

# WRITING WORLDVIEWS

EXTENDED SCHOLARLY  
CONVERSATIONS FROM IWAC 2023



Edited by  
**Christopher Basgier**  
**Terry Myers Zawacki**  
**Magnus Gustafsson**  
**Sue Hum, and**  
**Maureen Mathison**



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# CONTENTS

Introduction. On the Editorial Challenges in Writing Worldviews . . . . .	3
Christopher Basgier, Terry Myers Zawacki, Magnus Gustafsson, Sue Hum, and Maureen Mathison	
PART I. HISTORIES AND FUTURES . . . . .	15
Chapter 1. What Do the Next 50 Years Hold for WAC Research? A U.S. Perspective . . . . .	17
David R. Russell	
Chapter 2. Boundary-Crossing During Challenging Political Times: An Exhortation and Heuristic for WAC as Site of Deep Change . . . . .	43
Caitlin Martin, Mandy Olejnik, Elizabeth Wardle, and Angela Glotfelter	
Chapter 3. Linguistic Justice: Rights, Policies, and Practices from a Transnational Perspective . . . . .	63
Ligia A. Mihut	
Chapter 4. Historicizing WAC: Change in the Context of Continuity . . . . .	81
Kathleen Blake Yancey	
Chapter 5. Creative Nonfiction Across the Curriculum? . . . . .	99
Doug Hesse	
PART 2. EQUITY, ACCESS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE. . . . .	113
Chapter 6. Baking in the Disposition: The WAC/WID World Through Transnational Lenses . . . . .	115
Joseph Franklin	
Chapter 7. Toward a Dialogic Transnational Exchange in Writing Studies Editorial Work . . . . .	129
Lisa Arnold, Anna Habib, Joan Mullin, and Terry Myers Zawacki	
Chapter 8. Beyond the Binary: Using Critical Language Awareness to Navigate Conventions for Antiracist WAC. . . . .	147
Jessa Wood and Shawna Shapiro	
Chapter 9. Connecting Racial and Linguistic In/Justice in Writing Across the Curriculum: Toward a Raciolinguistic Approach . . . . .	163
Keli Tucker	

Chapter 10. Strategic Interventions and Compromises in Institutional Assessment: Changing the Story of Student Writing at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) . . . . . 179  
    Analeigh E. Horton, Aimee C. Mapes, and Emily Jo Schwaller

Chapter 11. Holistic Access . . . . . 197  
    Thomas Polk

PART 3. PROGRAMMATIC PERSPECTIVES . . . . . 213

Chapter 12. WAC Visibility: Rhetorical Strategies for Establishing and Maintaining Programmatic Awareness and Engagement. . . . . 215  
    Christopher Basgier

Chapter 13. Deep Accountability: Motivating Obligations in Disciplinary Writing Instruction . . . . . 235  
    Lacey Wootton

Chapter 14. WAC: The Research University’s *Mezzaterra* . . . . . 251  
    Cameron Bushnell

Chapter 15. Realizing the Potential of WAC Micro-Credentials: Driving Program Growth on New Paths . . . . . 267  
    Kimberly Harrison, Ming Fang, and Christine Martorana

Chapter 16. Partnering, Scaffolding, and Adapting: Lessons Learned from a Multi-Year Project to Embed WAC Across a BSN Curriculum . . . . 281  
    Heidi Nobles, T. Kenny Fountain, and Ashley Hurst

Chapter 17. WAC Emergence in English as a Foreign Language Contexts: A Tale of Two Japanese Universities . . . . . 297  
    Alex Way

Chapter 18. Connecting the Dots from Academic Literacies to Professional Communication Competence . . . . . 315  
    Radhika Jaidev

Chapter 19. A Critical Reflection on a Three-Pronged Approach to Second-Language Enhancement at The Chinese University of Hong Kong . . . . . 329  
    Jose Lai, Allen Ho, Olive Cheung, Amy Dai, Ella Leung, Carmen Li, and Steven Yeung

Chapter 20. Crafting a Rhetorical Odyssey: Pioneering a Writing Across the Curriculum Program at a Community College. . . . . 347  
    Alex Arreguin and Stacy Wilson

Contributors . . . . . 361

WRITING WORLDVIEWS:  
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INTRODUCTION.

# ON THE EDITORIAL CHALLENGES IN WRITING WORLDVIEWS

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In their 2023 International Writing Across the Curriculum (IWAC) conference session, “Considerations of Equity and Inclusion in Academic Publishing,” panelists Joan Mullin, Aimee Taylor, David Blakesley, and Heather Falconer posed a pair of questions central to the future of academic publishing: how can editors remain attuned to emerging trends while staying open to outliers? and how they might avoid replicating entrenched ideas, people, and processes? These questions have been especially pertinent for us as editors of scholarship that emerged from that conference, hosted by Clemson University, as have the panelists’ recommendation that the field look more closely at who is chosen to edit our books and journals, who selects and shapes review boards, and how reviewers are guided in evaluating submissions. Building on their call and extending a tradition of narrative histories in writing across the curriculum (WAC) (e.g., McLeod & Soven, 2006; Palmquist et al., 2020), we aim in this introduction to narrate some of these factors so that readers can understand how this collection came to be in its current form, and to leave breadcrumbs for future editors to follow—or avoid—as they undertake the effort of shaping collections that engage and extend our field’s scholarly focus.

We begin our narrative in the months before IWAC 2023, when our editorial team began to take shape through a combination of open calls, shoulder taps, and proactive requests. After the conference organizers released a call for editors, three volunteers—Chris Basgier, Terry Myers Zawacki, and Justin Nicholes—stepped forward, and, as a trio, brought complementary WAC expertise: international WAC research and L2 writing (Zawacki), WAC administration and teaching with technology (Basgier), and disciplinary belonging and creative writing across the curriculum (Nicholes, who contributed in the early stages before stepping away). In an email exchange, Terry noted the explicit conference focus on social and linguistic justice (e.g., “The role of WAC in addressing social justice/social justice literacy;” “WAC scholars as agents of change”) and, implicitly, on WAC globally (e.g., “WAC as a transnational movement”). She suggested we invite a scholar with expertise in both areas, so we turned to Sue Hum, a member of the WAC Clearinghouse editorial board with experience writing about race in visual rhetoric, Asian-American rhetorics, and quantitative literacy; Sue happily accepted.

At the same time, Magnus Gustafsson and Maureen Mathison—both with substantial transnational work and a commitment to ongoing dialogue between global and domestic WAC scholars—proposed to Mike Palmquist an IWAC volume devoted to work presented by international participants, to appear in the International Exchanges on Writing (IE) series. Given the IE series’ mission, Magnus and Maureen saw an opportunity to showcase WAC’s wide reach and highlight how international adaptations could inform and strengthen US-based initiatives. However, all of us were concerned that pursuing separate CFPs and volumes would fragment rather than integrate the diverse global perspectives emerging from the conference. The question of how to best represent the latter was not merely logistical. It grew from IWAC’s own history: the conference adopted the term “International” in 2006, a moment when major US-based organizations in rhetoric and writing studies were seeking to globalize their reach and foster transnational exchange (See Arnold et al., this volume, for details on these organizational efforts). In the nearly twenty years since, WAC has seen a slow but persistent growth in scholarly exchanges across borders. In a subsequent meeting, the six of us agreed to issue a single, inclusive CFP, one that would cultivate international representation while advancing linguistic and social justice as shared aims of WAC worldwide.

Given this history, it probably will not surprise readers that we were drawn to a specific term in the 2023 IWAC conference CFP as we considered the focus of this volume: *worldviews*. That CFP began by reminding the WAC community of this “crucial moment” and “the role we play in using the power of language to affect *worldviews*” (emphasis ours). Through many conversations about this

collection (and our own CFP), we kept returning to that term, eventually shaping our title, *Writing Worldviews*.

While this title echoes the aspirational “international” in the IWAC conference name, it also gestures to the multiplicity of views—a world of views—represented in the scholarship gathered here. During and after the conference, we sought to honor that multiplicity by engaging with as many panels and recorded talks as possible, listening for the diverse contexts and commitments that shape WAC research worldwide. At the same time, we knew we wanted to include perennial WAC concerns, such as building, sustaining, and assessing WAC programs. Like Kenneth Burke’s terministic screen, each chapter—and the collection as a whole—offers both a way of seeing and a way of not seeing (as Yancey notes in a different context in her chapter in this volume).

Indeed, we also understood that our work as editors was not neutral. In shaping this collection, we were also *shaping* which worldviews would be heard, and which remain outside its frame. For example, our CFP specifically asked for “empirically driven theoretical work” and “theoretically informed reflective teaching narratives.” While we sought to be inclusive, this phrasing signaled our intention to foreground scholarly approaches rather than more personal stories. In this way, then, our CFP also illustrates how our title, *Writing Worldviews*, can be read as both description and action: as editors, we quite literally “write” which worldviews become legible. We enact this shaping collectively—speaking here in one editorial voice—and individually, through our own positionalities, interests, and commitments.

As writing studies scholars working within a cross-disciplinary field, we recognize that collaboration continually activates and tests disciplinary distinctions. We must be deliberate in recognizing the affordances of different disciplinary worldviews, examining how epistemological differences shape what constitutes evidence, how reductionist and systemic impulses coexist in our scholarly work, and how every argument is situated within a social context (see Eigenbrode et al., 2007). We remained mindful of these distinctions in our reading of and responses to chapter proposals and our subsequent revision suggestions. Some—the linguistic and the conceptual, for example—were easier to identify; others were more difficult to negotiate as we moved across a spectrum of worldviews, especially regarding authors’ use of evidence, or their balance of analysis with synthesis. Developing functional and meaningful criteria that honor these complexities is demanding work, one that editors and readers share. While editors carry responsibility for this task, readers also share in it: they must recognize their own positionality—their worldviews—and the explicit or implicit criteria they bring to the act of reading. In this generative process, texts *and* worldviews are co-constructed—tested, affirmed, or revised—through the reciprocal acts of editing and reading.

This negotiated co-construction is inseparable from our own positionalities as editors and readers. As predominantly White scholars situated within Western academic traditions, we were mindful that our interpretive habits would shape how we read and responded to contributions. We asked how we might read beyond our own assumptions—to recognize work grounded in different epistemologies, rhetorical practices, and cultural logics—without reinscribing the very hierarchies we hoped to unsettle. At the same time, we recognized that the shared disciplinary commitments of the IWAC community often produced a certain coherence: contributors responded to the CFP with rigor and imagination, drawing on frameworks that, while diverse, largely aligned around WAC’s familiar research and programmatic concerns. In this sense, the process of editing became another instance of *writing worldviews*, a reciprocal act of reading, interpreting, and reshaping the field’s horizons. Through these exchanges, contributors, editors, and future readers participate together in redefining what counts as knowledge, whose voices are amplified, and how WAC imagines its global reach.

And lastly, on this point, we want to emphasize that the individual chapters presented here are also writing and rewriting existing worldviews via the methods and theories the authors apply to languages, identities, nations, research, rhetorical practices, pedagogies, and program building. Indeed, we are heartened by the strong attention to social and linguistic justice in chapters across domestic (US) and international contexts, evidence of an emerging disciplinary worldview on these concerns.

## CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

We turn now to our process of developing sections and chapter sequences for *Writing Worldviews*, an action that also speaks to the role of editors in shaping the material context in which authors’ worldviews are presented, read, and received. In shaping the volume, we editors spent considerable time weighing different visions for naming the sections and the number of sections to include, a discussion that involved making nuanced distinctions among chapters that largely overlapped in their attention to themes of social and linguistic justice, whether as a central focus or related to program building and sustainability. Our conversations, on Zoom and email, about section names and how to classify chapters reminded Terry of Jorge Luis Borges’ description of a fictional taxonomy in a likely apocryphal ancient Chinese encyclopedia:

On those remote pages it is written that animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones,

(c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they were mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those that are drawn with a camel's hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance. (1964, p. 108)

After much deliberation, we agreed to organize chapters into three broad sections, which, despite inevitable overlaps among mermaids, suckling pigs, and stray dogs, would most nearly represent the prevailing concerns of each chapter: Histories and Futures; Equity, Access, and Social Change; and Programmatic Perspectives.

## HISTORIES AND FUTURES

The first section—Histories and Futures—includes chapters that recount moments of growth and change in the field and consider possible futures in the context of larger social, political, technological, and scholarly influences on our programs and practices. We lead with the chapter “What Do the Next 50 Years Hold for WAC/WID Research? A U.S. Perspective” by David Russell, a noted WAC historian. Russell describes promising directions for US-based WAC and writing in the disciplines (WID) research, given what has already been accomplished through collaborative work across the related fields of writing studies, linguistics, discipline-based educational studies, and other fields that study writing as a human activity. Three trends, he predicts, will affect all of these research traditions—social justice, multimodality, and artificial intelligence—in the next fifty years of WAC.

Adopting an even wider lens for considering potential directions for WAC, Caitlin Martin, Mandy Olejnik, Elizabeth Wardle, and Angela Glotfelter draw our attention to impending—and troubling—threats to higher education in general in a post-democratic policy regime. In “Boundary-Crossing During Challenging Political Times: An Exhortation and Heuristic for WAC as Site of Deep Change,” they suggest that the current U.S. climate calls for WAC leaders to extend our expertise beyond our programs and institutions, applying a WAC “ethos,” bolstered by changemaking strategies to ensure that efforts towards reducing disparities and inculcating social justice will continue in higher education and beyond.

The two chapters that follow, by Ligia Mihut and Kathleen Blake Yancey, both honored as IWAC plenary speakers, offer histories of and reflections on similarly pressing WAC concerns: linguistic justice and the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on teaching with writing and “writing itself.” Mihut’s wide-ranging chapter,

“Linguistic Justice: Rights, Policies, and Practices from a Transnational Perspective,” argues that WAC scholars are uniquely positioned to address inequities in teaching, writing, and research practices. As evidence, she gives a historical account of the drafting, implementation, and critiques of the landmark 1974 resolution “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL). She suggests that SRTOL, for all of its limitations, is a model for ground-up approaches to change.

Yancey’s “unconventional” chapter, “Historicizing WAC: Change in the Context of Continuity,” is also concerned with change over time, in the field and in our practices. While new technologies have changed, for better or worse, the ways in which we teach writing, the challenges presented by generative AI, she suggests, are very different in kind and degree from other challenges to the field that have been taken up in its scholarship. Yet, she proposes, rather than seeing AI as a unique challenge, we might think of our response to it as one of the many “braided strands of activity” that comprise the field, a field characterized by continuity rather than by bounded stages of development.

In the last chapter in this section, “Creative Nonfiction Across the Curriculum?” Doug Hesse turns our attention from scholarly production to the value of writing creative nonfiction in courses across the curriculum (CNAC). He connects creative nonfiction to expressive writing with its conceptual roots in WAC, and he points to the current absence of expressivism in the WAC scholarship as a pedagogical loss. The benefits of CNAC for students, he argues, are many, including learning to make connections across knowledge domains. He offers suggestions for a range of CNAC assignments suitable for both composition and cross-curricular faculty.

## **EQUITY, ACCESS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Following the wider perspectives offered above, the chapters in the second section—Equity, Access, and Social Change—feature theoretical and qualitative inquiries into pluralistic and socially just WAC work. While the worldviews of chapters in the first section are positioned principally in U.S. higher education, Joseph Franklin’s chapter, “Baking in the Disposition: The WAC World through Transnational Lenses,” offers a transnational worldview that calls into question the uniqueness, and thus the value, of nationally defined models of WAC (and higher education). He reviews recent scholarship challenging the meanings of key terms—multilingual, translingual, international, global, transnational—being used in the work on social and linguistic justice. These terms, he explains, are often linguistically static and bounded by place. He proposes the term “ideological disposition” to better reflect the “transing,” or “boundary-unsettling,” work WAC leaders can do.

Of course, such “transing” is easier said than done. In their chapter “Toward a Dialogic Transnational Exchange in Writing Studies Editorial Work,” Lisa Arnold, Anna Habib, Joan Mullin, and Terry Myers Zawacki demonstrate the difficulties in establishing and maintaining publishing policies on language difference in an international context, where differing language ideologies circulate and intersect with the material realities of North American academic publishing. They name three key tensions in these policies: treating experiences with language as the same, failing to consider material dimensions of language, and not examining whether recommended practices align with or work against goals that writers may have.

Returning to a U.S. pedagogical context while still focused on tensions around language difference, Jessa Wood and Shawna Shapiro’s chapter, “Beyond the Binary: Using Critical Language Awareness to Navigate Conventions for Antiracist WAC,” speaks to a persistent desire among WAC professionals for practical pedagogical strategies that can promote social justice. Drawing from interviews with WAC practitioners, they describe the tension surrounding instruction on disciplinary writing conventions as either assimilationist or empowering, and they argue for resituating the debate within the context of critical language awareness (CLA). CLA, they argue, can allow WAC professionals to promote student agency, render disciplinary discourses accessible, generate space for students to bring their own assets to their writing, and foster advocacy for historically marginalized languages in institutional policy.

In her chapter, “Connecting Racial and Linguistic In/justice in Writing Across the Curriculum: Toward a Raciolinguistic Approach,” Keli Tucker extends this conversation by introducing raciolinguistics to WAC. Raciolinguistics attends to the interrelationships between linguistic discrimination and racism, which she illustrates at work in various writing pedagogies. In response to the ongoing existence of linguistic racism across the curriculum, Tucker urges WAC to recognize the limitations of existing pedagogies and work toward justice by advocating for linguistic diversity and an asset-based mindset in writing classrooms across disciplines.

Shifting the focus from classroom pedagogy to institutional policy, Analeigh E. Horton, Aimee C. Mapes, and Emily Jo Schwaller, in their chapter, “Strategic Interventions and Compromises in Institutional Assessment: Changing the Story of Student Writing at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI),” provide an anti-racist account of three institutions as they collaborated with their state board of education to revise assessment for the written communication requirement to include linguistic social justice. Through a rich recounting, the authors tell a tale of negotiation and action, as they leveraged their knowledge of assessment to “move the needle” to enact change.

In between the levels of state language policy and classroom pedagogy, other factors can act as barriers to access or facilitate the success of marginalized students, a point Thomas Polk makes with his model of holistic access, derived from qualitative case studies of two students' experiences with undergraduate research. In "Holistic Access," Polk suggests that gaining access requires minoritized students to call upon a range of competencies that extend well beyond the intellectual, including developing a network of cultural, social, and human resources and aligning that network with the knowledges privileged by the institution, the program offering research opportunities, and the program gatekeepers.

## PROGRAMMATIC PERSPECTIVES

Our final section again begins with a wide view on programmatic development and sustainability before turning to chapters focused on local circumstances and practices. In "WAC Visibility: Rhetorical Strategies for Establishing and Maintaining Programmatic Awareness and Engagement," Christopher Basgier explores specific rhetorical strategies informing WAC program visibility-making. Although WAC scholars point to the need to make our programs visible to a range of institutional audiences, there remains little research that examines in detail the rhetorical thinking underlying the strategies faculty and administrators use to achieve visibility. To fill that gap, Basgier describes survey results and interview findings from his research with WAC program leaders at a range of institutions that show they are aware of the multiple audiences for their websites, newsletters, social media, and annual reports and that they strive to cultivate a consistent and flexible program ethos and recognizable brand.

Where Basgier highlights strategies for cultivating program visibility, Lacey Wootton, in "Deep Accountability: Motivating Obligations in Disciplinary Writing Instruction," reminds us that even the most well-designed programs must be sensitive to local institutional and rhetorical circumstances, which include and exceed the officially sanctioned structures of WAC or related initiatives. Wootton's chapter draws on her institutional ethnography to reveal how WAC faculty's intrinsic motivations exceed the boundaries of institutional accountability. WAC instructors, she finds, consider a constellation of influences—colleagues' engagement, disciplinary values, and students' learning needs—that reframe writing-intensive teaching as an ethical and communal practice rather than a bureaucratic one.

In "WAC: The Research University's *Mezzaterra*," Cameron Bushnell, Clemson's host of the 2023 IWAC conference, is also interested in the motives faculty and department heads have for engaging in, or resisting, WAC initiatives. Recalling the lessons she learned from Art Young, her mentor at Clemson and foundational

WAC scholar, she suggests that establishing a “middle ground,” or “*mezzaterra*,” is a necessity if one is to be an effective WAC leader. There’s an art (Art) to creating collaborative spaces—cultural hubs—that can overcome the territoriality that disciplinary faculty often exhibit when new programs or initiatives are introduced. Following her description of how Art modeled *mezzaterra*, she turns to a threat to WAC sustainability from Clemson’s current research focus and the three cross-curricular initiatives she’s undertaken to counter that threat.

Over any program’s lifespan, its reach and influence tend to ebb and flow, as Kimberly Harrison, Ming Fang, and Christine Martorano describe in their chapter, “Realizing the Potential of WAC Micro-credentials: Driving Program Growth on New Paths,” which outlines their response to funding cuts and waning faculty participation. With the COVID-19 pandemic acting as a jump start to new initiatives, such as aligning with online teaching hubs, the authors highlight ways to cultivate an equitable writing culture at their Hispanic-serving institution by partnering with the Office of Micro-Credentials to offer both faculty- and student-facing WAC micro-credentials. In addition to the WAC course they designed for faculty, the authors describe the WAC micro-credential they developed for students, a unit embedded in select disciplinary courses and designed by faculty who’ve gone through the microcredentials mini-course.

Heidi Nobles, T. Kenny Fountain, and Ashley Hurst detail another kind of strategic partnership in “Partnering, Scaffolding, and Adapting: Lessons Learned from a Multi-Year Project to Embed WAC across a BSN Curriculum.” They describe the practicalities of developing, implementing, and assessing a WAC model that draws on existing course materials, focuses on transfer across the nursing curriculum, and encourages evidenced-based pedagogical practices. Although rooted in a nursing program, the authors provide a portable model of a WAC partnership that can be adapted to other contexts.

Of course, the portability of such programmatic initiatives is not always smooth, particularly when WAC is exported to contexts outside of the US, as our next two chapters illustrate. In “WAC Emergence in English as a Foreign Language Contexts: A Tale of Two Japanese Universities,” Alex Way asks how WAC operates in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) universities in Japan. As an answer, he compares two such programs to demonstrate both the promise and the challenge of implementing English for academic purposes (EAP) to internationalize the curricula, an effort met with varying degrees of success. He shows that, while EMI might be idealized in international contexts, it is not fully realized at the local level, where institutional considerations must be taken into account.

Likewise, Radhika Jaidev details the obstacles to establishing and growing a Centre for Professional Communication at the Singapore Institute of Technology. In “Connecting the Dots from Academic Literacies to Professional

Communication Competence,” Jaidev presents efforts to help students learn about the similarities and differences between academic and professional literacies to prepare them for the workforce after graduation. In the process, she also illustrates the challenges that can arise when such institution-wide efforts necessitate fundamental curricular changes, including faculty resistance, accurate knowledge about existing literacy instruction across the curriculum, and the time needed to create and deliver professional development.

Illustrating a successful WAC adaptation to the provision of discipline-based English writing and language instruction, Jose Lai, Alan Ho, Olive Cheung, Amy Dai, Ella Leung, Carmen Li, and Steven Yeung, in their “Critical Reflection on a Three-Pronged Approach to Second Language Enhancement: Formal Core Language Curriculum, Non-Formal English Across the Curriculum Movement, and Student-Centered Peer Tutoring Scheme,” recount a dynamic approach to implementing English across the curriculum, a cross-institutional initiative in Hong Kong. Their approach, the authors explain, was motivated by increasing student diversity at their bilingual institution and the lack of informed literacy instruction prior to students enrolling in disciplinary programs. The three-pronged approach they describe includes required discipline-focused courses offered by the English language teaching unit; a community of practice model that involves faculty and helps them to integrate both writing and language instruction in their courses; and a peer tutoring program developed along the lines of those in the US.

Returning to the US, we close this section with another successful model of WAC programmatic transfer, a chapter by Alex Arreguin and Stacy Wilcox, who describe partnering with Miami University to adapt a sensemaking model of WAC to the context of a multi-institutional community college system in Arizona. Their chapter, “Crafting a Rhetorical Odyssey: Pioneering a Writing Across the Curriculum Program at a Community College,” moves us to a wider WAC context—the community college—that too often goes unnoticed in the WAC literature. Recognizing this omission, the authors describe a four-part heuristic—allying, navigating, framing, and brokering—for operationalizing WAC at the two-year college. The rhetorical work involved in these activities, they argue, offers a productive framework for anyone interested in building and sustaining a WAC program at open-access institutions.

Appropriately, their chapter brings us back to the themes of equity, access, and social and linguistic justice that resonate throughout the chapters in this volume. We hope readers will benefit from learning about new directions of thought on these themes, as well as other established and developing worldviews, presented by all of our authors. Indeed, we believe *Writing Worldviews* offers a promising picture of the ways in which we can meet future challenges

and the opportunities these afford as WAC, with its place-based adaptations, continues to become an increasingly globalized movement. At the same time, this collection underscores that editing is itself a political act—one that determines which voices are amplified and how our field imagines its future—so we offer it not only as a collection of chapters that transform the initial conference presentations into fully developed research and theoretical contributions but also as an invitation to future editors and writers to take up that work with vision, courage, and justice.

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# PART 1. HISTORIES AND FUTURES



## CHAPTER 1.

# WHAT DO THE NEXT 50 YEARS HOLD FOR WAC RESEARCH? A U.S. PERSPECTIVE

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*Abstract.* This chapter lays out possible directions for WAC research in the US, based not only on what it has accomplished in the last 50-plus years but also on what other related traditions of research have accomplished: rhetoric and composition (especially first-year writing), technical/professional communication, discipline-based educational research (DBER), the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), applied linguistics research on second/other language writing, and research in fields such as psychology, neurophysiology, or sociology that sometimes focus on writing as a human activity, regardless of discipline. It addresses also three overarching trends that affect all these traditions: social justice, multimodality, and artificial intelligence. I will argue that collaboration with these other traditions of research holds great promise for the next 50 years.

The last 25 years have seen remarkable growth in research on writing in the disciplines, expanding on the work begun in the 1980s and 1990s (Russell, 2002). Its size and scope have burgeoned (Palmquist et al., 2020). More than 750 articles, chapters, and books have been indexed with WAC or WID (Writing in the Disciplines) as a keyword from 2000 to 2022 (not including book reviews), among those 95 analyzed empirical data. The US has an active research committee of the new professional organization, the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum (AWAC). And the free, online bibliographic database, CompPile, indexes journals from a range of fields that deal with WAC (the statistics above came from it).

Equally important, the problems of dissemination that loomed large in 2000 have been to a great degree solved by electronic publication. The WAC Clearinghouse, established in 1997, has been central to this improved

dissemination. It now houses a dozen active open-access journals in writing studies—four devoted to WAC—and archives of 12 others. It has published or reprinted more than 250 open-access books, many of them on WAC or directly related to it, including excellent introductions to WAC (Bazerman et al., 2005) and to genre (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), as well as numerous books on WAC internationally (Bushnell, 2020; International Exchanges on the Study of Writing, n.d.).

WAC is indeed an international movement—its origins lay outside the US, after all (Russell, 2002). And there have been major efforts stretching back for decades in other countries and regions, not only in English as an international language but also in many other languages, as I mention below. But in this chapter, I talk about its future from a U.S. perspective, in part because I know that perspective best, but mainly because to do that future justice from a global perspective would be the scope of a book, not an article. I trust that many of the issues I raise are relevant in other contexts, but given the specificity and complexity of the issues, each WAC tradition must envision its own futures.

Despite the extraordinary accomplishments and growth of WAC research, in the US and globally, it is far from complete, as some might be tempted to think. There is still much to know and share, as I will outline below. The next 50 years hold great promise for WAC research, in a great variety of areas, because WAC research is an immense variety of things. It thus has the potential to intersect with many research traditions. I mean not only traditions of educational research in other fields or writing research in other fields, but also fields adjacent to WAC, such as FYC, rhetoric and composition, technical/professional communication. In these neighboring—intersecting—fields, researchers may not be aware of WAC research, assuming that it is confined to program improvement when in fact it is much more, as I'll argue. And WAC researchers may not be aware of how much adjacent fields have contributed and might contribute to WAC, through collaboration. This collaboration might help WAC address what is widely recognized as a major problem in research, inside and outside of academia: disciplinary silos, which inhibit the sharing of knowledge and thus the progress of knowledge (Friedlander, 2022).

In this chapter, I describe possible directions for WAC research, based not only on what it has accomplished in the last 50-plus years but also on what other related traditions of research have accomplished. I will argue that collaboration with these other traditions of research holds great promise for the next 50 years. I'll focus on five intersections:

- WAC-adjacent research in rhetoric and composition, especially FYC, and technical/professional Communication,

- research on writing conducted in other disciplines on writing in those disciplines, the writing-focused subset of what is called discipline-based educational research (DBER),
- research on higher education in centers for learning/teaching excellence, what is called scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL),
- research in fields such as psychology, neurophysiology, or sociology that sometimes focus on writing as a human activity, regardless of discipline, and
- applied linguistics research on second language writing.

After taking up these five intersections with WAC research, I will describe three powerful new lines of inquiry that are going to be overarching trends in each of the five intersections. First, social justice research will make gender, race, class, disability, and other sources of injustice into major topics of research. Second, WAC research will continue to broaden its scope and reach by embracing communication across the curriculum (CxC) and communication in the disciplines (CiD), as multi-modal composition, speaking, reading, visual design, database searching, and other modes are explored in relation to writing and learning. Third, the explosion of artificial intelligence (AI) will profoundly affect the future of writing, learning, and their development, in ways that were hinted at through machine writing analytics for a decade but are now leading in directions that can only be guessed at or dreamed of. These overarching trends are the future of WAC research in all the intersections I'll mention.

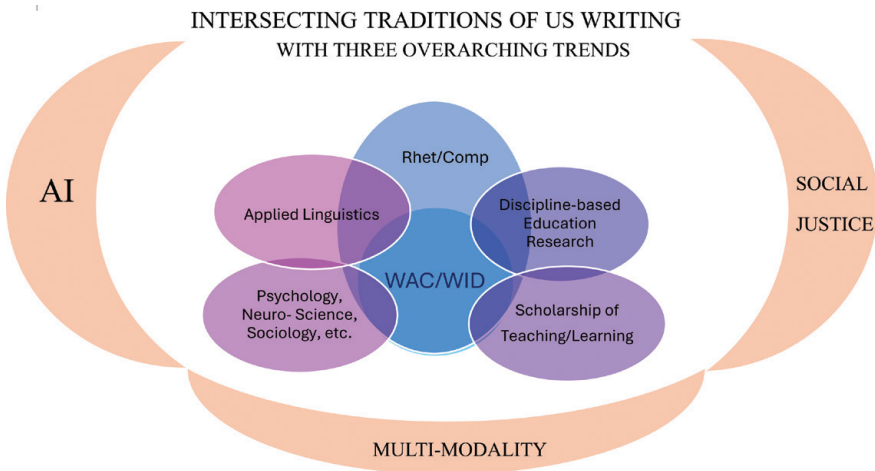


Figure 1.1. *Intersecting Traditions of U.S. Writing*

This admittedly US-centric diagram misses the width of EAP, ESL, EFL, and EMEMUS work carried out in Europe and elsewhere. It suggests nevertheless the complexity of the U.S. picture. The central light-blue oval contains WAC and the adjacent traditions of rhetoric and composition (including first-year composition and writing centers) and technical/professional communication, all with linked histories and professional organizations. The ovals on the left are important disciplines with traditions of research on writing that are not directly related to pedagogy. The ovals on the right are traditions of pedagogical research that sometimes include writing. All of the traditions can and do at times intersect with each other.

### **WAC-ADJACENT RESEARCH IN RHET/COMP AND TECHNICAL/PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION (TPC)**

Fields that are very close to WAC are rhet/comp and TPC—usually housed in the same department in U.S. higher education. Yet often their research programs are unknown, ignored, or misunderstood by researchers in any one of the fields, and opportunities for productive collaboration are squandered (e.g., on language justice policy see Sanders et al., 2023).

The relationship between composition (especially FYC) and WAC research has always been deep (Anson, 2010), but often complicated and sometimes even vexed (McLeod & Maimon, 2000). Until WAC formed its own professional organization, AWAC, in 2018, it was a SIG of CCCC. But the next 50 years of WAC could become an era of smooth cooperation to break down the silos that separate even our adjacent fields, and research can lead the way. Indeed, it already is.

The question of how students develop as writers and—I would add and emphasize—as learners has been key in composition. The qualitative studies of the 1990s into how students move into courses beyond FYC have continued but with a wider scope. Aided by new theories based on small-scale studies, longitudinal research was extended to mixed methods studies carried out on comparatively large numbers of students, such as the University of Michigan study of 169 students in 47 majors [UK “course” or EU academic program] across the four years of the standard U.S. university degree (Gere, 2019). This study included not only interviews and observations but also surveys, automated text analysis, and corpus linguistic analysis of texts written by students. The study found that “college writing has transformative effects on students,” (Gere, 2019, p. 314) but not effects that are uniform or clearly visible to students. Curriculum shapes student writing, but students “subvert or supplement” curricula

with writing, as their writing is linked to their personal and social development in ways the students themselves shape, given their prior experiences and perceptions. Because the Michigan study used automated and corpus linguistic analysis to reveal not only group performance and attitudes but also individual performance and attitudes, it points to a new direction in WAC research—the integration of methods: interview, survey, observation, and text analysis, now often automated.

Similarly, the student's perspective was captured in the Meaningful Writing Project, which collected open survey responses from 707 final-year students at four universities, with 27 follow-up interviews, to find what writing (if any) students found meaningful (Eodice et al., 2017). They then surveyed 160 faculty members who were mentioned by the students and interviewed 60 of them. They found the students valued writing projects that offered them one or more of three possibilities: agency, engagement, and learning for transfer. These results suggest that learning for transfer is something students do and value, whether or not students are explicitly taught to transfer.

As these studies also suggest, one central area of research composition in the last two decades and going forward has been “transfer,” the transition students make from general composition courses to writing in the disciplines and professions—WID (Whicker, 2022). The early and still prominent view of transfer is “close the gap”: the goal of the research is to identify the skills necessary in some discipline or workplace and then explicitly teach those, on the assumption that they will transfer neatly. This assumption was challenged by research in the 2000s that suggested that skills are bound up in a particular context situation or practice, and thus not easily transferred. This poses great challenges for the next generation of research on writing “transfer,” which Paul A. Prior et al. (2019) rightly say should be called “development.” This research problem transcends the rhet/comp and WAC silos.

Similarly, technical/professional communication (TPC) has since the 1980s held an annual convention in conjunction with CCCC. It has conducted research on writing in a range of fields for many decades, in several journals and book series. Most notably, engineering since the 1990s has made “communication” a priority, mainly written. Many researchers in technical communication have worked with researchers in engineering who investigate writing. There are even departments of communication housed within colleges of Engineering (Burge et al., 2012). Most TPC programs are housed in English departments (Yeats & Thompson, 2010). Yet WAC has not much collaborated with TPC. We should claim our mutual interests heartily and deepen our collaborations to overcome the TPC and WAC silos.

## DISCIPLINE-BASED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (DBER) AND WAC

WAC should partner more extensively and more effectively with research on teaching and learning in the disciplines conducted by researchers in those disciplines. At least 60 disciplines have journals that publish research on pedagogy in that discipline, sometimes multiple journals in a single discipline. While there has been research in almost every discipline on ways to improve learning through writing, and the influence on DBER has been large and increasing (Anson & Lyles, 2011), relatively few disciplines have taken writing-to-learn on board as an important project of ongoing pedagogical research and theorizing.

The exceptions, though, are important ones. Science education, particularly at the secondary school level (Hand, 2007), and mathematics education (Teuscher et al., 2016) have large-scale research efforts—stretching back many years—into the relationships between writing and learning in those fields. WAC researchers have in some cases partnered with them, but much more is possible. The AWAC Committee on Research and Publications now exists to do these very things, as well as the Committee on Partnerships (Association for Writing Across the Curriculum, 2019). Now there is a professional organization with a research committee, and interdisciplinary collaborations, both small and large scale, may be easier to facilitate and fund. The NSF and NIH have funded research on writing and learning in specific disciplines for many years, offering a rich opportunity for collaboration.

WAC researchers have traditionally spearheaded writing research with discipline-based researchers with whom they have collaborated. However, the initiative and the learning should be bi-directional. WAC has much to learn from DBER, not only about writing in each discipline but also about research methods that DBER has developed. And as Justin K. Rademaekers (2015) points out, transdisciplinary research is becoming far more common as problems become more complex and cross traditional boundaries. In this WAC may have more and more to offer, in facilitating communication among researchers in different disciplines and preparing students for such transdisciplinary knowledge-making (Gere et al., 2015). However, this will require WAC researchers to, first of all, be willing to learn and adopt or at least adapt to the educational research methods and traditions of other disciplines, and second of all, willing and able to explain our research methods and traditions in terms DBER can understand and adopt or adapt. Heather Falconer's (2022) study of discussions of writing and writing assessment in undergraduate biology education is a model.

WAC-DBER research collaborations would also profit from the ongoing tradition in WAC empirical studies of pedagogical collaboration with faculty in the

disciplines. For example, Tarabochia (2016) analyzed interactions between WAC consultants and disciplinary faculty. Michele Eodice et al. (2017) interviewed faculty in the disciplines. Eodice et al. (2017) also drew on survey and interview data to understand assignment design, and Bradley Hughes and Elisabeth L. Miller (2018) even analyzed workshop drafts of WAC assignments from disciplinary faculty. What we have learned from systematic research into pedagogical collaborations might be extended to our practice in research collaborations (and research on the collaborations themselves).

Because of the sheer number of journals that publish DBER and the credit and influence they have in their fields, this seems a high-priority area for WAC research to develop (Thew & Gustafsson, 2007). It also exemplifies the turn from missionary to ethnographic models of WAC. Ultimately, DBER may become the most effective and efficient intersection to de-silo WAC research for the next 50 years.

## **SOTL RESEARCH AND WAC**

Institution-wide centers for excellence in learning/teaching are now a common feature of higher education in the United States and natural allies of WAC research. What has been called the faculty development movement in higher education was officially organized in 1976 as the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD). This makes the movement the same age as WAC. It has a similar number of members and a wide institutional presence, with a similar penetration: from 20 to 65 percent depending on the type and level of institution (International WAC Mapping, n.d.; Kuhlenschmidt, 2011). WAC is fundamentally concerned with professional development, and indeed many WAC programs are in POD units and share personnel.

The research of this movement is called Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). It has many dimensions, from an individual instructor reflecting systematically on their own teaching to national projects organized by researchers in departments of higher education (usually housed in larger education departments) and funded by governmental or non-profit organizations.

Many of these research efforts involve writing for learning. Nine journals publish research on SoTL that is not confined to a single discipline. These have included 108 articles that refer to WAC and/or WID specifically. (This does not include the scores of discipline-specific journals that have pedagogical articles on WAC, as I mentioned above in terms of DBER.) Indeed, one of the most important studies of faculty development was done by a team that included Carol Rutz and William Condon, who are WAC researchers and program developers (Condon et al., 2016).

The research possibilities for WAC-SoTL collaboration are dramatically evident in Hughes's (2020) survey, "What Early-Career Disciplinary Faculty Want to Learn about WAC Pedagogy." This study was the result of a longstanding relationship with his university's teaching and learning program. Another example is Adele Leon's (2020) study of low-stakes assignments as high impact educational practices (HIPs), several of which involve writing.

Collaborative SoTL-WAC projects have even included a few large-scale quantitative studies. The largest was a special 2008 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to more than 23,000 students in 82 U.S. universities. It found that writing *with certain qualities* contributes significantly to student engagement and learning. The report concluded:

when institutions provided students with extensive, intellectually challenging writing activities, the students engaged in more deep learning activities such as analysis, synthesis, integration of ideas from various sources, and grappled more with course ideas both in and out of the classroom. In turn, students whose faculty assigned projects with these same characteristics reported greater personal, social, practical, and academic learning and development. (Anderson et al., 2015, pp. 20–21)

It is this sort of massive and impactful research that collaborations at the national level can achieve. At the local institutional level, centers for excellence in learning/teaching provide ways to organize collaboration and leverage WAC influence. At all levels, expanding beyond our silos to embrace SOTL is very much possible, despite the danger that integration into campus centers may deprive WAC efforts of secure funding and identity.

## **RESEARCH ON WRITING AS A GENERAL PHENOMENON, NOT FOCUSED ON A SPECIFIC DISCIPLINE**

Over the last two decades, the relatively new field of writing studies has shown that research in WAC, as well as in rhetoric and composition, forms only part of the vast whole of research on writing. We have mentioned professional communication, DBER, and SOTL. However, several other fields have long traditions of research on writing, largely independent of those I have mentioned. Chief among them are psychology (along with neuroscience more recently) and applied linguistics. These do major research that is often applicable to many or all areas of activity that involve writing. I'll focus on these two, but we might also mention sociology (of science and of knowledge), anthropology, history,

philosophy, literacy, and cultural studies, all of which have long traditions of research on writing (Bazerman, 2009).

Most relevant to WAC, psychology pursues ongoing work on the cognitive basis of writing to learn. Perry D. Klein and Pietro Boscolo (2016) published a major review essay on trends in writing-to-learn research. They point out that in the last two decades, numerous meta-analyses of quantitative and qualitative studies have shown writing has reliable small to medium effects on learning, but its effects can be increased (or decreased) depending on moderating variables such as the type of writing activity and the way it is integrated into instruction. Writing does not inherently affect learning but is “dependent on the goals and strategies of the writer” (Klein & Boscolo, 2016, p. 336). Directing attention to the task content and/or reflectively to the student/writer’s self-regulation processes improves learning, and these are learning strategies that can be successfully taught. Moreover, the genre of writing seems to make a difference, though in complex ways. Such research can be directly applicable, as is Michelle E. Neely’s (2017) study of WID faculty and peer tutors’ beliefs about writing, which draws on a rich tradition of work in educational psychology.

At a deeper level, neuroscience research has begun to investigate the physiology of writing, and its basis in preexisting functional systems that developed before writing, ontogenetically and phylogenetically, such as typifying perception, problem-solving action, sociality, cooperation, indexical pointing, and of course languaging (Prior et al., 2019). As this research takes up writing more and more (in conjunction with other media), its influence on WAC research will continue to grow (Dryer & Russell, 2018; Pennebaker & Chung, 2011). And the more we in WAC understand this basic research in other, even disparate fields, the more we will be able to influence and even collaborate with it.

## **RESEARCH ON WRITING IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

The research community in WAC has in the last decade come to interact more with applied linguistics research, especially as second language students have been more visible in secondary and higher education in the US and as WAC has connected with other movements across the curriculum world-wide, where linguists are prevalent. Linguistic approaches to discipline-specific and professional writing have grown exponentially with the demand for written English worldwide, particularly among academics in the sciences, who must publish overwhelmingly in English—itsself an object of contestation and research (Canagarajah, 1999).

Most obviously, the field of English for academic purposes (EAP) studies writing in various disciplines to help second and other language students

master writing in those fields. Yet several linguist-led initiatives in the US and worldwide are centrally concerned not only with writing (and reading, often) in courses beyond those focused on language but also on L1 students, who take advantage of services such as writing centers that serve L1 and L2+ students. Like WAC, these initiatives collaborate with faculty in the disciplines. These include integrated content and language in Northern Europe and South Africa, disciplinary didactics in Francophone Europe, academic literacies in the UK, and academic language and learning in Australia (for an overview see Russell, 2018). As mentioned earlier, the WAC Clearinghouse has numerous books and other materials devoted to research into writing in the disciplines in languages other than English (International Exchanges on the Study of Writing, n.d.)

Recently, computerized analysis of large bodies of texts in specific disciplines (corpus analysis) has dramatically shown the similarities and differences among them. These approaches hold great promise for WAC applications as well (Cotos, 2023; Crossley et al., 2017; Russell & Cortes, 2012; Strobl et al., 2019). For direct applications to WAC, see Otto Kruse and Chris M. Anson (2023).

Though of course teachers of ESL and applied linguists have long been interested in multi-(or trans-) lingual writing in the disciplines, in the 2000s the concerns of faculty involved with WAC led to a specific interest in these issues for the WAC movement. The catalyst was a series of videos called *Writing Across Borders*, produced by Vicki Tolar Burton and others at the Writing Center at Oregon State University in 2005 (Robertson, 2005). The poignant clips of second language writers dramatized their difficulties, not only with language per se but also with the rhetorical, cultural, pedagogical, and education system difficulties they face—made more difficult still by the attitudes of many faculty and writing tutors.

The videos became not only training tools but also a touchstone for further work, spurred also by the increasing involvement of WAC with similar efforts in other countries. A special issue of *ATD* on *Writing across the Curriculum and Second Language Writers: Cross-Field Research, Theory, and Program Development* was followed by a collection, *WAC and Second-Language Writers: Research towards linguistically and culturally inclusive programs and practices*, both edited by Terry Myers Zawacki and Michelle Cox (2011, 2014). The effort of WAC to respect and value disciplinary differences is supported by efforts to respect and value linguistic and cultural differences and to see multi-(trans-) lingual writers—even those in the process of learning a new language—as resources rather than remedial.

More broadly, various areas of linguistics and some WAC research and pedagogy have moved toward a “translingual” model of written communication, based on research that shows “every context is multilingual, even ones that appear

monolingual” (Donahue, 2016, p. 147). A translingual orientation brings a set of attitudes and perspectives that can, Christiane Donahue persuasively argues (2016), give new directions to WAC research and counter a longstanding “marginalization of linguistics research in writing studies” (Donahue, 2018, p. 134). The future for such exchanges on “transfer” writ large, and on transcending restrictive “code” models toward a global embrace of difference and flexibility will provide rich sources of new research (Donahue, 2023). In this, we arrive again at the first of the three overarching trends in research that affect WAC and all its intersecting research traditions: social justice.

I now turn to the three overarching trends that affect all intersecting traditions of writing research and suggest three calls to action.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WAC RESEARCH**

In 1998, Harriet Malinowitz published “A Feminist Critique of Writing in the Disciplines.” WAC, she argued, “does not generally present itself as a force that would help a student think like a feminist” (1998, p. 295). Her feminism called for active, integrated learning, not separated into “departments.” Her call was answered in the new century by several studies that described “Writing Across the Curriculum with Care,” as in the title of Bradley Peters’ (2003) chapter in a collection of articles on feminisms in composition (Gray-Rosendale & Harootunian, 2012). Studies explored ways of working with both students and faculty to understand the ways gender and sexuality—as well as their intersections with race and ethnicity, class, and post-coloniality—play out in teaching and learning in male-dominated fields, especially in the sciences and engineering (e.g., Tarabochia, 2016).

Beyond formal research into WAC and gender, the last two decades have brought an awareness of the ways gender affected the history of WAC, especially as it intersected with issues of power and status. A great many of the founders of WAC programs—indeed, most of its founders—were women, and women in junior or, often, non-tenure-eligible positions. Several of them have written personal narratives of their struggles (McLeod & Soven, 2006). The next 50 years will likely see expanding discussions and activism on gender and sexuality issues, as exemplified by Jonathan J. Rylander and Travis Webster’s (2020) rethinking of writing program administration “in terms of relationships between Writing Across the Curriculum and queer theories” (p. 198).

WAC has been less responsive to issues of race. Until the early 2010s, discussions of race had largely been missing in WAC (Anson, 2012), with a few exceptions, such as Stephen M. Fishman and Lucille McCarthy’s (2002) study of a philosophy professor working with minority students. Mya Poe (2013) and

others have worked to fill that gap by analyzing places where issues of race are too often avoided or dismissed or simply not made conscious, starting with assessment. The expectations that students and teachers—both majority and minority—bring to disciplinary classrooms affect a wide range of practices, through stereotyping and stereotype threat: classroom discussions, giving and responding to feedback, linguistic standard setting and maintenance, and so on.

Following Asao B. Inoue and Poe's (2012) pioneering work on racial bias in assessment, several scholars have argued and offered models for making social justice central to research in technical communication (Petersen & Walton, 2018). Jamila M. Kareem (2020) outlined culturally sustaining educational practices to focus WAC anti-racist work, especially around assessment. These practices address, as Neal Lerner said, the "ways in which the discourse expected of nurses, business majors, engineers ... are quite simply white supremacist" (2018, p. 115). An important collection of articles on diversity appeared in 2020 (Bartlett et al., 2020) with a section on racism and WAC. There are more and more studies of race and class in program administration, such as Sarah Peterson Pittock (2018) on writing center/WAC program connections for increasing inclusion, or Julie Wilson (2018) on small college collaboration among FYC and WAC to increase retention and access. And there is even recent research on the intersectionality of race and gender in WAC administration (Jordan, 2020).

These are small but indispensable steps toward larger-scale studies, such as Falconer's (2022) recent longitudinal case study of systematic bias within STEM disciplines. These will support and be supported by a range of critical approaches, such as Critical Language Awareness (Shapiro, 2022).

## RESEARCH ON MULTIMODAL WAC OR CXC

We need to redouble the efforts begun in the 1990s to broaden WAC to CAC—communication across the curriculum (now rendered CXC, a kinder acronym)—when a wide range of institutions structured their WAC programs around multimodal composition. The National Communication Association, which focuses on oral communication, recognized CXC as important, and connections with CCCC were strengthened. WAC programs increasingly include not only oral but also visual and other modes, which the widespread dissemination of inexpensive software tools allows students to use in class. The use of data in combination with other media—the hallmark of Web 2.0—has opened new possibilities for students to learn data analysis and visualization techniques in conjunction with writing (for multimodal WAC, see Bridwell-Bowles et al., 2009; Vrchota & Russell, 2013).

A 2017 survey showed that faculty across the curriculum use multiple modes in their scholarly communication and pedagogy (Reid et al., 2016). Since then, a few research studies have been published, mainly descriptions of and calls for multi-modal emphasis in WAC (Lee & Khadka, 2018), but also specific studies of TA practices (Campbell & Fiscus-Cannaday, 2021), and multimodal assignment design (Mikovits et al., 2021). What I am calling for here is more deep empirical research, like Kim Haimes-Korn and Kendra Hansen (2018) on 3D data visualization and performance and Tony Mangialetti (2023) on the effectiveness of multimodality in WAC courses.

This call is not new. In 2019, Rick Wysocki et al. published a “manifesto” on multimodality as part of a collection on it, calling for it to be embedded in “a larger ecology of teaching and curriculum building” (p. 21). Recently, Meg Mikovits et al. (2021) published an article extending the argument of Wysocki et al. (2019) to claim that the future of WAC is “multimodal and transfer supporting”—that WAC is a powerful way to embed multi-modality in higher education. “The future requires more faculty across the disciplines to approach multimodality with” openness and willingness to collaborate to create transfer-supporting pedagogy and curricula (Mikovits et al., 2021, p. 133). As Mikovits et al. lament, there is presently a lack of campus-wide WAC multimodal emphasis, in large part because students don’t see multimodal assignments as writing (2021). More empirical studies are necessary. WAC research can draw inspiration from the much larger effort in L2 research on multimodality (Mikovits et al., 2021) to supplement the paucity of L1 studies (only six studies of multimodal transfer were published between 2016 and 2022) (Mikovits et al., 2021).

Clearly, multimodal writing goes on in every discipline and profession. It includes reception skills as well as production: reading and listening (Carillo, 2016; Odom, 2013; Rhodes, 2013) and happens in studio as well as traditional or even computer-supported classroom models (Allan, 2013). Thus, research on it will affect WAC and each and every research tradition that intersects with it. This will emphatically be true as AI—which embraces multimodality—takes the stage.

## AI AND WAC RESEARCH

Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly so-called large language models (better described as large text models, as they do not use communicative language), is already attracting WAC researchers’ attention (Basgier, 2024). This is not surprising as machine-based writing analytics have been a major area of research for more than a decade before the current generation of tools was released in 2022. Corpus analysis of texts has been taken up specifically for WAC research

in a range of projects, supported by tools that collect student writing in various genres automatically (Anson et al., 2021; Crossley et al., 2017; Gere, 2019) However, the recent development of AI and the publicity surrounding its uses and dangers have dramatically spurred ongoing experimentation and research in the direction of LLMs. The results already suggest AI will have profound impacts on WAC and provide ample opportunities for research testing claims that AI will enhance:

1. **Automated Feedback and Assessment:** AI has the potential to analyze students' writing patterns and provide personalized recommendations for improvement based on individual strengths and weaknesses, such as automated feedback on grammar, style, and structure. If reliable, this might free up more instructor time for feedback on higher-order writing skills such as argumentation and critical thinking. Indeed, recent advances in AI can provide some content-specific feedback and help with critical thinking as well, though with major issues of credibility (Cotos, 2023).
2. **Support for Multimodal Writing:** AI can facilitate the creation of multimodal writing assignments, which integrate text with other media such as images, videos, or interactive elements. AI can assist in generating or analyzing these multimodal elements, providing students with more diverse and engaging ways to express themselves. (Jiang & Lai, 2025; Tan et al., 2025).
3. **Integration with Curriculum Design:** AI tools can assist instructors in designing writing-intensive assignments that align with learning objectives and disciplinary standards. By analyzing large datasets of student writing and course materials, AI can suggest relevant topics, prompts, and resources for writing assignments.
4. **Accessible Writing Assistance:** AI-powered writing tools can provide accessible writing assistance to students with disabilities or language barriers, such as text-to-speech functionality or translation services. This can help ensure that all students have equitable access to writing support (Goldman et al., 2024; Stornaiuolo et al., 2023).
5. **Writing Processes.** AI is supercharging a fundamental rethinking of writing processes, which began in the 1990s with the post-process movement (Lotier, 2021). As S. Scott Graham (2023) puts it, "Writing instructors and scholars of writing studies can consider how our hard-won insights about diverse and variable writing practices might allow for robust writing pedagogies that engage, rather than prohibit, use of AI" (p. 163). Linear concepts of writing processes must give way to a "multidimensional recursive AI-assisted writing process"

where LLMs become “genre-signaling engines. They use probability distributions to loudly indicate the nature of the output. But that output must reflect the input, and if your input doesn’t also loudly signal the desired genre, the output will not be what you were looking for” (Graham, 2023, p. 164).

6. **Ethical and Critical Awareness:** WAC research is well-positioned to address ethical considerations when integrating AI into instruction using writing, as critical approaches have, as we noted, been a growing area of research in the last decade. WAC research has and will continue to address issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for over-reliance on AI tools, as the policy statement of AWAC makes very clear (Association for Writing Across the Curriculum, 2025).

Indeed, accessibility and ethical/critical considerations will dovetail in future pedagogy and research, for students of all dis/abilities and disciplines, with all five of the intersecting traditions mentioned. As Courtney Stanton (2023) points out, AI will force teachers and students to confront their abilities and limitations as writers, and that confrontation can lead to reflection, and even to “writing about writing” (Downs & Wardle, 2007). WAC scholars bear special responsibility for increasing students’ and society’s critical awareness, as “AI will craft their emails and work reports and drive their digital conversations, and they will not encounter the same level of distrust and user reluctance that exists in academia.” (Stanton, 2023, p. 183)

WAC research and advocacy hold great promise for combatting what sci-fi author Ted Chiang (2023) and philosopher Daniel Dennett (2023) call the most dangerous aspect of AI: AI may undermine the fundamental trust that underpins social relations if people are unable to detect the “bullshit” (Dennett’s term) that AI produces—unless what AI produces is signaled with a watermark of some kind to warn readers of the non-human source and thus potential dangers.

Thus, AI poses a dramatic and potentially existential challenge to WAC research. It goes to the heart of what writing is and does across the curriculum, in the disciplines, and indeed in the very institutions that we inhabit and constantly remake through writing.

## CONCLUSION

In the next 50 years, I hope we will find answers—or better and more complete answers—to a range of fundamental questions. What are some of them?

Hughes’ (2020) interview study of 107 assistant professors from a wide range of disciplines, titled “What Early-Career Disciplinary Faculty Want to

Learn about WAC Pedagogy,” suggests an extremely practical set of pedagogical research questions, which I adapt below.

We need research on:

1. Designing assignments in general (e.g., choosing the type, aligning with learning outcomes, sequencing, dealing with large classes, writing to learn, fairness and equity, etc.)
2. Designing discipline-specific assignments (disciplinary genres and ways of thinking, balancing disciplinary goals and student interests, sequencing disciplinary knowledge, etc.)
3. Writing pedagogy in general (writing processes and management, scaffolding, embedding writing instruction in content instruction/classroom activities, using models, etc.)
4. Discipline-specific writing pedagogy (differences between writing in other courses/levels and writing in each discipline, including teaching discipline-specific genres, conventions, epistemologies, values, social organization, etc.)
5. Responding to student writing/speaking/design (effective feedback, assessment strategies, rubrics, prioritizing feedback, managing teacher and TA time, etc.)
6. Improving learning through writing (teaching heterogeneous learners, building on previous learning with/through writing, motivating students through writing in one’s field, building confidence in and through writing, fairness and social justice, etc.)
7. Resources for writing in the discipline (bibliographic sources on WAC both general and discipline-specific, teaching strategies, local resources, networking, etc.)

We must now add the fundamental questions AI raises, noted above, as it becomes what many believe will be a major disruptor on the scale of the internet and smart mobile phones.

It is crucial to recognize that these immediately practical pedagogical questions are intimately tied to deeper and larger questions that all five of the traditions and all three of the trends research. Each and every one of them investigates how specialized writing (in disciplines, professions, and communities) works at all levels and between levels: cognitive, interpersonal, rhetorical, political, and socio-cultural. These questions, I have suggested, are answerable only if there are concerted collaborative efforts.

Therefore, there are critical needs regarding alliances and connections. I see seven. First, an essential requirement is for writing across the curriculum (WAC)

scholars to ally with those people, as individuals and groups, who are denied social justice. We can support them as people (students, colleagues, parents, community members) and their organizations (Russell, 2023). There are more than a dozen professional organizations that focus on student advocacy, mainly in social justice terms, most notably the American Council on Education, but also professional organizations for people who identify as Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian Pacific American, Black women, and for directors of programs on LGBT, disability, faculty diversity, race/ethnicity, and recruitment (UC Riverside, n.d.). Collaborating with organizations in higher education focused on these themes will enable WAC to address issues related to language, nationality, race, gender, class, and the broader problems that led to the development of general/liberal education post-World War II, including the conflicts between democratic and authoritarian regimes and thus between liberty and tyranny. Fortunately, there are committees within the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum (AWAC) tasked with addressing these issues, as more and more direct engagement is needed.

Second, fundamental questions remain about the relationship between writing and learning and how it impacts intellectual and personal development over time. Collaboration between WAC researchers and experts in K-12 education, psychology, linguistics, and other fields, both in the US and internationally, could help answer these questions. While such collaboration is relatively limited in the United States compared to other regions like Latin America and Europe, there is potential for significant progress.

Third, programmatic questions require large-scale institutional research, necessitating cooperation with national organizations supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning, such as the POD network. A model for this collaboration is the partnership between WAC researchers and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) noted earlier, which conducted a groundbreaking study on the effects of writing on college student engagement.

Fourth, WAC can enhance its partnership with research on learning in specific disciplines conducted by those disciplines themselves—DBER. While some collaboration has occurred, there is room for much more. The AWAC committees on research and publications—and on partnerships—have been established to facilitate these efforts.

Fifth, by transcending the silos that isolate us from applied linguistics, we can cooperate to increase access across ethnic and linguistic boundaries (Condon, 2012; Nielsen, 2014)—“writing across communities” as well as across disciplines (Guerra, 2015). Moreover, WAC research will thereby become part of challenging the dominance English has had globally (Bushnell, 2020). It will also embrace the research and innovation for writing research in other nations

and global sectors—as exemplified by the WAC Clearinghouse book series *International Exchanges on the Study of Writing* including its section *International Exchanges: Latin America*. Indeed, next to DBER, international/global collaboration offers the greatest opportunities in the future.

Sixth, it is imperative for WAC to establish alliances and connections with other organizations involved in educational reform and accreditation, particularly their research arms. Examples include not only the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education, but also the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and potentially the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Hosting sessions on WAC at meetings of these organizations, as has been done in the past, would be beneficial. This approach would build on historical initiatives, such as seminars sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) that played a significant role in the development of WAC, and conferences organized by leaders like Carol Schneider of AAC&U in the late 1980s and early 1990s (McLeod & Soven, 2006). Again, the AWAC committees for advocacy and partnerships have been established to support these efforts.

Seventh, research must be taken up by programs and participants to be of use, and this is a problem in itself (Cox et al., 2018). Research projects on how to integrate research throughout the programs' design, pedagogy, faculty development, institutional integration for sustainability, and assessment are crucial. Programs themselves become sites of research that can provide information on best practices going forward.

WAC research is now more than 50 years old. With collaborations, it will be prepared to take on the challenges of the next 50.

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CHAPTER 2.

**BOUNDARY-CROSSING DURING  
CHALLENGING POLITICAL  
TIMES: AN EXHORTATION  
AND HEURISTIC FOR WAC  
AS SITE OF DEEP CHANGE**

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***Abstract.** This chapter examines WAC programs within shifting U.S. educational policy regimes, from the equity regime of the mid-twentieth century to the current accountability regime and a potential post-accountability era. The authors argue that WAC programs, with their focus on disciplinary expertise and collaborative change, are uniquely positioned to foster deep, meaningful change within and beyond institutions. They propose a five-part heuristic for WAC leaders to enact change: recognizing systems as changeable, framing problems as scholarly opportunities, leveraging disciplinary expertise, connecting across silos, and centering equity and access. Examples of successful WAC initiatives are discussed.*

Since their inception, writing across the curriculum (WAC) programs have felt the competing pressures of institutional, societal, and disciplinary needs. Narratives from WAC scholars across time illustrate how these initiatives have been

implicated in various literacy crises: At one institution, the Board of Trustees mandated a writing test to “ensure no degrees [were] awarded to students who lacked minimal basic writing skills” (Holder & McLeod, 2006, p. 69). Another university approved a plan that “[gave] each department responsibility for teaching and certifying the reading, writing, and oral communication skills of its students” (Russell, 1991, p. 283), spreading responsibility for evaluating student writing skills among all faculty and all disciplines. In another case, an untenured WPA was called to the dean’s office, where she was asked what she would do about the problem of student writing identified in the explosive *Newsweek* piece, “Why Johnny Can’t Write” (Maimon, 2006).

These internal and external demands persist across time and location, and WAC programs have continued to develop in a shifting educational landscape in response to frustration over student writing ability, a desire to meet accreditation expectations, and calls for improved support for struggling students. While the local needs vary, they reflect broader conversations about the “crisis” in higher education: students are “academically adrift,” one story goes; another story suggests that students are being “brainwashed” by radical leftists; yet another suggests we “return to the basics” that students should have acquired before they even entered college.

Despite these consistent narratives, the context for facing challenges in higher education has changed. Policy regimes, a concept introduced to our field from political science by writing scholar Tyler Branson, provides a useful lens for understanding why, despite local challenges, WAC programs generally flourished over the last 50 years, and why higher education now finds itself at a new crisis point where previous approaches are no longer sufficient. In this chapter, we describe how WAC efforts were initially bolstered by what Branson (2022) has called the “equity regime,” before being challenged by the rise of an “accountability regime” beginning in the 1980s. Over the past few years, equity and access in school settings have come under attack at the state level. Since the Trump administration took office, those efforts have expanded, with direct attacks on individual institutions and the elimination of funding to schools and grant projects. These legislative efforts suggest that the accountability regime may be rapidly transforming into a new and darker regime. This hostile climate increasingly demands that we enact our values and expertise in both internal- and external-facing work that extends beyond WAC programs and even beyond single institutions. The work of teaching students to write, analyze, and think critically has only become more necessary as our contemporary policy regime has begun to shift in distinctly antidemocratic directions. By contextualizing WAC within these policy regimes, we identify five strategies that may be beneficial to WAC

leaders, ultimately arguing that higher education could benefit from WAC leaders and scholars who can apply the field's *ethos* and changemaking strategies beyond WAC programs.

## **WAC'S HISTORICAL PLACE WITHIN U.S. EDUCATION POLICY REGIMES**

Policy regimes help us understand the “governing arrangements of a given policy problem” (Branson, 2022, p. 19), and access to research-based writing education is an institutional policy problem that cannot be removed from its broader context. A policy regime includes interest groups with power; underlying values that limit “ways of seeing, talking, and defining problems, which in turn shape policy solutions”; the ways policies are implemented and by whom; and the policies themselves (Branson, 2022, pp. 14–15). Policy regimes, then, are part and parcel of institutional cultures that can both afford and constrain change by presenting one course of action as commonsense, simply because it fits the goals, rules, and routines of the current policy regime. Policy regimes are not unchangeable but may feel “impenetrable” given their hegemony (Branson, 2022, p. 24). From the early days of WAC to the present, educational policy regimes have gone in and out of favor, and these policy regimes have variously constrained and afforded the goals of WAC.

### **THE EQUITY REGIME: SUPPORTING ACCESS, IF NOT INCLUSION**

The 1940s–1970s were a period of deep transition for American higher education and its students, largely due to landmark federal legislation that provided increased financial access to higher education and legally ended segregation. The GI Bill, the Civil Rights Act, and the Higher Education Act, all expanded access to higher education while positioning “the [federal] government’s role in education as providing equal opportunities to students in poverty” (Branson, 2022, p. 163; citing McGuinn, 2006). That is, the federal government continued to play a “hands-off” role in education, according to Patrick J. McGuinn (2006), under the assumptions “that most schools were doing fine” and “that problems were isolated in schools located in poor areas” (qtd. in Branson, 2022, p. 18). As a result of these assumptions, “there were few mandates for what states were to do with the money they received” (Branson, 2022, p. 18). Termed the “equity regime” by Branson (2022) and McGuinn (2006), these decades saw the federal government take an interest in providing equitable access to higher education primarily through economic means.

The economic focus of the equity regime meant that changes throughout this period increased access to education without creating truly inclusive educational systems. This is perhaps best illustrated by the literacy crises of the 1970s that prompted WAC work as we know it today. More veterans, working class and working poor, women, and students of color entered higher education institutions, bringing with them languages, literacies, and ways of being deemed unacceptable for the academy. Concerns about student writing ability from within and beyond the academy reflected a deficit view of marginalized students, emphasizing their need to achieve writing and literacy standards that centered white, middle-class norms (Weschler & Diner, 2022). By today's standards, the equity regime hardly led to the creation of inclusive and equitable systems, but it was an important step.

The equity regime also made it possible for WAC programs to flourish across the country. For example, Elaine Maimon's (2006) faculty program at Beaver College (now Arcadia University) in 1977 was subsidized by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, itself made possible by the equity regime a decade earlier. Though the relationship between the U.S. education policy regime and the rise of WAC programs was not always this direct, WAC programs were able to grow because higher education broadly emphasized the idea of access and directed funding to those efforts. The result was a "quiet and local flowering," as institutions across the country responded to the literacy crisis in radically different ways as they "faced hard questions about the meaning of education, equality, literacy, democracy, diversity, knowledge, power, and liberation" (Walvoord, 1996, p. 61). WAC programs developed through the 1980s, often funded by grants (Thaiss & Porter, 2010), leading to over 1100 programs across the country in 1987 (McLeod & Shirley, 2000). The equity regime provided a fertile environment for the success of WAC efforts to support struggling students with their writing and learning. Ultimately, that environment did not last.

## **FROM EQUITY TO ACCOUNTABILITY: SHIFTING EDUCATIONAL POLICY REGIMES**

The persistence of widespread, deficit views of (marginalized) students alongside increased federal funding for education ultimately gave rise to an educational policy regime focused on economic accountability instead of equitable access beginning in the 1980s. Bureaucrats like Terrell H. Bell, Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, helped usher in this new policy regime. *A Nation at Risk* served a pivotal role in this transformation, framing public education as responsible for and failing to foster the economic growth of the

country while calling for “strengthened curriculum” and “standards” in public education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In subsequent years, both Democratic and Republican administrations continued to enact this economically driven model of public education, spawning bills like No Child Left Behind under the Bush Administration (McGuinn, 2006) and the College Scorecard under the Obama Administration (Welch & Scott, 2016). Together, these policies created a regime of assessment and accountability that resulted in ever-worsening austerity conditions for public education and for mass literacy movements.

Whereas the equity regime’s policy focus had been redistributing resources to support “disadvantaged” students, the accountability regime enacted a belief that federal education mandates “had become too prescriptive or intrusive” while also being “ineffective in improving school quality or student performance” (McGuinn, 2006, p. 39). The emphasis on low student performance framed education as in crisis; policies and funding requirements subsequently moved away from equity and toward accountability with a variety of metrics taken from Taylorism and the business and agricultural sectors (Davidson, 2017; Newfield, 2018). Funding for public education became increasingly performance-based (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001)—and those performance measurements largely became proxy metrics (O’Neil, 2016) that are wholly unrelated to learning or equitable achievement, such as salary after graduation or number of graduates in STEM fields. Institutions unable to perform well on these metrics were subjected to various austerity and accountability protocols (Branson, 2022; McGuinn, 2006) and measures such as budget cuts, layoffs, failure to backfill vacated positions, and lack of cost-of-living adjustments. As the accountability regime gained dominance, education saw the continued rollback of efforts to expand educational opportunities made during the equity regime.

During this period, funding opportunities shifted away from equity and learning and toward efficiency and profit. Programs like WAC, which do not typically produce any revenue but rather enhance existing learning environments, were impacted. Between 1987 and 1995, 32 universities ended their WAC programs, and over half of those cited budgetary reasons such as the end of grant funding that was not replaced by local funds (Thaiss & Porter, 2010). By 2010, most WAC programs were funded internally rather than by grant funding (Thaiss & Porter, 2010). When institutional budgets are squeezed and metrics for success include profitability, WAC programs are vulnerable. The policy movement from equity to accountability impacted not only WAC, but the entire field of rhetoric, composition, and writing studies, the broader humanities, and higher education as a whole.

## **BEYOND ACCOUNTABILITY: CHALLENGES FOR WAC AND PUBLIC EDUCATION**

As we revise this chapter for publication in Fall 2025, the current state of higher education is one in which its capacity for access, equity, and inclusion is diminished and its democratic mission for public good is under threat. The consequences for WAC and other writing-related educational efforts are potentially dire, given the role WAC has long played in inviting students into the work of the university and helping faculty members make their learning environments more inclusive.

Today, the accountability regime is giving way to an even more challenging regime for those who are concerned with issues of equity and federal support for education. While accountability requires often-problematic testing and consequences for failing to meet certain standards, current efforts seem intent on eliminating federal support of education altogether, with states dominating and micromanaging education through an ideological approach that seeks to eliminate the teaching of content deemed too progressive or “woke.” The accountability regime arose as states made an effort to wrest back control over education from the federal government (McGuinn, 2006); today, state governments are using their power to shape higher education in ways that are even more antithetical to the longstanding efforts of WAC scholars to support access, equity, and inclusion. Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision that considering race in higher education admissions was a violation of the Equal Protections Law in 2023, states across the country began introducing legislation aimed at limiting or outright banning diversity, equity, and inclusion offices on college campuses (Lu, 2023). Higher education institutions are increasingly emphasizing career preparation and eliminating programs that consulting agencies identify as “unprofitable.” In our shifting policy regime, criticism has shifted from labeling DEI efforts as “unprofitable” toward labeling them as illegal, un-American, or discriminatory. In early 2025, Trump signed an executive order eliminating “illegal and immoral discrimination programs, going by the name ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion’ (DEI)” (The White House, 2025). These efforts extended to the Department of Education, which published a form on its website encouraging American citizens to report activities at schools that could be considered “DEI,” saying:

The U.S. Department of Education is committed to ensuring all students have access to meaningful learning free of divisive ideologies and indoctrination. This submission form is an outlet for students, parents, teachers, and the broader community to report illegal discriminatory practices at institutions of learning. The Department of Education will utilize community submissions to identify potential areas for investigation. (U.S. Department of Education, 2025)

This effort to eliminate DEI programs and content is inevitably affecting pedagogical content in Humanities fields broadly, and particularly in places like English departments. In September of 2025, Professor Melissa McCoul was fired from Texas A&M for teaching about the differences between gender and sex in a children's literature class. Her firing was precipitated by a student who had recorded a tense exchange between herself and McCoul and who argued in the video that McCoul's teaching went against Trump's executive order that outlawed discussions of gender (Priest et al., 2025).

Florida is another illustrative example of the direction national policy may take under the second Trump administration. Governor Ron DeSantis used his authority there to reconstitute the New College Board of Trustees within a matter of weeks. The new board entirely remade the curriculum and eliminated programs and offices related to equity (Holloway, 2023; McMenamin, 2023; Moody, 2023). Those responsible for the takeover at New College plainly stated it was a test case for doing the same thing across the country (Contreras, 2023). The American Association of University Professors (2023) released a grim report about this takeover; in their press release, they noted that the "ideologically driven assault" on higher education is "unparalleled in U.S. history" (p. 1). In the report itself, one faculty member called the situation an "intellectual reign of terror" (AAUP, 2023, p. 1).

In 2025, the federal government has followed suit: the Trump administration has dramatically cut federal grant funding and is attacking universities who do not conform to its mandates to roll back practices meant to support marginalized students. The administration's lawsuits against even powerful private universities like Harvard University, Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Brown University have precipitated concessions from these universities that limit their academic freedom and the free speech of students on their campuses, laying out what promises to be an anti-democratic roadmap for the future of higher education (The Associated Press, 2025). Strides made during the equity regime are swiftly being undone at both the state and federal levels under the guise of "restor[ing] fairness, merit, and safety in higher education" (White House, 2025). In some states, curricular authority, once the purview of the faculty, has now been expressly granted to boards of trustees through state legislation like that passed in Ohio in 2025. The federal government has also attacked accreditation bodies, largely because of their enforcement of equity-related policies, and several states have banded together to form a new accreditation agency (Governor Ron DeSantis Announces, 2025). These efforts illustrate what a post-accountability regime may soon look like, one where politicians have complete control over educational efforts and where higher education (and other institutions vital to democracy) are hollowed out (see Stanley

Crouch's 2004 and 2020 work on post-democracy and the role of institutions such as public education for maintaining democracy).

Though writing is often positioned as an important professional skill, WAC and other writing programs are not inherently "safe" in the unfolding new policy regime, especially when a local WAC program aspires to antiracist work in one of the 30 states that have introduced, approved, or enacted anti-DEI legislation (Chronicle Staff, 2025).

## **AN EXHORTATION AND HEURISTIC FOR WAC AS DEEP CHANGE SITE**

What is the role of WAC programs, not only in the continued policies of the accountability regime but also in the unfolding efforts of states to tightly control educational content? We argue that WAC programs are uniquely positioned to help faculty leverage their expertise to make deep change in, across, and beyond curriculum, programs, and even institutions. This is because WAC programs are one of the few remaining sites of scholarly work that include faculty from across all disciplines making grassroots change on college campuses. Here, we argue that WAC is a uniquely situated site of changemaking and provide a heuristic for what WAC change efforts look like in today's unfolding post-accountability policy regime.

WAC programs are rooted in disciplinary and research-based best practices that help participants shift their ideas about teaching writing. While WAC program participants change their teaching practices, they also often come to change their *ideas* about writing, teaching, and learning over time and through ongoing interactions (Adler-Kassner, 2019; Anson & Flash, 2021; Glotfelter, et al., 2022; Walvoord et al., 1997). In this way, WAC programs offer participants *sensemaking opportunities* in which "individuals attach new meaning to familiar concepts and ideas" (Kezar, 2018, p. 87) or "develop new language and new concepts to discuss a changed institution" (Martin, 2023, p. 17). The result of participating in sensemaking efforts is not simply a changed practice, but also changed values and beliefs (Kezar, 2018). When groups of people engage in collective sensemaking, deep change occurs, prompting a fundamental transformation in their behaviors and practices and in their underlying value systems of individuals and their wider programmatic and institutional contexts (Kezar, 2018). This recursive learning process cannot be mandated and has been demonstrated to be incredibly challenging and rare in higher education (Kezar, 2018). But WAC has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to help groups and institutions engage in successful deep change efforts as they reframe writing, teaching, and learning.

Our examination of WAC practices across time has led us to believe that WAC's ability to help groups both large and small engage in the necessary sense-making efforts to engage in deep change depends on five related principles. These five principles can serve as a heuristic for WAC leaders when they seek to strategically support groups of faculty in deep change efforts:

1. Seeing systems and their parts as changeable;
2. Recognizing problems as scholarly opportunities;
3. Leveraging disciplinary expertise for problem-solving around teaching and learning;
4. Connecting people and resources across silos;
5. Viewing equity and access as central to change (and key to decision-making about what changes to make).

Here we describe each of the elements of this heuristic for WAC as a change agent, illustrated through historical and current examples, including change efforts that we have designed and enacted.

### **ELEMENT 1: SEE SYSTEMS AND THEIR PARTS AS CHANGEABLE**

From its inception, WAC has recognized that just because we inherit a system does not mean we must continue to accept or enact it. Early WAC programs began by changing or creating institutional structures that supported writing, often by offering “supplementary teacher figures who had special expertise” such as “writing center tutors, writing teachers in ‘linked’ or team-taught courses, or student ‘fellows’ attached to courses in the disciplines” (Walvoord, 1996, p. 62). These new structures were the result of seeing the institution as changeable. As WAC continued to help faculty integrate writing into their teaching, programs focused less on changing institution-wide structures and more on changing small parts of them, such as the curriculum and pedagogical strategies within individual classrooms (Anson, 2006). As a field, WAC has recently taken a renewed interest in understanding how individual programs are situated in their local institutions and what areas of that institution may need to be changed for WAC to flourish (Cox et al., 2018).

When WAC leaders see the institution as changeable, they encourage others to ask what if? For instance, a large part of our own work in WAC has been enabling others to locate levers for change in the wider university system. In the 2020–2021 academic year, Miami University's WAC program offered a faculty learning community dedicated to graduate writing support that enabled participants to “take ownership of their disciplinary writing” while also focusing on the systems of graduate education (Olejnik, 2023, p. 162). Representatives of

Miami's graduate school also participated in the community, which enabled faculty participants to better understand the university's overarching policies and how they could innovate within those policies. As facilitator of the program, Olejnik created the conditions for participants to see the institutional system as something they could change. Many aspects of graduate school were designed to serve as gatekeeping mechanisms, but sensemaking around writing, teaching, and learning and about how the institution itself works led to powerful changes that better support student learning (Olejnik, 2023).

Recognizing that the systems we work within are changeable can also enable WAC leaders to use their expertise to enact change beyond WAC and writing. Though not all WAC leaders may aspire to higher administrative roles, the leadership capacities they develop help advance their careers such that “people who care about writing and have the ability to influence the curriculum” (Malenczyk, 2012, p. 104) are actually in positions to do so. Maimon's tenure as president of Governors State University provides a strong example of this. If she had not seen the university system as changeable, GSU may have ceased to exist: It was one of only a few upper-division universities nationwide when she joined in 2007. During her presidency, GSU transitioned from offering only 300- and 400-level and graduate courses to a four-year, comprehensive university through the worst budget crisis Illinois had ever endured (Maimon, 2018). This transition created new opportunities for GSU to fulfill its mission of supporting the diverse learners in the Chicagoland area, while also enabling the university to remain financially solvent. As president, she used many of the same strategies she employed as a WAC leader and WPA (Martin, 2021), illustrating what can happen when a WAC leader takes the values and practices of our field to the highest levels of academic administration.

## **ELEMENT 2: RECOGNIZE PROBLEMS AS SCHOLARLY OPPORTUNITIES**

WAC programs have also been successful because they position writing (and teaching and learning) in scholarly ways—a stark contrast to the bureaucratic and managerial focus of the accountability regime and to the anti-intellectualism of a brewing post-democracy regime. When charged with “solving” the “problem” of student writing, Maimon invited faculty to participate in a “scholarly exchange” through a series of workshops, only some of which involved compensation from the NEH grant (Palmquist et al., 2020, p. 8). As she puts it, faculty in her initial workshop “who had previously thought that a writing workshop would be about commas and semicolons, or, at best, about gerunds and gerundives, found out that writing was an ancient art, a challenging craft, and, in many ways, thinking made visible” (Maimon, 2006, p. 25). That is, rather than treating “writing” as a

skill that could be improved by learning about parts of speech, this foundational WAC work positioned writing as a scholarly activity and as “a complex process that is integrally involved with the subject matter which is written about” (Maimon, 1980, p. 11).

Many WAC programs today take a scholarly approach to faculty development and other aspects of their work, including Miami’s Howe Faculty Writing Fellows Program. The initial design of the Fellows program in 2017 drew on this principle by integrating the threshold concepts framework with writing theory and pedagogy, encouraging faculty to work in disciplinary teams to solve the problems that brought them to the program. The framework, which we explain in detail elsewhere (Glotfelter et al., 2022; Glotfelter et al., 2018), engages faculty teams in sensemaking by offering them scholarship on writing, teaching, and learning before offering them strategies or practices they might try. This scholarly approach extends into all of the WAC programming in the Howe Center for Writing Excellence, including the faculty learning community to support graduate-level writing (Olejnik, 2023), a leadership and change institute to empower faculty as change agents, and new programs for Fellows to continue engaging in long-term sensemaking and change.

Approaching problems as scholarly opportunities is a choice that can inform decision-making at all levels, but problems in higher education are often framed as simple managerial tasks requiring “common sense” decisions based on efficiency and economic savings. These value systems do not see problems as scholarly opportunities because to do so requires a different philosophy regarding leadership and change—and, subsequently, more time, support, structure, and engagement across stakeholder groups than hierarchical managerial decision-making. Though not all changes in higher education will require such a deep change process (Kezar, 2018), failing to engage in sensemaking when it is needed will derail even the best change plans.

### **ELEMENT 3: LEVERAGE DISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE**

When we treat problems as scholarly opportunities, we also make it possible to leverage disciplinary expertise beyond our own. When faculty teams decide to participate in Fellows, for example, they usually want to solve problems related to incorporating writing in their courses or meeting university requirements. As they engage in sensemaking about writing, teaching, and learning, they are also asked to identify the threshold ideas of their fields—their core ways of thinking and practicing, of approaching and solving problems. Once they begin to articulate these learning thresholds, they begin to integrate new ideas from writing theory and learning theory with their disciplinary values and practices. In doing

so, they're able to identify and solve their problems from their expertise, which includes reframed ideas of writing, teaching, and learning. The types of problems they solve vary widely, because the challenges in their programs also vary widely. Some of their projects have taken on problems such as:

- Introductory courses that unintentionally serve as a gatekeeping function because they have not changed in decades;
- Expectations and conventions in a discipline that exclude students of color and minoritized faculty;
- New general education requirements that require new approaches;
- Low enrollment in a major and the need for a coherent curricular approach; and
- Traditional assignments and genres that are not helping students learn threshold concepts that are transferable to other contexts.

The Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) model at University of Minnesota (Flash, 2021), the Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University (Anson & Dannels, 2009), and the “Expeditions in Learning” seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Hughes & Miller, 2018) are additional examples that aim to encourage faculty to innovate how they teach writing from a disciplinary perspective.

Teaching writing is not the only place where disciplinary expertise can be a meaningful lever for change. The Opening New Doors for Accelerating Success (ONDAS) Seminar led by Linda Adler-Kassner at University of California, Santa Barbara, illustrates what can happen when WAC leaders are positioned to help faculty innovate beyond a single classroom. This program similarly offers participants a theoretical framework that encourages them to link teaching strategies to disciplinary content knowledge, ideas about communicating knowledge, and ideas about who students are as learners to achieve the ultimate goal: more inclusive teaching that is situated within specific fields' disciplinary epistemologies (Adler-Kassner, 2019; Martin, 2021). Through this seminar, faculty members have made program-wide changes that not only support learners in their efforts to join the disciplines but also question or change the structures of those disciplines at the institution (Adler-Kassner, 2019; Martin, 2021). Some of their efforts focus on writing, but not all of them, as the *ONDAS* seminar is more than a WAC program. By leveraging disciplinary expertise, this program empowers faculty to foster equity, access, and opportunity while also showing the power of moving WAC strategies to new contexts and sites, something we see as crucial for navigating the accountability regime and what follows it.

While leveraging faculty expertise might seem like common sense to WAC leaders, it is not typical of how higher education approaches problems. Instead

of calling on the expertise of faculty, universities more often hire expensive outside consulting firms, a choice that supports the neoliberal, austerity logics of the accountability regime (Mazzucato & Collington, 2023). WAC leaders, in particular, can encourage bringing faculty expertise into larger university conversations because the field has developed strategies and tactics from its decades of experience helping faculty reimagine programs and courses. In this way, WAC leaders can play a crucial role as boundary-brokers across disparate sites of the institution.

#### **ELEMENT 4: CONNECT PEOPLE AND RESOURCES ACROSS SILOS**

WAC has long been one of the few sites on campus that regularly engages people from across disciplinary silos in meaningful work together. At the institutional level, WAC programs expose participants to different disciplinary perspectives, and faculty participants often report the value of these mixed settings, giving participants opportunities to connect in ways typically constrained by their day-to-day work. One Fellows participant, for example, commented on how he had no understanding of the work of another department housed in the same building on campus. In a recent cohort, faculty teams from accountancy and sociology identified many shared values and commitments that they previously did not have the opportunity to consider, such as the need to understand cultural factors impacting strikes, prompted by external events during the seminar but afforded by the program's emphasis on collective sensemaking. WAC leaders are well-positioned to help others make connections across disciplinary silos, and the strategies they employ in faculty development can be part of those larger conversations.

The power of collaborating with institutional partners is also well-documented in WAC scholarship. William Condon and Carol Rutz (2012) suggest that a well-integrated WAC program can lead to alliances that benefit multiple institutional programs by increasing visibility, broadening the pool of potential participants, and connecting writing to other initiatives. Centers for teaching and learning are frequent, but not the only sites of collaboration for a WAC program. North Carolina State University's Campus Writing and Speaking Program found success by collaborating not only with disciplinary departments, but also with the Council for Undergraduate Education and the Committee on Undergraduate Program Review (Anson et al., 2003). Collaborations with institutional partners have led some in WAC to be concerned that programs could be subsumed or die out (McLeod, 2008; Walvoord, 1996). Instead, we see these partnerships helping WAC itself change—a theme of the 2023 special issue of *The WAC Journal* edited by Cristyn Elder. We believe WAC can and will change, indeed *must* change, lest

“we risk not allowing it to shape the academy in important ways, ways its pioneers might not have envisioned” (Malenczyk, 2012, p. 104).

### **ELEMENT 5: VIEW EQUITY AND ACCESS AS CENTRAL TO CHANGE**

The challenges presented by the accountability regime (and whatever policy regime is now unfolding) encourage WAC leaders to return to the founding ethic of the modern discipline: It is our responsibility to invite people into writing and literacy, rather than exclude them. We noted earlier that WAC’s founding was in response to efforts to diversify higher education. Through “a quietly subversive movement,” WAC leaders acted as change agents engaging in institutional critique in non-combative ways (McLeod & Maimon, 2000, p. 578). This work drew on and developed research about writing processes grounded in the desire to understand diverse student experiences (see Perl, 1979, 2014; Rose, 1980). Though early discourse in WAC sometimes used deficit-based language to discuss students (Martin, 2021) and programs were sometimes part of “remediation” (Palmquist et al., 2020, p. 5) and gatekeeping efforts, early efforts at inclusion that fall short of today’s standards were important first steps in the field’s ongoing efforts toward access, equity, and inclusion.

The ONDAS Seminar at UCSB is one example of programming that explicitly engages faculty participants in thinking about access, equity, and inclusion, in part because it was funded through a 2015 Department of Education Title V Hispanic-Serving Institution Grant. Emily Bouza (2023) calls for WAC to guide linguistic justice by teaching about language fluidity. Her discussion of the power of linguistic justice for both accessing and changing linguistic norms of various communities echoes how Adler-Kassner (2019) defines access and opportunity (Martin, 2021) and Donna LeCourt’s (1996) now-decades-old call for WAC as a critical pedagogy.

We have also found that simply providing faculty participants with theoretical frames for thinking about the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and writing theories can lead them to critically examine the conventions of their fields and disciplines. Through the Fellows Program at Miami, for example, faculty teams from economics and philosophy have sought to invite students into the work of their fields by grappling with how to teach discourse conventions explicitly (Fennen et al., 2022; Kinghorn & Shao, 2022). On the other hand, a psychologist and woman of color used Fellows to reflect on the various ways that the conventions and discourse expectations of psychology transmit “a message of noninclusion” to “both female faculty and female faculty of color within the discipline, as well as female graduate students of color who have previously been reported feeling like ‘uninvited guests’ in psychology classrooms” (Kalia, 2022, p. 222).

Just as early WAC programs drew on emerging research in their work, current WAC leaders can incorporate our discipline's scholarship to better enact our goals related to equity and access (see Adler-Kassner and Wardle's [2022] description of goals for both access and opportunity). Our field's history of trying, imperfectly, to invite new groups of people into literacy and education reminds us of the need and ability to work now to forefront the values of equity and access in large-scale decision making. Choices have consequences, and we can work with faculty to enact policies and practices where the public good, not profit, is the primary motive. In many places, access and inclusion efforts are under direct attack. We must not only push back against such inequitable shifts when they come but also ensure that we are not "complying in advance," as many universities have done, and abandoning our efforts ahead of any pushback.

## WAC AS A SITE FOR CHANGE MOVING FORWARD

The principles outlined above have allowed WAC programs to enact positive changes in higher education across many decades, despite shifting policy regimes and uncertain funding models. While the current moment is challenging for American higher education, we believe that WAC programs (and their leaders) inhabit a particular vantage point from which to intervene. WAC has thrived as *grassroots efforts* toward sensemaking and change within institutions and their programs. At this moment, we might seek to expand those sensemaking efforts and leverage our position as boundary brokers. We can identify openings for connections across silos that support meaningful change, connecting stakeholders with varied interests and experiences who bring various kinds of expertise to bear on the problems we all face. WAC leaders might also seek to make connections across institutions, drawing inspiration from the informal networks built by early WAC leaders to support their work. For example, ongoing collaborations between Miami University and Mesa Community College (see Arreguin & Wilson, this collection) have led leaders of both programs to innovate their work. This collaboration has extended beyond Miami and Mesa through the Sensemaking for Student Success Project, a Lumina Foundation-funded program that supported eight teams from seven Ohio institutions as they aim to respond to pressing institutional challenges that go far beyond the usual scope of WAC (see Sensemaking for Student Success, n.d., and Perez, 2024, for more on this method).

WAC's *ethos* of boundary-crossing collaboration is critical for meeting the challenges higher education faces under the accountability and post-accountability policy regimes. Collaboration with others, rather than competition with them, is paramount to forwarding equity across higher education institutions.

Collaboration provides opportunities to change how groups and individuals interact, whether they are stakeholders from departments housed in the same building that rarely interact or from different institutions across states and countries. In doing so, they build more capacity for deep change by working across once-isolated silos. Given the current political climate, the need for such collaborative work has never been more urgent.

As we face today's changing sociopolitical context, we may feel overwhelmed by the sheer number and force of arguments that seek to demonize and destroy higher education. However, WAC programs have the tools and history to collaborate with faculty across disciplines to push back against the forces changing higher education in ways that undermine its equity imperative.

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## CHAPTER 3.

# LINGUISTIC JUSTICE: RIGHTS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES FROM A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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*Abstract.* In this chapter, Mihut proposes and develops a linguistic justice approach as a frame for pedagogies of language pluralism. This approach, she argues, simultaneously and necessarily incorporates at least two moves: on the one hand, it exposes monolingual standards and on the other hand, it actively integrates cross-cultural rhetorics and translanguing writing in the classroom. In a linguistic justice frame, both actions—critique of monolingualism and integration of plurilingual practices and theories—are essential to centering and valorizing linguistically-rich practices. The chapter will first introduce theoretical influences and historical background on language rights including Geneva Smitherman’s (1995) work on the background of the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” statement (SRTOL). It will further discuss how we can move to practices by drawing on research on both multilingual, international scholars teaching in the US and scholars teaching writing in different disciplines in Eastern Europe. Based on these practices, Mihut shows how the legacy of SRTOL has helped us develop an international perspective for linguistic justice and calls for a change in WAC by attending to one of language rights statements that have emerged in the last three to four years.

In 2001, I came to visit the US, only a few months after the 9/11 attacks. I sought medical expertise regarding a congenital eye problem. A group of friends from Greenville, SC arranged the details of my visit: the medical consultation, travel expenses, lodging, and other. Before my arrival, I applied for a visitor/tourist visa at the U.S. embassy in Bucharest. I arrived at the embassy with all the necessary documents (the official invitation, letters of financial support, medical documents, etc.). The most important was proof of employment, which was my best attempt to show I had attachments to Romania and was not going

to overstay my visa. At the time, I was an English high school teacher in my early twenties. I waited my turn with anticipation and a good dose of anxiety. As I made my way to the window where the officer started the visa interview, I noticed we talked through the mediation of an interpreter. This was unexpected because I spoke English fluently, which was evidenced by my employment status as an English teacher. However, I remained silent and followed obediently the question-answer protocol. I was asked basic questions and after that, we proceeded to the medical-related questions. To my surprise, after I would give my answer in Romanian, the interpreter would translate my answer, and then proceed with additional commentary: “But I am not so sure” or “That’s unlikely.” With these editorializing comments, he simply invalidated my account. As you can imagine, this was both entertaining and quite disconcerting. I was dealing with a real, yet unusual medical problem and the interpreter simply did not believe my account. The interview continued until at one divine moment, the officer read my application and noticed that under employment, I had listed: English teacher. He looked up and for the first time engaged me directly in English: So, you speak English? “Yes. I do.” He immediately dismissed the interpreter and proceeded to talk to me directly in English. I presented my case in detail. No editorializing. Just facts. My plea was successful, and I was granted the visa for my visit.

This personal account, a narrative of power, access, and advocacy, is also an account of linguistic justice in a transnational setting. My knowledge of English opened a door for me that another tried to block. I became my own advocate in a situation of unequal power dynamics, in a system already set in its tracks to silence or confine the petitioner to a pre-established role, of little influence on the outcome of the interaction. It was unjust for the interpreter who held the institutional authority to use it to deprive me of access and medical expertise. Many have advocated for fundamental rights in situations of injustice, however my interview at the U.S. embassy shows I barely had any right to speak or express my own voice. And even if there was such a right, I did not know how I could use it in situations of unequal power. My position of precarity has taught me lessons of silence, not of rights, since the translator, although one person, points to an established system that often constrains individual agency and personal or public advocacy. The same questions about language rights persisted when I moved to the US. As a transnational scholar, I recognized the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL) resolution’s (Committee on CCCC Language, 1974) rhetoric of rights, but for me, this approach was insufficient: How can students have language rights when the education systems shaping them had not been adjusted to welcome their enactment? Moving through specific aspects of SRTOL, in this chapter, I highlight the urgent need to consider

systems of power and institutions that shape decision-marking processes leading to transformative change. Specifically, I focus on the gap between SRTOL's promise and the limits of its enactment.

There are systems of linguistic power before students make it to our classroom, while they are in our classroom, and after they leave. We face issues of justice or injustice, daily, weekly, not just occasionally. As language is embedded in every fabric of our world, we need to consider linguistic justice approaches throughout systems and processes to address problems of inequity in the writing classroom, in research and practice, and in scholarship and research. WAC scholars are uniquely positioned to effect change in all these areas as they work within systems of education and disciplinary knowledge. By exploring the legacy of SRTOL in my pedagogy and research, I will show how a linguistic justice approach from a transnational lens can be a vehicle for change.

While language policies concerning the English-only imposition emerged in the late nineteenth century primarily in the colonies and Indian nations, the full manifestations of these policies grew stronger with the Americanization movement at the turn of the twentieth century (Flowers, 2024). In retracing the English-only origin story and the progress and resistance to language policies, Katherine S. Flowers (2024) highlights two decades—the 1960s and 1970s—when language rights achieved remarkable success (and resistance) through legal battles, including a series of laws favoring bi- and multilingual education (the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 or the amended Voting Rights Act of 1975). During these decades, more equitable approaches to education and respectively to language manifested through court decisions such as the 1973 ordinance in Dade County declaring bilinguality and biculturality official, open admissions, and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) resolution, “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL) (Flowers, 2024).

Now in 2026, fifty-two years since the first significant language policy in our field, a return to this historical moment may offer new insights about the impact and legacy of SRTOL. The resolution (Committee on CCCC Language, 1974) both changed the face of our profession and to some extent, left it (almost) the same. This contradiction is explored further in this chapter as I follow the history of the resolution, with attention to the resolution’s background work, its impact on practice, and the emergence of subsequent language rights policies. This contradiction has been captured by several scholars in profound ways (e.g., Kinloch, 2005; Kynard, 2007; Smitherman, 2015; Wible, 2006, etc.). Carmen Kynard (2007), for instance, refers to the “possibilities of SRTOL, always imagined and yet never fully achieved” (p. 361), while Scott Wible (2006) remarks that the resolution and its background documents lacked “specific strategies to take to the classroom” (p. 442). Wible (2006) further counterposes a critique of

this “lack” as he offers a detailed analysis of the Language Curriculum Research Group (LCRG)’s work in the 1960s and 1970s, a rich pedagogically focused initiative that remained peripheral or little known to the larger NCTE/CCCC membership. A general examination of SRTOL may reveal its limitations—the pedagogical enactments—but a deeper, analytical exploration shows complex and transformative effects. I’d like to pursue this contradiction between the promise of SRTOL and its enactment by looking closer at one aspect that has frequently been neglected in the reception and legacy exploration of SRTOL—the background work. In the “Foreword” to *Students’ Right to Their Own Language: A Critical Sourcebook*, Smitherman (2015) points to the uniqueness of this collection as it centers our attention on this little-known work, and even less-read documents that accompanied the resolution—a thirty-two-page document published in *College Composition and Communication* that extended and amplified the original SRTOL (see Committee on CCCC Language: Background Statement, 1974). I am interested in this background work of SRTOL and the process surrounding pedagogical applications as it underscores the amplitude of many stakeholders connected to SRTOL, it clarifies the initial contradiction, and it also points to another less-known aspect: the impact on other language resolutions and advocacy for linguistic pluralism, including global and transnational language justice work.

## **“STUDENTS’ RIGHT TO THEIR OWN LANGUAGE” (SRTOL): THE FIRST STEPS**

Offering an overview of the socio-historical context of SRTOL, Smitherman (1995) explains that in the fall of 1971, more than 50 years ago, CCCC officers appointed a committee to draft a language resolution. This action was initiated in response to the socio-historical changes in the nation at the time. That moment in history, marked by the effects of the social movements, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and growth of the Black Power, has been instrumental in engendering changes not only for African Americans but for other marginalized groups such as women and immigrants in their fight for equal rights. Due to the laborious work of the first committee on language justice (because that’s the best descriptor of that work) in 1971, what we now know as “Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” the first draft of this resolution was born a year later, in 1972:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style.

Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (To Readers of CCC, 1974)

A quick overview of the work on SRTOL between 1971 and 1974 shows a few important lessons: 1) Change within the system is *important* work, 2) Change within the system is *slow* work, and 3) This change is also *persistent* work.

First, change within the system is important work. From the background on SRTOL, we learn that the conditions for change were not particular to CCCC. Smitherman explains that the change for equal rights fired up work across professional organizations: NCTE, CCCC, Modern Language Association, American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, Speech Communication Association, American Bar Association, and “on and on across disciplines and throughout the Academy” (1995, p. 22). A convergence of efforts across academia and within disciplines created an incredible momentum for change. This work became significant because it moved stakeholders to take action and address inequity from the top down. Top-down approaches exert power of direction that spreads much faster to constituents within the system. Other key influencers such as the Black Caucus (see Kynard, 2007) or the work of the Language Curriculum Research Group made possible through the support of a Ford Foundation grant (Wible, 2006) also believed in the promise and vision of SRTOL and the necessity for research on pedagogy on Black sociolinguistics. However, working within the system also means obstacles, stoppages, or deviations often dictated by the ebbs and flows of larger political movements. Between 1971–1974: efforts were made to work with NCTE to obtain its support of CCCC’s language resolution (CCCC being self-governed but structurally part of NCTE). But that did not happen. NCTE eventually adopted a lesser version of SRTOL and this hesitation limited the initial resolution’s impact.

Second, change within the system is slow work. The move from theory and praxis is often a contested process, with challenges and new opportunities to refine our theories. It is this gap between theory and practice that is often the

motive for why many scholars deemed SRTOL as unsuccessful. However, many of these scholars neglect the process and the work on pedagogy that was started in the background even if part of that work was never published. After the passing of SRTOL in 1972 by the CCCC Executive Committee, background work was necessary that would support, expand, and explain concepts stipulated in the resolution and eventually, translate the resolution into actionable items. Another committee was formed to accomplish this, which involved extensive research and work on language variation and teaching and learning recommendations, including a bibliography of 129 entries (Smitherman, 1995). In this document, 15 issues were addressed in the form of questions. A selection of these questions is included here: “What Do We Mean by Dialect?”, “Why and How Do Dialects Differ?”, “How Do We Acquire Dialects?”, “Why Do Some Dialects Have More Prestige Than Others?”, “Does Dialect Affect the Ability to Read?”, “Does Dialect Affect the Ability to Write?”, “Does Dialect Limit the Ability to Think?” and a series of questions about grammar, handbooks, standardized tests, impact of dialects on employability, etc. (Committee on CCCC Language: Background Statement, 1974).

Despite the usefulness of this background document, CCCC found, rightfully so, that more support was needed to encourage the implementation of SRTOL in the classroom. In a next step, the CCCC Executive Committee charged a new committee to focus on praxis: activities, mini-lessons, and practical guides for the implementation of the resolution. After four years of work (1976–1980), unfortunately CCCC wavered in its full support of the resolution and decided not to publish the document (Smitherman, 1995). Smitherman (1995) explains that the socio-political context had shifted during this time toward a more conservative stance, and SRTOL, unfortunately, remained a theoretical document at least for a while. In many ways, then, the resolution captures the contradiction I alluded to earlier: a discrepancy between the promise of a great change and no apparent or immediate meaningful change in practice, a mismatch between theory and practice. But SRTOL accomplished something beyond the theory/praxis dichotomy. By proclaiming linguistic rights, even in their theoretical form, the resolution helped create a path for affirming African American vernacular *and* other languages beyond. In her 1995 article, Smitherman explains the resolution’s role in setting the stage for new linguistic justice actions:

We’re now in the period of a new paradigm shift, from a provincial, more narrowly conceived focus to a broader internationalist perspective. We thus are being forced to address the issue of multiple linguistic voices, not only here, but in the global family. NCTE and CCCC, having grappled with these

issues through the “Students’ Right” era is, I think, well-positioned for a leadership role in formulating a national language policy for this nation. (p. 26)

As she accounts the history of SRTOL, Smitherman’s visionary discourse advocates for an internationalist, multilingual perspective that is surprisingly anachronistic for the times when it was delivered. Similarly, Kynard (2007) points to the Black Caucus’s role at NCTE in 1980 in taking a stance for “global human rights and dignity” (p. 362). These global perspectives concerning language or human rights derived from SRTOL have rarely, if ever been traced to this resolution. And since 1995, there have been limited efforts to continue the work of SRTOL with an internationalist perspective.

However, in the early 2000s, a noticeable, even if contested at times, paradigm shift toward the valorization of multiple languages and dialects occurred more prominently. Scholarship advocating for bi-, multi-, and translingual approaches began to flood top journals or venues in the field including the special issue on Cross-Language Relations in Composition in *College English* (2006); Christiane Donahue’s (2009) “‘Internationalization’ and Composition Studies: Reorienting the Discourse”; Bruce Horner et al.’s (2011) “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach”; Canagarajah’s (2013) *Literacy as Translingual Practice Between Communities and Classroom* (2013); Martin’s (2015) *Transnational Writing Program Administration*, and numerous other publications.

As with SRTOL, the emphasis on language rights from a global or international perspective has focused on theoretical underpinnings and despite isolated examples, pedagogical suggestions remained rather limited. From SRTOL, I have learned that there must be intentional work on praxis. To this end, I began to look at practices that showed linguistic justice, even if not officially under this nomenclature. Included below is a list of my research agenda, the data source, and resulting publications focused on praxis:

- 2015–2019. Data: my own pedagogy practice, development of a syllabus statement on linguistic pluralism, and the circulation of the statement (publication: Mihut, 2019)
- 2016–2019. Data: blog posts on pedagogy from scholars affiliated with the Transnational Composition Group (publication: Mihut, 2020)
- 2016–2022. Data in the form of student research projects at Barry University (over 200 papers) (publication: Mihut, 2021)
- 2016–2023. Data from pedagogy practices of transnational scholars in four countries: Romania, Nepal, India, and Colombia. (publication: Mihut, 2025)

This research agenda from the last decade-plus shows a direct focus on pedagogy, which has allowed me to observe where linguistic justice is present or lacking and what we can do to address the latter. In short, I will introduce a quick overview of various practices of linguistic justice.

In 2015, the Transnational Composition SIG of CCCC published a series of blog posts written by our members and affiliated colleagues to affirm the group's mission and increase its visibility. My analysis of these blogs on translanguaging or transnational pedagogy together with research on pedagogy of transnational scholars is synthesized in a few key points<sup>1</sup>: 1) Transnational scholars engage *beliefs about language standards and writing* such as language ideologies and views on writing in the classroom; 2) Transnational scholars critique US-based *methods of writing instruction and assignments* (e.g., discussion-based seminar, lectures, the teaching of standard grammar, argument-based papers, and standardized genre expectations, etc.); 3) Transnational scholars develop *cross-cultural, globally-oriented curricula* (e.g., integration of cross-cultural themes and readings: reading on global citizenship, transnational socio-political issues, transcultural knowledge and specific: the use of classical texts in China, writing style in Japan, etc.); 4) Transnational scholars display a commitment to *cross-linguistic approaches*/diverse rhetorical traditions and engage national and global reforms (transnational scholars in international settings); and 5) Transnational scholars' trajectory of their own scholarly development—the language(s) they speak, their mentors, or their affiliation, etc.—determine largely the role they play in engaging transnational and linguistic justice issues.

From this research on pedagogy, I formulated the linguistic justice approach. In my view, a linguistic justice approach encompasses:

a series of pedagogical suggestions that reorient and attune students' discursive practices to language difference, global geopolitical and social contingencies, and cross-cultural rhetorics. Linguistic justice implicates an enactment of the politics of difference defined not only in U.S. terms but rather developed across rhetorical traditions and writing cultures. In a linguistic justice frame, both actions—critique of monolingualism and integration of plurilingual practices and theories—are essential in centering and valorizing linguistically-rich practices. (Mihut, 2020, p. 270)

This conception of linguistic justice approach is derived from pedagogical enactments of linguistic pluralism as an asset. It is different from other theory-praxis

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1 An in-depth analysis of these blogs are synthesized in Mihut (2020).

approaches because it first looks at the practice of plurilingual valorization in order to build the theoretical frame. Of the five points listed earlier, I will focus on two: methods of instruction and cross-cultural curricular developments.

## METHODS OF WRITING INSTRUCTION AND ASSIGNMENTS

In discussing methods of writing instruction and assignments, I found that many instructors with transnational experience critiqued argument-based papers, discussion-based seminars, and the teaching of grammar with only Standard American English (SAE) rules. Regarding discussion-based assignments, the critique reveals that students from cross-cultural or international backgrounds can be alienated because of unequal participation or limited oral skills disrupting the formation of a truly democratic dialog. Silence, one scholar explains, can often be equated to deficiency. Also, students coming from home cultures and communities where power relationships between students and teachers are hierarchical will find it more difficult to engage in class discussion and voice alternative viewpoints to their instructors because such interventions often denote disrespect. Many of these students, then, avoid participating actively in class.

The argument-based or thesis-driven papers have also received criticism. Two scholars from Nepal, now both based at U.S. institutions, acknowledge that learning new genres such as the argument-based paper takes time as students write and interact across languages and cultures. Also, the critique further suggests that the argument-based paper seems to be the default genre, when alternative writing genres could be equally valuable. Instead, these scholars propose a “review essay exploring multiple perspectives” whereby students write about an issue “without’ taking a position on it” (Sharma, 2017). Students are encouraged to account for multiple angles and various stakeholders connected to the selected issue. One of these scholars, Santosh Khadka (2015), further proposes a pedagogy of change through adaptations: a series of “*intercultural, inter-linguistic and inter-academic adaptations.*” The repeated use of the prefix “inter”—between, moving between and among languages and cultures—suggests that writing must emerge in a space of in-betweenness. Writing is never singular, an expression of one argument, one language, or one culture. Rather, writing in a linguistic justice frame acknowledges the interconnectedness of our experience and the multiplicity of languages and cultures that writing can and should capture.

Another example of linguistic justice in practice concerns writing assignments, specifically work on writing genres based on studies of comparative writing cultures in Europe. An influx of studies of writing in the European contexts takes

a comparative approach, much vaster and encompassing than US-based studies, covering not just one course, but multiple courses, curricula, institutions, and countries. Mira Bekar et al. (2015), for example, compare educational genres in three countries, two in Eastern Europe (Romania and Ukraine) and one from Southeastern Europe (Macedonia). One of the comparisons shared in this study is included in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1. Six Genres Mentioned Most Often at the Three Universities**

Priority	Macedonia	Ukraine	Romania
1	Notes (68)	Notes (84)	Notes (91)
2	Essay (59)	In-class exam (56)	In-class exam (54)
3	Seminar paper (36)	Research paper (50)	Seminar paper (45)
4	Reflections (33)	Essays (45)	Essay (38)
5	Proposal (32)	Seminar paper (34)	Summary (23)
6	Narrative/creative text (27)	Technical report (20) Narrative or creative text (20) Journalistic text (20)	Research paper (22)

This study’s work on genre accounts for variations across languages, disciplines, national contexts, and writing cultures. Bekar et al. (2015) explain:

Much more than by a particular language, writing is determined by matters including the effects of educational ideologies and traditions, the type of control a country exerts on the educational system, conceptions of literacy development, the involvement of students into disciplinary conversation, the assessment procedures, language policy and the degree of explicitness of teaching writing. (p. 121)

Bekar et al. (2015) acknowledge, like my previous work on the blogs, beliefs and ideologies that are embedded in our institutions and educational systems. Most importantly, they show how power and control loom over types of literacy. In fact, in a recent edited collection focused on linguistic justice in practice, Eunjeong Lee et al. (2022) identify exactly this need to disrupt “racist and monolingual ideologies” by looking at established institutional structures (p. 5). This move from micro—the classroom experience—to the macro—larger institutional ideologies and practices is important to consider in linguistic justice work. Bekar et al.’s (2015) study also offers important contextual frames: historical context on each country and their educational system (Macedonia’s independence from former Yugoslavia in 1991, Romania’s education system that followed the French

and German model, the former due to the Romance language connection, and the Ukrainian education with new BA and MA programs). The authors also provide several survey results, including a table of the most significant genres for each country with both generic genre language—genre families—and with a specific designation of each genre in the original language as identified by the surveyed participants from each country. This careful inclusion of each country's specific language and genre practice from the perspective of the people on the ground demonstrates critical linguistic justice work; this work accounts for power dynamics (which country was independent or not in the former communist bloc); belief systems (such as orientation towards EU values); language in action (perception of other languages, including English as a *lingua franca*), and contextual information for the writing genres under analysis. In other words, this study enacts a linguistic justice approach as it takes on a multilingual approach to writing genres while acknowledging power dynamics across institutions and nation-states.

## **CROSS-LINGUISTIC APPROACHES: RHETORICAL TRADITIONS, ENGAGING NATIONAL AND GLOBAL REFORMS**

A second dimension of linguistic justice can be observed through larger, more global changes, at the curriculum level or through engagement with national or global reforms. In my research, I noticed that US-based transnational scholars approached linguistic justice work at the micro-level, in the classroom, at the level of assignments and specific lessons. However, many transnational scholars in international settings took actions that were more global in nature, engaging diverse rhetorical traditions, or national or global reforms beyond the classroom.

For instance, in Eastern Europe, I found that scholars often explained their way of teaching writing by referring to three intellectual traditions permeating European universities—the Anglo-Saxon, German, and French traditions. Each one of these, Sonia Pavlenko et al. (2014) explain, captures a distinct intellectual approach and purpose: (the Anglo-Saxon) to advance a theory, the German: to engage in dialog, or the French: to display eloquence. I found numerous references to these writing traditions in scholarship on European writing and in my primary research.<sup>2</sup> In one of my studies of writing in Romania, a respondent

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2 From those of us in the U.S. context, I'd like to preemptively address a potential critique in referring to these traditions; they often got slotted under contrastive rhetoric approaches. However, we need to understand these traditions from the perspectives of those on the ground. My respondents mentioned them because they used these rhetorical traditions to explain writing in the classroom in their specific national context.

attributed the “lack of a [writing] tradition” to the influence of other larger rhetorical traditions. Specifically, he referred to the French tradition, and later, he praised the Anglo-Saxon rhetoric:

This has to do with the French influence that was fairly strong, that at some point configured our [educational] institutions. This is what the French influence did: it made it so that Romania would not talk about writing. Writing was learned through imitation. ... But things changed in France, too. (Mihut, 2025, p. 53)

He also mentioned that in his writing courses, he includes a bibliography of texts written in Romanian by Romanian authors but also by English authors, such as John M. Swales and his well-established rhetorical moves. This openness towards the Anglo-Saxon and English influences is interesting especially since he is a professor of Romanian studies with a background in French language and literature. Yet, despite his affiliation with the French, we find him critiquing the French influence on the Romanian writing culture but embracing the Anglo-Saxon writing.

This example shows writing in countries or cultures that have often found themselves at the margins, in this case Eastern Europeans at the margins of Europe, will often seek affiliation with larger, more visible writing cultures. This linguistic alliance is a strategy for achieving legitimization, of seeking to be seen and acknowledged. At the same time, this reveals the significant role that multilingual scholars have in advancing, shaping, resisting, or redirecting linguistic rights and work across cultures and contexts. This Romanian scholar rejects the French influence, while embracing the English rhetoric. In his pedagogy, he draws on both Romanian and English authors, but not on French. He advocates for a type of desirable linguistic pluralism while dismissing an old form of bilingualism that pulls him to a past that he doesn't need. This selective appreciation of linguistic pluralism and advocacy work has meaning only within the larger linguistic context and history of education in Romania, as Bekar et al. (2015) explained.

Linguistic justice work at the micro level (in the classroom, at the level of assignments and the ideologies that shape our choice of genres and classroom activities) and at the macro level, in large curricular reforms (e.g., the Bologna process in the European Union)<sup>3</sup> or major rhetorical traditions shows an active

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3 The Bologna process refers to the Bologna Declaration, signed on June 19, 1999. The Declaration adopted a series of guiding principles to emphasize greater connectivity and the seamless transfer of credits and credentials across national systems in the European Union. This restructuring of higher education fostered significant growth in institutional partnerships and scholarly exchanges across Europe, particularly between its Eastern and Western regions. See Doroholschi et al. (2018).

and dynamic engagement with writing across languages, genres, cultures, institutions, and nation-states. It also reveals that linguistic justice work is not one-size fits all. My linguistic justice work stems from my background as a transnational scholar. My thinking about linguistic justice has been influenced by the SRTOL resolution in the US, and it has developed over time through community-based writing and pedagogies in South Florida, a context where multilingualism is thriving and celebrated. It continues to be refined and revised by deep work across pedagogies, languages, and cultures. Each one of these aspects shaped my view of linguistic justice but not entirely as expected. I couldn't buy into the rhetoric of rights, since I grew in Romania where individual rights were often denied. Others have raised questions about whether this was the right approach. For instance, Patrick Bruch and Richard Marback (2002) show the ambivalence of rights rhetoric in SRTOL: while it afforded a position of dignified humanity to African Americans that has been denied for centuries, it also failed to recognize the systemic circumstances that favored the exclusion in the first place. In her remarkable book, *Linguistic Justice*, April Baker-Bell (2020) affirms the personal, historical, and political dimensions of linguistic justice. In her framing, linguistic justice is about "Black Language and Black Liberation" and "an antiracist approach to language and literacy education" (p. 7). What interests me is the exigence that shaped Baker-Bell's conception of linguistic justice. She mentions the marginalization, and contempt for the Black language, which ultimately means the dehumanization of Black students (and individuals). For this reason, a rhetoric of rights that Bruch and Marback (2002) advocate seems befitting because it contributes to African Americans' realization of "selfhood and citizenship" as instituted by the U.S. Constitution (p. 652). Ultimately, a variety of approaches is necessary.

Whether conceptualized in the US or in a transnational context, whether nation-bound or transnational in nature, linguistic justice calls for attention to language, power, and advocacy work.

This is particularly important to WAC scholars since their work already advocates and negotiates with various stakeholders to foreground the centrality of writing within and across disciplines. Acknowledging the presence of cultural, disciplinary, national, and all sorts of boundaries that need brokering, WAC scholars must consider more critically the role of language and languages in shaping disciplinary knowledge. In her article about disciplinary formations, Donahue (2018) argues that scholarship from linguistics, didactics, or foreign language writing can enrich the work of WAC scholars. To this end, she proposes two terms: code and transfer, whereby transfer is discussed through a second language disciplinary angle. Making a slightly similar argument, Laura Aull and Shawna Shapiro (2023) also orient our attention to how linguistics/applied linguistics can enrich the field

of rhetoric and composition by highlighting language use/language in action, evidence-based methods of studying language, and many more. Interestingly, in the history of SRTOL, a significant role has been given to sociolinguistics and research on Black English in establishing its legitimacy as a language. In other words, Donahue (2018), Aull and Shapiro (2023), Wible (2006), and others show that research on language and sociolinguistics can enrich our argument about the centrality of writing, and even further, I would argue, linguistic justice's role in our approach to writing in WAC.

Despite the seemingly slow work in moving from the theoretical tenets of SRTOL to practical enactment of linguistic justice, we now benefit from abundant work. Research and pedagogy on Black English are robust and so is scholarship on pedagogy on linguistic justice and translingual/transnational writing. While SRTOL's legacy has been contested, decades later we witness a different narrative. Not only has SRTOL created an opportunity for international perspectives to flourish, but the resolution also shaped a series of future language policies. These language policies, which I explore briefly in the latter section of this chapter, have gained momentum in the last five-plus years. If we pay attention, they can reorient our work in WAC towards linguistic justice setting a transformative agenda for the next decades.

## CURRENT LINGUISTIC JUSTICE STATEMENTS

A final point is that change within the system is *persistent* work. If we follow the evolution of SRTOL and language policies, we notice intense activity in the early 1970s, some activity in the 1980s with the engagement with English-Only, and most recently, a boom of linguistic justice statements and policies, fifty-plus years after SRTOL resolution. What has changed? Since 2020, the exigence for linguistic justice has been occasioned by pressing political, economic, and social movements. These changes prompted both a deepening and expansion of linguistic justice policies to different domains of our work. I included below a selected list of these policies with a note regarding their expansion or deepening of the origin SRTOL:

- 2023 (February): “Statement on Support for Gender Diversity/Trans, Two-Spirit, and Nonbinary Students, Staff, and Faculty” –**expansion**
- 2022 (November): “Position Statement on Citation Justice in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies”–**expansion**
- 2022 (November): “Statement on Language, Power, and Action” – **deepening**
- 2021(June): “Statement on White Language Supremacy” –**deepening**

- 2021 (revised June): “Ebonics Training and Research” (May 1998, revised May 2016)—**deepening**
- 2020 (September): “Black Technical and Professional Communication Position Statement with Resource Guide”—**expansion**
- 2020 (July): “This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!”—**deepening**
- 2020 (revised May): “Statement on Second Language Writing and Multilingual Writers” —with bibliography (January 2001, revised November 2009, reaffirmed November 2014) —**deepening**

Today we benefit from more than a dozen policies on linguistic justice. Yet, the history of SRTOL taught us that systems can change, and that if we wait too long, the conditions favoring good change can evaporate. Unfortunately, WAC has a long tradition of neglect or marginal attention to multilingualism, one that has been noted by various scholars, including Analeigh E. Horton’s (2024) review of WAC’s historical and contemporary monolingual epistemologies. While Horton’s (2024) larger goal to center second language writers in WAC is different from my own, she notably identifies the absence of multilingualism from WAC’s agenda in major reports or projects, such as Robert Jones and Joseph Comprone’s (1993) report; Chris Thaiss and Tara Porter’s (2010) article on the state of WAC/WID in 2010; or more recently, Thaiss’s (2021) plenary address at the International Writing Across the Curriculum conference. As such, any larger-scale projects or reports have either neglected or designated multilingualism to the margins.

As we transition into the next 50 years, I ask: How will WAC work look like if today, each one of us takes at heart one policy of those listed earlier? Or, if we start small, take one assignment and ask: How can I reframe this with a linguistic justice approach in mind? Where is linguistic justice needed in this lesson/unit/course? What can I do to accomplish that work?

In 2016, I developed my own version of SRTOL (see Mihut, 2019) and I included it in the syllabus of a course titled “Techniques of Research.” Similar to WAC, in this course students of different majors study one discourse community and conduct an interview with a member of that community. Since the inclusion of the linguistic pluralism syllabus statement, students have conducted interviews in languages like Spanish and Arabic, read secondary sources in French, learned about educational systems in the Caribbean, Germany, Italy, The Gambia, Hungary, and Montenegro, and created genuine partnerships with marginalized communities and knowledges. All this started with one course policy. While there is no magic formula to produce change, taking one small action about language ideologies can engender surprising transformations.

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## 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

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  $\frac{3}{4}$  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 *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 development 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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## CHAPTER 5.

# CREATIVE NONFICTION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM?

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*Abstract. This chapter argues for the integration of creative nonfiction writing into WAC and WID programs. Drawing parallels to popular science writing, it contends that creative nonfiction, characterized by narrative, strong authorial presence, and associative thinking, can enhance student engagement and learning. Building upon the historical work of James Britton, Janet Emig, and others, the chapter addresses concerns regarding the use of creative writing in disciplinary contexts, and it proposes its value for fostering deeper understanding, connecting course content to broader audiences, and promoting social change through informed public discourse. Concrete examples of creative nonfiction assignments are discussed.*

It's Labor Day, and I'm in a mountain cabin near Crested Butte, Colorado. The owner had warned us to close windows at night. Tiny gnats in vast numbers are getting through screens, drawn to the light. Now it's night and I'm reading in bed, brushing bugs from pages. The book, by David Kaiser (2020), is *Quantum Legacies*. It's a collection of 20 essays by an MIT physicist, with titles like "All Quantum, No Solace," "From Blackboards to Bombs," and "Gaga for Gravitation." Kaiser explores particle and quantum physics, providing plenty of fact and theory, yes, but doing so often through stories and portraits of scientists.

Nobel laureate Kip Thorne blurbs that Kaiser's prose "sometimes soars ... in a remarkable series of vignettes" (in Kaiser, 2020, cover). The reviewer from *Physics World* calls it "a breath of fresh air to see physics writing like this: lucid and friendly, sober and thoughtful, and willing to trust the reader's engagement and intelligence rather than demanding the former and underestimating the latter" (in Kaiser, 2020, cover).

The book has enough formulae and graphics to earn serious credentials, though I'm sure physics grad students would yawn. But it also has analogies and reveries. Explaining the problem of trying to identify a Higgs boson from the

output of an accelerator, Kaiser notes, “This is a bit like trying to infer the existence of a particular long-deceased grandmother—and measure her height and weight—by sifting all the data of a national census” (2020, p. 178). Remembering how he got interested in particle physics, he recalls, “One of my favorite books in graduate school was *The Higgs Hunter’s Guide* ... The title made me feel like Indiana Jones” (2020, p. 179). In a discussion of relationships between the vast and the infinitesimal, Kaiser sets a scene: “Jason and Andy mused that night over burgers: Could we somehow exploit these large-scale features of the universe to test quantum theory” (2020, p. 59)? The book is a little closer to Montaignian essay than Newtonian tradition, closer to story than textbook. It’s written for readers who chose to read rather than for those obliged.

There’s a long vein of similar physics writing, from Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics* (2010) to Gary Zukav’s *Dancing Wu Li Masters* (1979). Biology has had Lewis Thomas’s *The Lives of a Cell* (1974) and Jane Goodall’s *My Life with the Chimpanzees* (1988). In fact, this sort of writing has been popular enough to join the Best American writing series. But it’s pretty far from what we’d generally have any student try in an undergraduate science course.

Why not? Why and how might teachers in writing across the curriculum (WAC) settings assign this sort of writing, which I’ll park under the umbrella of creative nonfiction? I’ve speculatively devised an acronym, heaven help me: CNAC or, better, “Snack.” That’s just plain hubris. I’m going to make a brief, high-level case for this kind of writing, aiming toward ideas for assignments that faculty might adopt in various courses.

With “creative nonfiction,” I’m gesturing to a confederation of factual genres that have aesthetic, stylistic, and authorial features historically associated with fiction or poetry: narrative, image, metaphor, voice, dialogue, the whole shebang. I’m pointing to genres like memoir and personal essay, to literary journalism, profiles, place writing and so on. See, for example, my introduction to a special issue of *College English* on creative nonfiction that I guest edited (Hesse, 2003).

Three qualities of creative nonfiction are most apparent in popular science writing. First is a strong presence of story and scene. Ideas and concepts are narrativized. The writer takes readers on the drive up to the observatory or into the bar with the botanist. We see the mood of the lab at midnight. There’s dialogue.

Second, and related, ideas are associated with people who function like characters. We see how they look and talk and dance or drink. We learn about childhoods or grad schools, perhaps through interviews with friends or colleagues. In the case of personal essays, the person at the autobiographical reflective center is the first-person narrator, who reports, reacts, and reflects. People in creative nonfiction figure as agents or reagents, as refractors and filters, not as windexed clear glass.

Third, the writing is often associational, sometimes even digressive. A fact or idea gets connection to other facts or ideas, sometimes mediated by experience or memory. The writer values connections, even taking leaps in the name of creating interest, for themselves as well as others. So writing about a new image from the Webb space telescope might take me to watching the Milky Way above a Crested Butte cabin on a gnat-filled black night. Writing might take me to 1968 and an Iowa backyard, lying on a blanket beside my mother to watch the Pleiades meteor shower.

## CONCEPTUAL ROOTS OF CNAC IN WAC

There's a modest tradition of creative writing to foster writing-to-learn. Its roots go back at least as far as research that James Britton and his colleagues did with British children in the early 1970s. They theorized a spectrum of writing roles ranging from the writer as participant, producing transactional discourse that operates in and on the world, to the writer as spectator, producing poetic discourse (note "poetic" here is larger than poetry). The spectator role is to observe, evaluate, and create. Britton writes:

In a very general way the distinction between the roles of participant and spectator is the distinction between work and play: between language as a *means* (to buy and sell, to inform, instruct, persuade and so on) and an utterance for its own sake, no means but an *end*: a voluntary activity that occupies us for no other reasons than that it *preoccupies*. (1975, p. 81)

Between transactional and poetic discourse, between getting things done and creating artifacts, Britton posits expressive discourse, writing to create meaning for the writer, with only the logic and conventions the writer needs. Writers beginning in expressive discourse may, as they move toward external readers and their expectations shape writing to meet transactional or poetic conventions. Or they may fashion expressive discourse for public, not only personal dimensions, in which "the writer chooses to approach his reader as though he were a personal friend, hence revealing much about himself by implication in the course of dealing with his topic" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 90). This, I'll observe, is the realm of the personal essay, one of the genres available for CNAC, as I noted above. If I were writing a CNAC-ish personal essay about Britton's ideas, I might include a story about drinking beer with Britton in 1979 or 1980, at George's Buffett on Market Street in Iowa City, where he'd come to teach in the Iowa National Endowment for the Humanities seminar. In approaching the piece this way, I'd be invoking the qualities of story, character, and digression I described above.

The centrality of expressive discourse as a productive learning space got taken up early by Janet Emig, and the whole tradition of writing-to-learn. By the time of gospel writers like John Bean, expressive writing was mainly groundwork for instrumental ends, important for learning and perhaps paving the way to transactional purposes. Poetic discourse, which Bean reduces to creative writing, is almost absent. While Bean (2011) includes “creativity exercises,” there are only three among twenty-five examples. There are more fully developed examples elsewhere, obviously, as with Art Young’s (1982) consideration of the poetic functions of language. Poetic discourse needn’t manifest as poetry, of course, though in a 2003 article, Young and three colleagues explained how and why it might.

There’s an unfortunate complexity in the double ways that the term “expressive” has come to refer both to aim and artifact. On the one hand, as aim, expressive indicates a self that produces language for its own needs and interests, sufficient for the writer as sole reader, either as a final product (like a diary), or as a private means to public ends (like a first draft on the way to a published final). On the other hand, an artifact deemed expressive is recognized as having autobiographical or poetic elements; the appellation through much of the 1980s through 2000s was frequently derisive, expressive perceived as self-indulgent when more important writing needed to be done. In contrast, I suggest, the expressive artifact may have fallen short of its rhetorical situation (often by focusing more on the writer’s experiences or thinking rather than other content) or failed to achieve an expected quality for either transactional or poetic discourse. The text remained in the middle of Britton et al.’s (1975) continuum rather than progressing to either of reader-based prose’s ends. A crucial WAC tenet is to acknowledge that such writing is doing important work for learning, even if falls short rhetorically.

“Creative” works, including creative nonfiction, have their origins in the expressive aims of language, writers trying to sort out/constitute their encounters with the world through language. They may productively (at least for their writers’ learning or personal needs) fail to meet standards for successful poetic artifacts: stories, poems, screenplays, multimodal performance works, personal essays, literary journalism, and so on.

There has been relatively little about creative writing generally in the WAC literature, only a fraction of which addresses creative nonfiction particularly. Recently, Alexandria Peary (2015) and, especially, Justin Nicholes (2022) have described most thoroughly the case for creative writing across the curriculum, but they’ve said little about creative nonfiction forms. When you think about it, creative nonfiction’s absence is somewhat remarkable. You might actually expect fact-based narrative would be fecund for content-driven writing in

WAC courses, especially given examples from disciplinary scholars writing memoirs, journalists writing profiles of scholars, and so on. I speculate that there've been three reservations. First, obviously, is a general reluctance about creative work in the serious business of WAC. If engineers, psychologists, or art historians face a tough enough time making space for writing, filling that space with forms that seem to belong elsewhere in the curriculum is a tall ask. Second, within creative writing, nonfiction has been less defined for many WAC professors than have been other creative genres; they have a clearer sense of what poems are than of personal essays. Third I speculate that straight out poetry, fiction, and drama are not only more familiar but also safer. If you're having students write something other than straight academic prose, then poems or short stories oddly present fewer risks; they're so dramatically different from conventional academic discourse that they bear warning labels, as it were. Nonfiction does so less clearly.

Creative nonfiction's absence is perhaps a vestige of a phenomenon that Jim Porter (1986) described in his landmark article, "Intertextuality and Discourse Community." Porter described writers first as pre-socialized with respect to a discourse community, kept outside its ropes. Next writers are socialized, that is, able to perform its conventions sufficiently well to gain membership. A precept of WID is helping students acquire the rhetorical and epistemological moves to mark themselves as players in a disciplinary orchestra, even if last chair second violin. Some fewer, finally, are post-socialized. This last level is reserved for some few who have earned such status as to permit them to flout convention, including through creative nonfiction genres. I'm thinking of writers like Stephen Jay Gould or Neil DeGrasse Tyson. Having students write creative nonfiction may violate some unstated decorum; they haven't passed through expected levels. The more imaginative stuff is reserved for the accomplished insiders holding tacit licenses to tell stories of the field and themselves. It's parallel to crediting student sentence fragments only after students have demonstrated facility with traditional sentence expectations. Rightly or wrongly, we expect students to credential through customs. Maybe it's hazing. I remember my high school calculus teacher, Joe Beck, making us learn a tedious method of solving certain differential equations, only later to offer shortcuts. We were told it was good for us. But maybe it was better for the field of mathematics.

## **BENEFITS OF CNAC**

With that background, let's consider more directly some benefits for CNAC. Surely, we need better reasons than humoring belletristic sorts like me. Peary

(2015) believes creative writing supports different or hybrid learning styles, asserting that “creative writing is an invaluable transferrable skill; students who have taken a creative writing course see improvement specifically in the areas of critical thinking, the maintenance of a healthy writing process, and close reading” (p. 196). I offer three more reasons.

## COGNITIVE GROWTH

WAC’s fundamental promise has been that compelling or inviting engagement through writing inevitably builds learning. Creative writing’s contribution is to have students remove course material from usual disciplinary rhetorical situations, then make use of them in imaginative contexts. For example, here are two conventional creative writing WAC assignments:

Write a scene involving two characters having coffee. One of them wants to ban the novel *The Hate You Give* from a high school library. The other believes the book belongs there. Among things you’ll need to establish is the relationship between these characters prior to this conversation.

Write a poem that uses the following words: mycelium, rhizome. You might for example have your poem describe a family or a set of relationships, with the target words serving as metaphor for dynamics among people.

Scholars who have advocated creative writing across the curriculum have focused mainly on writing-to-learn. One challenge I see is the tension between addressing course content and creating an artifact of reasonable quality. Artistic considerations vie with facts and concepts, especially as one moves from expressive to poetic discourse. Making a good artifact can become more seductive than grappling with a concept. Characters and images are sexier than mitochondria, so professors might rightly worry if students drift too far from course content. Creative nonfiction may keep students on a better course, as first-person works like essay and memoir introduce the variable of braiding content with lived experience. Rather than materials or ideas important to students “externally,” as things to be tested or as elements of fictions, some creative nonfiction genres ask writers to combine ideas with aspects of their own lives. A common assignment strategy is to have students apply a theory or study to a scenario, for example, “How might a neighborhood group use the broken windows theory of crime to argue for better enforcement of traffic laws for speeding and stop signs? And how might police reply?” Creative

nonfiction takes that assignment practice a step further, by drawing on student experiences and stakes. In a section below, I've included two example types of assignments, but for now, consider two examples that invoke memoir or personal essay.

The psychology literature generally cites four styles of parenting: permissive, neglectful, authoritative, and authoritarian. Which style do you think you experienced growing up? Your challenge is to tell one or more stories from your own childhood that illustrate your thinking. Tell them in a way that is compelling to your readers, creating one or more scenes, for example, that let them understand your circumstances. Of course, you'll also need to help them understand the parenting style as the scholarly literature characterizes it.

I've given you two groups of paintings made during the Victorian period, one Pre-Raphaelite and the other "genre" paintings. Which group do you like better? You'll need, of course, to describe a painting or two as examples and why they appeal to you, and you may find it helpful to contrast with a work from the other group that you don't like as much. But here's the challenge. What from your own life experiences might account for your choice?

## COMMUNICATING TO POPULAR AUDIENCES

Communicating effectively within disciplines matters, of course. For readers planted in a particular field, obliged by circumstance to read its texts, writing that's direct, jargoned, just-the-facts-ma'am, maybe both sufficient and desirable. Sure, the insider-to-insider technical writing of music theory or political science or engineering may benefit from metaphor or analogy in the name of clarity. But such stylistic flourishes are transactional. Attention is built in.

But what about audiences who aren't obliged? What about readers of the *New York Times* science Tuesday section? I expect a big WAC challenge is having students write for wider publics. That the work of WAC should spread beyond the academy has gained increasing attention within our field. The comprehensive retrospective "Fifty Years of WAC" heralded "WAC as a force for social change," an outward gaze I support (Palmquist et al., 2020). Even as WAC contends in the academy with concerns of race, class, sex, gender, climate and so on, it should also contend in the world with what broad publics know and understand about physical and social realities.

Higher education increasingly calls for professors to work as public intellectuals, climbing beyond protected disciplinary boxes. I know firsthand that explaining the limits of machine scored writing to a *Washington Post* audience—in 750 words—is a far cry from talking to fellow disciplinary insiders. I suspect we don't trust undergraduates with that sort of writing. I think that's a mistake. For most students—and especially those not headed to grad school—learning high level conventions of a discipline has less personal and civic payoff than being able to use disciplinary knowledge in broader life situations. Yes, there's intellectual value in perceiving how a field's epistemology is manifested through its rhetoric and vice versa, and that value is best achieved by actually writing. I'm not suggesting creative tasks should replace all disciplinary strategies.

But the practical knowledge crisis we face in the 2020s is not within disciplines but in how academic knowledge is taken up—or, rather, not—by public spheres. Having students write for those audiences requires the tools of narrative, scene, and voice as much as the accurate presentation of facts and concepts. We should have students consider and practice strategies to make readers care about things they're learning. I'm not just meaning tasks like, “Explain photosynthesis to your grandmother” or “Explain to your boyfriend Martin Luther's theological objections to the Roman Catholic Church.” Going beyond such rhetorical situations means deploying some of the techniques of creative nonfiction, whether literary journalism or personal essay: story, character, style.

Consider how such approaches to writing for popular audiences might be useful in some example tasks: 1) explain important recent applications in CRISPR; 2) what's at stake between “scientific” and “whole language” approaches to teaching reading; 3) explain what drives immigrant approaches on the American southern border; 4) explain the relationship between wages and inflation in the American economy. Myriad other academic topics should matter to audiences who aren't obliged to read about them, but attracting those audiences means making them interesting. This often means leading with stories of scholars or scenes of places where concepts are enacted, then moving into the scholarly literature: story-coating, not sugar-coating. (That said, I'm surely not naïve about widespread reading habits in a fractured, bunkered 2026 social media terrain.)

The need to have student writers (and their professors) write for audiences beyond disciplinary communities is essential. In his very smart contribution to the special issue of *The WAC Journal*, focusing on WAC at 50, Paul Cook (2023) describes the need for what he calls “misinformation across the curriculum” (p. 115), addressing the crisis in fake news and sham facts across society. I'd take Cook's remedy one step beyond the fine recommendations he makes, calling for taking disciplinary knowledge into the world beyond classrooms and scholarly publication. The rhetorical tools of creative nonfiction are instrumental.

## CONNECTION

Creative nonfiction can embed engagement in students, making them care differently about a subject matter by making relationships between it and other aspects of their lives. This is an old-fashioned liberal arts ideal, I'll confess. But it's important (and hard) to have students both perceive discrete coursework as building career skills and content knowledge, yes, but also as building identities, their own habits of being shaped by all manner of knowledge whose value is not only in exchange or credential but also in connective formation. Creative nonfiction figures writers as makers, with students as first-person agents of meanings. Joan Didion (2009) famously wrote that we live by the imposition of a narrative line on the shifting phantasmagoria of experience, and surely that experience might and must include that gained in school.

For many years I've taught a general education capstone course, "Mountains: Ecologies and Imaginations," in an Advanced Seminar (ASEM) program I developed. All graduating seniors at the University of Denver are required to take an ASEM, courses designed to focus on topics from a multidisciplinary perspective, for students across the university. My own course typically has students from engineering to art, accounting to sociology. ASEMs are writing intensive, requiring over 6,000 words of prose, a substantial proportion of it revised after instructor feedback. The course description of "Mountains: Ecologies and Imaginations" begins, "Why are people drawn to mountains? What geological and biological features account for our interest, and how might the psychology and philosophy of aesthetics explain why mountains have multiple uses and effects, recreational to religious? And what are the economic and ecological consequences of this attention?" For three main writing projects in the course, I give students a choice among nine alternatives, ranging from analyzing specific case studies that pit development against preservation, to analyzing how mountains are depicted and used in popular culture (Ford truck commercials are fertile ground), to creative nonfiction options. Here are two of them:

Write your own memoir about an experience or set of experiences in the mountains. Tell a story or a series of related stories that descriptively recreate your experience(s), so that readers can get a descriptive sense of what you saw, heard, did, thought. That last element is important. Readers should get a sense of what the experience meant to you, why it was important. You can include overt reflection, of course, but I encourage you to do this with some degree of artfulness. Some degree of showing, not telling is often useful. Please note that explicit and direct comments are fine. Just be thoughtful and

engage readers as you write. Photographs are welcome as part of this piece.

Take a trip to the mountains and write about it. Think of yourself as a journalist/memoirist on assignment. Pick out a place and take a hike or a stroll. Bring a notebook and camera and record plenty of details and impressions: of the landscape, the plants, animals, other people, your thoughts along the way. Emulate the kind of writing that George Cotstantz does in *Ice, Fire, and Nutcrackers: A Rocky Mountain Ecology*.

Invariably, students choose a creative nonfiction project as one of their three. They think it's the easy route, but they learn otherwise. Still, they're highly invested. The position of creative nonfiction writer gives them a kind of agency that they don't otherwise feel they have, and they get to be like many of the writers we're reading in the course.

## EXAMPLE TYPES OF ASSIGNMENTS

What kinds of assignments might disciplinary faculty make? Let me offer two examples. Providing students some examples of the genres they're pursuing will help them. It should go without saying that few students will achieve publishable standards in the strictures of a course term. Encourage excellence but be happy with serious efforts in the direction.

Option 1. A *New Yorker*/literary journalist approach. Have students write about course material as an outside writer looking in, a reporter creating a feature article that simultaneously explains a concept but does so by portraying the setting in which that concept is being taught and learned. (Of course, a more straightforward news story assignment is also a salutary approach; I'm just focusing on CNAC). Here are directions:

Portray a course topic in the form of a feature article for a widely-read serious magazine. You have to get the subject matter right, of course, but you'll also have to solve the challenge of making this interesting for readers who don't have to read it. One approach is through narrative, embedding the information in the story of the class. What's the classroom like? How about the students? Might you interview some? What are they like? What's the class atmosphere? How does the professor dress, move, talk? What images can you create for readers? Include quotations or summaries from class meetings or readings. Perhaps even do some extra readings

for context—or talk with friends in other sections or other schools to see how they learned this material. Through all of this, feel free to share, first person, your own perceptions and reactions. *Illustration.* Focusing on the presentations, discussions, and readings in your psychology class, write about how college students understand and respond to current research about the Big Five personality traits.

Option 2. Write a personal essay. This option asks students to connect course content with something in their experiences or perspectives beyond the course, perhaps using the content as a point of departure. Here are possible directions:

Write a personal essay that embeds at least one idea/concept from this class into your life beyond the course. You might focus on something that surprised you or changed your thinking, perhaps telling about your previous thinking and how you came about it, then narrating the change. You might explore your response to an idea or a reading, beginning with “like” or “dislike” or “it personally matters” or “it personally doesn’t” or “it connects” or “it doesn’t” before trying to figure out and explain why. In other words, what in your own life or outlook on the world may connect with this idea—or not—and how? Of course, you’ll need to explain the idea, perhaps from course meetings or from readings. Can you create scenes that illustrate who you are, how you got there, and what this might have to do with the topic? Additionally or alternatively, you might explore what you—or others—might do with this knowledge. You might consider how others—including a friend or family member—might process this idea differently and why. *Illustration.* Write a personal essay that engages the ideas in Marina Andrijevic et al.’s findings in their 2020 *Nature* article “Overcoming Gender Inequality for Climate Resilient Development.”

## EVALUATING CREATIVE NONFICTION IN WAC SETTINGS

Inevitably, the question arises, “How do I respond to student creative nonfiction?”—or at least I hope the question is framed as “respond,” not simply “grade.” Perhaps I’m a romantic naively asserting that response doesn’t require evaluation, let alone grades. A basic menu of topics can serve as heuristics for responding,

with faculty selecting as many or few as made practical by the assignment, their own interests, or time:

- What did I find most interesting?
- How accurately, fully, and adroitly did you render the subject matter?
- What was my sense of the voice of the piece, of the personality or character that comes through?
- Where did I want more—or less?
- Where did you take risks—or avoid them?
- How well did the narrative, descriptive, reflective elements of the piece interact with the subject matter?
- What questions did I have? What opportunities did I see?
- How do I think other readers, might react to this piece, especially readers who aren't experts in this content or aren't obliged to read it?

One could, of course, build a response rubric around these questions or, going a step further, assign to some of them criteria for grading. I appreciate the concerns of biologist Jerry Waldvogel, who had his students write poems for compelling reasons and effects but who felt, “I did not feel qualified to critically evaluate their poetry as such. My grading criteria were thus basic spelling and grammar, scientific accuracy, and evidence of both critical and creative thinking” (Young et al., 2003, p. 26). Twenty years later, we do better than basic spelling and grammar. We can help colleagues unpack “evidence of both critical and creative thinking” in creative nonfiction, if we need to emphasize grading in addition to responding—or instead of it. (I could make an argument why we don't, but I'm a realist and pragmatist.)

For example, if I were building a rubric to unpack Waldvogel's “creative thinking,” I'd create criteria like this, depending on the nature/genre of the task assigned.

- **Narrative Elements**
  - 1–2 Absent or simply perfunctory
  - 3–4 Tells what happened, with a straightforward recounting of events
  - 5–6 Inclusion of one or more scenes, places where the writer uses description, imagery, or reflection to dramatize and render specific moments
  - 7–8 Well-crafted combination of story and scene, engaging readers
- **Character/Voice**
  - 1–2 The piece sounds fairly “disembodied,” lacking authorial presence

- 3–4 The writing is personalized, coming from an individual
- 5–6 The writer is engaging, using reflection, disclosure, insight and style to present an interesting persona
- **Connection**
  - 1–2 Creative and content elements exist largely independent of one another. “Here’s my story. Here’s some content.”
  - 3–4 There are attempts to connect creative and content elements so readers see why they’re together
  - 5–6 The piece seems relatively organic in form, with seams between elements largely invisible

One barrier for colleagues across campus in responding to creative nonfiction assignments is a lack of conscious familiarity with genres in their own fields. Professional development activities should include WAC leaders providing some examples—and having faculty gather examples themselves. Leaders should help colleagues learn how to read CNAC.

## LAST THOUGHT: FOR WRITING TEACHERS

The examples above sketch kinds of assignments that non-English faculty might consider for courses across the curriculum. I’d like to close with a reversal of sorts: the situation for faculty teaching writing classes in English departments or writing programs, especially in first-year courses or electives specifically focused on creative nonfiction.

As a bridge to WAC, we might invite students to do some CNAC projects with disciplinary content as source material or points of departure. Rather than only having students write about their experiences or current issues, we might challenge them to make interesting the knowledge they’re encountering elsewhere in their studies: a reading, field work, a lecture. If writing is to be a liberal and connective art, as I think it should, then proponents of CNAC should not just push themselves into other disciplines. We should make room for slices of those fields in our own writing classes. We should show students how writers for centuries have used “content” knowledge to shape personal essays and other literary forms.

Nearly fifty years ago, I read Thomas’s (1979) essays in *Lives of a Cell* in Carl Klaus’s “Art of the Essay” course at The University of Iowa. I remember being fascinated by science given narrative energy through that made it fascinating. But I also remember having a wider writing world open with recognition that creative nonfiction needn’t develop merely out of the life I happened to live but also out of encounters with phenomena and ideas that needed making alive to myself and other readers.

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**PART 2. EQUITY, ACCESS,  
AND SOCIAL CHANGE**



## CHAPTER 6.

# BAKING IN THE DISPOSITION: THE WAC/WID WORLD THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL LENSES

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*Abstract.* In a global perspective for WAC and other writing programs, the singular identifier of the nation still holds a dominance in articles, books, and conference presentations. But, how we understand relationships between different programs on the global writing studies map often demands a more nuanced unpacking than stable nation-markers can offer. Jonathan Hall (2023) calls us to take up “thinking with trans-” in WAC (p. 13). This chapter answers this call first by locating different pieces of global writing program scholarship along a spectrum from those that aim to establish a single, stable identity for a particular (often national) writing location on one end, and on the other, what the author calls critical-transnational narratives that complicate and destabilize identifiers about place. This chapter establishes a way of transnationally reading the world through scholarship—not as a rejection of categories or borders—but as a recognition of, and engagement with, their fluid and emergent character.

In a global perspective for WAC and other writing programs, the singular identifier of the nation often maintains a kind of dominance in writing studies discourse on the world scale. “The American model,” or “Writing Centers in Japan,” or “Czech writers” will locate a subject for audiences, or serve to compare between different places. The efficacy and stability of these nation-markers begs some important questions: Can we assume these descriptions really cover all aspects contained within that geography? If not, what is being left out and why? How can we capture the complexities of the relationships between different nations in what is shared and not? These questions can form a simple entry point for a transnational perspective as a platform to explore potential limitations, to articulate new modes of meaning and interaction across contexts, and to demarcate and define WAC programs globally.

As this concept of transnationality has developed, there has been some conflation and confusion around how it relates to international or multinational relationships. Sometimes, the term “transnational” works as an adjective to modify a place or a person (e.g., this transnational institution, as a transnational scholar) and this already raises questions about efficacy and stability. An institution with partnerships in different countries—is that international or multinational or transnational? Is a scholar with many passports transnational or is it just when they have worked in different countries or maybe not at all? Where can we say we’re representing *enough* connections at the worldwide scale? In trying to answer these questions, it is important to begin to draw a distinction between connecting particulars of place(s) and the ideology/disposition of the transnational. Without this distinction, transnational sensemaking risks dangerous slippage, potentially futile application, and thus further disregard for distant programs.

This article develops the transnational as an ideological disposition or approach that will give WAC/WID scholars much more powerful terms through which to describe, define, and demarcate these programmatic relationships on a global scale. By drawing a connection between translanguaging’s disposition distinction from linguistic practice, this article shows how some early literature on the more global turn for WAC/WID work demonstrates a disposition in possible rhetorical constructions/moves (listing, defining, parsing). Building an ideological disposition, we can distill an approach untethered from more restrictive constructions of context in order to find something more transferable to help navigate moving across and between committees, departments, programs, and institutions in our work. Woven through these examples is a metaphor of baking, borne out of the rhetorical move of listing and meant to articulate the shift from one state (multiple ingredients) to another (mixing, baking). I offer these ways of transnationally reading the world through global writing studies scholarship—not as a *rejection* of categories or borders—but as a recognition of, and engagement with, their fluid and emergent character. Such engagement is central to all WAC work, but especially crucial to a more global understanding of our shared, and not shared, labors.

## **TRANSNATIONAL DISPOSITION— UNTETHERING PLACE AND PROCESS**

Broadly speaking, the long-term trends of increased access to higher education and the more recent expansion of higher education into a global marketplace via new technological (mass media, transportation), economic (capitalist) and ideological (neoliberal) developments—with the concomitant increases in diversity and mobility of students and scholars—has translated into desires for new

voices, new narratives, and new theories to help understand and represent this growing heterogeneity. With that being said, these changes are also part of a long history of global movements, which predate and continue through these modern developments. The transnational, in a sense, not only crosses borders, it re-draws the maps along extra-geographic subjects, and points us to the very constructedness of those nations that we might take for granted. Terms like “international” or “multinational” help us to broaden beyond a national consciousness, but they can also reify more than resist the assumptions of stable borders as part of these relationships. The basic idea of the transnational—as I see it—opens the doors to a conversation about boundaries; it shows us a more mobile, manifold, and contingent world rather than over-reliance on a received set of political borders. In writing studies, this transnational turn has signaled a need to better understand programmatic connections across *and* within these borders, but the term is not always used to the same effect.

Wendy S. Hesford and Eileen E. Schell (2008) define transnationality as “the movements of people, goods, and ideas across national borders ... often used to highlight forms of cultural hybridity and intertextuality” pointing toward a shift in “the objects and areas of study,” (p. 463). They are critical of how idealized or romanticized distortions of place elevate hybridity or interconnection without giving enough attention to (U.S. imperialist) power. Transnationality, to them, is too often used as a synonym for present contexts/locations “with little recognition of how transnationality challenges traditional understandings of context” and how such uses signal a synonym for globalization without showing national identifiers as “constructed within and often solidified by transnational connectivities” (2008, p. 464). This focus is a more ideological disposition that shifts to different transnational subjects and more deliberately engages with power and complex national formations rather than relying on it as a simple modifier to define context.

Similarly, as Rebecca Dingo et al. (2013) pointed out, there is a slippage that occurs when the term “transnational” becomes a generically global perspective that lacks a “complex, networked understanding of power” (p. 518). They argue against the use of the term “transnational” to denote global exchange or describe sites for rhetorical and literacy work that happens outside of the US or in locations designated as *other* and describe their surprise that “these lines of scholarship in the field *still* hold to the transnational as a particular location and/or relationship between set locations” and not as a lens that can critique global, neoliberal structures (2013, p. 519). The transnational is rather a “complex, networked understanding of power” (Rebecca Dingo et al., 2013, p. 518), a “theoretical apparatus” (p. 520), and a “process” (p. 526). For them, scholars have a responsibility not just to bring readers into contact with those across the globe but to “show the inherent influence each site has on one-another” (2013,

p. 519). What's at issue here is when particulars of place/context emerge as stable when one is identifying and locating an object of study. There is an important separation they are drawing that asks us to distinguish between using transnational simply to describe a particular location, or multiple locations, and a more critical parsing of the attributes, influences, and processes involved. But do we even have terms yet through which to articulate that kind of process-distinction? How can we describe that shift from single, to multi, to trans in terms of place? And what does this have to do with WAC work?

## NOT ABOUT THE NUMBER

Hall (2023) argues that we already “live in the age of trans-” and asks how translanguaging, transnational, transdisciplinary phenomena are affecting the work of WAC/WID programs (p. 13). Hall works to articulate the effect of the *trans-* prefix as “categorical malleability,” and movement through “acrossness,” “betweenness,” “beyond,” and “transcending” borders/boundaries (2023, pp. 13–14). Attaching the *trans-*prefix to gender, discipline, language, and nation, Hall explores how these various transing expressions can relate to WAC work, which is constantly working across and between various categories and boundaries. Christiane Donahue (2016) also draws out the trans-prefix to connect transnational and translanguaging modes, arguing that when encountering difference, we tend to compare rather than adopt a “trans” orientation. The “trans” orientation can tell a difference between surface feature differences as well as shared underlying moves of negotiation, appropriation, resistance, and adaptation (Donahue, 2016, p. 147). These are some initial terms for that process at the heart of transing. Following Hall and Donahue, I do find that this connection between translanguaging and transnational work hinges on this separation between “surface features” and a more connected sense of a disposition as a generator of new knowledge.

Translingualism could lead us a bit here as there's been much said about it as a disposition or ideology. Some scholars see translanguaging and study it as a more deeply integrated and profound form of multilingualism that blends and mixes languages to challenge monolingual norms. In short, they find it through the *surface* level in oral and written products of language usage or use it as an identifying marker. Others, like myself, see translanguaging as profoundly more valuable on the level of an ideological disposition untethered from any *particular* language usage. Bruce Horner et al. (2011) specified that a translanguaging approach is “not about the number of languages, or language varieties, one can claim to know,” it is instead “the disposition of openness and inquiry that people take toward language and language differences” (p. 311). Recently, Horner and Sara P.

Alvarez (2019) have defined translanguaging as a “a way to interrogate and unveil terms of language” (p. 1) through ontology, agency, social relations, ideology, *and* practice. The natural uptake is to see translanguaging as a way to manifest alterity and reject rigid rules; to call out the elitism and bias they may promote. But, an implication of ideology that is not about the numbers would *also* mean: it could be entirely possible that a multilingual writer composes a multilingual text that still reinforces monolingualist ideological positions, which inherently value the “native” dialect, obsess over grammatical perfection to a particular academic version of the language, and believe in strict borders between those languages—even within that multilingual text. On the other hand, it’s entirely possible that a text is written solely in one language (a monolingual, not monolingualist, product) yet which moves across dialect boundaries, disrupts grammar norms, and integrates any number of unmarked loan words, thus destabilizing these norms/boundaries (therefore more aligning with translanguaging ideology).

Rudimentary and fraught though it might be, Table 6.1 attempts to highlight the ways this shift from “mono” to “multi” to “trans” might play out across language and location.

**Table 6.1. Delineating Between Practice and Ideology for Language and Location**

	Mono-	Multi-	Trans-
<b>Language Use</b>	Monolingual – one language	Multilingual – more than one language	Translingual – more intense multilingual work?
<b>Language Ideology</b>	Monolingualism – native speaker bias, fixed stable grammar, difference as deficit	Multilingualism – the value of more than one, but still stable borders between languages	Translingualism – change is the norm, borders unstable, difference as asset and invention, challenge assumptions of identity
<b>Location</b>	National – singular label applying within and throughout political border	Inter-/multinational – existing within and beyond a national border, engaging across stable borders	Transnational – Everywhere and nowhere, maybe?
<b>Ideology</b>	Nationalism – identifying and supporting a nation, often through exclusion of others	Globalism – one country cannot be easily separated from another	Transnationalism – challenge stability of single signifier within and across nations, opening new terms of identity and engagement; a process

The key point is that on the level of particular products or practices, language and location do not fit so well within the trans- designation. It is in the ideological/dispositional level—untethered from correlation with the number of languages or nations—that the “trans” modifier really comes to life. Talking about multiple places, even along multiple factors doesn’t quite shift us into a new disposition, what we need is a meaningful challenge or articulation to the processes involved in constructing that place. What is also evident is the gap in terminology for describing the split between product and ideology for place-based analysis. Let’s look at foundational scholarship discussing writing programs to see what we can glean to help us articulate these processes better.

## READING FOR THE TRANSING SHIFT

There are examples of various strategies across global writing program scholarship that can demonstrate ways to rhetorically construct and enact the transnational shift from the inter/-multinational level to trans. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive or an argument for a compulsory list of moves. The purpose is to highlight ways that we can begin to understand when the transnational begins shifting to the level of ideological disposition by being articulated in ways that serve to untether our assumptions of place and move beyond more rigid terms of context—even if they are *multiple*. Some basic ingredients for transnational connectivities are alternative geographic scales that can complement the nation-scale, the inclusion of non-spatial scales to describe subjects (an institution, academic field), and various conceptual frames through which to view the topic/program (gender, religion, psychology). These are the ingredients and transforming those pieces of place into something new and edible, which requires an alchemy that describes what a disposition aims to articulate or obtain.

## LISTING

A great place to start in examining transnational rhetorical moves is in the introductions of edited collections that are international in scope. Even before the term “transnational” was common, I think proto-transnationalism started with lists. The introduction to the self-described first English anthology on European writing studies by Lennart Björk et al. (2003) does not contain the term “transnational,” though its contributors and content span Europe and beyond. This serves to offer us an *alternative geographic scale* beyond the nation (Europe). It also offers a transing *non-spatial scale* by stating that contributors come from a range of different *disciplines*: “mother-tongue language studies, literature, pedagogy, psychology, rhetoric, and medicine” and foregrounds different *conceptual frames*

through which to see the teaching of academic writing: “epistemological, motivational, social, cognitive, linguistic, aesthetic, emotional” (Björk et al., 2003, p. 3). This list sets us up with new geographic and discursive territory through which to find transnational articulation by offering alternative geographic scales and *alternatives to* purely geographic discourse. But are we transing yet? There is still missing information to name how these ingredients change form.

In the introduction to a collection on writing centers in the Arabian Gulf region (alternate geographic scale), Othman Z. Barnawi (2018) does the ultimate list-dance across spatial and conceptual scales (though never uses the term transnational). First, listing the countries in the region: “Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait” and their role in (non-spatial scales) “global socio-political, cultural and economic environments” (Barnawi, 2018, p. ix). Then Barnawi evokes Western educational institutions versus the Islamic World and the emergence between them for (the following conceptual frames) “Englishization, internationalization, privatization and mallification of education” and neoliberal discourses affecting the “community, affiliations, partners, actors, administrative bodies, stakeholders and consumers in the Arabian Gulf region and beyond” (2018, p. ix). Long live the list. There are even more before the end of the piece but suffice it to say the ingredients are in place, yet the recipe is not complete. This dance across spatial and conceptual terms embodies much of what transnationality does by moving between material (geographic, spatial) and conceptual markers—and a list is crucial in framing the multiplicity of these relationships.

I would say we still need some way to describe their relationships and a method by which to sift and distill what moves and doesn't between them if we want to see the potential of transing. The trans-recipe is not yet complete. How do we bake it to turn the parts into bread? Without that, these ubiquitous lists feel more multi- than trans. In a collection introduction pushing for more nuance and terms of engagement, Lisa Arnold et al. (2017) describe and frame the local writing program work as an “intricate ‘in-betweenness’” in a super-diverse Beirut context richly layered in language, politics, history, and cultures, which requires “an abandonment of prior assumptions” and is “best viewed as constant negotiations” (p. 6). That phrase “intricate in-betweenness,” which is constantly negotiated, serves to articulate a novel description for the relationships across these spatial and conceptual scales of meaning. This is the subtle shift that can turn a list towards a dispositional understanding of these layers of meaning. What's another move to go with listing of relevant alternate geographic scales, non-spatial scales, conceptual frames, and then naming the nuanced relationships through which they connect? Defining the term “transnational.”

## DEFINING

Using the term “transnational” frequently without definition risks slippage, but by explicitly defining it, one may better articulate a perspective on it that gives a recipe some direction. In the introduction to the edited collection *Transnational Writing Program Administration*, David S. Martins (2015) offers us multiple definitions for the term “transnational” and triangulates by parsing pieces from each of them. Starting with one that looks at the evolving relationships across countries, Martins then specifies that “unlike ‘global’ or ‘international,’ the term ‘transnational’ typically invokes a more critical, analytical orientation” and cites the Hesford and Schell emphasis on the feminist challenge to traditional constructions of context and place (2015, p. 4). His definitional paragraph ends with a list and the goal of the collection: “a more nuanced conversation about learning, teaching, and administration in transnational contexts” (2015, p. 4). As we are in search of a dispositional understanding, Martins’ definition is getting at the orientation rather than simply a multitude of countries and to do that we need conceptual tools like nuance.

Jay Jordan (2022) describes his project as part of the “transnational experiment” of “teaching, learning, observing, and experiencing” and reminds us of the fact that “relevant writing-related scholarship, teaching, and administration are inextricable from one another” (p. 10). Transnationality as an experiment of the inextricable is an evocative transing definition. Jordan parses transnationality and internationality, saying that both terms are present in his book, but that they are “not ultimately interchangeable” (2022, p. 11). Usage of the term “international” is framed around trends in education, concepts of globalization, and what could readily be contained within discourses around “internationalization” in terms of policy and demographics in the global turn.

The explanation for transnationality is a tour of key definitions we’ve already encountered with Hesford and Schell (2008) and Martins (2015) as well as others through lenses of social space, consciousness, local connections, and co-constructions of place. Jordan concludes that though the participants in his study were all Korean nationals in Korea, they were subtly but noticeably, acting in the awareness that the particular context of their Asia Campus was different from other Korean educational contexts. He writes of a “friction just beneath the smooth internationalist surface of the university’s and government’s experiment that was both noticeable and variously productive” (2022, p. 15). The sense of the transnational as friction—compared to a more inter-/multinationalist assumption of smoothness—is a powerful way to parse the distinction. Jordan uses lists, gives us multiple definitions from multiple disciplines, and also disambiguates trans- and inter-national concepts while offering the terms

“inextricable” and “friction” to describe these relationships. Now we’re seeing multiple rhetorical moves that are carving out room for a disposition by naming these processes and new forms of connection.

## PARSING

Up to now, these cited scholars have set the stage for articulating transnational relationships that move away from static nation-identities, but they have not so much enacted a transing disposition to place. I think the first example of actually doing that comes in actively parsing out aspects of place that thread through the conceptual and spatial scales beyond, intricately in-between, and in friction with geographic identifiers. To study and describe relationships that work on different spatial scales without evoking nations could be seen as one form of transnational discourse, but I think it is *not* as potent, complex, or interesting as weaving new terms for the relationships that use, but don’t stabilize or simplify, nations.

Mary N. Muchiri et al. (1995) issued in *CCCs* a strong critique of the limitations facing composition when seen from a more global writing studies view. They remind readers that “[c]learly there is something rather odd about the academic map, so that hundreds of small institutions in North America and Europe are on it, and others elsewhere are off it” (1995, p. 184). The most basic suggestion comes in working to delineate the varied assumptions made by composition research about students, teachers, language, and universities, because some of these are “refreshing in these new contexts, some have to be questioned, and some seem bizarre” (Muchiri et al., 1995, p. 176). Though it is a somewhat small rhetorical move, it is productive to think through this parsing (some aspects as *x*, some aspects as *y*) as a core aspect of a transnational approach. To not take such an approach means collapsing and reducing differences into simplified narratives that may limit the degree to which real relationships can be represented.

An example of delicately parsing across contexts to introduce friction in the relationships between countries comes from Lisa Emerson and Rosemary Clerehan’s (2009) discussion of writing program administration work in Australia and New Zealand. They open by pointing out that from an outsider’s view, WPA work in North America appears very homogenous, that each program assumes a relationship with a writing center, that they are based around composition courses, that there is a certain commitment to funding, and there is a shared history. While this homogeneity can reveal shared concerns about “access, labor issues, or disciplinary standing,” (listing ...) the local cultural specificity of the North American literature is hard to penetrate for those in writing programs that present “very different profiles” (Emerson & Clerehan, 2009, pp. 166–167). Emerson and Clerehan describe the central differences in the larger infrastructure:

“entry testing, writing center, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, and compulsory freshman composition courses” are not a part of the Australian higher education contexts (2009, p. 167). Aside from the region’s differences with North American contexts, between Australia and New Zealand, there are also “distinct national contrasts in terms of development, theoretical base, and position within the university” (Emerson & Clerehan, 2009, p. 167). They go into detail about the generative histories of these different national contexts in terms of student demographics, labor conditions, institutional structures, economic and social movements, etc. This attention to parsing the differences across multiple scales and conceptual frames while citing important similarities and differences at these various layers is thoughtful and productive.

Olga Dysthe (2003) outlines a historical and contextual background for the absence of a prominent place for writing studies in Norwegian higher education. She traces various influences from German and US-based institutions in the policies and practices of different Norwegian universities. She writes that while experiences in foreign institutions have shaped the program, “local studies carry more weight as a basis for in service training of teachers than for instance American or Australian research” (2003, p. 158). Dysthe makes moves to position Norway among different influences like this: “Norway occupies a middle position between the United States, where students specialize late, and England and France where students start their specialization in secondary school” (2003, p. 163). This middle position is our transning move and has meant that workshops and courses in academic writing have had to be tailored to the specific curricula in local universities that will help students learn to write in their disciplines in particular ways—drawing on process pedagogy, but not first-year composition courses. Rather than outright rejecting other models, they are adapted and communicated across an array of conditions so particular influences can be traced. A cup of this, a pinch of that, and some instructions on how they interact to form a particular thing. What’s happening in both these examples is that there are parts of different places that influence a program, and the nation-marker is used, but quickly localized or contextualized so that it doesn’t rest as a reified totality. These are just the initial steps of sensemaking of this kind to articulate what can/should be much more robust theorizing about these relationships.

## LOOKING FORWARD TRANSNATIONALLY

To maintain the baking metaphor just a bit further, let’s recap. Placing the word “transnational” in front of something basically just gives the name: bread, muffin, scone. That won’t help it get made and it won’t help anyone else make sense of it. Missing is a list of ingredients—the many things that are needed (spatial

and conceptual markers) but not even to share the specific quantities, yet. This gets us to the line, so to speak, right before we're really transing with a disposition. It is like the technical challenge in the middle of "Bake Off"—a list of ingredients with the instruction: bake. Not super helpful. Ideally, a transnational disposition demands more direction, more quantizing, more description to create something fresh and transferable. The scholars who can do that, and our very analysis of what it means to bring these ingredients into meaningful contact, show how one can understand baking beyond the particular recipe, the process beyond the particulars, the methods and means through which these interactions shape something out of base ingredients. From this foundation, we can start to really tackle the histories and implications of sourcing certain ingredients; the power, heat, and pressure required to form these structures; and the new ways that drive new understandings and responses to changing realities.

So, the source of the power of a transnational disposition operating on the level of ideology or approach (here the baking more than simply a particular recipe) is that one can start interchanging these ingredients (spatial and conceptual scales of meaning) to apply to one's own programmatic context. It is this transing knowledge that allows us to scale down to our institution and understand the discourses, disciplines, approaches, social dynamics, and personalities that come between us and achieving our program goals. Or, we can scale up to see how tracing influences across national borders can sometimes apply and sometimes not apply, thus giving a way to parse more meaningful interactions with programs rather than a binary, wholesale "relevant" or "non-relevant" designation depending on the case. Lastly, we can avoid a trap with an endless stream of more places we need to trace, more terms we need to list, more approaches we need to account for because it's not about the number, it's more about the level of detail in the recipe, or the meta-discourse through which we can reflect on how to even *make sense of* the processes.

With these concepts in mind, when scholar-practitioners encounter or embark on their own transing work, they can aim to be conscientious through some of these discussed rhetorical constructions. They can align with the critique of undue influence of, and limitations in, the US-based composition lens for global writing and a tendency for an import-export, presence-absence binary. But they may also bristle when reading terms like "The American model," which calls one to ask: which one? Which parts? It might end up that what's really being discussed is a linguistic influence that is not just about the hegemonic dominance of English but also a monolingual ideology that is endemic in a local institution with a history of bad policy. Even a simple rhetorical move could elevate that discussion by writing something more like *the English-only aspects of the so-called "American model" or certain linguistic practices dominant in many U.S. contexts*. Similarly, if a

foreign, ex-pat colleague works in an institution, say, in Japan, they may interpret institutional reticence as “Japanese-style management,” which they must oblige in deference. There is an exigence to unpack that generalization and find more nuanced forms of meaning if they need to grow their program. While it helps, it doesn’t require each individual possess all language expertise or a lifetime of local cultural authority to be able to *leave space and develop approaches* for more potential meaning or more savvy rhetorical constructions. The recipe of institutional resistance could be a cup of ideology and just a pinch of nationality.

The gist of this disposition means that when one encounters a big, broad generalized category like a nation, they don’t just accept it without some critical engagement. Seeing the world through a transnational disposition starts with reticence at the discussion of what happens in Chinese writing centers or what Brazilian writers are like. This reticence offers a pause to ask for more detail before accepting this term—a more detailed listing and parsing of attributes depending on the claims being made as well as a way to bring these attributes into meaningful contact. If we as a global field want to benefit from the knowledge being made in many contexts, we are also going to need a rigorous way to talk about power. Tracing inequities along material, political, linguistic, social, economic terms give us more tools with which to unpack concepts like U.S. imperial power and open up to the complex nuances of influence.

Current events in many places call for a way to parse nations from religions from political ideologies from rhetorical posturing. And to describe how they interact. The answers may be in other languages and contexts and forms, so we need a transnational disposition capable of parsing these contexts and crossings in order to engage with that knowledge. Scaling down, the work all WAC programs do to traverse disciplines, genres, departments, languages, cultures, spaces, et cetera allows us to sharpen our skills in parsing and moving across these local geographies with a kind of dexterity and fluidity in order to make choices and take actions in the support of our work. In that next meeting, when someone makes a big claim about writing, the sciences, English, French people—one can meet this as an exigence to unpack and articulate more nuance. Ask for attributes, features, or developments to trace that brought about these categories. Ask what other contexts have faced the same questions and how they might have answered.

Translingual and transnational dispositions are connected through their claims about agency: more than the product or the place, what matters is that one acts in the knowledge that they are participating in an ongoing construction of meaning and they have agency. Translingual and transnational dispositions *produce* that agency—they are the heat and chemistry that bakes something out of a soupy bowl of ingredients. The best approach to WAC work often resists rejecting borders/categories while stating the importance of not taking

them wholesale; it accepts the challenges of articulating the across-ness and between-ness, the flexibility and porosity of margins, the ways that concepts and materiality tangle and dance across the maps of space and place. We don't just accept the borders we cross, we make and move them, too. Otherwise, we just let others do it for us and then we're cooked.

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CHAPTER 7.

TOWARD A DIALOGIC  
TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGE  
IN WRITING STUDIES  
EDITORIAL WORK

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*Abstract. Scholars promoting linguistic social justice in writing studies and those working within transnational and global contexts of writing share many concerns. However, complications arise in practice and in theory for those working at the intersections. We consider these complications, focusing on three key tensions within the editing and publishing processes that shape these fields: making policy statements that respect language difference while treating different experiences with language as the same; that discuss theoretical but not material dimensions of language; and/or that do not examine whether practices align with or work against neoliberal multiculturalism. We begin with a local example, demonstrating how the WAC Clearinghouse International Exchanges on the Study of Writing book series editors grapple with articulating policies that respond to these tensions within the North American context, not the least of which is the assumption that concepts such as race and linguistic social justice in our scholarship are universal. This local perspective leads to a wider consideration of colonial epistemologies, language ideologies, and dominant research traditions*

*underlying academic publishing practices and thus our research and practices. Throughout, we provide actions which organizations, publishers, editors and authors can use to intentionally interrupt English's privileged position and to build knowledge more inclusively.*

For decades, writing researchers globally have pointed out that the dominance of English, by default, privileges scholars, research methods, theories, and pedagogies from majority-English countries<sup>1</sup> (see ALES, n.d.; Ávila Reyes, 2021; Canagarajah, 2013; Corcoran et al., 2019; Curry & Lillis, 2017; Hamel, 2013). Increasingly, as a result of engaging with international research, there has been a focus in the field on globalizing our professional organizations and publishing practices, with many writing studies scholars pressing for changes to traditional standards for academic writing, writing assessment, and scholarly publication (e.g., Bazerman, 2014; Horner et al., 2009; Poe et al., 2018). The field has revised standards and practices around social, cultural, linguistic, and epistemological difference (see statements such as those from Association for Writing Across the Curriculum [n.d., *AWAC* executive]; Conference on College Composition and Communication [2025]; International Writing Center Association [2010]; National Council of Teachers of English [2025]). These organizations' stated goals and policies express an honest commitment to inclusivity across national and cultural boundaries.

Even as we make these efforts, scholars continue to point to Western epistemologies and standard academic English practices embedded in our research and pedagogies, and, therefore, in the editorial and publication processes which shape the field. In our positions as co-editors of the WAC Clearinghouse International Exchanges on the Study of Writing book series (Zawacki, Mullin, Habib) and as former chairs of the Conference on College Composition and Communication Globalization Committee of Postsecondary Writing Instruction and Research (Zawacki, Arnold), these issues and the complications that emerge from them have become increasingly visible.<sup>2</sup> Even as we are based in the US, our transnational work, which involves collaborations with international colleagues, has required us to consciously cross (linguistic, epistemological, cultural) borders. These transnational collaborations have allowed us to encounter and recognize the limitations of Western frameworks for linguistic social justice<sup>3</sup> outside of the Global North.

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1 Throughout we interchange terms commonly used by international scholars to discuss "Anglo-Centered," "Center," and "majority-English" sites, notably the US, Britain, and Australia. Those outside the "Center" are tagged "periphery." Center countries, Europe and those identifying as "Western" and the "Global North" are positioned next to all other countries tagged "Global South."

2 The IE book series can be found at <https://wacclearinghouse.org/books/international/>.

3 By linguistic social justice, we refer generally to scholarly conversations that complicate English as a lingua franca; "standard" English; Western rhetorical traditions and discursive practices.

For these reasons, in this chapter we highlight the tensions that arise when attempting to disrupt the Western epistemologies that underlie the vast majority of writing studies scholarship. While these tensions arise most visibly in work at the intersections of transnational exchange, we are all embedded in transnational discourse although we may not recognize it as such given the privileged position we occupy within the discourse. In that sense, then, this chapter is relevant to all in the Global North who are invested in supporting linguistic social justice within the field even though they may not be explicitly engaged in transnational scholarship. In what follows, we offer a brief history of efforts by North American professional organizations to recognize and acknowledge the global nature of our work, efforts which, at the same time, bring up complicated questions for editors and publishers.

The CCCC Committee on Globalization of Postsecondary Writing Instruction and Research, convened in 2009 by Charles Bazerman, then CCCC chair, was charged with bringing global contexts of writing to the fore of the field more systematically than, for example, changing organizational names to acknowledge international participation (e.g., International Writing Center Association renamed in 1999; the International WAC Conference in 2006). Prior to publishing the “CCCC Statement on Globalization in Writing Studies Pedagogy and Research” (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2017), committee members discussed terms such as *international*, *transnational*, and *globalization* extensively, noting important distinctions that are often conflated: While *international* refers merely to the existence of one or more nations in a single context; *transnational* suggests an element of exchange between and among nations; and *globalization* “imply[es] less rigidly defined boundaries and a more mobile meshing of cultures, languages, and nationalities” (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2017, “Defining Globalization”). As evidenced by the statement, globalization carries important implications for writing studies in that globalization is always-already present in everything we do. However, as committee members noted, research, teaching, and administration often ignore this reality and remain focused on North American contexts of writing pedagogy and practice.

There are exceptions, of course. Among publishers featuring inter- and transnational perspectives on writing (e.g., Routledge, Multilingual Matters), the International Exchanges on the Study of Writing book series (IE) and its Latin American section, published by The WAC Clearinghouse and its print publishing partner, University Press of Colorado, explicitly seek to raise awareness of global contexts of writing and to publish books “that draw on scholarship across national and disciplinary borders to challenge parochial understandings” of Writing Studies (The WAC Clearinghouse, n.d., *International*).

Along with an increased organizational and publisher focus on global contexts of writing, the field has undertaken in recent years a sustained reckoning with the way it is implicated in traditions of social and linguistic injustice, particularly in relation to historically underrepresented groups. To this end, in the early 2020s, CCCC instituted a number of new committees and published several statements that are focused on equity, inclusion, decolonization, and social justice (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2025). In 2021, the Council of Writing Program Administrators publicly responded to critiques of its organizational members, structure, and documents by halting all public work and soliciting outside counsel to ensure its operations were equitable and inclusive. In 2023, the organization hosted a conference focused on the theme of “Social Justice WPAing,” and later published a 2023 Cultural Assessment Report.

Although such organizational committees, publishers, and statements are helpful in bringing attention to social injustice within the field, they cannot necessarily change actual practice. Circulated in 2021, the *Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors* (Cagle et al., n.d.), which informed the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s (2023) and the WAC Clearinghouse’s (n.d., *Statement*) recent clarifications of editorial practices, signals a shift in this regard. Lauren E. Cagle et al. (n.d.) offer “explicit guidance on anti-racist professional practices ... for editors, reviewers, and authors involved in academic reviewing” (p. 2), which has been adopted by or adapted with variations by multiple publishing venues. That said, we want to recognize that for non-US-based scholars, the document and the terms can seem insular and specific to a U.S. context: the term BIPOC, for example, originating and used in the US, relies on a colonial vision of race and assumes that those who are phenotypically black or brown are always positioned as minorities no matter the context. In her article outlining a transnational Black language pedagogy, Esther Milu (2021) critiqued writing scholarship that has assumed all Black students in the US identify as African American and speak or write in Black Vernacular English. As Milu showed through her examples of students with transnational African identities and language backgrounds, we must rethink such assumptions and complicate our understanding of racialized groups. Similarly, the concept of linguistic social justice is likely to resonate differently for those outside the US.

Without a doubt, however, there are many shared concerns among scholars promoting linguistic social justice in the field and those working within transnational and global contexts of writing. However, complications arise in practice and in theory for those working at the intersections. In this chapter we consider these complications by focusing on three key tensions within the editing and

publishing processes—specifically, making policy statements that respect language difference while treating different experiences with language as the same; that discuss theoretical but not material dimensions of language; and/or that do not examine whether practices align with or work against neoliberal multiculturalism. To give a concrete example of how these tensions are felt in practice, we begin with a local context, the IE book series and its statement on language. The latter is an ongoing concern as the series editors grapple with how to articulate a policy that responds to these tensions within the North American context in which we work, not the least of which is the assumption that concepts such as race and linguistic social justice in our scholarship are universals. This local perspective leads us to a wider consideration of the colonial epistemologies, language ideologies, and dominant research traditions upon which our field and the practices of academic publishing are based. As Maria Kuteeva and Taina Saarinen (2022) reminded us, “Writing and publishing shape each other through different established mechanisms (e.g., peer review, author guidelines, style manuals), but there is room for negotiation” (p. 133)—the latter a hopeful note underlying the recommendations for change throughout this chapter.

## COMPLICATING LANGUAGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES: THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Aware early on of the need to address these tensions, the IE co-editors created a “Statement on Language for Submission and Publication” that begins by recognizing that “the language of publication is often a political and identity decision,” that “different regions, languages, and traditions develop their own relatively specific perspectives and methodologies to address their own interests and research problems,” and that “this diversity . . . often prevents an equal international exchange of scholarship.”<sup>4</sup> While a forceful political statement, the co-editors have wrestled with what this recognition of difference *means in practice*. The submission guidelines offered on the site signal to authors that the series is open to diverse voices and texts but will also be looking for “strong scholarly merit” as determined through “rigorous peer review.” Strategically, this advice is aimed not only at authors but also at external audiences to reassure them that, while IE is an open-access series, it follows standard review processes. With these relatively general guidelines, authors are called to imagine the degree of openness that series editors and reviewers might, in practice, bring to their reading of the text.

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<sup>4</sup> The statement is available at <https://wacclearinghouse.org/books/international/guidelines/language-policy/>.

Similarly, the IE internal peer review form prompts reviewers to be mindful of “contextual, cultural, and linguistic differences” while also asking whether there is a “sound organization,” a “logical and readable structure,” a “well-researched” and/or “adequately explained and detailed” topic with “connections to related studies,”<sup>5</sup> all generally accepted criteria for scholarly work transnationally. The problem for reviewers and thus for editors and publishers, however, lies in the ways these criteria are taken up from a Global North perspective. Even when prompted to be aware of rhetorical and textual variations, reviewers, particularly those in U.S. institutions, will likely first draw on discursal forms with which they are most familiar and then imagine, in a sense, the variations that might be acceptable for books in IE, a series under the umbrella of a U.S.-based organization. Given this tacit bias in Western traditions, the editorial group has been grappling for some time to describe what our assertions about openness mean in practice, how to fairly read alternative texts and diverse voices, and even how to define “alternative.”

With these concerns foremost in articulating policies, the editors have considered asking that *all* submissions include an explanation of the rhetorical tradition on which the text is based and how the richer language and cultural experience readers will encounter is integral to the project. While well-intended, such a request would put the responsibility onto authors to explain how and why they are conforming to or departing from Western academic conventions rather than trusting readers to be open to difference. The former—an explanation of rhetorical and textual choices—follows a model Suresh Canagarajah (2022) enacted that generally respects “the expectation of coherence around a unified thesis,” signaling to readers that he is “an insider to academic norms” while, at the same time, including features from his Sri Lankan academic community. His goal with this layered approach was to “subtly recontextualize” the work to achieve a positive uptake by reviewers and editors (2022, p. 116). He advised, however, that this kind of “complex policy work” must involve gradual, small-scale changes (2022, p. 112).

While writers who are enacting translingual, transcultural difference can cue readers, as Canagarajah did, we see two complications around this position: First, it relies on setting the alternative against the dominant, thus reinforcing the dominant, a point Bruce Horner made in a conversation with Theresa Lillis (2015). Second is the assumption that writers who are breaking from academic strictures are conscious of this intention, are exercising their agency, and are also able, as Canagarajah advised, to “rescale” their use of “vernacular and multilingual resources” to fit the publication (2022, p. 124). As many of the scholars we

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5 IE peer review form available on request from series editors.

cite here have argued, however, a writer's agency is always limited not only by the publications for which they write but also by the traditions that are valued within their local contexts. Anna Kristina Hultgren and Julia Molinari (2022) noted, while largely agreeing with Canagarajah's concept of "agentic communicative practices," that the question is "the extent to which social actors (here academic writers) are free to make their own communicative choices (agency) and the extent to which those choices are shaped by colonial social structures, be it norms, ideologies, or material resources (structure)" (p. 51). With these complications in mind, we IE editors continue to weigh the positive and negative implications of following Canagarajah's model, among the latter the risk of positioning certain authors as "the other." Taken more broadly, either option—asking for an explanatory statement vs letting the work stand on its own—means that reviewers, editors and publishers will need to adjust their readerly dispositions to be open to texts and writers from outside their own contexts.

## COMPLICATING PUBLISHING PROCESSES: THE LARGER CONTEXT

Decolonial scholars acknowledge that we in the Global North cannot undo the past; instead, our responsibility lies in recognizing the damage done by this colonial history and, in response, "bring[ing] to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 543). "Linguistic justice," therefore, requires "an enactment of the politics of difference defined not just in U.S. terms but rather developed across rhetorical traditions and writing cultures," which, Ligia A. Mihut (2020) suggested, requires us to critique monolingualism while also promoting "linguistically-rich practices" (p. 270). To make *meaningful* and *lasting* change in the publication processes for writing studies, we must complicate, and perhaps slow down, our conception of what change looks like, dwelling "in the borders" (Cushman, 2016, p. 235) while we consider how to revise our understandings of linguistic justice for international, transnational publication contexts.

As a first step, it is important to recognize that the term "linguistic justice" can carry different meanings globally, just as English—particularly academic English—carries different stakes for a variety of users worldwide. In other words, scholars in the US cannot assume that there is universal agreement about what "linguistic justice" means, nor can Global North scholars determine what the role of English is or should be worldwide. Organizational statements must be understood within the sociohistorical context from which they have emerged, which includes acknowledging the material, lived experiences of language as pluriversal rather than universal.

We complicate the idea of linguistic social justice by focusing on three key tensions in play in editorial processes:

1. Acknowledging that languages themselves are different, yet making decisions that treat all experiences of language difference as the same;
2. Discussing language as theoretical, without acknowledging its embodied, material dimension; and
3. Making policy statements but not examining whether practices are undermining or aligning with neoliberal multiculturalism.

Importantly, we seek to describe these tensions for two reasons: first, to respond with suggestions about how we can change publication processes in writing studies and second, to begin balancing our field's Anglo-centered and Western foundations.

*Tension one* is informed by a still-prevalent notion that all experiences of language difference are the same (see also Gilyard's critique, 2016). Joel Heng Hartse & Ryuko Kubota (2014) described their experiences of copyediting and pointed out the limits of various theories of language difference and challenges to English as an academic *lingua franca*, as these theories do not "address what is actually practiced or expected" (p. 79). Similarly, Hultgren & Molinari (2022) pointed to the idealistic conceptions of writerly "agency," maintaining they be problematized within the context of existing structures that, in reality, limit agency—in this case, the influential, powerful publishing institutions centered on and driven by scholars in the Global North (p. 48). Cushman (2016) stated the problem directly: "Emancipatory projects in composition studies [and academic publishing] fall short of their social justice goals because they critique a content or place of practice without revealing and altering their own structuring tenets" (p. 239). This tension is highlighted when, on the one hand, scholars strive to support language differences, but the reality is that gatekeepers such as publishers and the larger academic audience require conformity to seemingly "standard" expectations (Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014). Editors and reviewers can also get caught up in these tensions, falling prey to a tacit, faulty logic that flattens difference, as Asao B. Inoue (2021) points out, by assuming that achieving a universal communicative style is just how things are. As a result, editors can end up valuing Global North styles with "straightforward" language and methodological approaches, assuming that their standards are universal. They may equate fairness with sameness, editing out a voice that does not conform to recognized Western forms of reason, order and coherence. Because of their positions within a wider system that values "straightforward" styles, editors may face resistance from publishers when they accept alternate styles. On the other hand, they may also be labeled as champions of the status quo when legitimately asking authors

for additional explanation or evidence, because, for example, one's stylistic preference may be conflated with what is actually needed to substantiate a claim.

At the same time, those living and working in Global South contexts often experience greater professional rewards from publishing in English-medium journals in the Global North, considered prestigious because of the dominance of the language and publishing structures. Consequently, local or regional publications can be devalued and bypassed (Ergin & Alkan, 2019). This can lead to a problematic cycle in which even scholars from the Global South prioritize and promote English-language publications and publishers in the Global North (Lillis et al., 2022). Change to existing processes and structures must therefore occur in both publication contexts. However, scholars examining these tensions often conclude that those positioned within Anglophone and colonial traditions of writing and publishing inherently limit the change that can be possible (Lillis et al., 2022).

Canagarajah (2022) was more hopeful, as we noted earlier, arguing that we in writing studies must understand the relationship between structure and agency as a dynamic interplay that allows for multilingual scholars in particular to transform academic publishing. At the same time, the subtle changes he made, he admitted, have depended upon his own stature as a full tenured professor, as well as recent scholarly conversations about “decolonial movements [which] are introducing alternate genres and rhetorics for academic writing” (2022, p. 122). Ultimately, he arrived at a similar conclusion to Heng Hartse and Kubota (2014) and Hultgren and Molinari (2022), maintaining that authors have to adopt strategies that suit their topic, objectives, genre, journal, and discipline, to which we want to add, and to the extent that they are conscious of the sociolinguistic possibilities available to them. There are no generic recipes or rules on textual resistance suitable for scholars universally, Canagarajah said. Both “structure” and “change” are too often presented problematically as a dichotomy (another tension), when in fact both can exist at the same time (Canagarajah, 2022, pp. 124–125).

Here we note that it is also important to raise distinctions among possible definitions of both “alternative” and “linguistic difference,” which carry implications for editorial policies around linguistic justice: On the one hand, “linguistic difference” can be identified according to lexicogrammatical, often sentence-level, features of writing (Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014). On the other hand, “linguistic difference” and “alternative” can be identified as sociolinguistic features of writing informed by a variety of cultural and rhetorical traditions (Canagarajah, 2022). With clearer definitions of what editors, reviewers and publishers mean by these terms, we will all be better able to make editorial recommendations and decisions to support linguistic justice. As well, as Heng

Hartse and Kubota (2014) recommended, copyeditors—which we would expand to editors and reviewers in general—should always ask themselves, “why do I want this change [in the text] to be made?” (p. 81). But, as the IE series editors have found, it is also important that publishers, editorial boards, and series editors continually revisit and clarify their policies and practices around linguistic social justice. This is particularly true when considering the larger cultural and ideological systems within which these groups operate and must negotiate.

Real change only happens when individuals and those involved in the publishing process commit to questioning and revising their worldviews, which also includes translating rather than skipping over citations that provide another perspective, such as “La dictadura del inglés en la ciencia: El 95% de los artículos se publica en esa lengua y solo el 1% en español o portugués” (Hernández Bonilla, 2021). We must also read scholarship outside our usual zones of readership—for example, Natalia Ávila Reyes (2021) in the Latin American section of the IE series, or Kegiso Jacob Sello’s (2019) “Multilinguisme et injustice sociale linguistique au Botswana.” Such intentional reading practices by publishers, reviewers, and editors would inform a review and revision of extant policy statements on language and publishing from groups working with/in the tensions produced by Anglophone centers while also expanding their cross-cultural and cross-linguistic understanding. Further, we also strongly recommend “Rethinking English as a Lingua Franca: A Position Statement,” (Navarro et al., 2022), which in eight languages “challenges assumptions made about the use of English as a lingua franca” and seeks to identify “the impact of such assumptions on trajectories of knowledge production and uptake, and legitimize the use of multiple languages for transnational scholarly exchange” (see also Curry & Lillis, 2017).

One problem, however, in efforts to read “beyond” scholarship written in English is that non-English publications receive fewer citations overall, precisely because they are not read, and thus they may not be easily found in the usual indices consulted in English. However, there are multiple available resources for finding international scholars, including, for example, many of the publications of the International Exchanges and Perspectives series, which include references to scholars outside of the US as well as the Global North context, while the Latin American section of IE features multilingual books and references. Searching sites of large publishers such as Routledge, Multilingual Matters, and joining organizations like the International Society for the Advancement of Writing Research (n.d.), ALES: Latin American Association of Writing Studies in Higher Education and Professional Contexts (n.d.), European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (n.d.), and the Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Alliance (n.d.), as well as associated transnational listservs will take one to scholars, conferences, scholarship and conversations that can help to shift

one's scholarly worldview. Once the scholarship is read, it needs to be included through citation. Our chapter here, directed primarily to a wide Global North audience, has intentionally cited both recognized translingual and decolonial scholars as well as scholarship not as well known outside of the US.

*A second tension*, which connects to the first, challenges us to discuss language beyond its theoretical dimension alone by acknowledging its embodied, material dimension. Decolonial theory, in fact, encourages us to move away from “graphocentric” to geopolitical orientations toward language that acknowledge the role of the body and material conditions (e.g., Baca, 2009; Canagarajah, 2024). Lisa R. Arnold (2021) furthered this point, arguing that we should conceive of different lived experiences of language more concretely as “weight,” a term that, she argued, emphasizes “the value attached” to language as “experienced on the ground by all language users,” which “produces material consequences in everyday life” (p. 190). To account for this understanding in terms of publishing, we suggest that editors and reviewers adopt a collaborative orientation, in which the body and biography of authors are invited into the editorial process. For example, we see value in Canagarajah's (2024) suggestion—made in the context of writing pedagogy but just as applicable in the publishing context—that textual norms and standards should be developed collaboratively. Authors can be encouraged to “draw from their own values and resources” (p. 300) and propose adaptations to editorial norms or policies that will more effectively contextualize their submissions and more fully represent their lived experiences of language. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, authors should not bear the whole burden of explaining their own positionality as in relation to Western dominant practices. In addition, publishers, editors, and reviewers must work to adjust their orientations as readers to contexts outside the Global North and invite voices and perspectives that may be unfamiliar or challenging.

Along these lines, the IE editors have been discussing how editors of multilingual volumes might want the option to identify the editorial choices that construct the collection. Editors of two recent edited collections (Corcoran et al., 2026; Donahue et al, 2025), for example, are including statements about how choosing the languages for different chapters in their collections not only involves a sociolinguistic right for authors but also is an editorial obligation for linguistic social justice in global knowledge exchanges. Such statements or intertextual acknowledgements further make visible our constructed assumptions about language, location, and the “weight” of an individual's relationship, or attachment, to certain language(s) and linguistic forms, all of which influence our uptake and knowledge building as readers and writers. The IE series has also instituted an advisory board comprising scholars from different countries, languages, and rhetorical traditions. With their collaboration, the editorial

group seeks to adapt editorial policies and reviewing practices so that these may more effectively describe submission expectations that fully recognize and invite diverse lived experiences of language.

*A third tension* underlying editorial processes in writing studies, and which connects to the previous two, centers on the risk of uncritically supporting diversity, hybridity, multiculturalism, and multilingualism. Kubota (2016) referred to this uncritical multi/plural turn as a form of “neoliberal multiculturalism” that “assumes color-blindness and support [for] diversity-but only the kind of diversity that privileges the multicultural, hybrid, cosmopolitan (rising) middle class over the monocultural, non-hybrid, parochial working class” (p. 488). In other words, as editors and reviewers we should be careful that our openness to linguistic diversity and language difference does not privilege certain forms of difference while neglecting others. We also need to take care not to assume that our approach to social justice is always “emancipatory” or that it is emancipatory for all. Further, we should acknowledge that our liberatory efforts, while well-intentioned, can sometimes reinforce a power differential of the West trying to liberate “the rest.”

Those of us who are situated in the Global North and committed to linguistic social justice and anti-racist or decolonial efforts in our editorial work can unwittingly reinforce power differentials when we expect authors (from both the Global South and the Global North) to subscribe to these same ideological stances. Accounting for linguistic diversity and assuming a translingual orientation as readers, editors, and reviewers are undeniably important moves, but authors may actively choose to conform to *lingua franca* standards for reasons that are essential to their careers, livelihoods, reputations (and, sometimes even their own decolonial or anti-colonial efforts). As Nancy Henaku (2023) explained in a podcast:

a lot of the time we think that decolonization is this one thing, but decolonization could be different things for different groups based on their own historical relationships with the colonial project. But also, people think if we “do” decolonial work, then [the injustices will] all end. You have to constantly do [the work] because power keeps morphing in different ways in response to new developments. Currently neoliberalism is complicating the ways in which we analyze and experience power in everyday life.

In this regard, doing the work of linguistic equity in publishing (and in other spaces) requires reflexivity, recursivity, and criticality, and the recognition that policy statements are only one part of a much longer project that involves the complex and complicated work of putting statements into practice.

Ultimately, Western traditions are not primary to but are *part of* the international. Writing studies as conceived in the US does not exist in the same way outside of it, and conceptions of what “writing” or “writing pedagogy” means may differ considerably across contexts. Many in our bibliography have compared different writing approaches used by scholars from the Global South to those from the Global North, highlighting the “way the burdens of writing, relevance, and theory production are distributed along patterns of global inequality” (Ergin & Alkan, 2019, p. 259). Editorial work in and outside of the Global North must recognize the limitations of our approaches and definitions and seek out complexifications across borders.

## **CHANGE IS COMPLICATED AND SLOW: STEPS WE CAN TAKE**

Scholars from the Global North do not often feel compelled to offer rich descriptions of our local contexts or to qualify the value of our claims—unless asked. Those deeply enculturated in Western rhetorical and structural conventions tend to assume that readers are positioned similarly, are (or will become) familiar with the dominant standards and will understand these as privileged and universal, not tied to geography or national origin. To change these assumptions, we editors and reviewers must first reflect on our own participation in maintaining the power of global academic hierarchies which are perpetuated throughout the publication process. And, as we have argued here, we must work within our own spheres of influence to counter these systemic hierarchies by continually making them visible (see Ergin & Alkan, 2019).

Editors and reviewers can do this by:

- seeking out, prioritizing, and learning from North-South and South-South collaborations;
- pushing publishers, and reviewers and readers, to be open to scholarship from the Global South and, further, not to question why authors are citing this scholarship (as Global South and non-Anglo authors widely report);
- reading and citing non-English articles in Global North publications to encourage multiple views and inclusion in citation indexes;
- working with translations both to and from dominant languages to explore the situatedness of research traditions, methods, questions, articulations;
- attending conferences outside of our comfort zones and taking time to listen and engage in conversations outside of sessions (i.e., don’t dominate); and

- hosting webinars that address the value of plurilingual publications and research; that explore an issue from international perspectives; that take up terms and unpack them from a dialogic transnational perspective, the term “linguistic social justice,” for example.

As Federico Navarro explicitly stated (Lillis, et.al. 2022), changing academic publishing practices “is a political call for social justice in global research ... “ not an erasure of any voice, but a rich “cross-fertilization between nations, languages and identities” (47-47.16). That cross-fertilization, that kind of rich exchange, requires decentering Global North perspectives and policies, reorienting Western readerly dispositions and habituated publishing practices, dwelling *in* the borders while reading *across* borders and languages, reflexive practice and collaborative action. Realizing linguistic social justice means acknowledging the tensions and complexities around the idea itself and then moving forward, incrementally and mindfully, towards change.

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CHAPTER 8.

BEYOND THE BINARY: USING  
CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS  
TO NAVIGATE CONVENTIONS  
FOR ANTIRACIST WAC

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*Abstract.* Through an antiracist lens, this chapter explores the challenges of addressing language conventions in writing across the curriculum (WAC). Drawing on empirical research and critical language awareness (CLA), the authors challenge the binary of either teaching conventions as assimilationist or avoiding them altogether. They propose “critical transparency” as a “both/and” approach and argue for explicit instruction in conventions alongside critical examination of their origins, impacts, and alternatives. The chapter provides examples of critical transparency in WAC contexts and offers a heuristic centered on agency, access, asset, and advocacy to guide practitioners in implementing CLA principles.

Though scholars of color have long noted the need for greater attention to racial equity in writing studies (Pimentel, 2021), calls for antiracist work have never been more prominent (e.g., Association for Writing Across the Curriculum, 2020; Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2020; Inoue, 2019). The need for racial justice work is especially pressing in writing across the curriculum (WAC), which is dominated by White administrators and has historically paid less attention to race than other subfields of writing studies (Anson, 2012; Lerner, 2018). While coordinating with disciplinary faculty on racial equity work can pose challenges, it is also an important opportunity to extend antiracist pedagogy across campuses. Thus, practical strategies for this work are especially needed.

Our own scholarly work speaks to this moment in WAC. Jessa Wood’s empirical research examines how WAC administrators at institutions across

the US are adopting antiracist/racial equity-oriented approaches to WAC and disseminating antiracist and inclusive pedagogies across their campuses (Wood, 2024). She found that most participants reported actively engaging in at least some antiracist work in their programs. However, many were not fully satisfied with their efforts: 77 percent felt that their programs were not doing enough to address systemic racism on their campuses. One particular challenge cited by participants was the complexity of navigating discussions of linguistic conventions with disciplinary writing faculty. Selected findings from this study will be unpacked later in this chapter.

Through this research, Wood connected with Shawna Shapiro, whose work focuses on critical language awareness (CLA) approaches to writing pedagogy (e.g., Shapiro, 2022). Together, we began to identify ways that CLA might provide framing and approaches to help WAC/WID instructors and administrators engage critically with writing conventions, helping nuance a problematic binary framing of complete assimilation or avoidance as our only options for addressing conventions. This framing, we argue, hinders antiracist WAC work.

This chapter is the outgrowth of those conversations. We begin with a brief introduction to Wood's study and to CLA. We identify student *agency* as a shared core goal of both antiracist WAC and CLA writing pedagogy. We then share findings from Wood's research indicating that many WAC administrators view teaching about conventions, particularly conventions of standardized written English, as an assimilationist practice that hinders student agency. This viewpoint can create tensions with disciplinary faculty, who more frequently view teaching conventions as a means of increasing students' agency as participants in academic disciplines. We note that some WID practitioners have already begun adopting more nuanced approaches to conventions in their work with disciplinary faculty.

These findings suggest the need for a nuanced approach to both linguistic and disciplinary conventions—an endeavor in which, we argue, CLA may be helpful. We offer the concept of *critical transparency*, informed by CLA's pragmatic yet progressive orientation, as a way to give students access to conventions *and* critically contextualize those conventions. We provide examples of transparency in action within various WAC contexts and conclude with a heuristic of questions centered around four values—agency, access, asset, and advocacy—which can support other practitioners in using CLA to pursue antiracist and linguistically just WAC work.

## **BACKGROUND ON WOOD'S STUDY OF WAC ADMINISTRATORS' APPROACHES TO ANTIRACIST WORK**

Throughout this chapter, we draw on findings from Wood's IRB-approved empirical research, which utilized a survey and semi-structured interviews with

WAC administrators from diverse institutions across the US. Questions explored how participants understood the role of racial equity work in WAC, whether/how they worked to promote racial equity in their programs, and what, if any, challenges they faced in that work.

The 45 participants brought a range of backgrounds, identities, and roles, including wide-ranging years of WAC experience, educational backgrounds, self-reported expertise in antiracist/DEIJ work, and position types. Participants worked in a range of institutions and program types: a mix of public and private institutions, representing all U.S. geographic regions, ranging from community colleges to large R1s: 81.8 percent of participants worked at predominantly White institutions, while 25.0 percent worked at minority-serving institutions (MSIs). Notably, the participants were all White (88.4%) and Asian (11.6%). This sample is likely fairly representative of racial demographics in the field of WAC (Wood, 2024), but it's nevertheless important to note that the study primarily captures White perspectives. In interpreting the data, we primarily use participant perspectives to identify challenges faced by *some* practitioners in order to offer potential solutions for those experiencing similar struggles on their campuses, without suggesting that these trends necessarily hold for all WAC programs or practitioners or that participants represent the full range of possible antiracist perspectives or interventions.

For the larger study, the data were open coded using a modified grounded theory methodology (Wood, 2024). In this text, because we found alignment between CLA and participants' conceptions of their work, we read Wood's findings in conversation with CLA, with a focus on how participants spoke to faculty about the connections between writing conventions and student agency.

## **BACKGROUND ON CLA: A PRAGMATIC AND PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO LANGUAGE**

The term "critical language awareness" (CLA) dates back to the late 1980s and was coined by linguists and literacy scholars to reference an instructional approach that attends explicitly to the social and political aspects of language (Janks, 2010; Shapiro, 2022). CLA pedagogy has been adapted for a variety of classroom settings, including English language arts, world/heritage instruction, and English for academic or professional purposes (Shapiro & Lorimer Leonard, 2023). It is only recently that CLA has been taken up in college writing (e.g., Hankerson, 2022; Shapiro, 2022), and there has been very little attention to CLA in WAC (Shapiro, 2023).

Ideologically, a CLA approach to writing pedagogy aims to be both *pragmatic* and *progressive*, pushing against binary thinking about linguistic justice

that tends to position teaching about conventions as in direct opposition to creating space for resistance. This orientation is rooted in an intellectual tradition known as “critical pragmatism” (Ruecker & Shapiro, 2020). With a CLA approach, students receive explicit instruction in standardized language and other written conventions, and have opportunities to contextualize, critique, and at times resist those conventions (e.g., Gere et al., 2021). This nuanced, “both/and” approach to conventions is particularly helpful in the context of WAC/WID, where most disciplinary faculty expect students to recognize and use disciplinary genres and norms, as well as to follow conventions of Standardized Written English (SW). As Shapiro (2023) explains in her discussion of “Why WAC Needs CLA”:

A CLA approach suggests that we—and our students—do not have to choose between elevating or rejecting academic norms and linguistic standards. Rather, we “work with the tensions” ... around those norms and standards ... so that students have the tools they need *both* to use [those] conventions *and* to critique and even resist those conventions, when they choose to do so. (p. 86, emphasis original)

Or, to put it more succinctly, using framing from Black/African American rhetorics scholar Carmen Kynard (2021): We must teach students from diverse language backgrounds to “play the game” without “letting the game play you.”

## CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE BETWEEN CLA AND ANTIRACIST APPROACHES

Both CLA and antiracist approaches are grounded in a commitment to writer *agency*—i.e., the ability to make informed choices about one’s own writing and languaging practices. Both recognize that uncritically expecting use of SWE can hinder agency for users of other, minoritized language varieties (Young et al., 2018), particularly Black language users (Baker-Bell, 2020). These approaches both emphasize how writing policies and pedagogies can (re)center the agency of multilingual and multidialectal writers by celebrating and building on the linguistic and cultural assets students bring to the classroom.

Where CLA approaches differ from many antiracist approaches to writing pedagogy, including in WAC, is in their orientation to conventions. Given the close historical relationship between teaching and enforcing conventions, antiracist scholars often frame emphasizing conventions as an inherently assimilationist, and therefore harmful, endeavor (e.g., Green & Condon, 2020; Inoue,

as cited in Lerner, 2018; Villanueva, 2011). When conventions are studied as part of an antiracist WAC curriculum, the emphasis is often on challenging or resisting those conventions (e.g., García de Müeller & Cortés Lagos, 2023). Such critiques lead many faculty to conclude that they should minimize attention to sentence-level language altogether in order to avoid privileging particular dialects or penalizing students for their language backgrounds (MacDonald, 2007; Micciche, 2004; Pawlowski, 2024)—a response that Zoe Esterly et al. (2023) call an “avoidance approach.” We see avoidance frames as the consequence of a binary approach to conventions that leads practitioners to see any instruction in and around conventions as inherently incompatible with student agency and respect for students’ linguistic assets.

A CLA approach raises the possibility of revising this binary thinking, promoting a “both/and approach” to language (and other) conventions that is both pragmatic and progressive. It suggests that, as part of increasing students’ agency, we can offer instruction in conventions and opportunities for informed decision-making around, feedback on, and reflection about use of conventions as a means of expanding—but not replacing—students’ existing linguistic repertoires (Shapiro et al., 2016; Shapiro & Perrault, in press). We find a CLA approach particularly well-suited to WAC work, which involves navigating conversations about a variety of disciplinary writing conventions as well as conventions for standardized language use.

## **APPROACHES TO AGENCY AND CONVENTIONS IN PARTICIPANT DATA**

The dynamics described above were salient in data from Wood’s (2024) study, which found a widespread emphasis on agency, often understood as resistance to convention. For example, one typical interviewee explained that she centers students’ “authorship identity,” saying students should “get to pick how they present themselves” (Wood, 2024, p. 171). Another participant (not quoted in the original text) described “giving the student the voice and the agency” as an alternative to WAC’s “assimilationist” roots.

An avoidance approach was common among participants as a way of responding to questions about conventions from disciplinary writing faculty. One representative participant in the study noted that in their work with WID faculty, they advocated “minimizing any concern with grammar or adherence to standard language,” especially in assessment criteria. Another said that, while they would love for their program to lead more in-depth conversations about dialect with faculty, their primary short-term priority was ensuring faculty are “not providing line edits on grammar.”

For these participants, *decreased* emphasis on language conventions was crucial for respecting students' identities and increasing agency. For example, one participant said:

[Many faculty] always want students to do the standard edited American English, like this very perfect-looking final version of something. And I just want people to realize that we have people from all kinds of backgrounds at our institution ... and understand that you can't really expect that.

Similarly, another participant argued that too much focus on conventions and sentence-level language might reinforce "a system that really reifies a lot of these hegemonic systems of power, ... around language, around race"—i.e., perpetuating, rather than combating, institutionalized racism. These participants' responses reflected the "assimilation vs. avoidance" binary outlined above, where any attention to language conventions is seen as detracting from agency and engaging assimilation.

However, these participants also reported sometimes finding themselves at an impasse with disciplinary faculty who saw teaching conventions as an important piece of students' access to disciplines. For instance, one representative participant noted that, while her colleagues were often initially excited by progressive approaches from scholars such as April Baker-Bell (2020), they voiced concerns that "when [students] get to Dr. So-and-So's class, or when they get to their capstone, or when they submit to this journal as a grad student ... they're going to get pushback on that." Other participants highlighted faculty and/or institutional positions that seemed to demand more prescriptive approaches to language: One described "a continual pressure to 'prepare students for the workforce,' which is communicated as forcing students to learn EAE [edited American English]."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, participants noted that students themselves may want access to "the dominant canon, the dominant forms of writing" (as one put it) in order to achieve their academic, professional, or personal goals. These responses highlight the high stakes of resisting conventions in many rhetorical situations, which render exclusive avoidance a less appealing instructional strategy for those seeking to empower students.

Thus, data from Wood's study suggested that an avoidance approach to conventions might not be sufficient to sustain effective collaborations with disciplinary writing colleagues, nor to address students' (real or perceived) academic

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1 These tensions are echoed in research by Adrienne Jankens et al. (2023), who found many disciplinary faculty felt torn between "wanting to value non-standard forms" (p. 56) in order to be more inclusive and equitable, "but [being unable to] stop valuing standard forms" (p. 56) because they see faculty with those forms as essential to students' academic and professional success.

needs. These findings suggest that a more nuanced approach to conventions might be necessary for WAC programs to fulfill their curricular mission, which includes the need for pragmatic buy-in and sustained collaboration with disciplinary faculty. At the same time, however, pragmatism should not mean forfeiting a progressive commitment to antiracism and linguistic justice.

## **A MORE NUANCED APPROACH TO DISCIPLINARY CONVENTIONS AMONG WID FACULTY**

Notably, participants in Wood's study were more likely to endorse nuanced approaches to disciplinary conventions than language conventions. This was particularly true of participants whose work aligned more closely with writing in the disciplines (WID) than WAC, since WID has a stronger history of engaging with conventions than WAC, given that it is generally grounded in specific disciplines rather than writing-to-learn across disciplines. Some WID program leaders in Wood's study pointed out that knowledge of disciplinary conventions was important to students' agency as members of academic disciplines and communities, because those conventions reflect disciplinary ways of thinking and interacting. This linkage is well documented in WID scholarship. As Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2022) explain, "composed knowledge, aka writing, reflects epistemologies that circulate within courses and fields," reflecting those communities' "values, cultures, and strategies for learning" (p. 24). Writing practices are also tied closely to disciplinary identity and academic socialization (e.g., Lillis & Harrington, 2015), meaning that as students engage in disciplinary writing, they develop an increased sense of belonging in those fields of study.

Several participants specifically spoke about the need to promote access to disciplinary communities through explicit teaching of conventions, while also leaving open the possibility for resisting or changing conventions. As one participant who identified as a WID scholar explained,

I would say that people in some of the sciences are really struggling, ... authentically, to figure out how permeable their discourse expectations can be, if they're going to continue to participate in the scientific community in the ways they have been ... [given] how the mandate for replicability of process works.

This participant indicated a need to "expand without replacing" disciplinary writing practices by both teaching students current practices and creating opportunities for new approaches. Along similar lines, another participant drew on

Adler-Kassner and Wardle (2022) between providing “access” to disciplines (and disciplinary conventions) as they currently exist and offering students “opportunity” to transform those disciplines/conventions by drawing on their existing assets (p. 8). The participant explained:

Faculty in the disciplines ought to make the discourses and epistemologies more transparent to provide access to the discipline, but also ... provide opportunities for students to bring their individual experiences, language, and commitments to the discipline in ways that might transform it.

In short, some participants in Wood’s study recognized the possibility of a nuanced approach to disciplinary conventions that promotes neither complete conformity nor absolute resistance, recognizing that learning about conventions contributes to academic socialization but can also highlight opportunities for principled resistance. However, when it came to language conventions, participants were less likely to endorse “both/and” approaches, falling instead into the “assimilation vs. avoidance” binary discussed earlier.

## **BEYOND THE BINARY: CRITICAL TRANSPARENCY AS A BOTH/AND APPROACH TO LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS**

One way to think about the findings presented above is that they highlight a shared commitment to student agency, but divergent views on whether and how teaching about conventions is aligned with this commitment. Some participants justified the teaching of disciplinary conventions as a gesture toward access, which is in line with their commitment to equity. But others felt that teaching about conventions—particularly language conventions—was inherently assimilationist and likely did more harm than good, leaving little room for recognizing student assets. These findings suggested a need for a more nuanced approach to language conventions that transcends the assimilation vs. avoidance binary, helping to increase students’ access and agency in line with the goals of antiracism.

In the remainder of this chapter, we offer such an approach, informed by CLA, called *critical transparency*. With this orientation, instructors aim to be as explicit as possible in teaching writing conventions, but they do so in a way that openly acknowledges the contexts, harms, and alternatives for those conventions—especially when it comes to Standardized Written English. In other words, the aim is to demystify the “rules” of writing in a way that includes contextualization and critique. Such an approach leverages the values of agency, access, asset, and advocacy that are at the heart of a CLA approach to language (e.g., Shapiro, 2023) and which we have highlighted in participants’ responses.

Critical transparency allows us to be pragmatic in our writing instruction, since students increase their knowledge about linguistic norms and conventions, while also being progressive, since students gain insight into the origins, impacts, and alternatives to those norms and conventions. That progressive aspect of a CLA approach can and should include invitations for students to draw on their existing linguistic and cultural assets, in keeping with the Adler-Kassner and Wardle’s (2022) notion of “providing opportunities” (p. 8). Moreover, this approach assumes that we are not just helping students to adjust to a static academy. Rather, we need to engage in advocacy work to promote antiracist and linguistically just curricula, instruction, and policies. Again, at the heart of this approach is the “both/and” of teaching students what they need today but also promoting access and justice for tomorrow.

Within the data from Wood’s study, we did identify a few examples of this critical transparency orientation. In addition to the both/and approaches to disciplinary conventions highlighted above, another participant highlighted the danger of teaching genre features in an overgeneralizing and uncritical way—e.g., in saying “This is the way you write an abstract,” or “This is the way you write a lab report,” without “critically interrogating the why of that, and then who’s left out when you insist on having it done that way.” Another participant pointed out that even though her own subfield of technical writing can be highly prescriptive, students appreciate learning that this sort of writing “doesn’t always look the same in every context.” However, many participants also seemed to be uncertain how to enact something like critical transparency in their contexts, even as they grappled with competing desires to promote access and opportunity. We hope that the remainder of this article, which discusses how critical transparency might be put into practice, supports a greater uptake of this approach.

## **APPLYING A CRITICAL TRANSPARENCY APPROACH TO LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS IN WAC/WID**

Critical transparency begins with presenting language conventions in a critical context. This means examining them not as universal “rules” but as cultural norms that reflect particular values and epistemologies. Some of the rhetorical moves we might make in discussing conventions from a critical transparency perspective include:

- Linking conventions to academic cultural values (e.g., highlighting how authors—especially U.S. authors—are expected to show “originality” and/or “contribution” in the language they use to craft thesis statements or to establish a “gap” in scholarship);

- Identifying how conventions vary across disciplines and genres (e.g., Aull, 2015; “Write Like a Scientist” website);
- Identifying the rhetorical and epistemological purpose of conventions through a rhetorical grammar approach (e.g., Salvatore, 2021);
- Historicizing conventions, so students know where they come from and how they get reified and perpetuated (e.g., Aull & Shapiro, 2023) and identifying how academic writing changes over time (e.g., Brennan, 2024; “Scientific,” 2016);
- Recognizing potential problems with current conventions—i.e., Who gets excluded? What gets lost?
- Looking at cases of resistance to current conventions (e.g., academic writing that incorporates non-dominant languages and dialects; emerging contexts where translanguaging and dialectical variety are more accepted, such as writing for public audiences or multilingual publishing).

Another way we can increase students’ awareness and knowledge of language conventions is by encouraging rhetorical reading of disciplinary (or other) texts with particular attention to writers’ language choices (e.g., Aull & Shapiro, 2025). As they read, students might consider questions like these:

- What linguistic patterns seem “built in” to this genre of writing, and why? What are the affordances and constraints of these linguistic choices (e.g., the use of passive voice in “methods” sections is meant to convey objectivity, but can be clunky and can obscure researcher positionality; see Inzunza, 2020)?
- How does this author’s language compare to others we’ve read?
- What is a quote from the text that you thought was particularly well-worded? What made it effective?
- Are there places where the author could have used language that was clearer, more concise, and/or more accessible? (see Shapiro & Aull, 2023, for more on accessible language in writing)
- How do this author’s racial and other identities and/or privileges affect how their choices might be received by audiences—especially if they are challenging conventions?
- What is a linguistic strategy you could experiment with in your writing? How might this strategy impact your audiences? What risks might be involved?

As an extension of this process, students might also critically analyze existing style guides to see what values and assumptions underlie their recommendations, and/or work individually or as a group to create a “style guide” identifying

conventions they find important (e.g., always capitalizing “Black” when used as a racial identity/category, as is recommended in some citation formats, such as APA). In reflective memos on their writing, students can also be asked to answer similar questions about their own writing in reflective writing such as a reflective memo about their draft.

A critical transparency approach also makes space for some assignments that invite students to break with conventions, through mixing codes or genres. For their own writing classes, Shapiro and Wood have designed assignments in which students write for an audience outside the academy, in which case they will likely *not* follow disciplinary conventions and may incorporate language varieties other than standardized English (see Chapter 7 of Shapiro, 2022, for examples). However, this approach does not mean the writing is a “free-for-all.” Instead, students must investigate the typical conventions for their chosen genre and audience and explain their choices to follow or break with those conventions.

Critical transparency can also inform how we respond to student writing—a major concern for many of Wood’s participants, who noticed that disciplinary faculty sometimes engaged in harsh critiques of student language. A critical transparency approach encourages faculty to be thoughtful and explicit about *whether* and *why* we are responding to students’ linguistic choices in their writing—a decision that varies depending on the nature of the assignment and on where the student is in the writing process (Shapiro & Perrault, in press). Shapiro urges faculty to focus on language choices that impact clarity (e.g., inconsistent verb tenses, lack of subject/verb agreement, and use of the wrong form of a word, such as the adjective “economic” when the noun “economy” is needed). She invites them to spend less time on choices that are less central to clarity—e.g., missing articles (*a, an, the*), which can be ignored or maybe noted as a general pattern (Shapiro, 2022). Of course, for high stakes writing, such as a graduate school application, faculty may wish to flag all unconventional language choices but allow the student to make the “edits” themselves, honoring their agency.

Although disciplinary faculty may not adopt all of these pedagogical applications, we can help to promote critical (and transparent!) conversations about language and convention even in small ways. For example, Wood worked with a faculty member in biology to identify key language-related debates in her discipline, including calls to move away from the colonial terms “old world” and “new world” to refer to species, and an increased use of the first-person (I, we) to acknowledge observational subjectivity. They discussed benefits from students’ learning of these (evolving) conventions as a means of increasing access to disciplinary learning and promoting their agency as scientific writers. Shapiro has had conversations with many faculty about the shifting language conventions in their fields and has developed a list of “bad academic metaphors”—i.e., analogies

that were used in the past—particularly in writing for public audiences—but have been problematized more recently among specialists in the field. Examples of this include the use of “war” to talk about public health (e.g., “war on drugs”) and the use of “melting pot” (versus “salad bowl,” for example) as a metaphor for diverse communities (Shapiro, 2022).

## CONCLUSION AND HEURISTIC

We hope this article has provided useful insights about how WAC administrators and faculty can address both disciplinary and language conventions with greater confidence and efficacy, in order to enact our commitment to racial and linguistic justice in pragmatic and progressive ways. We offer the heuristic below as a resource that can be used by administrators and instructors to reflect on how they might take up a CLA approach in their WAC work, centered around four CLA values: access, agency, asset, and advocacy. Although we have focused primarily on curriculum and instruction in this chapter, the value of advocacy encourages us to consider relevance as well to institutional policy-making, resource development, and even support for faculty in their own writing-all activities that fall within the purview of some WAC programs. Readers interested in more CLA-oriented resources—as well as opportunities for online conversation on these topics—may wish to visit <https://clacollective.org/>.

### HEURISTIC: CLA REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR WAC FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

#### Access

- How can I be transparent, explicit, *and* critical in talking about disciplinary norms/conventions?
- How can I help students understand academic disciplines as linguistic communities, to support students’ socialization into the academy?

#### Agency

- Where might I create opportunities for students to practice informed, supported decision-making as language users?
- How can I help students assess the benefits and risks of challenging academic norms and conventions in a range of contexts?
- How can I tailor my feedback and assessment practices to increase students’ capacity and confidence in evaluating the impact of their linguistic and rhetorical choices?

## Asset

- How can I take my students' goals, experiences, and interests into account in curriculum design and instruction?
- How might I broaden the range of genres, codes, and styles of communication included in my course materials, activities, and assignments?

## Advocacy

- How can I advocate for more equitable and inclusive structures and practices at my institution, so that the burden of adjustment is not on students alone?
- How might I contribute to linguistic equity and inclusion in my own scholarly communication and disciplinary participation?

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CHAPTER 9.

CONNECTING RACIAL AND  
LINGUISTIC IN/JUSTICE  
IN WRITING ACROSS THE  
CURRICULUM: TOWARD A  
RACIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

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*Abstract.* In WAC scholarship, relatively little attention has been paid to the mutually constitutive relationship between the two goals of achieving racial justice and linguistic justice. This chapter responds to this exigency by proposing the adoption of a raciolinguistic perspective in the teaching of writing across the curriculum, and in the design and implementation of WAC programming.

At a moment when attacks on DEI are having a chilling effect on institutional support for inclusive teaching, WAC programs must not only reaffirm their commitments to racial and linguistic justice, but also model policies and pedagogical practices across disciplines that actively support diverse student voices. Recent scholarship has addressed racial justice in writing across the curriculum (Condon & Young, 2016; Inoue & Poe, 2012) as well as linguistic justice in WAC (Matsuda, 2012; Zawacki & Cox, 2014), but less attention has been paid to the mutually constitutive relationship between racial and linguistic justice. Understanding this relationship through the lens of raciolinguistic ideologies—a theoretical framework from educational linguistics—highlights the fact that meaningful change requires treating racial and linguistic justice as interconnected goals, neither of which can be fully realized in isolation. By foregrounding a raciolinguistic approach, WAC programs can both address inequities in the present and imagine a new path forward, one in which WAC programs can play a key role in affirming and supporting the languaging practices of all students in writing classrooms across disciplines.

This chapter discusses why it is so critical to understand the social and ideological constructions of race and language as interrelated phenomena, drawing

on a historical analysis of how deficit perspectives have shaped writing pedagogy to first address how raciolinguistic ideologies show up in the values that sit at the heart of WAC work and then describe how the raciolinguistic theoretical lens offers a way to understand the harm that instructors teaching writing may unintentionally be enacting on students through linguistic racism. It will conclude by offering some ideas for operationalizing a raciolinguistically informed approach to WAC and reflecting on how this framework can help us envision a more inclusive future for both writing across the curriculum and higher education more broadly.

## **THE AFFORDANCES OF A RACIOLINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES FRAMEWORK**

The term “raciolinguistic ideologies” stems from a theoretical framework developed by Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) to describe and uncover the mutual co-construction of ideas about race and language, or in other words, the way that language ideologies—the beliefs and attitudes people hold about language and language users—are shaped by racial hierarchies that determine whose languages hold power and privilege. Here, Rosa and Flores (2017) outline five components of a raciolinguistic theoretical perspective:

- Historical and contemporary colonial conaturalizations of race and language,
- Perceptions of race and linguistic difference,
- Regimentations of racial and linguistic categories,
- Racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages, and
- Contestations of racial and linguistic power formations (p. 3)

The raciolinguistic perspective offers a way of analyzing race and language together, rather than as discrete and disconnected social processes, in order to uncover how race and language function as proxies for one another (Alim, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). In this way, the raciolinguistic theoretical framework helps make visible the consequential ways in which the linguistic production of people racialized as non-white is perceived through the white gaze, referred to by Rosa and Flores (2015) as the “white listening subject.” The white listening subject describes an ideological position that “is not always just listening, nor is it only white. [Rather, it] refers to those who inhabit positions of institutionalized power that are produced and maintained, on the one hand, through structures of white supremacy, and on the other hand, through modes of perceiving and apprehending language, including but not limited to listening” (García et al., 2021, p. 8). The raciolinguistic theoretical perspective,

then, can be used to reveal how the language production of people who are linguistically and racially minoritized, when perceived from the ideological position of the white listening subject, is ideologically constructed as inferior and inappropriate in formal settings, and to uncover the raciolinguistic ideologies responsible for this perception.

While the raciolinguistic theoretical perspective has been taken up in educational research and K12 pedagogy related to resisting deficit discourses and linguistic racism, particularly in bilingual education programs and world language instruction, it has not yet been widely applied in writing studies or in WAC. However, the framework of raciolinguistic ideologies has significant potential for productively building on the work of scholars who have long been attending to the interconnections between language and race in how we teach writing and administrate writing programs, including Geneva Smitherman (1986), Victor Villanueva (1993), Vershawn Ashanti Young (2010), Keith Gilyard (2011), Carmen Kynard (2014), Staci Perryman-Clark (2014), Asao B. Inoue (2015), April Baker-Bell (2020) and many others. Moreover, while multiple frameworks intended to work toward racial and linguistic justice have emerged out of or been taken up in writing studies—such as theories of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2016; Horner et al., 2011) that position difference in linguistic practices as an asset and a resource, and critical language awareness pedagogies (Britton & Lorimer Leonard, 2020; Shapiro, 2022; Wood & Shapiro, 2026) that promote students' agency to make their own choices about how to deploy their linguistic resources—the literature shows a need for pedagogical strategies that attend to the enmeshed problem of linguistic racism through multiple interconnected methods. A raciolinguistic ideologies framework can extend other methods by addressing how the perceptions of our linguistic practices are inextricably linked to the ways in which we are racialized and draws specific attention to the fact that these processes must be attended to simultaneously. Moreover, this framework helps to build on and extend on prior work taking a critical perspective and racialized lens towards WAC programming and practices, such as Donna LeCourt's (1996) argument for a less hegemonic and more critical reimagining of WAC; Michelle Hall Kells' (2007) promotion of a conceptualization of WAC that accounts for community knowledge-making practices; Villanueva's (2011) criticisms of assimilationist policies in writing instruction; Jamila M. Kareem's (2020) advocacy for culturally sustaining pedagogies in WAC; and Perryman-Clark's (2023) call for prioritizing diversity and inclusion in faculty development. In particular, a raciolinguistic theoretical approach to WAC helps address Mya Poe's (2013) argument for "mak[ing] race a meaningful part of our discussions about teaching writing across the curriculum" (p. 3) through attending to racial and linguistic in/justice as interconnected, as well as acknowledging

how the assumptions and expectations we bring to the writing classroom are shaped by raciolinguistic ideologies. Thus, rather than supplanting previous theoretical frameworks and critical work in WAC, a raciolinguistic ideologies theoretical perspective approach to the work of teaching writing and administering writing programs like WAC initiatives can work in concert with them.

## **LINGUISTIC RACISM AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS WITH MINORITIZED RACIAL IDENTITIES AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS**

Specifically, a raciolinguistic ideologies framework can help call attention to the ideologies at work in the operationalization of linguistic racism in the teaching of writing, as well as the harm linguistic racism enacts on students. Linguistic racism is racism based on one's linguistic practices, resulting from raciolinguistic ideologies that frame standardized English rooted in white-centric linguistic norms as legitimate while viewing other linguistic practices—usually those of people racialized as non-white—as illegitimate. It occurs as a consequence of the raciolinguistic ideologies that, according to Flores and Rosa (2015), “conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices ... even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects” (p. 150). Linguistic racism highlights the fact that the consequences of language use are starkly different for different students according to their linguistic and racial identities: Writers whose ways of languaging already adhere closely to standardized English experience clear linguistic privileges in U.S. writing classrooms, while writers whose ways of languaging do not will often experience devastating consequences. As a result of linguistic racism, students who bring diverse linguistic repertoires to the writing classroom must frequently confront stereotypes, racial scripts and categories, labeling, and other deficit discourses and narratives of inferiority, which occur in the form of powerful myths and norms surrounding language use and writing that constrain learning and work to disenfranchise these students. In the writing classroom, linguistic racism can result in students from marginalized linguistic backgrounds feeling fearful and inadequate, and experiencing a lack of belonging as a result of their “limited possibilities for engagement, involvement, and inclusion” (Zamel, 1995, p. 512). In addition to impacting learning and academic success, linguistic racism also negatively affects students' socioemotional well-being, causing shame, insecurity, low self-esteem, depression, social anxiety, and even suicidal ideation (De Costa, 2020; Dovchin, 2020). To mitigate these harmful effects, students who experience linguistic racism often must engage in sociolinguistic labor, which is “the physical, emotional,

and psychological effort put into deploying sociolinguistic resources in a way that is meant to satisfy others” (Holliday & Squire, 2021, p. 4). This labor may look like code-switching (i.e., switching to a different, more accepted way of languaging for a particular context) or other forms of self-monitoring (Holliday & Squires, 2021). Students might also safeguard against negative instructor feedback tied to their linguistic choices by turning to AI writing technologies like ChatGPT to modify their writing to fit dominant norms (Barrot, 2023).

## LINGUISTIC RACISM IN WRITING INSTRUCTION AND WAC

As a result of their far-reaching societal influence, raciolinguistic ideologies have played a fundamental role in the development of deficit discourses in U.S. educational spaces, from K-12 through higher education. When taking a historical perspective on the development of writing studies as a discipline and in WAC specifically, the influence of raciolinguistic ideologies is evident. Writing studies emerged as a site of research and pedagogy against a backdrop of social change and political events which made higher education available to many groups who had not previously had the opportunity to attend: Women were admitted following a social movement to redefine women’s education more broadly; working class men were admitted as a consequence of WWI and WWII casualties; non-traditional students were able to enroll because of the G.I. Bill; international students enrolled in U.S. universities as Germany became a less attractive destination for higher education after WWII; and the civil rights movement of the 1960s led to open admissions policies that made higher education available to students of color. These gradual steps toward increasing diversity in higher education were generally not predicated on the value of inclusivity; rather, they were largely the result of economic decisions intended to increase enrollment in response to decreasing numbers of “ideal” college applicants: upper class white men. While many students with linguistically and racially minoritized identities still benefited from increased access to higher education, their presence in the writing classroom was accompanied by deficit discourses positioning their writing as unacademic, and composition as a discipline was largely borne out of the goal of remediating their linguistic practices (Matsuda, 2012). At the same time, the writing across the curriculum movement, too, began as a way to increase equity and access, yet had a similar goal of assimilation through remediation (Russell, 2002).

In 1974, the adoption of the Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) marked a disciplinary move towards greater acceptance of

these linguistic practices. This resolution resulted in part from a social turn in writing studies as a whole, influenced largely by scholarship in sociolinguistics, which saw writing and meaning-making coming to be regarded as social and cultural—rather than merely cognitive—processes (Coxwell-Teague & Lunsford, 2014). Smitherman (1999), one of the authors of SRTOL, attributes its writing primarily to a growing movement toward more disciplinary attention to race, which culminated in the formation of a committee to draft a policy document related to students' dialects. The resulting resolution argued that:

the idea of an objective, standard American dialect is a myth; the labeling of particular language varieties as unacceptable amounts to political dominance; the national disposition should bend toward pride in cultural diversity and preservation of the dialects representative thereof; and teachers need appropriate preparation to execute properly a teaching mandate driven by descriptive language study rather than by linguistic prescriptivism. (Gilyard, 2011, p. 94)

While responses to SRTOL were mixed (Gilyard, 2011), a central legacy of SRTOL is that from the point of its adoption, it was clear that racially and linguistically minoritized students—and by extension the raciolinguistic ideologies that shape how we teach students to write—could no longer be ignored.

Since then, the assumption of difference as deficit in writing pedagogy is not as overt as it once was. Significant strides have been made toward racial and linguistic inclusion in writing studies as a discipline, particularly in recent years through the work of scholars such as Inoue, Kynard, Baker Bell, and many others. However, despite a growing shift toward support of students' own languages in the writing classroom, the legacy of remediation remains "ideological in its pervasiveness" (Jordan, 2012, p. 26). Today, SRTOL is largely viewed as a promise unfulfilled—its possibilities "always imagined, and yet never fully achieved" (Kynard, 2014, p. 230)—and despite a growing shift toward recognition and support of students' own languages in WAC and writing studies, individual instructors often still struggle to ensure students' right to their own ways of languaging and resist the reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies in their teaching. As a result of tacit policies that have tended to position adherence to standardized English as the definition of effective writing, college writing courses—both within writing programs and across disciplines—continue to act as racial and linguistic gatekeepers as well as ideological checkpoints through the ways in which they work to bring students' ways of languaging into alignment with raciolinguistic ideals (Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Jordan, 2012; Sanchez & Branson, 2016).

## THE ENACTMENT OF LINGUISTIC RACISM IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

As a result of this ongoing pressure to conform to linguistic norms that they experience in the writing classroom, students from marginalized racial and linguistic backgrounds must constantly navigate these ongoing tensions as they negotiate their linguistic practices in ways that linguistically privileged students are rarely required to do (Bou Ayash, 2016, 2020). These expectations can have detrimental effects on the writing experiences of students with minoritized racial and linguistic identities, exerting influence over how they see themselves as writers, complicating their experiences with language and writing, and reducing their sense of ownership over their own linguistic practices. However, honoring students' own ways of languaging continues to be a site of struggle for many instructors teaching writing, whether in writing programs or across disciplines. Here, I theorize some ways in which the deep entrenchment of raciolinguistic ideologies in the teaching of writing provides avenues for the enactment of linguistic racism through values and beliefs as well as embodied habits of mind, even by instructors who have good intentions.

First, even for instructors who work to enact an antiracist writing pedagogy, the linguistic racism that they anticipate students will experience in other courses or later on in professional contexts often presents a paradox, one which has perhaps been most accurately described by Poe and Inoue (2016), who ask: "How can we engage in fostering a more just society within our classrooms or programs ... when we know that most outside our programs and classrooms will assess our students' writing in vastly different ways, often to our students' detriment, often in contradiction to the lessons we offer them about language and its valuing?" (p. 125). However, in attempting to ensure that students are prepared for "the real world" in which they will encounter linguistic racism, instructors are often instead active participants in the social and ideological construction of that world. Instructors' desire to ensure that students are prepared for the linguistic racism they will encounter elsewhere has been conceptualized by Lisa Delpit (1988) as teaching students the "codes of power," which holds that acquisition of standardized English provides students—particularly students with minoritized identities—with upward mobility and societal success. Even instructors who advocate for the acceptance of non-standardized forms of languaging in academic and professional spaces often believe that standardized English should still be taught because of its perceived power and cultural capital (Inoue, 2015; Perryman-Clark, 2014). However, these arguments are based on the belief that only the use of standardized English counts as linguistic legitimacy and can lead to academic and professional success, and that other Englishes are less communicative

and therefore less useful or valid in academic or professional contexts (Inoue, 2015; Young, 2013). Moreover, they presuppose that linguistically and racially minoritized individuals can easily circumvent linguistic racism by adopting standardized English, a perspective which not only buys into the myth that positions standardized English as an ideal (Lippi-Green, 2011), but also ignores the ideological nature of standardized English and the reality that adherence to it will not prevent them from being perceived through the exclusionary lens of the white listening subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In this way, writing instruction that is predicated on providing students with minoritized identities with the codes of power is “not empowering ... but rather a mechanism for ... support[ing] the raciolinguistic status quo” (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 22).

Another way of enacting linguistic racism—one which is both common and deceptively benign—is the result of the concept of appropriateness, which functions as a racializing discourse through which standardized English is conceptualized as a neutral and objective linguistic practice, one which stands alone as the accepted and appropriate norm for academic settings, while non-standardized linguistic practices are perceived as inappropriate and unacademic. Appropriateness reifies racial inequality through supposedly neutral and normative standards which, in reality, burden racially and linguistically minoritized students with the task of performing whiteness in their language use. Again, the concept of appropriateness rests on the false assumption that individuals racialized as non-white need only modify their linguistic practices to match standardized English in order to be read as appropriate, and that by doing so, they can control how they are perceived and interpreted; however, “linguistic stigmatization should be understood less as a reflection of objective linguistic practices than of perceptions that construe appropriateness based on speakers’ racial positions” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 152). When initially proposing the raciolinguistic theoretical perspective, Rosa and Flores (2015) intended to critique such appropriateness-based approaches to language education, which they argue are “implicated in the reproduction of racial normativity by expecting language-minoritized students to model their linguistic practices after the white speaking subject despite the fact that the white listening subject continues to perceive these students’ language use in racialized ways” (p. 151). In working covertly to delegitimize non-standardized Englishes, discourses of appropriateness convey to linguistically and racially minoritized students that the way they communicate in their own communities does not carry equal weight in academic, professional, and other formal writing contexts, and that they must assimilate to white western upper class notions of appropriateness in order to be successful.

One final way in which linguistic racism is often enacted in writing instruction is through the raciolinguistic ideologies that are embodied in one’s habitus

as an instructor—that is, the ways in which our beliefs, judgements, and dispositions are mediated through raciolinguistic ideologies, and how we embody these ideologies in our pedagogies and practices. Kathryn A. Woolard (2020) notes that language ideologies “occur not only as mental constructs ... but also in embodied practices and dispositions ... [They] inhere in what Pierre Bourdieu called the *habitus*, that is the implicit knowledge and ingrained sensibilities that are inscribed in the body through repeated social experience” (2). Inoue (2015) has discussed this phenomenon as it relates to writing pedagogy in his concept of the “white racial habitus,” a term he uses to make visible the ways in which whiteness is entrenched in the embodied subjectivity of pedagogical practices and to foreground the dominant hegemonic discourses underlying writing instruction and assessment. Like the white listening subject, the white habitus is not an identity category but rather a power construct, one which functions as a set of dispositions that are embodied and performed by individuals through actions, languages, practices, judgements, expectations, and discourses. The white racial habitus is a significant factor in how raciolinguistic ideologies come to be reproduced in writing instruction because, as Gilyard (2011) points out, teachers teach tradition—that is, they teach what they have learned and have come to believe to be appropriate and acceptable. Thus, when instructors promote standardized English as the traditionally appropriate norm to which students should aspire, they are enacting linguistic racism and tacitly reifying whiteness through standardized English’s historic connection to privilege and power through whiteness (Inoue, 2015). However, while raciolinguistic ideologies as enacted and embodied through the pedagogical habitus may constitute a less visible form of linguistic racism, it is all the more insidious for that reason. As Hilary Janks (2010) notes, the pedagogical habitus is difficult to change—to do so requires “changing who we are and where we have come from ... [because] our embodied practices are bound up with ingrained beliefs about education and what we value in students” (p. 201)—and as a result, raciolinguistic ideologies as manifested through one’s habitus are particularly deep-rooted.

## **MAKING RACIOLINGUISTIC JUSTICE ACTIONABLE IN WAC**

In writing across the curriculum programs, a raciolinguistic theoretical framework can help to address these enactments of linguistic racism through first prompting us to uncover and confront the tensions resulting from the taken-for-grantedness in the assumptions, beliefs, and values that sit at the heart of writing instruction and writing program administration. For example, Chris M. Anson (2015) describes the concept that writing is a social and rhetorical

activity—that, in other words, students make informed choices when composing in response to a particular audience and rhetorical situation—as one of the core concepts in WAC. However, the reality of the writing classroom is that it exists as a “conditional rhetorical space” (Anson & Dannels, 2004), one in which “students must navigate complex sets of expectations, writing simultaneously ‘through’ a teacher to an imagined or sometimes real external audience, yet ‘to’ the teacher as evaluator of their success in reaching that audience” (Anson, 2015, p. 207). Raciolinguistic ideologies can cause tension in this conditional rhetorical space because many faculty members teaching writing in disciplines across the curriculum have never critically reflected on the implicit norms that inform their expectations and assumptions about writing (Sheriff, 2021). As a result of raciolinguistic ideological paradigms, these expectations and assumptions can retain vestiges of deficit perspective toward linguistically and racially minoritized students that position them as being responsible for their own academic struggles when they deviate from the supposedly neutral norms of standardized English. Thus, in evaluating students’ writing, faculty risk equating linguistic variation in their work with deficiency rather than recognizing it as a reflection of their diverse rhetorical resources, and may unintentionally position students’ linguistic identities as barriers to success rather than as assets.

Taking a raciolinguistic theoretical approach to such tensions would allow WAC programs to make raciolinguistic justice actionable through prompting instructors to interrogate how raciolinguistic ideologies might be shaping their pedagogies, as well as supporting them in working to value students’ diverse linguistic strengths, rather than requiring students with minoritized identities to perform white, middle-class linguistic norms in their writing. Faculty development initiatives can operationalize this approach by inviting instructors to reflect on their own language ideologies, examine how these beliefs shape their expectations for student writing, and engage in critical dialogue about linguistic diversity across disciplines. WAC programs can also advance this work by creating ongoing structures for faculty engagement and reflection, such as interdisciplinary faculty learning communities or working groups that allow instructors to collaboratively identify and challenge the raciolinguistic ideologies shaping their expectations for student writing, and develop inclusive pedagogical approaches that affirm students’ linguistic identities. WAC programs could further rethink the support offered to faculty in curricular design, assignment development, and assessment practices to ensure that writing classrooms across disciplines encourage students to not only draw on their full linguistic repertoires, but also develop greater rhetorical awareness through practicing code-meshing, translanguaging, and other inclusive linguistic strategies. One way such raciolinguistic justice initiatives could be advanced is by engaging faculty in collaboratively

designing writing assignments and activities that help students practice adapting their language choices to diverse rhetorical contexts while maintaining ownership of their voices. Faculty can also be supported in incorporating readings that feature diverse voices, normalize linguistic variation, and attend to how identity and power dynamics shape writers' choices across contexts. To accompany these curricular changes, WAC programs could provide models of alternative assessment approaches such as labor-based grading or reflective self-assessment that more closely align with the goals of raciolinguistic justice. Embedding linguistic justice into faculty development in these and other ways can ensure that writing faculty across disciplines are not only supported in teaching writing more equitably, but also accountable to a shared commitment to enacting practices that resist deficit perspectives and linguistic assimilation.

To support these efforts, WAC programs must further envision the design of their own programs in ways that take a theoretical lens to every level of its work in order to ensure that the support offered to faculty is grounded in program design that reinforces inclusive pedagogical practices across disciplines. For example, revising mission statements to include commitments to raciolinguistic justice or revising program learning outcomes to include goals related to linguistic awareness and linguistic flexibility can ensure that commitments to linguistic and racial justice are not just performative, but also embedded in the structures that guide decision-making and programmatic evaluation. By positioning linguistic diversity as a strength rather than a challenge, WAC programs can become both a site for support in teaching writing across disciplines as well as a catalyst for shifting broader institutional cultures toward valuing a wider range of rhetorical and linguistic practices as legitimate forms of academic communication.

While raciolinguistic justice will necessarily be put into practice in different ways in different institutional and departmental contexts, together these efforts could move WAC programs toward enacting raciolinguistic justice in both pedagogy and program design. However, raciolinguistic ideologies are pervasive and deeply ingrained in the way we think about, talk about, and teach writing, and resisting them will require interrupting the ways in which they are enacted through every part of writing instruction and writing program administration. As Baker-Bell (2020) argues, the process of transforming our programmatic missions, policies, and practices must begin by first challenging ourselves to recognize that “linguistic hierarchies and racial hierarchies are interconnected [and to acknowledge that] ... people’s language experiences are not separate from their racial experiences” (p. 2). Once we begin this process, we can then begin the work of challenging and resisting raciolinguistic ideologies in teaching practices and creating more inclusive and equitable writing instruction across disciplines that values all students’ linguistic practices.

## REIMAGINING WAC THROUGH THE LENS OF RACIOLINGUISTIC JUSTICE

It is important to acknowledge that the barriers to putting raciolinguistic justice into practice in WAC programs are increasing amid anti-DEI measures that are not only constraining our ability to promote racial and linguistic justice in academic spaces, but also threatening the progress that has already been made. However, such resistance only heightens the urgency of this work by reminding us that justice-oriented teaching is not optional, but essential to an inclusive vision for the future of higher education. When instructors who teach writing—regardless of discipline—view the writing of students with minoritized racial and linguistic identities through the lens of appropriateness or require them to adhere to standardized English under the guise of helping them succeed, we are not only complicit in enforcing standards that are linguistically racist, but also failing to recognize and support students' full linguistic and communicative potential and in some cases even doing harm. Put plainly, we cannot be effective or equitable writing instructors without understanding the raciolinguistic ideologies that shape our pedagogies and practices and divesting from raciolinguistic ideologies in our teaching. As WAC stakeholders consider its future directions, it is imperative to trouble the foundations of WAC and the ways we are engaging in working toward equity and inclusion by supporting instructors in understanding the role of raciolinguistic ideologies in fostering deficit beliefs about student writing, critically examining how their assumptions about language and race are impacting their pedagogies and practices, and taking action to resist raciolinguistic ideologies in their teaching in order to affirm and hold space for all students' linguistic practices. Vestiges of colonial perspectives on language and race continue to linger in the way writing is taught and assessed, and enacting a shift in perspective among instructors teaching writing in courses across multiple disciplines, not just within writing programs, will be a critical task if we want to accomplish a more just and inclusive vision of higher education more broadly and to bolster WAC efforts as part of a broader movement toward systemic change (Craig, et al., 2023). By embedding a raciolinguistic theoretical perspective into WAC programming and pedagogy, we can move toward a more just and inclusive vision of writing instruction that truly empowers all students to learn and engage through writing.

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CHAPTER 10.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS  
AND COMPROMISES IN  
INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT:  
CHANGING THE STORY  
OF STUDENT WRITING  
AT A HISPANIC SERVING  
INSTITUTION (HSI)

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*Abstract.* This chapter reflects upon a state university's required writing assessment. The authors argue that the mandates were not based in writing studies best practices. They demonstrate moves, which they refer to as "strategic interventions and compromises," they made throughout the assessment process to make it more aligned with writing assessment scholarship. The authors provide nine heuristic questions aimed at WAC stakeholders to empower them to make similar moves within their own contexts.

Community members of the University of Arizona (UArizona) have been invested in students' writing development for decades, with stakeholders including administrators, faculty, and the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR). In 2020, student writing development re-emerged at both the institutional and state levels. During the implementation of a new writing across the curriculum (WAC)

program at UArizona, ABOR mandated that the three Arizona state universities (Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and UArizona) collaborate on an assessment of student written communication. Over the previous 15 years of UArizona's writing assessments, data results contributed to a misperception that "students can't write." When tasked by the state to design a written communication assessment, the UArizona assessment team—a group of writing experts upholding scholarship debunking these kinds of claims (Wardle, 2019)—discovered that the past assessments were methodologically misaligned to capture students' development and had not been designed with campus writing specialists. In the same way, the upcoming ABOR assessment of student writing favored summative results of students' performance without being contextualized to the needs of our local university (Ewell, 2009) and, worse, seemed likely to reaffirm the institution's perceived student writing crisis. Including the authors and three other writing and assessment specialists, the UArizona assessment team set out to make strategic interventions in the assignment design that was informed by linguistic social justice (Syracuse University College of Arts & Sciences, n.d.). We had three priorities within our local and state contexts: to minimize the harm of accountability assessment (Gallagher, 2011), to counter deficit-minded talk about student writing, and to leverage assessment as an opportunity for WAC faculty development marked by reciprocity.

Although research supports that writing development is non-linear (Driscoll et al., 2020), writing studies scholars have shown that assessments of writing such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment or Voluntary System of Accountability (which had been used by UArizona in 2018) reduce student learning into a decontextualized snapshot (Gallagher, 2011; Wardle, 2019). Results from these kinds of studies can offer institutions metrics for leveraging competition (Gallagher, 2011) but fail to produce a holistic understanding of students' writing development. For the Arizona statewide assessment mandate, ABOR wanted to use an assessment like the Collegiate Learning Assessment or Voluntary System of Accountability, arguing that a standardized assessment could be used to compare students at the three state universities. Writing experts representing each of the three universities argued against this kind of comparison: since the contexts and student populations of each are distinctive, any kind of comparative assessment, especially one developed by a third party with no localized knowledge, would create misleading or false inferences on student performance at one institution versus another.

Ultimately, ABOR and the statewide tri-university writing representatives compromised on the assessment design. First, all three universities agreed to use a nationally-developed rubric, the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) VALUE Written Communication Rubric. This rubric is intended to be modified by individual institutions, so ABOR and the tri-university writing

representatives compromised on a tailored rubric to be used by all three institutions. Second, while all three universities were allowed to select their own artifacts for the assessment, a subset of each were rated by scorers at the other two universities. Throughout this negotiation and subsequent assessment, our UArizona team had to act strategically. Michelle Cox et al. (2018) describe “strategic interventions” (p. 158) as key to integrating sustainable WAC programs in complex systems. We interpreted strategic interventions as opportunities to disrupt the mandated assessment requirements. However, as disruption was not always possible, we made strategic compromises when we could by suggesting alterations to the mandates. Our interventions and compromises sought to move the overall mindset toward linguistic justice for our diverse student body (Perryman-Clark, 2023).

Our UArizona team made many strategic interventions and compromises throughout this assessment project; we have narrowed them to the most salient for WAC administrators across institutional contexts based on the common elements of assessment that many programs experience: assessment design, rater training, and report writing. First, we describe our contributions to the collaboratively tailored AAC&U VALUE Written Communication Rubric. Second, we detail the multimodal, hybrid rater training we created to enhance UArizona raters’ learning development, validity, and reliability. Third, we discuss the UArizona assessment report we collaboratively authored for institutional and state stakeholders. We offer several insights into the assessment’s methods and findings. However, as our strategic intervention asserted, effective assessments are localized, so we, therefore, encourage readers to focus less on our specific results and more on the heuristic questions offered at the end of each section that might be taken up to promote linguistic justice in unique settings.

## CONTEXT

UArizona is one of three four-year public universities in Arizona. It is a large, Research 1 university located in the southwestern United States in Tucson, one hour north of Mexico. UArizona is the state’s flagship land-grant institution, which sits on the Indigenous lands of the O’odham and Yaqui. It is an American Indian and Alaska Native-Serving Institution (AIANSI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). It is governed by ABOR.

In Arizona, like many in United States contexts, assessment of the public institutions involves state-, institutional-, and faculty- level actors. State regents or legislatures mandate policies. Institutions respond in kind with administrative guidelines, sometimes with or without faculty insights. Related to the written communication assessment described here, ABOR mandated the public four-year state universities to work together to design a plan for and carry out

assessment of undergraduate student written communication. The three state universities met frequently along with an ABOR representative. The cross-institutional meetings focused on planning the assessment for consistency across the three universities, which included the measurement instrument, procedures for selecting student written data, methods of assessment, analysis of student written data, and reporting of findings. After these decisions, each institution carried out the collection of student writing, the assessment, and the data analysis at their own campus and then shared an assessment report with ABOR. Taking two and a half years from start to finish, the entire assessment process began in May 2020 and UArizona’s participation concluded with a final institutional report submitted to ABOR in November 2022.

Throughout the process, we advocated for a contextual paradigm of assessment so that procedures and measurement tools aligned with local curricula, instructors, and students, as these are optimum for validity, reliability, and fairness, and to help target specific goals and needs of students (Gallagher, 2014; Inoue, 2015; Mislevy, 2021; Poe & Elliot, 2019; Yancey & Huot, 1997). Table 10.1 presents a snapshot of UArizona students in 2021, and the samples collected for the assessment.

**Table 10.1. Assessment Population**

Academic Career Fall 2021	Number of Students	Student Writing Assessment Samples	Number of Artifacts
Undergraduate	38,528	Early Career (students with fewer than 25 credits)	364
New Undergraduate Transfers	2,639 <sup>a</sup>		
Graduate	10,943		0
Total	49,471		728

<sup>a</sup> Included in the undergraduate total.

### THREE PHASES OF ASSESSMENT

#### PRE-ASSESSMENT: STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS AND COMPROMISES IN RUBRIC DESIGN

In this article, we focus on specific interventions to the process that led to small but impactful activities, with the first intervention being the design of the measurement instrument, or rubric. With the ABOR mandate that state universities develop and implement a cycle of assessment across three public universities, a tri-university assessment working group (henceforth referred to as assessment

working group) was formed with representatives across the three state universities, including WAC specialists. To guide the assessment, ABOR outlined nine parameters, of which four received the most discussion:

- Assessment will permit inferences about the abilities of the general student population.
- Where feasible, assessment will permit judgements about the learning growth experienced by students between their first and final years of undergraduate education.
- Some common instruments of assessment will be used by all Arizona public universities, as agreed upon through inter-institutional deliberation.
- The universities are required to collaborate with one another in the design and administration of some common assessments; however, each university will report assessment activities and findings separately as described below. (Notes from assessment working group, June 2020)

All three universities had to collect written artifacts from early-career students and late-career students while adopting the same methods for scoring and analyzing in response to two research questions: How does the writing of incoming freshmen compare with the writing of students nearing completion of the General Education requirements? What patterns are evident in student writers' accomplishments and challenges that can point to areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement in the General Education curriculum?

Regarding these parameters, members of the assessment working group were first concerned that the new mandate required additional labor without additional resources. Second, the parameters set a precedent for comparative analysis between early-career and late-career students with expectations of making claims that differences between early-career and late-career students would be evidence of exponential growth in writing development (or lack thereof) (Broad, 2003; Gallagher, 2014; Inoue, 2015; Neely, 2018; Poe & Elliot, 2019; Walvoord, 1997). Third, the mandate promoted accountability assessment based on decontextualized, summative results about student performance (Ewell 2009; Gallagher, 2014; Walvoord, 1997). According to Chris W. Gallagher (2011), accountability assessments reduce student achievement into “a lever for institutional accountability and competition, rather than a teaching and learning practice” (p. 451). For WAC specialists, Monica Stitt-Bergh and Thomas Hilgers (2009) explain that external assessments “do not encourage a campus community to ask serious questions about what it is doing, what it should be doing, and how to become a culture focused on ongoing self-improvement through data-driven decision making” (p. 3). At UArizona, WAC specialists harnessed

the assessment mandate as an opportunity to educate our faculty about the complexity of writing and to emphasize student writing strengths.

During the process, assessment working group members (including an ABOR representative, assessment coordinators at each institution, and content knowledge experts, such as the Director of WAC at UArizona) met regularly. Early on, the process of designing a rubric emerged as a site for compromise and potential agency. Cross-institutional dialogue was essential. We deliberated over criteria and benchmark standards. When a prototype rubric was presented by the ABOR representative with little alignment with writing studies research, we proposed the potential for adapting the VALUE Written Communication Rubric because it gives explicit permission to localize Rubrics “into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses” (AAC&U Values Rubric, 2008). UArizona WAC specialists then led the charge for revising the VALUE Written Communication Rubric.

Specifically, we promoted keywords in the rubric to reflect writing studies scholarship on writing development (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015; Yancey et al., 2014). For instance, there was much discussion over the word *genre*. Different stakeholders feared that genre-based assessment would be difficult for training and calibration. Yet, WAC leaders and Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) serving on the assessment working group explained that attention to writing situations and genres aligned well with a process of collecting different types of writing across the disciplines. UArizona successfully argued that genre is an essential threshold concept for writing studies (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015).

An equally important issue related to deemphasizing prescriptive language standards (Baker-Bell, 2020; Inoue & Poe, 2020; Lippi-Green, 2012). One category of the rubric was “Control of Syntax and Mechanics,” which focused on language expression. We argued that the rubric category should omit *error* as a focus. Eliminating phrases like “virtually error-free” or “with few errors,” we offered the following: “The writer sustains *precise attention to* grammar, mechanics, and syntax in a manner consistent with the purpose, audience, and context and that enhances the clarity of the text’s meaning” (emphasis original). The result was a standard that did not focus on errors in syntax, grammar, or mechanics. Throughout the process, we worked to omit a default language of “Standard English” that linguistic social justice scholars show disproportionately harms minoritized language users (Baker-Bell, 2020; Inoue, 2015; Kynard, 2016; Lippi-Green, 2012; Shapiro & Watson, 2022).

Taking several months, the process for designing the tri-university rubric required intentional dialogue from each institution’s representatives and ABOR. Overall, the 2021–2022 Assessment of Written Communication established

rigorous, reflexive, richly contextualized assessment achievable with adequate time, financial support, open communication, and disciplinary expertise.

### Questions for WAC Specialists

The strategic interventions and compromises during pre-assessment showcase adaptability for WAC specialists to consider in their own assessment contexts, such as:

1. What strategies can empower WAC stakeholders to maintain dialogue and deliberation toward shared goals?
2. How can programs resist accountability assessment by creating a cross-institutional coalition?
3. What strategies help reduce a reliance on error frequency in measurement language?

### ASSESSMENT: STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS IN TRAINING AND COMPROMISES IN EXECUTION

As previously stated, we utilized the assessment to provide a common language, resist false comparisons between student groups, and create reciprocal, transferable professional development for faculty. A vertical writing curriculum-structured courses across students' undergraduate careers-is particularly impactful for participants across institutions when there is a shared language and understanding (Anson et al., 2019; Melzer, 2014; Perryman-Clark, 2023). As noted in the rubric decisions above, we centered on the term *genre*, but within our training, we specified further by framing assigned writing as contingent on disciplinarity and metagenres. Metagenres illustrate patterns that highlight ways of knowing and doing-both within and across disciplinary spaces-that are typified within writing (Carter, 2007). Metagenres span disciplines and help instructors see connections between the writing they assign and the writing students experience throughout their academic careers. We used the following table to illustrate metagenres and train reviewers on writing principles present throughout (see Table 10.2).

By focusing on typical rhetorical moves made, reviewers were better able to anticipate and identify writing choices and the purpose underlying those choices. This was particularly useful in assessment conversations where the artifacts were decontextualized as we did not have the assignment prompts. It also helped us explain to instructors the importance of naming genres for their students to 1) highlight the purpose of the writing, 2) outline expectations and conventions of the genre, and 3) support students moving from one writing task to another to recognize genres and conventions.

**Table 10.2. Metagenre Training Table**

Metagenre	Common Moves
Writing research from sources	<p><b>Structure:</b> introduction, supporting reasons, and conclusion</p> <p><b>Content:</b> debatable thesis, development of reasons and evidence from sources, conclusion</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> formal and academic</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> argument, literature review, historiography</p>
Writing to report empirical research	<p><b>Structure:</b> IMRaD with title, headings, subheadings, figures, and references</p> <p><b>Content:</b> research question, description of methods and observed data, results, and discussion</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> technical jargon, objective tone</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> lab reports, quantitative and qualitative research studies, logbooks</p>
Writing to problem solve	<p><b>Structure:</b> problem statement, recommendation or proposal, concluding summary</p> <p><b>Content:</b> establishes problem with evidence and proposes a solution, may present findings</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> objective tone, clear, concise</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> executive summaries, letters to representatives, project proposals, business plans</p>
Writing to critique a text or performance	<p><b>Structure:</b> title, introduction, paragraphs in support of thesis</p> <p><b>Content:</b> presents analytical thesis that interprets a text; evidence includes quotes from text</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> active voice, descriptive language</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> literary analysis, film criticism, analytical essay</p>
Writing to reflect	<p><b>Structure:</b> highly varied, one paragraph or multi-paragraph essay, no headings</p> <p><b>Content:</b> personal experience emphasizing description, narrative, and evidence from experience or specific course activities</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> more informal, heavy use of personal pronoun “I”</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> self-assessment, personal statements, reflective letters</p>

Beyond metagenres, we used the remainder of the assessment training as a strategic opportunity to provide a richer understanding of student writing and assessment practices for interdisciplinary faculty and administrators. The three universities communicated the following principles around assessment:

- Writing should be assessed through direct measures of authentic student work, such as course assignments;

- Assessment is *iterative* and not a linear progression; and
- Claims about development in student writing should be supported with evidence from the *same student writer over time*. In other words, we believe that institutional assessment is a snapshot of a group of students at different stages in their college career as writers.

These principles overlap with threshold concepts, specifically that “writing speaks to situations through recognizable forms” and “all writers have more to learn” (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015). These bullet points illustrate our philosophy around assessing writing, especially the importance of taking into consideration development over time and not creating false artifacts around student comparisons (Wardle & Roozen, 2016). We continually drew from these concepts in the report of our findings and the presentation of our work.

Our goal of highlighting WAC principles and equitable assessment practices required a longer process and more labor for both us and our reviewers. We created and proposed a budget to ABOR in response to the mandated assessment that provided approximately \$30,000 of funding. We intentionally wanted a diversity of participants and recruited reviewers from multiple disciplines covering the major disciplinary categories (humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, applied science, and art) and career tracks (e.g., tenured track, career track, graduate students, etc.). This diversity allowed for richer conversation and paid professional development opportunities for participants who are frequently tasked with individual labor. Additionally, we were determined to design the assessment as paid professional development that would have outcomes beyond the mandated review but that highlighted strategies and evidence-based practices instructors could incorporate into their classrooms. Our training then took place over two weeks in the summer with the first week containing asynchronous elements through our learning management system (D2L). The first week focused on the principles of WAC and assessment and the second week contained both synchronous and asynchronous elements where we gathered to calibrate materials and discuss discrepancies or clarifications for the rubric. Participants received a stipend of \$500 for their labor (up to \$1000 if they scored additional artifacts) and breakfast and snacks during the second week. We view the length of time, compensation, and attention to instructors’ professional development as a form of reciprocity for doing the labor of assessment.

One challenge to integrating WAC principles in the assessment training was the amount of time focused on the technology. We were required to use Watermark, the university-supported tool recently adopted for a range of assessments across campus. The tool was unable to provide multimodal elements, which reinforced misconceptions that writing is only produced as a single text and

in relatively few genres. This limited the types of assignments we were able to curate from instructors. Additionally, the tool took a lot of training in terms of usability and incorporating the rubric meaningfully. This created more labor for participants to navigate between Watermark and our learning management system that had an annotated rubric and glossary. Although Watermark was challenging to navigate, it did provide an avenue for recording and tracking our assessment as we shared it with the two other institutions and aligned with our institutional goals.

### Questions for WAC Specialists

Overall, our assessment training became an actionable space for supporting our goals of navigating accountability assessment and meaningful WAC faculty development. The strategic interventions and compromises during assessment showcase pedagogy and leadership for WAC specialists to consider:

1. What are the common values, terminologies, and metagenres important for your context? How do you communicate those across the institution?
2. How can WAC incorporate authentic writing scenarios across campus and programming—from individual classrooms to large-scale endeavors such as assessment?
3. How can we leverage resources (e.g., time, money, etc.) from other initiatives to provide meaningful professional development to instructors?
4. How does WAC professional development, mandatory or voluntary, create spaces for reciprocity?

### POST-ASSESSMENT: STRATEGIC COMPROMISES IN REPORTING AND INTERVENTIONS IN COLLABORATING

The UArizona assessment confirmed largely what we already know about writing development: students score higher than administrators predict (Brereton, 1995; Wardle, 2019), early-career students continue to learn genre conventions (Roozen, 2010), late-career students maneuver between genres in meaningful ways (Lindenman, 2015; Tardy, 2009), and students draw on their writing experiences from across time (Driscoll et al., 2020). The strategic compromises conducted in our findings included resisting comparisons between the early-career and late-career students and reinforcing the concepts of writing development and genre. Through writing the UArizona report, we operationalized genre knowledge as the tool for strategic compromise. We created a text designed to meet the audience's expectations while furthering our team's linguistic justice

goal. We blended elements of white papers, IMRaD articles, and position papers to communicate with our institutional and state stakeholder audience. We drew from the white paper form to present a one-page executive summary with five bulleted key findings and recommendations. Concurrently, as authors, we recognized this document's kairos for influencing the audience's mindset regarding writing assessments. The IMRaD style facilitated thorough discussions of literature, context and methods, findings, implications, and recommendations, plus a detailed appendix. We drew from linguistic features in position papers to imbue the writing with persuasive tonal and stylistic elements to nod towards reconceptualizing writing assessment. The report resisted ABOR's demands to draw comparative inferences about writing development between first-year and upper-level students. Our genre-based rhetorical resources enabled us to advocate for the importance of assessment processes that are "site-based, locally controlled, context-sensitive, rhetorically based, and theoretically consistent" (O'Neill et al., 2009, p. 57). In doing so, we sought to defend our strategic interventions and compromises while paving the way for future assessments to depart even further from UArizona's previous ones.

With the above goals in mind as we wrote the report, we created a document that imbued what we did with writing studies assessment theory. The Introduction quickly but thoroughly synthesized interdisciplinary research in educational measurement that called for connecting assessments to local curricular needs that best captured the complexity of writing development. We pulled from early studies like Richard Reed Braddock et al.'s (1963) meta-analysis of studies on process-based writing to contemporary takes such as Asao B. Inoue's (2015) socially-just assessment recommendations. In the Methods, we offered a deep dive into the UArizona's context and student demographics. As an AIAN-SI, HSI, and land-grant institution, it was necessary to highlight the diverse student body as an indicator of the population's diverse linguistic repertoire and needs, especially so it could differentiate UArizona from the other two state universities. We also clearly detailed the assessment procedures, documenting artifacts' creation, collection, and evaluation. Our meticulous description of methods showcased clear discrepancies between what scholarship recommended and what ABOR was asking us to do. We explained that a significant methodological limitation was that the assessment as designed would not generate results answerable to the research questions. We additionally added, departing from the white paper and IMRaD forms, a reflection on the process, drawing from persuasive rhetorical strategies found in position papers to showcase the strengths of the assessment (our strategic interventions and compromises) and its constraints (the assessment's design and lack of resources). We carefully crafted these elements ahead of the Results section so that readers skimming for data

would first encounter the assessment's theory/implementation contradictions. The Discussion presented implications and recommendations for supporting writing at UArizona. We reinforced evidence-based research on student exposure and dexterity with different genres throughout their writing careers. This gave way to showcase a strategy for accomplishing this goal—a parallel strategic intervention (nurturing the WAC program)—by highlighting the many potential benefits of investing in writing at UArizona. In sum, the assessment report creatively and clearly documented our strategic interventions and compromises and desire to change the story of student writing that “students can't write.” The report insistently resisted comparisons between the student groups and decontextualized student writing.

The resulting report, a 26-page single-spaced document inclusive of graphs, tables, references, and appendices, represented approximately 30 months of work from seven UArizona co-authors and countless others. In this chapter, like Terry Myers Zawacki et al. (2009), we do not discuss specific results as the goal of our writing here is not to explicate UArizona students' writing, but rather, to provide through storytelling a framework (and words of caution, or at least, aspects to be aware of) for readers developing their own assessments. In our case, although we made several successful strategic interventions, we were unable to sway ABOR's mandate to compare early- and late-career students. In turn, our strategic compromise in writing the report was to highlight students' demonstrated strengths instead of entrenching false comparisons and deficit mindsets. However, despite our strategic compromises to author a genre-blended, business-like document, the full report was truncated by an upper-level UArizona administrator to, supposedly, be more digestible for ABOR. This, in our eyes, affirmed that “investments in student writing” really was masking accountability assessment because the stakeholders valued skipping directly to students' performance rather than reading and learning from our report.

Unsurprised by this turn of events, our last major strategic intervention was to return to our local context with insights from the Written Communication Assessment and to host a town hall. We invited all sites and stakeholders of writing from across campus to create a grassroots movement for cross-curricular writing support. We reported our findings and experiences to them and collaboratively brainstormed responses through a gallery walk-style interactive feedback session. During the gallery walk, participants identified their priorities for moving forward and were directed to share out. One of the most frequently starred priorities was to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially given our AANSI HSI statues and land-grant mission. This town hall served as an inaugural meeting for WAC Faculty Fellows and an opportunity to liaise with other sites of writing like general education, the Writing

Program, and the Writing Center. Our in-person meeting emphasized uniting WAC stakeholders that otherwise lacked clear pathways to working together.

### Questions for WAC Specialists

The interventions during post-assessment showcase ingenuity in mandated writing assessment for WAC specialists to consider:

1. What do you want stakeholders, especially those with whom you might infrequently have an audience, to know and understand?
2. How can you utilize your assessment communications (e.g., reports, presentations, etc.) to advance WAC best practices that can counteract other past or proposed measures?

## CONCLUSION

Institutional change often requires extensive time and labor for incremental results. As Staci Perryman-Clark (2023) explains, “it is critical that faculty development initiatives align with a university’s vision or mission” (p. 19). Our need for strategic interventions and compromises reflects that our push for change was misaligned with ABOR’s goals. Conflict between state versus institution versus writing faculty is common with the United States and hearkens to a broader challenge of neoliberal management in higher education that is rarely concerned with contextual factors of learning. While both ABOR and our team wanted students to become stronger writers, our definitions of “good writing” and conceptions of what writing development looks like were at odds. Our goal as WAC leaders, then, was to explore how we could leverage institutional requirements, such as this assessment as well as general education reform, to enact change in our local context. The required assessment became a kairotic moment for documenting fundamental issues in the writing ecology that impacted students at all three state universities.

This retelling, full of minutiae about the process, likely elicits feelings of entanglement within the weeds, which is how we felt working through it. This experience illustrated for us how institutional assessment is both a big and little detail in our university’s history. Our work has a lasting impact on how we will respond, both at the state level and HSI university context, to student writing. It also set a precedent for future assessments of, including but not limited to, writing. At the same time, we recognize that this assessment was just one of many snapshots of writing. It took the pulse not only of student writing but about the culture, values, and goals that diverge and intersect across our laminated context, but only at a moment in time rather than across a longitudinal timeframe.

Overall, as WAC leaders, we were affirmed by this project that writing assessment, like writing itself, is a process. The compromises and interventions described here offer windows into the complex and complicated rhetorical situation.

Throughout the work, we tried to subvert accountability assessment for our purposes, which included educating stakeholders of writing complexity, resisting deficit narratives about student writing in terms of linguistic social justice, and using the assessment for WAC faculty development. The process allowed us to interact with audiences who were oftentimes unattuned to our requests for resources. Specifically, we gained a platform to argue for a more connected curriculum and faculty WAC training. Through the assessment process, we spoke to evidence-based scholarship in writing assessment and contributed our own data to persuade stakeholders towards a new story of student writing. Our work with ABOR, although hard fought and of potentially small-seeming significance, set important precedents for localizing assessments and arguing against accountability studies. However, the throughline of this endeavor has been nurturing our own university community, so we are proud of the grassroots change made at UArizona. Most notably, this process served as a launchpad for the WAC Faculty Fellows program focused on antiracist linguistic justice and also drew out sites of writing from siloes by bringing into conversation various writing experts across campus, like the Foundational Writing Program, General Education writing intensive course directors and instructors, and the Writing Center.

We hope that this chapter can be used by fellow WAC administrators in their own contexts to evidence the importance of listening to WAC experts' expertise in designing assessment. We recognize, however, the strength of institutional governing bodies who are oftentimes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to persuade. Therefore, we extend the questions posed throughout the chapter to inspire strategic interventions and compromises elsewhere. These questions invite and encourage WAC specialists to:

- Respond to institutional requirements through adaptability approaches that minimize linguistic injustices and maximize coalition building;
- Rely upon their expertise to infuse institutional requirements with best practices;
- Utilize institutional requirements as opportunities for professional development and gathering resources; and
- Reflect upon their goals and purposes ahead of communicating with stakeholders to make the most of opportunities for dialogue.

This heuristic is born of years of hard work in the name of linguistic justice for students. Our reflections highlight key points of tension and responses. We celebrate the progress and note the roadblocks on our to-do list of things to

accomplish to strengthen the perception of and support for student writing on our campus. By relying upon a broad range of instructors, administrators, and staff, a knowledgeable assessment team, and diverse disciplinary participation for scoring and scorers, we ultimately positioned WAC and linguistic justice as a grassroots effort that reached across campus lines. To Perryman-Clark's (2023) point, our work did not overhaul ABOR's beliefs about writing. However, our strategic interventions and compromises moved the needle, which we consider a promising first chapter in the revision of UArizona's story of student writing.

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## CHAPTER 11.

# HOLISTIC ACCESS

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***Abstract.** This chapter defines the concept of holistic access, a theorization of access as a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon. It illustrates this concept by mapping the pathways two undergraduate students (a STEM and a humanities student) traveled to access an undergraduate research fellowship. The qualitative analysis of their experiences surfaces often-hidden factors that mediate access to such environments. Holistic access can help educators identify and transform barriers to access at multiple levels of the institution.*

*Access* can take on many meanings in conversations about education. At its base, however, access is understood through a rhetoric of opportunity: that students have the opportunity, should they choose to take it, to participate in and benefit from the varied educational experiences a university offers. This kind of access is, of course, made available to all students. But as this chapter will argue, access is not always *access*. A more honest accounting needs to recognize that access is a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon. I identify this framing as *holistic access*.

This argument arises from an ethnographic study I conducted on a much-prized high-impact practice on my campus: undergraduate research. Undergraduate research programs sponsor curricular and co-curricular opportunities with the central goal of providing undergraduate students authentic learning opportunities via access to the scholarly activity of their professors (UERU, 1998; Wald & Harland, 2017). These experiences offer many benefits (Osborn & Karukstis, 2009), but students, particularly minoritized and first-generation students, face numerous barriers in accessing these benefits (Mahatmya et al., 2017; Pierszalowski et al., 2021; UERU, 2022). While preparation or readiness is a commonly discussed barrier, writing and literacy are not often analyzed in this scholarship. Heather Falconer's (2018, 2022) research stands as an exception.

As a WAC scholar and administrator, I wanted to learn more about how writing mediates access to UR experiences and their benefits. For this reason, I studied the experiences of students seeking access to my institution's undergraduate research fellowship program. Common to many campuses,

fellowship programs provide students with grant funding to pursue independent projects under the guidance of a mentor. To earn a fellowship and receive funding—in other words, to gain access—students need to write a successful project proposal. In the chapter that follows, I highlight the experiences of two students from my study: Rachel, who majored in a STEM discipline, and Kamala, who majored in a humanities discipline. Both students were in their final years of undergraduate education at the time of this study. While both Rachel and Kamala wrote successful proposals and earned fellowships, their pathways toward that success reveal an array of factors that both facilitated and contested their access to the program. Drawing on their experiences, I argue that meaningfully accessing such spaces requires students: (1) to assemble a network of cultural, social, and human resources, (2) to align that network with the values and epistemologies privileged by the institution offering access, and (3) to assemble at least some of that network before they can gain access to the benefits of such learning experiences. In this way, such programs limit access to those who already have some degree of it. The combination of these understandings gives shape to what I call *holistic access*, a term I use to highlight the multidimensionality of access.

To construct this argument, I first define and illustrate the concept of *holistic access*. This concept is informed by bioecological theories of development, so I include a brief discussion of these theories. Following this definitional section, I use this holistic framing to offer strategies for addressing access at both the micro and meso levels. These strategies are intended to help writers and mentors navigate institutional headwinds that impede access by assessing and building an individual's resource network; they also aim to help educators and leaders engaged with programming at a systems level mitigate barriers that impede access. Finally, I conclude with some questions raised by this research.

## **HOLISTIC ACCESS: DEFINING THE CONCEPT**

*Holistic access* emerged as a concept critical to understanding the successes and challenges of the students in my study. It was evident that these students were all highly capable, intelligent, and successful; after all, they all crafted winning proposals and earned at least one fellowship. The two students I feature in this chapter had, in fact, earned multiple fellowships at my institution and beyond it. But the pathways to that success varied. Some students, like Rachel, seemed to have tailwinds easing their way to success; others, like Kamala, faced headwinds that challenged their progress. Their stories forced me to wonder about the many students who didn't attain similar success: those who pursued the fellowship but weren't awarded one and those who were interested but never tried in the first place.

To better understand Rachel's and Kamala's pathways and the dynamics shaping them, I turned to Urie Bronfenbrenner and Pamela A. Morris' (2006) bioecological theory of human development and Dana Lynn Driscoll and Jing Zhang's (2022) adaptation of it for composition studies. David Slomp (2012) argues that bioecological approaches can help scholars consider how both individual and contextual factors influence writing development. I contend these models are also useful for research on access because the dual view they offer illuminates a network of resources available to an individual, including connections or (mis)alignments between an individual and a context, and consequently highlights factors that mediate students' access to particular learning environments. Thus, I used these theories to ask what resources were available to Rachel and Kamala and how they marshalled these resources to gain access to this fellowship program.

Bioecological theories posit that writing development involves the discovery and gradual accrual of resources over time and across contexts. The iterative employment of resources incrementally enables more complex (re)uses of resources and engenders a deepening awareness of their context of use. The main drivers of development are *processes* or *key events*, where resources are acquired and employed, and the effectiveness of a given process is shaped by the developing *person*, the *context* of development, and the *time* of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Driscoll & Zhang, 2022). A bioecological lens thus prompted me to understand the mentoring interactions between Rachel or Kamala and their respective mentor (process) and the outcomes of those interactions as shaped by the individuals themselves (person), the immediate mentoring environment (context), and the adjacent or encompassing contexts that impinged upon the mentoring process (e.g., the fellowship program itself) as those elements evolve over time. So while mentoring might have been the most intentional process supporting Rachel and Kamala, these mentoring interactions were just one part of the resource networks enabling their access.

As I mapped their resource networks, I recognized Rachel and Kamala were drawing on resources across several dimensions; these included the cognitive, affective, social, and material. For Rachel, these resources mostly worked in her favor. For instance, she had a long track record operating in undergraduate research experiences stretching back to high school; this experience exposed her to the research proposal genre and the questions and methods she would employ during her fellowship project (cognitive resource). Her resource network also included the mentors she met along the way and the mentors who sponsored her fellowship project (social resource); these mentors supplied her with her research project including the data she would analyze and the technology she would use to analyze it (material resources). Rachel's mentors were also heavily involved in writing her proposal, going so far as to redraft her research questions

and methods section. And although Rachel was essentially told to apply for the fellowship by her mentors, her access was also driven by her own motivation (affective resource) to pursue a research career and graduate education, an ambition inspired in part by her parents who had both earned graduate degrees (social resource). This motivation was bolstered by her persistence and self-regulation that helped her work through difficult moments in her mentoring and research experience (affective resources). These and other elements (such as bus fare paid for by the fellowship and family and personal health issues inspiring her research interests) are all factors salient to her accessing this fellowship program.

Kamala also drew on an array of resources to gain access to this UR fellowship. Like Rachel, Kamala had abundant prior experience and had been engaged in work related to her project since high school (cognitive resource). She had written proposals as a part of that work and was, as her mentor described her, a prolific writer who could “write her way out of any hole” (cognitive resource). She also had strong motivation to pursue her project and aspirations beyond college that called her toward the justice work she was attempting in her project (affective resources). Kamala had a good mentor and project site coordinator (social resources) who encouraged her, advised her, and resourced her toward success. Her mentor had connections to the fellowship program and could provide Kamala with privileged information and materials (social/material resource), but her mentor didn’t have a track-record (scholarly or otherwise) in the area Kamala pursued; in fact, her mentor didn’t have much of a publication record at all. Additionally, some resources that Kamala received from her mentor (the sample proposals; a material resource) challenged Kamala’s resolve (affective resource) and amplified pre-existing doubts about her belonging in the fellowship program. These doubts were merited, as I will discuss later, but her persistence and belief in the project (affective resource) were strong enough to overcome such challenges. The fellowship funding (material resource) also motivated her because it would alleviate her daily living expenses and allow her to quit her part-time jobs.

The term *holistic* emerged from such mapping and led to the three observations I shared in the introduction to this chapter. First, I recognized Rachel’s and Kamala’s access wasn’t enabled by resources in any one dimension but by (combinations across) the whole, a network of resources that they could assemble to perform a given task or overcome a particular challenge. Rachel, for example, relied on strategies she had developed to regulate her emotions (affective resource) to navigate a rocky relationship with her first mentor, to seek help from other members of her social network, and to eventually identify a new mentor (social resource). Second, I recognized that Rachel and Kamala had assembled some or even most of their networks prior to seeking access to the

fellowship program. Rachel and Kamala, for example, had both already been working on their projects (cognitive and material resources) and had mentors to sponsor that work and connect them with the fellowship program (social resource). This observation suggests that access to this program might be unintentionally restricted to those who already have some degree of prior access. In fact, some of the students I talked with at program events chose not to apply when they learned they needed to find a mentor to sponsor their projects.

Finally, I recognized that these networks work best when the resources that comprise them align with the values and epistemologies privileged within the institutional context. Kamala's experience highlighted this key observation. While Rachel might have experienced some challenges with her mentor, her pathway toward access largely aligned with the vision of the program and the evaluators who enacted that vision. Kamala's project, however, did not align with the conceptions of what the evaluators tacitly defined as *research*, and this misalignment caused Kamala's access to be contested. In all, I began to recognize that access occurred across dimensions and at multiple levels: both at the micro-level (e.g., mentoring interactions) and at the meso- or institutional level (the relevance of the resources to the values, aim, and limitations of the program). *Holistic access* thus became the shorthand for Rachel's and Kamala's agency in assembling and employing a multidimensional resource network over time to earn their fellowship opportunities. This includes the interrelations among dimensions, the pre-existence of resources, and the alignment of resources with institutional values and material constraints.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

If higher education writ large wants to make its learning environments more accessible, how does the concept of *holistic access* help do that? In this section, I consider that question and organize my answer into two parts. The first takes the holistic framing and turns it toward educators working with students at the micro level; the second considers how educators working at a systems level might address access holistically. While these recommendations are built upon research on a specific UR program, I offer them with an eye toward higher education more broadly and encourage educators to think about the phenomenon of access from a holistic standpoint.

### NAVIGATING HEADWINDS AT THE MICRO LEVEL

Educators working with students at the individual or small group level should take a holistic approach to mentoring and teaching. Sometimes, challenges with

access are cognitive, and students guided by their mentors reach the limits of their knowledge and skills to complete key tasks. But a holistic approach can remind students and mentors that challenges can also be material, affective, or social and addressed by drawing on resources from one or more of those dimensions. In other words, holistic access as a concept expands the landscape upon which writing and learning problems can be discussed, identified, and resolved, allowing mentors and students to consider challenges with access from multiple vantage points.

Kamala's experience is illustrative here. When Kamala began to write the proposal for her first grant, her mentor thought she would have no problems composing it. Kamala was a proficient writer, had written several proposals previously, and was aware of the expectations of a successful proposal. Despite these considerable cognitive resources, Kamala struggled to write her fellowship proposal. To help her through this struggle, her mentor shared sample proposals that she had collected through her role as a proposal evaluator for the fellowship program. The fellowship program did not offer students sample proposals, so getting access to such materials was an advantage for Kamala.

The sample proposals, however, were a vexed resource for Kamala. As she put it, the samples helped her to better understand the form and the style of the proposal, but they also amplified Kamala's pre-existing concerns about belonging. That is, the samples reinforced her long-standing perception that *research* is "a science thing" and caused her to doubt the value of her project because the sample proposals typically described empirical, data-driven projects that were part of their mentor's research agenda. Kamala's mentor also hadn't worked on the kind of project Kamala was proposing, so she didn't have a track record to rely on like students in STEM contexts often did. This set of observations led Kamala to feel like she "didn't have anything that was really selling me as a researcher." The upshot is that Kamala's difficulty with writing her proposal originated not in her conceptual understanding of the writing task but in her affective concerns about belonging as those concerns intersected with the institutional ideologies of *research* represented in sample proposals and review practices. These headwinds caused her to wonder: does my project fit in the program? Do I belong here? Am I even a "researcher?" That doubt, more than anything, stifled her writing and contested her access.

A holistic approach to the mentoring process could have unveiled some of the complexity and eased Kamala's pathway toward success. Kamala and her mentor were able to articulate some of these challenges after Kamala's proposal was accepted when they realized they had spent considerable effort shoehorning Kamala's project into an empirical paradigm to ease her concerns about fit, shoehorning that muddled the vision of her project and complicated her proposal

writing. Viewing access holistically would have allowed for the interplay of multiple dimensions to be visible during the writing process, helping Kamala and her mentor to more accurately identify their challenges and the strengths they could leverage to address these challenges.

To this end, I offer Table 11.1 as a heuristic for problem identification across dimensions. I believe it can help make the full complexity of access more visible and help students and their mentors better understand the affordances they may leverage and the barriers they may be facing. The questions act as a starting place for mentors and students to self-assess their composing processes. Educators should adapt these questions to consider how they might better support the students they mentor and teach.

**Table 11.1. A Heuristic for Addressing Access Holistically**

Dimension	Elements
<b>Cognitive</b>	Do I understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the subject matter sufficiently?</li> <li>• the conventions of this text type, including its purpose?</li> <li>• the expectations of the audience reading this text?</li> <li>• the process for developing this text (or have a plan)?</li> <li>• the aims of this program?</li> </ul> Do I have experience with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this genre or audience?</li> <li>• aspects of this process?</li> <li>• this project type?</li> <li>• this context?</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	Could someone in my social network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthen my subject matter, rhetorical, formal or process knowledge?</li> <li>• encourage my motivations, goals, or progress?</li> <li>• connect me to resources that would</li> <li>• strengthen my knowledge,</li> <li>• expand my network,</li> <li>• provide me with practical experience,</li> <li>• or help me understand my affective experiences?</li> </ul>
<b>Affective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I find this project or subject area               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meaningful to me?</li> <li>• motivated by a larger goal?</li> <li>• enabling or constraining my agency?</li> <li>• facilitating or contesting my sense of belonging in this environment?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>Material</b></p>	<p>Do I have models of this project type?          Do I have a plan for executing this project and learning in this context?          Do I have time for this project?          Can I find opportunities to further my interest or learning in this context?          Are these funded?          Do I have disruptions in my writing environment?</p>
<p><b>Institutional</b></p>	<p>What are the aims and values of the institution?          How do I relate to these?          What are its limitations?          How might I anticipate these?</p>

**ADDRESSING HEADWINDS AT A SYSTEMS LEVEL**

Scaling access to high-impact practices is a considerable challenge, as noted by the UERU (2022). As with challenges at the individual level, issues with access at a systems level are not only cognitive; they can also be affective, social, and material. Thus, holistic access as a concept can help educators working at this level address issues with access by viewing them from multiple vantage points. In this section, I offer strategies that educators might consider to further enhance access to disciplinary participation through a holistic lens.

A common approach to increasing access to UR and other high-impact learning environments is to make them, their access points, and their benefits more visible (Lockett et al., 2021). This approach helps students become aware of these opportunities and understand how programs like UR fellowships can help them achieve their future goals, such as employment or graduate school. Such visibility efforts demonstrate the relevance of UR programming to students’ lives, which can activate students’ affective resources. While this approach might help students imagine their futures, it doesn’t always help to address where students are, have come from, and how to get to where they are going. To address such a challenge, academic units could develop scaffolded programming that longitudinally prepares students for fuller participation in disciplinary activity (Carpi et al., 2017; Gaillet et al., 2022). Making the components of these longitudinal trajectories more visible would also ease access by highlighting what access involves and better defining what it means to be prepared to participate in a given learning environment. Illuminating the full constellation of capital required to participate in a UR fellowship or other authentic learning environments can facilitate access by exposing the hidden curriculum of such environments (Cooper et al., 2021) and facilitating their interrogation.

This type of work takes time and resources that aren't always available to academic units. In my work as a WAC administrator, I find that many academic units benefit from ideas that help them take the first steps toward developing these structures and addressing the challenges that shape access. In other words, to make access points more visible, academic units first need to generate access points. These access points can be course-based or more formal events and venues (e.g., celebrations of research and journals), but the students in my study often accessed their mentors and research opportunities outside of the classroom and formal celebrations. Many STEM academic units, for instance, have research groups that operate as incubators where students can meet mentors, learn about their research, and discover opportunities to contribute to ongoing projects. Such spaces also help to facilitate peer networks that normalize research, motivate pursuit of research opportunities, and foster student research efficacy, effectively (re)constituting a culture of undergraduate research. Students like Rachel were often able to take advantage of such material and social wealth that wasn't available to students like Kamala, who were often independently generating their own projects rather than contributing to the agenda of an established researcher. In other words, the epistemological practices of collaboration, replication, and aggregation common to STEM were resources themselves and provided additional tailwinds that humanities students or those in contexts favoring individuality and particularity could not leverage.

While funding a research center would be beyond the means of many academic units, some programs might allocate a small portion of funds (e.g., a grant or faculty stipend) to help academic units take the initial steps toward building resources and infrastructure. Efforts could include the curation of an archive of project types, information about methodologies, and guidance on key challenges experienced by underrepresented disciplinary areas (material resources); these are foundational activities for WAC specialists. This resource development should also include social resources, including faculty who might serve as mentors, information about their research or project agendas, and events that expose students to the idea of *research* as a core disciplinary endeavor, one that builds on an existing body of knowledge. This, in effect, begins to assemble some of the access networks that students like Rachel and Kamala relied on to secure their fellowships. An additional consideration might include identifying a person who can coordinate such efforts (social resource), via course release or other compensation, and establish connections to existing infrastructure (e.g., centers for humanities or arts; material resource), thereby amplifying or accelerating this capacity building. I say this because a plurality of the students in this study connected to research groups via academic advisors (social resource) who were charged in part with finding and connecting students to such opportunities.

As Falconer (2022) argues, establishing such spaces is only part of the challenge. How faculty engage with students in such social spaces still matters. To help students learn the social norms for engaging in authentic disciplinary activity, Falconer (2022) suggests faculty and units clarify the roles and responsibilities of undergraduates in mentoring relationships or mentored research work; faculty should also have a clear sense of their own roles and responsibilities in such mentoring relationships. Part of the resource development I described above could focus on establishing guidelines that make transparent such expectations (Cooper et al., 2021).

To take a more transformative stance, educators should also examine the ideologies that shape access to these spaces. In the UR program I studied, *research* was implicitly defined as empirical inquiry generating quantitative data and thereby tacitly defined *researchers* as those who conduct such inquiry. As I described above, this dynamic caused Kamala to doubt that she belonged in the program; she needed her mentor's encouragement and connections to the fellowship program to overcome the barrier created by this conceptualization of *research*. Similarly, the program's use of *passion* as an evaluation criterion shaped who accessed this program. Evaluators outwardly defined *passion* as excitement and justified its use to rate proposals because they believed all students could demonstrate excitement about their projects; thus, they believed *passion* would open access to the program. Inwardly, however, evaluators weren't just looking for expressions of excitement; they wanted to see a track record of project-related accomplishments. But compiling such a track record often requires access to a scarce resource: time; time to read, think, gain familiarity with an area of inquiry and methods to explore it; time to accomplish project-related tasks; time that students at my institution often used to earn money or attend to non-academic demands. In this way, *passion* ideologically shaped access in both affective (excitement) and material (a track record) ways, establishing contradictory dynamics where access might appear available to all but is only available to those with some degree of prior access or an established resource network.

*Holistic access* contains heuristic power to examine such ideological formations that shape access to a learning environment, and WAC specialists are well-suited to help educators identify resultant barriers and transform their influence on access. To do so, we should help educators holistically examine their practices in relation to their values using an adapted version of Table 11.1. Not all educators are ready to conduct such an examination; some haven't developed the competencies, and others are too close to their programs to see them fully. As Pamela Flash (2016) illustrates, WAC specialists are expert mediators who can create distance and illuminate practices that help educators become more aware of the dynamics shaping their learning environments. In the program I studied, access

was a value, but their evaluation practices undermined this value at times. Using a holistic lens, I was able to identify hidden facets of these evaluation practices and inform revisions to them. Such awareness enables educators to make more intentional decisions about their programs, including decisions related to access. But we need to start with a holistic lens to systematically identify and analyze the dynamics of a learning environment.

Such a research-based approach can be quite resource-intensive and unsustainable or beyond the means of many WAC specialists. A general and more scalable strategy can be to address issues of belonging and disciplinary affiliation through project representation. While Falconer (2022) demonstrates that students can interpret representation based on gender or racial identity as tokenism, I believe disciplinary and methodological representation to be different. As I described above, Kamala's doubts were reinforced by the sample proposals she reviewed; having access to materials that resembled her project type would have helped write her proposal and ease her doubts about fit. The program has funded projects from humanities and creative areas and could highlight these in program materials, signaling to students that these projects do belong. Such representation could extend to the recruitment of faculty who review projects and define what counts as *research* in the first place. Thus, WAC specialists can help educators identify project models and other educational resources to support students' access in both cognitive and affective ways.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have argued that *access* is a multidimensional concept. Rachel illustrates this argument as a STEM student who was an experienced and motivated researcher but an uncertain writer who needed to persist through challenges with her mentoring relationship. To do so, she drew on a network of affective, social, material, and cognitive resources to compose her proposal and earn her grant award, thus achieving access. I have also argued that institutions expect those seeking access to have assembled at least some of their network and aligned the resources comprising it with the values and epistemologies privileged by the institution. Such an expectation restricts meaningful access to those who already have it. Kamala illustrates the headwinds ideological alignment can cause even a proficient writer as she navigated institutional ideologies that defined research in ways that contested the value of her project and amplified her doubts about belonging. Like Rachel, Kamala drew on a network of resources to overcome these doubts and achieve access. Taken together, these two arguments comprise the concept of *holistic access*: the recognition that *access* involves more than the availability of an opportunity but

the accumulation and employment of resources across dimensions and at multiple levels in institutionally recognized ways.

While I have offered some practical applications of this concept above, I believe this concept and the research it emerges from raise a few questions that future scholarship might explore further. First, how does this concept play out across different research sites and demographic categories, particularly helping to understand the experiences of new majority students (Maimon, 2023)? My original study design sought to include first-generation students and multilingual students, but I struggled to recruit students from these demographic categories. Ultimately, I was able to include two students who identified as first-generation students and two students who identified as multilingual, but this sample did not match my expectations going into the study given the student demographics of the university, one recognized as among the most diverse in the nation (Wood, 2024). Moreover, their linguistic and family identities did not seem as salient to their experiences as did their disciplinary affiliation. Is this the result of my research site or my identity as a researcher? Would a study of access within a single disciplinary environment yield findings different from my study of a cross-curricular environment?

Furthermore, my research speaks to the resources successful students relied on to achieve access, but I had originally sought to include students who had applied to the fellowship program but did not earn a grant. I was not successful in this recruitment effort either. How might the experiences of unsuccessful students enrich and deepen the understanding of access presented in this chapter? Do particular dimensions appear more salient to the experiences of success and failure? Finally, I believe attention to neurodivergence would also enrich this concept by further highlighting the multidimensional strengths students bring to academic endeavors and success. What other factors might emerge from a more concentrated study of student experiences across demographic categories?

Second, how does *holistic access* help the field of WAC reconsider the concept of *authenticity*? While above I wonder how this research might look different across research sites, I also believe the concept of holistic access described in this chapter owes much to its research site and that site's enactment of *authenticity*. Undergraduate research has been recognized as a high-impact practice and an authentic learning experience (Kuh, 2008; Wald & Harland, 2017). Peter Felton (2017) argues that such environments offer many benefits but can be challenging for students because they provide fewer explicit cues and structures that support student success than the typical classroom. For this reason, students need to practice a wide variety of competencies to find stability and achieve success in such environments. This characteristic of authentic learning environments perhaps made the dimensions and dynamics I describe in my research

more visible. Are these dimensions as salient in other authentic learning environments and more traditional learning environments? I believe that they are, but future research might document the salience of these dimensions across learning environments with higher and lower degrees of fidelity.

Finally, how might holistic access help WAC and UR scholars reimagine the concept of *authenticity* in the first place? While this concept can be defined in several ways (Bialystok, 2017; Kreber et al., 2007), WAC scholars typically define *authenticity* as the intellectual replication of the “real world.” Mya Poe et al. (2010) exemplify this when they define *authentic learning* as “based on the exigency of problems to be solved in specific fields” (p. 5). Holistic access as a concept, however, reveals that replication of the intellectual work of disciplines brings not just opportunities for significant learning to university campuses but also the corresponding inequities of the “real world”—despite educators’ best intentions, as Falconer (2022) writes. How does WAC as field grapple with such replication? Should *authenticity* as “real-worldness” remain the guiding frame? How might *authenticity* centered around self-determination, critical reflection, or meaningfulness help enrich our pedagogical, curricular, and scholarly pursuits?

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**PART 3. PROGRAMMATIC  
PERSPECTIVES**



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

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-I listservs, 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

**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 *servicing* 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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CHAPTER 13.

DEEP ACCOUNTABILITY:  
MOTIVATING OBLIGATIONS  
IN DISCIPLINARY WRITING  
INSTRUCTION

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*Abstract.* In this essay, I explore the self-constructed forms of accountability (“deep accountability”) and obligation that motivate faculty teaching writing in their discipline, arguing that faculty participants’ motivation arose from intrinsic sources more than institutional requirements. After defining deep accountability, I present findings from an institutional ethnography of emotional labor in disciplinary writing instruction. I conclude that more nuanced understanding of faculty motivation will lead to more collaborative and effective faculty development and that greater understanding of faculty obligations and labor will benefit all faculty.

One of the great things I love about our job is the, the independence that I generally feel that I have, that I can go in the classroom, there is little oversight . . . Unless there’s an uproar among the students, . . . the administration is going to kind of let me do my own thing. . . I think it is, you have to have that internal personal accountability to do the right thing.

—Steven, term-faculty marketing professor

University faculty are usually not closely managed by their supervisors; they design their own research projects, write in isolation, and close their doors behind them when they go into their classrooms. Faculty have much control over their course design, the activities of their classes, and assessment of student work. Moreover, accountability and rewards often center on their scholarship more than their teaching, and academic institutions often don’t value or reward teaching (Kahn, 2020). Even when requirements for teaching exist, the ways faculty are held accountable for meeting them can be unclear, especially in terms of student learning.

And yet, we can safely assume that the majority of faculty will teach disciplinary material and evaluate student learning—and even teach and assess additional material, such as writing in their discipline. Without direct management, thorough external assessment of student learning, or material reward for pursuing teaching excellence, faculty are still motivated to make sound pedagogical decisions, participate in professional development to improve their teaching, and figure out ways to compensate for a lack of pedagogical knowledge. In other words, faculty consistently not only fulfill but often exceed what their employers explicitly ask of them. They reveal deep impulses toward intrinsic motivation.

As professionals, university faculty operate without close oversight and accountability, and as professionals, they are motivated to do their jobs. In fact, this lack of oversight is embedded in definitions of “professionalism.” For example, Tony Scott (2009), contrasting “professionals” and “bureaucrats” among university faculty, emphasized autonomy: professionals “have a high degree of autonomy in their work, . . . don’t have to conform to many explicit roles that determine their daily work” (p. 43). Similarly, in his discussion of professionalism as a general characteristic and in academia, Burton Bledstein (1976) emphasized independence but added that “a professional embraced an ethic of service which taught that dedication to a client’s interest took precedence over personal profit, when the two happened to come into conflict” (pp. 86–87). In other words, while professionals have autonomy, they also should behave ethically and attend to their “clients” best interests. A sense of professionalism carries with it the motivation to do the job.

In this chapter, I explore intrinsic motivation for faculty teaching writing in their disciplines. In these courses, faculty must be motivated not only to teach material within their areas of expertise but also to teach writing, an area of instruction in which they might feel less sure of themselves and even see as a burden. Faculty’s motivation in WAC faculty development has been the subject of research before. Scholars have examined factors in resistance and motivation in WAC instruction and faculty development: class size (Swilky, 1992), reflection (Flash, 2016), faculty agency (Walvoord, et al., 1997), institutional cultures and requirements (Condon, et al., 2016; Polk, 2019), and institutional support for cross-disciplinary communication (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006). Although this research reveals the need for attention to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in motivation, my research indicates that faculty attend more closely to the factors that they themselves have constructed.

I will add to existing considerations of motivation in WAC by presenting findings from an institutional ethnography of faculty’s emotional labor in required writing-intensive courses at a private, R2 university; these findings reveal that motivation and obligation have a complicated relationship with institutional structures and professional values. The study revealed that a motivating

force in faculty's deployment of emotional labor was a sense of obligation to their colleagues, their discipline or profession, and their students. This self-constructed "deep accountability" fostered forms of emotional labor that exceeded institutional requirements.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the ways that disciplinary faculty can be motivated by a sense of obligation, grounded in ideas of accountability that they themselves have constructed. In doing so, I argue that faculty motivation is multifaceted and arises less from institutional requirements and rewards than from self-constructed accountability. Understanding what motivates faculty can help faculty developers create more collaborative and meaningful development, and it can help all faculty see the risks of exploitation when faculty construct "requirements" beyond those that the institution states or rewards. After an overview of methodology, I will present my theory of "deep accountability," which aligns with Arlie Russell Hochschild's (2012) concept of "deep acting" and which highlights the complicated relationship between personal obligation and institutional context. I will then describe the two forms of obligation that study participants experienced (to colleagues and the discipline or profession and to students), highlighting the self-constructed nature of these obligations and the accompanying sense of accountability. I will close with the implications of these findings for faculty developers and faculty concerned with labor requirements.

## METHODOLOGY

I conducted my study using institutional ethnography, a methodology developed by Dorothy Smith (2005) that requires exploration of both institutional contexts and individual activities. Institutional ethnography (IE) traces the coordination of workplace activities and the experience of those activities, along with the convergences and divergences between the institutional practices, policies, and requirements and individual experiences. Moreover, Dorothy Smith (2005) maintained that institutions exist through their texts; these texts are essential to understanding the coordination of activities. For these reasons, IE provides a methodological and epistemological standpoint that fosters deeper complex understanding of faculty labor within an institutional context. In the case of my study, it allowed me to explore not only the institutional policies that faculty navigated as they taught disciplinary writing but also the disjunctures between policies and lived experiences. The IE methodology is especially suited to WAC research because WAC programs often involve institutional structures and requirements, faculty and student interrelationships, faculty labor, and curricular and other institutional texts—all elements foregrounded in IE. In fact, Cox et al. (2018) argued for a more systemic, holistic view of WAC, which aligns with the IE view of institutions and labor.

My study sought to understand the emotional labor involved in disciplinary writing instruction within the institutional context: a mid-sized R2 urban university in the Mid-Atlantic region. As part of their undergraduate requirements, students must complete a “W1” requirement (first-year writing) and a “W2” requirement (a second one-semester course that emphasizes writing in their discipline). The W2 requirement was established in 2018, as part of a larger revision of the general-education program; the development of the requirements for W2 courses involved multiple iterations and consultations with faculty. Faculty proposing a new W2 course or the conversion of an existing course to a W2 must demonstrate WAC elements in their proposal: multiple writing assignments, process work and revision, interactive feedback, information-literacy instruction, and low-stakes and writing-to-learn assignments. In the early stages of W2 development, the general-education program offered multiple faculty development opportunities and three faculty learning communities; this support has decreased but not disappeared.

All the participants in this study (18 total) had recently taught or were teaching a W2 course when I interviewed them. About one-third had been involved in the development of their discipline’s W2 course, and eight had participated in a W2 faculty learning community. While no participants expressed eagerness to teach a W2 course, and most of them had been assigned to teach it, none communicated resentment, and all saw it as a reasonable and necessary duty. (In most departments, W2 classes rotated among faculty.) I had 15 participants in three focus groups, and three participants in a series of three individual interviews over the course of the semester. The focus groups afforded responses across a number of disciplines; here, my questions centered on forms of emotional labor and participants’ sense of institutional expectations and rewards. The interviews provided a more chronological scope, as we met at different points of the semester. My first set of interview questions was the same as for the focus groups; the second set involved examination of course materials and instructor feedback on student writing; and in the third, we discussed institutional expectations, personnel review, and faculty development. Participants comprised tenure-line, term (full-time, non-tenure-track), and adjunct (part-time) faculty at a variety of ranks; they came from departments in the arts and humanities, social sciences, sciences, and professional schools. There were nine male-identifying and 6 female-identifying faculty, with 3 faculty of color, in the focus groups, and 2 male-identifying and one female-identifying faculty in the interviews.

The focus of the research was participants’ experiences of emotional labor in teaching writing in their W2 courses, with attention to the institutional context of that labor. In analyzing those experiences, I found ways that these faculty deployed emotional labor to support students’ writing development, especially to

compensate for their own perceived lack of knowledge of writing pedagogy; they might not have been experts in writing pedagogy, but they had expertise in relating to students. I relied on Hochschild's (2012) foundational definition of emotional labor: "This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. . . . This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (p. 7). In other words, emotional labor is not necessarily how we feel about our labor, no matter how strong those feelings might be. Instead, it is the self-management of those feelings as part of one's job; emotional labor is commodified.

Forms of faculty emotional labor revealed in my original study included faculty suppressing feelings of frustration in office hours, class meetings, and feedback on writing in order to not discourage students; taking time to deal with students' emotions as part of their regular instructional practice; sharing their own emotional experiences with writing to normalize criticism and the attendant emotions; awareness of students' affective, embodied responses to feedback and writing difficulties; "cheering on" students to motivate them; and redirecting unhappy students to course materials and instruction to sustain motivation. In these cases, participants were not directly teaching disciplinary writing or content; they were deliberately managing students' and their own emotions to "produce the desired effect" of student learning.

In applying the epistemological framework of IE more forcefully, however, I also saw that faculty's motivations for deploying that labor were often divorced from explicit institutional requirements beyond the requirement to "teach writing in this course." While they acknowledged the W2 learning outcomes and requirements as part of their course design and pedagogy, they spoke more about the self-constructed obligations I'll describe below. Moreover, their own personnel reviews do not incorporate writing instruction or even student learning (unless one argues that student evaluations measure student learning—which I would not). The self-constructed forms of obligation and accountability, and the emotional labor they deployed to fulfill those obligations, are not part of institutional assessment, personnel evaluation, or rewards—and yet, emotional labor requires significant time and energy in its focus on individual student needs. I explored this disjuncture between external requirements and the actualities of faculty labor by examining institutional texts related to W2 requirements and personnel evaluations for teaching in conjunction with participants' own descriptions of their labor, and that exploration led me to theorize that faculty motivation was tied to self-constructed "deep accountability," discussed in the next section. The remainder of this article focuses on these forms of obligation and their implications.

## DEEP ACCOUNTABILITY: BEYOND INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The participants in this study expressed a strong commitment to teaching in general and to teaching writing in particular. For example, Sam,<sup>1</sup> a term-faculty government professor and focus-group participant, situated his identity in terms of how he supported his students: “I’m also a teacher, because I’m interested in doing a good job for my students and with my students.” But no participants said that the labor of teaching writing in their disciplines was externally valued, despite my questions about institutional requirements and expectations. Moreover, all three interview participants (Miriam, Carl, and Steven), with whom I explored institutional expectations more deeply, consistently demonstrated unfamiliarity with and misunderstanding of the personnel policies that supposedly communicated expectations and the ways faculty were accountable to those expectations. I find it difficult to blame these faculty for their lack of knowledge, however. When I delved into the various policies and guidelines at the university and department levels, I found them to be vague and often contradictory. Compounding this lack of clarity was the sense on the part of all participants that for teaching, what mattered were the numerical student evaluations.

There existed, in other words, something of a vacuum where explicit expectations, assessment, and rewards for teaching would be. And yet all participants were motivated to not only jump through the institutional hoops of the W2 requirements but meaningfully support student writing development.

In the absence of clear institutional requirements and accountability for teaching writing, these participants constructed their own accountability structures that went beyond the institutional requirements of the W2 courses and personnel reviews, a framework of obligations that motivated not only their pedagogical decisions but also their emotional labor—what I am calling “deep accountability.” In using this term, I am inspired by Hochschild’s (2012) idea of “deep acting,” part of her seminal theories of emotional labor. Hochschild argued that people often manage what they feel in accordance with social feeling rules. In other words, they internalize the feeling rules and employ them in emotional self-management. Such self-management is an ordinary part of our social interactions, but it can also be part of emotional labor, which, as I noted, is commodified. According to Hochschild, this deep acting can become so automatic and normalized that is indistinguishable from one’s “real” emotions.

While I relied on Hochschild’s (2012) work in my own examination of emotional labor, I also realized that academic labor lacks the heavy-handed management and accountability experienced by her participants. I thus extended

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1 All participant names are pseudonyms.

her concept of deep acting to the ways that faculty in my study experienced a deep sense of obligation within self-constructed accountability structures: deep accountability. These structures were born more out of participants' sense of themselves as professionals than institutional personnel requirements. Focus-group participant Karen, a tenured psychology professor, pointed directly to the lack of influence of institutional requirements: "I'd say that I don't really have channels for institutional expectations that I know of, or that I've heard, so that I don't really feel a lot of pressure in general from the department, ... that I need to personally teach writing." Instead, as Steven, a term-faculty marketing professor and interviewee, put it when we discussed how the institution evaluated his writing instruction, "You know, I think it is, you have to have that internal personal accountability to do the right thing."<sup>2</sup> Steven echoed Bledstein's (1976) idea of a professional "ethic of service."

The self-constructed structures became internalized to the extent that they felt like natural forms of obligation and responsibility, and they guided not only what faculty did but what they deeply felt they *must* do to act in accordance with their professional identity. This internalization ran deeply enough that participants felt obligated to do more than what the institution's policies required of them. One way this obligation played out was in emotional labor, which was not explicitly managed or required by the institution, but which was an essential part of their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities (both institutionally codified and perceived) to their students.

Yet while this deep accountability and its attendant impulse to meet obligations prompted participants to support students' writing development, exceeding institutional requirements also poses risks. For example, Gill (2009), in her analysis of academia and neoliberalism, pointed to faculty's internalization of the neoliberal "audit culture" (p. 46), which, combined with professional identity and values, results in extensive self-management (obviating the need for external management): "We appear ... to be model neoliberal subjects whose working practices and 'psychic habitus' ... constitute us as self-regulating, calculating, conscientious and responsabilised" (p. 47). Not only does the institution not need to exert explicit management on faculty in order for them to fulfill their obligations—faculty will, according to Gill, exceed the management requirements that do exist, not in spite of, but because of their own academic agency: "The 'freedom,' 'flexibility' and 'autonomy' of neoliberal forms of governmentality has proved far more effective for extracting 'surplus value' or at least vastly more time

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2 Across the board, participants did express alignment with and support for the curricular requirements of the W2 courses, although they also expressed frustration with their own perceived lack of abilities, class sizes, etc. No participants, however, said that they believed the university would assess their writing instruction or students' writing improvement.

spent working, than any older modalities of power” (p. 47). In other words, the impulses and obligations that faculty feel as autonomous professionals can also be a source of labor exploitation—or perhaps self-exploitation, as participants gave more than the university asked or rewarded them for. In the case of my participants, there was no institutional accountability or assessment for students’ writing development or for the emotional labor faculty employed to foster that development, nor were there rewards for the time and energy involved. The complex interrelationships that Gill described allow the institution to get more labor out of faculty than they reward them for or even acknowledge—while also not explicitly requiring that labor and thus not explicitly exploiting them. Yet, despite these risks, and despite the lack of external accountability and rewards, as I will show in the next section, these obligations are an important motivator in disciplinary faculty’s work with student writing.<sup>3</sup>

## FORMS OF OBLIGATION

In this study, deep accountability revealed itself in two primary areas of obligation: to colleagues and their discipline or profession, and to students. In both cases, there were no institutional or disciplinary mechanisms to hold faculty accountable for student learning. While the general-education program did assess W2 courses, this assessment was programmatic, not focused on student learning in individual courses; moreover, at the time of this study, only course materials were assessed. As I have discussed, participants didn’t see the institutional expectations for teaching as clear, meaningful, or relevant, and the main mechanism they did point to—student evaluations of teaching—didn’t measure students’ learning or writing development. Nonetheless, all the study participants had constructed systems of obligation and accountability that they pointed to as primary motivating factors in their teaching. This self-constructed deep accountability drove participants’ efforts with students.

### ACCOUNTABILITY TO COLLEAGUES AND THE DISCIPLINE OR PROFESSION

In this section, I’ll discuss the forms of deep accountability to their colleagues and to their discipline or profession that participants described. These forms reveal a sense of obligation to prepare students for future writing and research situations—and they also reveal the reality that it’s unlikely that faculty would ever be held formally accountable in those future situations.

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<sup>3</sup> To be clear, participants did pay attention to and even care about the outcomes and requirements for W2 courses. But when they discussed *why* they devoted time and energy to students’ emotional management, they invoked the forms of accountability they had constructed for themselves.

Participants expressed a sense of obligation to those colleagues who would next encounter their student writers, as well as resentment toward those colleagues who they suspected did not sufficiently prepare students, revealing a culture of deep mutual accountability. For example, Miriam, term faculty in art history, said: “Sometimes, you know, a student will have done a lower-level course with me, and then they’ll go on to do a more upper-level course with another colleague, and I do feel like, ... I hope they’re okay. I hope I’ve taught them all right on the lower-level stuff before they go on to the higher level.” Although it’s possible that other faculty in Miriam’s department might question how well students are prepared for their classes, there were no actual structures to institutionalize tracking of students from one class to another.

But participants also felt that their colleagues had obligations to prepare students, and they expressed negative views of colleagues who they believed were not doing their part in supporting student writing. Steven, for example, expressed resentment toward his colleagues who he thought devoted insufficient attention to working with student writing in the W2 classes. He felt that his colleagues were doing students a disservice when they paid little more than lip service to the W2 requirements because employers were demanding better writing preparation. Similarly, Liz, a tenured history professor and focus-group member, explained the problem as a matter of student support and learning reinforcement, starting from the first-year writing class: “You know, when people walk into other classes, are we holding them to those standards, because we all know, you can have somebody teach you something your first semester, and if nobody ... holds you to it for the next seven, you don’t learn it. ... So, ... I think there are lots of very high expectations about what we, we should be doing, but personally, I don’t feel like we can give the students the support they need.” In these cases, participants were frustrated that their colleagues were not upholding the same professional standards that they were—not practicing the same kind of accountability that Miriam described above. (While no participants expressed this point, I suspect that concerns about their colleagues judging them could play a role in their self-constructed obligations.) These responses revealed a culture of deep accountability to colleagues for sufficiently preparing students for whoever would get them next, whether that was a colleague, a graduate-school professor, or an employer.

This preparation often took the form of training students in disciplinary conventions for writing. Discussing the major writing project in his chemistry class, Carl said, “And then they had to put that [data] into the context of a results and discussion section ... so when I write a research paper, there’s a results and discussion section. So ... it’s a fairly standard thing we have to write.” Carl felt he should train students to engage in the practices of chemistry researchers (“we”);

he was accountable to these disciplinary conventions. Karen described a similar process of training students to enter the “we” of disciplinary writing: “And I feel like if they just ... end the course knowing what generally a psychological report looks like and what the components are, and they can even put together a really nice methods section and remember all of the components of that methods section in ... conventionally how we write them, then I think they’ve learned something.” This obligation to prepare students to write as, say, chemists or psychologists—to be part of that disciplinary “we”—is central to the concept of the W2 classes; these courses are meant to be disciplinary writing courses, and W2 faculty have an obligation to support that preparation. If faculty do not align with this disciplinary accountability, there is little point to the W2 course.

But it is also interesting that participants felt a sense of obligation and accountability to the discipline more broadly, although “the discipline” would enact no official accountability. Most of their students would not go on to be scholars in their fields, and unless they did graduate work, it was unlikely that other scholars would discover that Karen had never taught her students to write “a really nice methods section”. The participants felt accountable to a *concept* of the discipline and disciplinary writing. As professionals within a discipline, they held themselves accountable for promulgating the values and conventions of the discipline. Indeed, part of the professional identity of a faculty member is inculcating new members of the discipline. Moreover, such attention to disciplinary knowledge and conventions *through* writing is a hallmark of WAC; perhaps without realizing it, and certainly without expressing it, participants were enacting the epistemological functions of disciplinary rhetoric and supporting students in learning how to think and construct knowledge in their discipline through learning how to write in their discipline.

Participants also expressed a sense of accountability to post-graduation professional work. Steven and Carl both emphasized this area of obligation. They recognized the importance of writing in their fields. Steven referred to future employers’ complaints about students’ writing ability: “I do recognize the importance because anytime we talk to employers or anyone ... who has been in the work world for a while, ... people talk about how poor the writing skills are for most college graduates coming out these days, and especially in the business world. So, ... I recognize that there’s a deficiency there. Again, I’m not going to be able to solve it all in my one class, but it’s certainly something that it’s worth addressing.” Putting aside the persistence of the “kids these days can’t write” complaints over many generations, Steven felt accountable to future employers to do his part to send them graduates with good writing skills.

Similarly, although he did not focus on students’ deficiencies, Carl expressed an obligation to future employers: “If a student goes out and is working at a

testing facility, they need to be able to write their ... technical reports in a very specific way, and, and so our students are comfortable doing that at graduation, they're going to be better off when they go to their job. So we all see it as part of our responsibility that this kind of training is important." Here, Carl described a more communal obligation on the part of his colleagues and himself toward fulfilling professional obligations.

As with disciplinary accountability, there were no official accountability mechanisms here; no one would come back to Carl or Steven to complain about their former students' writing. But they used their knowledge of actual professional practices to construct a sense of obligation to prepare students for those practices. The future situations were real, even if the accountability was not. But this area of accountability is also important because it aligns with a value across much of higher education that is frequently criticized: a focus on professional preparation and job skills, as though a university course of study is simply a job-training program. Although this university has no broad institutional mandates for job preparation, and there is a thriving general-education program grounded in liberal-arts values, faculty are certainly aware of students' needs to find employment after graduation, and they can see evidence of it in university marketing materials touting high job-placement numbers for graduates. But it is still up to faculty to construct the particular obligations and forms of (imagined) accountability, as well as to devise teaching and learning opportunities to meet those obligations. Even in this area, deep accountability was the driving force, not external, institutional requirements.

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO STUDENTS

In this section, I'll turn to participants' sense of obligation to their students. More than any other area, participants felt accountable to students. For many participants, "students as humans" mattered, in the classroom and beyond. They wanted them to learn and to be successful, and they held themselves responsible. As I've discussed, participants described feeling accountable to colleagues and the discipline or profession, when there was not any actual mechanism to hold them accountable. But their students would be accountable for what they knew in those other contexts, and so in an indirect way, that accountability to peers was accountability to students, too; even their accountability to colleagues and the discipline or profession was grounded in notions of student success.

To be clear, participants did hold students responsible for their own learning. They noted a few areas in which they felt that students were not sufficiently acting in the best interests of their learning, focusing on problems with communication and following instructions. For example, focus-group member Joseph, a term-faculty international studies professor, talked about the frustration of working with

students in office hours, only to see little evidence of that work in their papers: “But it’s actually the conversations with students where they lay out a pretty good idea, and you say, yeah, you can do that. You just have to . . . remember this and this and you can do it. And then I feel that all they hear is, you can do it. And what I get written is totally different from what we just talked about, like so different that you wonder if they’re even in that conversation.” A similar problem with communication came up in discussions of students following assignment instructions. This irritation was not directed at students’ writing ability but at students’ inability to comprehend and follow assignment instructions or to follow through on what was discussed in office hours—areas that these faculty believed students did have the ability, and responsibility, to control. These reactions matter because they underscore participants’ humanity; they aren’t saints devoted to students’ needs and to the psychic rewards that might come from meeting those needs. Participants felt frustration, irritation, impatience, and even anger—and yet they deployed emotional labor to self-manage those human responses.

Despite their sometimes negative emotions toward student behaviors, participants’ deep accountability—which, again, was largely self-constructed—to students appeared to serve as a centrally motivating force in their teaching, prompting them to attend to students’ pedagogical, personal, and emotional needs and devise ways to succeed in sometimes constrained material conditions (such as large class sizes). It also revealed the importance of relationships and attention to human needs in writing instruction.

Some participants communicated awareness of students’ material context when they discussed accountability, highlighting their obligations to them as people. For example, Steven described a sense of accountability to his students in transactional terms: “I feel some personal accountability to students. . . . I know some people hate the term referring to our students as our clients or our customers. But again, they’re paying a lot of money for this, and you know, my ultimate goal in a professional-based field is to set them up for success in that future career.” Instead of reducing his teaching labor to crass “give the paying customers what they want” terms, Steven demonstrated his awareness of students’ material context (i.e., an expensive school that puts a high financial burden on many of its students) and of his obligations to their futures—awareness, that is, of the people currently in his classes and the people they would be after they leave. There was no external body checking that Steven prepared his students for the workplace; his obligations arose out of his concern for the people in his classes.

Miriam, too, felt obligations to her students, and she also had a transactional sense of accountability, although hers was grounded in her course materials. She wanted to ensure that she delivered on what her course had promised to students: “Just being accountable . . . to what the students expected of the course. . . . I always

cover all of the material that I say I'm going to cover. We do all of the assignments, ... and I really try and give them this fully rounded course that I promised them at the beginning." Note that Miriam described this "transaction" in terms of the people involved—herself and her students—instead of institutional or disciplinary outcomes.

But Miriam also cared about the human element of teaching, not just about whether the content was mastered: "Despite any of the requirements or anything, ... I genuinely ... want these students to learn and understand this that and the other, ... not even for their course or for their degree but like them as human beings. I want them to appreciate art and architecture and be able to understand it, ... just for humanity, just to be a human, appreciate culture and civilization." Miriam believed she was accountable to students in terms of the course material, but she also felt accountable to their human development, to the kinds of people they were becoming. Like Steven, who cared that his students left his classes with the means to have a career, Miriam cared about her students beyond the classroom; she was invested in the ways they might move through the culture.

Carl's comments about accountability to students were restricted to their development within his class, but these comments, too, revealed deep accountability and obligation through his repeated use of the word "need" as he described his struggles with navigating students' inaccurate perceptions of their own abilities without causing them to feel like giving up: "There are two things we need to really thread in all this. ... We need to be able to give instruction and correction and ... guidance. But we need to do it in a way, right—And so sometimes there's lots of guidance that we need to give, and ... the students' own perception of where they think they should be and where they actually are, versus where we think that they should be and where they actually are, are completely different." What Carl was trying to articulate here was the need to provide "correction"—criticism—and to bring students to a higher ability level while not completely undermining their (inaccurate) self-image because to do so would be counterproductive in terms of student improvement. What was notable, though, was his repeated use of the word "need"; Carl viewed that tricky balance as an obligation. Instead of an externally imposed requirement, this obligation was an internalized "we need," a professional obligation that he participated in and held himself accountable to, echoing the sense of professional obligation and deep accountability to students that Steven and Miriam expressed.

## IMPLICATIONS

The nuances of these faculty's accountability, obligation, and motivation provide insights that can be useful to those involved in WAC faculty development,

including faculty developers and WAC faculty themselves, as well as to all faculty concerned about institutional requirements and expectations.

While institutional requirements for W2 courses guided faculty's course design, these study participants' feelings of deep accountability and obligation led to their more localized pedagogical decisions and their emotional labor. But the interview participants (Carl, Miriam, and Steven) also revealed that their desire to support students' writing development and meet their perceived obligations led them to avail themselves of professional-development opportunities. Crucially, they emphasized that while they valued professional development, they wanted to access it on their terms—when they wanted it, in the forms they wanted it, because they wanted it—and not because of institutional mandates (echoing Walvoord et al.'s [1997] findings about faculty agency in professional development). In other words, they were motivated to participate in faculty development, but they insisted that the motivation be intrinsic.

Awareness of both deep accountability and faculty's desire for agency provides affordances and cautions for those involved in WAC programs. On the one hand, these study participants believe that their teaching and students' writing development are important, echoing William Condon et al.'s (2016) findings that faculty do value teaching. They are motivated to support student writing—a clear affordance for faculty developers. And understanding the nature of that motivation creates avenues for more collaborative faculty development, in which, for example, faculty developers and WAC faculty might reflect on their perceived obligations and then develop pedagogical approaches to meet them. Deep accountability here becomes a generative force, in which analyzing the obligations can lead to effective teaching practices.

But deep accountability suggests cautions, too. As I have discussed, the very professionalism that fosters autonomy can also prompt labor that exceeds what the institution requires and rewards. These study participants were already doing more labor than the university required; faculty development should not increase their burdens. I'm not suggesting that faculty "work to the rule," nor am I encouraging heavy-handed institutional management and micro-oriented rewards structures. But I am urging faculty developers to attend to faculty's desire for agency in faculty development and to development activities that will have clear payoffs—including not only greater effectiveness but also the kinds of efficiency that can be interwoven with effectiveness.

Moreover, faculty developers and WAC researchers should attend to the different experiences of emotional labor and accountability by various faculty groups. In this study, some participants expressed concern about the pressures contingent faculty and women might face, but none provided examples of actual experience of that pressure. For example, some term faculty said that term faculty could be more

vulnerable to criticism from unhappy students, but none had experienced that. Similarly, multiple research studies reveal biases in student evaluations of teaching against women and faculty of color (e.g., Fan, et al., 2019; Heffernan, 2021), but none of these participants said that their evaluations demonstrated such effects.<sup>4</sup>

Attention to faculty labor applies beyond faculty development, of course. All faculty, whether in WAC programs or not, can benefit from reflection on their labor and what motivates it: Where are we exceeding institutional requirements? Why do we do the work we do? Is the institution compensating us for our forms of labor, even if that compensation is indirect? How can we demonstrate our “excess” labor in ways that the institution acknowledges and values? How can we advocate for changes to institutional policies that would recognize our labor without leading to heavy-handed management or reductive metrics? Tackling such difficult questions begins with honest discussion of the ways that we create our own obligations and sources of motivation.

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<sup>4</sup> I am currently analyzing data from a follow-up study that examined the experiences of emotional labor by WAC faculty of color; this data indicates that these participants employed emotional labor in additional ways to, for example, establish credibility and authority with students.

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## CHAPTER 14.

# WAC: THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY'S *MEZZATERRA*

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*Abstract. This chapter describes the groundwork laid by WAC pioneer Art Young for the Pearce Center at Clemson University and asks how the Center can maintain its investment in writing and the belief that “everyone can write” in the face of Clemson’s research priorities. To persist, a middle ground—a mezzaterra—needed to be found, one that incorporated the values Young modeled: adapting to circumstances, building community both at the university and beyond, and innovating in ways that upset the status quo. These values can be seen in the three initiatives the author describes: Grad WAC Fellows, Service Learning Outreach, and Research Faculty Fellows program.*

To friend and mentor, Art Young

I have often thought of Art Young, a WAC pioneer, as a mentor for the work I’ve done at Pearce Center for Professional Communication at Clemson University. Art was responsible for establishing the Pearce Center in the 1980s. The groundwork in terms of infrastructure and character laid by Art and his team, including Kathleen Yancey, then Pearce Endowed Chair and Carl Lovitt, then Pearce Center Director, was what I wanted to continue when I was appointed director in 2016. Although Art’s numerous accomplishments in building the Center would be hard to catalog in the space of this chapter, they include being given a substantial donation from Mr. and Mrs. Roy Pearce for a professional communication center and the spectacular recognition by *TIME Magazine* in 2001 of Clemson as “Public College of the Year” on the strength of its Communication Across the Curriculum program (Denny, 2000). For me, as a new director, the key strengths that Art modeled might be captured this way: *adapting* to circumstances, *building community* both at the university and beyond, and *innovating* in ways that upset the status quo. It must be noted that we are fortunate, as a Center that continues to be fully supported by foundation and endowment funding, to have the space and latitude to enact these values.

For Art, writing represented a means to revolutionize student learning. This progressive, activist goal became foundational not only to Clemson's program but also to new WAC programs being established at the time. To achieve this goal, however, WAC leaders had to adapt to the contexts in which they were working. To describe that adaptability, I borrow a term from cultural criticism—*mezzaterra*—which speaks to the value of establishing middle ground. In this chapter, I describe the ways Art Young has contributed to my thinking of writing programs as middle ground, a kind of *mezzaterra* of academic environments, i.e., sites of collective, collaborative activity through writing. Borrowed from Egyptian essayist and novelist, Ahdaf Soueif in *Mezzaterra* (2004), this term provides a structural analogy for an inclusive middle ground that, in WAC programs, comprises not only physical spaces—writing labs and centers—but also psychic space, arenas of imagination for engaging and investing in the power of writing. The term urges us to think outside of dominant vocabularies of the writing field about the sense of space (*terra*) from a wide range of locations, each with its specific perspective about how a cultural hub could be created, an imaginative act of finding and creating middle (*mezza*) ground. WAC programs furnish not only spaces for collaboration but also spaces for difference where competing ideas are expressed, juxtaposed, and combined towards a goal of overcoming possessive territoriality as faculty work together, as writers and teachers, to achieve student learning goals.

To show how Art embraced *mezzaterra* in building the Clemson WAC program, I begin by describing how he created these middle-ground spaces from the time he arrived at Clemson as the Robert Campbell Endowed Chair for Technical Writing, with a joint appointment in the Departments of English (2/3) and Engineering (1/3). I describe three values—adaptability, community building, and innovation—that the Pearce Center, under Art's leadership and continuing to the present, has undertaken towards breaking down disciplinary and programmatic borders. I explain how Art modeled these values in developing the WAC program. Moving to the present, I describe the current research-focused environment at Clemson and its threat to WAC before turning to three programs I've initiated that work against that threat in an effort to cultivate a collective sense of writing and learning goals for students: Grad WAC Fellows to facilitate WAC “through the back door”; expanded client-based Service-Learning programs to extend outreach to the surrounding community; and a Research Faculty Fellows program to find out where and how writing is happening across the university.

## ADAPTABILITY

Art learned early on how to adapt to the challenges this position involved. Although recruited by Dixie Goswami, a highly respected writing scholar at

Clemson, neither Engineering nor English knew quite what to do with him. The Department of English, in particular, seemed resistant to his expertise despite his founding position in writing across the curriculum and despite his WAC programming at Michigan Tech, his previous institution, having been declared “an essential pillar” of an MTU education. The department was neither interested in supporting a writing program nor in assigning him courses in literature, saying he was not hired to teach literature, despite his PhD credentials in romantic literature. Thus, even with the encouragement and warm welcome of Goswami and the successes behind him, he had some rough patches in his startup with Clemson, as I learned in a zoom conversation with him (A. Young, personal communication, February 5, 2024).

Although Art’s divided disciplinary appointment created challenges, it also produced the conditions that demanded adaptability, community, and innovation, as I’ll explain. While, in my experience, English departments have been welcoming spaces on a campus, Art found the opposite situation in the late 1980s when it was a conservative department determined to remain a service department for general education, unwilling to recognize the research on writing and learning that had occurred throughout the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s. They seemed to have missed the then-radical conclusions from British and American studies in education that “language is central to learning because through language we ‘organize our representation of the world’” (Russell, 2012, p. 19) and that writing had come to stand at the center of both student-centered and active-learning movements. Elaine Maimon summed up with humor the serious intellectual activity that informed the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge: “the teaching of writing is ‘scholarly not scullery’” (1980, p. 6, qtd. in Russell, 2012, p. 24).

Two years after his arrival at Clemson, Art seized an opportunity to respond to the conditions he found on campus when he obtained a budget from the Campbell Fund. He immediately printed brochures advertising a writing workshop and distributed them to all university faculty. He arranged to hold the workshop at Kresge Outdoor Lab, near but not on campus, undoubtedly part of the call’s success. Sixty signed up for the required two workshops, each lasting a full day, each allowing a rare opportunity for faculty to meet, talk, share notes and ideas about how to help their students better learn the materials of their disciplines. Reflections at the end of each session from the community—engineers, scientists, mathematicians, historians, landscape architects—were positive and the word got around. The provost called: what were these meetings that were generating such buzz? (A. Young, personal communication, February 5, 2024).

At about the same time, Dixie Goswami, in one of the many transformative events affecting “every aspect of my professional life,” according to Art, suggested

a project for his technical writing class (Young, 2001, p. 1). His approach exemplified the vision he left for his successors: consider the situation and adapt to its constraints. The project, a user's manual for the Clemson University Forestry and Agriculture Network, revealed to Art and his students that writing projects needed to negotiate competing aims given multiple "clients" interested in the outcome. One party wanted flexibility and accessibility, the other wanted standardization. The project was also a lesson for Art on the need for adaptability, given that "what some perceive as the driest of academic subjects, technical writing—when placed in an authentic context—could be fraught with politics, conflict, and intrigue" (Young, 2001, p. 5).

That need to assess conditions and adapt to multiple demands continues to describe the situation WAC programs face in their commitment to the human investment in writing amidst many universities' ambitions related to gaining or exceeding Research One status, the latter being relevant at Clemson. That WAC today can be considered mainstream given its longevity and persistence attests to its being continually innovative and pioneering, which, as I'll describe shortly, is critical for its survival, a lesson Art quickly learned in his joint assignment.

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

The joint assignment that Art Young accepted at Clemson put him squarely on the threshold between the sciences and humanities. Art negotiated separate and competing departmental demands with little to no guidance about what the dual appointment might mean except that he was to continue to build the Effective Technical Communication program established with a substantial gift from a Clemson Engineering alum, Robert Campbell. The dean of engineering, however, had one plan for the funds—funding an engineering laboratory—while the English Department had none, and indeed resisted using funds, thus undermining efforts to establish a writing program (A. Young, personal communication, February 5, 2024). Art's opening gambit at Clemson demonstrates his expertise in creating a middle ground, a *mezzaterra*, as he negotiated the conflicting objectives of the two appointments and created an unexpected community. His early cross-departmental workshops attracted participants from across the university hierarchy from department heads to first-year faculty. From these early workshops, a WAC community emerged, which proved to be vertical as well as horizontal. This idea has been both valuable and indispensable in programmatic developments over the years, as WAC scholars attest. Marty Townsend describes, for example, how the University of Missouri Campus Writing Program achieved its "longevity and vitality ... from the 'top down' and 'bottom up' coming together in the middle" approach. "The faculty wanted this program

to happen,'” she explains: “Equally important, the administration supported the new WAC initiative both fiscally and philosophically without getting in the way of faculty governance. Those two key factors, combined with a dynamic, professional staff, allowed us to create a robust program” (as cited in Rutz, 2006, p. 45). As WAC practitioners understand, their programs succeed when middle ground includes representatives spanning all levels of departments and the administration.

Middle ground, however, is neither a utopia nor does it achieve consensus; instead, it provides a site of operations working across disciplines with one set of ideas engaging another and thus encouraging new forms of problem solving. Art understood that the new pedagogical movements in writing brought promise for change given that their very structure facilitated interdisciplinary collaboration; he embraced the expansive notion not only that “everyone can write,” but also that everyone should participate in the project of writing (Elbow, 2000). From this modest premise, writing programs challenged the status quo. In transcending disciplinary boundaries, writing programs provided space, both physical and psychological, making visible complex problems, challenging academic orthodoxies, and generating fresh theoretical and pedagogical insights. In short, writing programs created conditions in which practitioners became agents of change.

Adaptability has always been central to WAC's identity, emerging not from rigid institutional structures but from the flexible, relational networks that allowed programs to evolve in response to local needs. As David Russell (2006) notes in his introduction to Susan McLeod's and Margot Soven's *Composing a Community: A History of Writing Across the Curriculum*, “WAC has been a training ground for change agents . . . , relying on a network of personal relationships in a community of practitioners in many disciplines, rather than a formal organization” (p. 4). Demonstrating the intersecting forces of WAC programs, stories like those featured in *Composing a Community* documented the centrality of “a few powerful ideas,” “a wide range of possible models,” and a “bricolage of theories and methods,” eschewing “the usual means of disseminating ideas and practices in academia” (Russell, 2006, p. 5). In fact, WAC formed in opposition to orthodoxy, becoming more about community and less about academy, knitted together through personal connections, and perpetuated in narratives from individuals dedicated to “the network of personal relationships that formed WAC” (Russell, 2006, p. 7).

## INNOVATION

Finding middle ground, as mundane as it might sound, is actually revolutionary. By 2000, Art Young's Communication Across the Curriculum program had serious data for bragging rights. He was able to inform Clemson's president that

nearly half of all faculty (400 out of 900 faculty) had come to a writing workshop (A. Young, personal communication, February 5, 2024). But I believe Art would also be among the first to say that writing is so much more than head counts and numbers, even more than words on a page or images on a screen. Writing refers to a larger sphere than ink on the page; it is the very medium through which thought, relationship, and change takes form. Writing, in this sense, not only manifests thought but also defines the transitory relations between people, which Matthew Luskey and Daniel L. Emery (2016) examine in their study of liminality, the threshold condition between established structures, where boundaries blur and new meanings emerge. Transitional spaces, they write, are often marked by various absences: lack of commonalities in vocabulary, dissimilar contexts, differing conceptual and disciplinary knowledge (p. 102). These discontinuities might be seen as possibilities for connection and alignment, allowing, in this case, disciplinary faculty and writing consultants to engage in “fruitful struggle to articulate student-facing writing abilities aligned with disciplinary and epistemological values” (Luskey & Emery, 2016, p. 105). Liminality, then, names a productive in-between state, a moment of ambiguity that precedes new insights, with the promise of unsettling entrenched attitudes and eroding barriers to communication.

Art tapped into this condition of language, its ability to transcend disciplinary borders, in the novel program Poetry Across the Curriculum (PAC), which took poetry to classes of student engineers, scientists, and social scientists. He describes the subversive quality of writing across the curriculum in a poetry experiment designed not only to counteract “education as usual,” but also to allow teachers to “shut off the automatic pilot” of student response with “writing tasks that are unpredictable.” He characterized this teaching as “not writing *across* the curriculum nor writing *in* the discipline but writing *against* the curriculum” (Young, 2003, p. 473). In poetry, he found paths across the disciplinary barriers erected by the curricula itself.

In that project, Art likely experienced, as many WAC consultants do, a healthy dose of what McLeod (1995) has called “*foreigner* status,” a sense of “not being part of the local departmental power structure” that permits consultants who “have no stake in disciplinary arguments ... [to] ask questions no one else can ask” (p. 111). For Art, it meant operating at odds from two departments and disciplines. He became a double émigré, given his use of writing to challenge disciplinary understandings, and his use of literature and literary forms that were contrary to the understanding of some writing experts. Poetry across the curriculum provided a *mezzaterra* for meeting between the two broad disciplinary cultures. It also enacted a kind of social equality, avoiding stereotypes, such as, engineers can’t write or technical writing is not creative, while providing an alternative means to meaningful engagement with course content that

involved “tasks that keep writers off balance” (Young, 2003, p. 475).

Writing-across-the-curriculum programs exemplify adaptability because they treat writing as comparative and connective practice, an ensemble of concepts and strategies that enable knowledge to move across contexts, a point Kathleen Yancey et al., (2018) draw upon for conceptualizing transfer. In “Writing Across College: Key Terms and Multiple Contexts as Factors Promoting Students’ Transfer of Writing Knowledge and Practice,” the authors propose eight key terms, several of which rely on structures of rhetoric, including, for example, rhetorical situation, purpose, audience, genre. When students engage with writing concepts through reflection and integrate them into individualized theories of writing, they gain the conceptual tools to adapt their rhetorical choices and transport writing knowledge from one disciplinary context to another. Another key term, discourse community, includes language itself. It reminds us that transfer depends not only on rhetorical organizational, but also on language, the very material of communication that enables transdisciplinary application. As a brief example, let me digress to describe an impromptu assignment I gave a group of my Graduate WAC Fellows. After showing a short video interview with the mayor of Asheville, NC, I asked the graduate TAs to prepare an assignment for their students that responded to the devastation of Hurricane Helene for neighborhoods just to our north. Their assignment asked students to develop some small part of a solution that drew on their disciplinary expertise and addressed the mayor’s needs. The TAs were creative in assignments ranging from designing non-power-dependent communication systems, to designing chemical generating systems, and to developing landscape materials that could sheath wires without stringing or burying them. The projects varied as widely as the diversity of fields represented in the graduate class. Connections between projects became apparent when I asked them to list keywords from each assignment on the board. Not that the keywords were the same, but, rather, the keywords immediately demonstrated that these projects could be in conversation, and indeed all were necessary, to solve the problem that the hurricane presented.

Language, words, writing, all the elements of communication, as WAC directors know, are the very material of the middle ground, the *mezzaterra*. Writing programs facilitate connections between disparate research areas and offer a means of discovering surprising communities, which, in turn, may disrupt the usual lines of disciplinary responses.

## MOVING TO THE PRESENT

Since my initial appointment as Pearce Center director in 2016, a role that allows me to continue to work between literature and the writing communities of my

department and college, I have honed the idea of the WAC program at Clemson as the university's *mezzaterra*. Let me explain: Clemson's recent ambitions like many other universities to exceed their designation as a Carnegie R1 university and to strive for membership in the Association of American Universities' cohort of "leading research universities" raises questions about how teaching will be valued going forward. If teaching is critical to the WAC mission, as Art noted in our conversation, then what would result, he asked, if faculty no longer "think of themselves as teachers first." More specifically, how will foundational tenets of WAC, i.e., James Britton's and Janet Emig's argument that language is central to learning, survive when universities emphasize the activities and outcomes of research and not the writing processes central to both. Michael Pemberton (2012) reminds us that WAC programs are built on a social-constructionist paradigm, which "argues, in part, for the distribution of writing expertise *within* and among disciplines, locating the sites of textual authority in many diverse fields and interpretive communities" (p. 369). In noting sites located "*among*" disciplines, Pemberton points, I think, to the idea of *mezzaterra*; that is the collective activity that creates a middle ground, creating, as I said in my opening, physical and psychic spaces for working through difference, spaces where competing ideas are expressed and negotiated and different areas of expertise are recognized, valued, and connected.

Over the years of his career, Art saw WAC as a revolutionary possibility: Writing programs can create not only a culture of writing on university campuses, but also the intersectionality of a middle ground for conversation around ideas, philosophies, and designs for learning, a *mezzaterra*. In the following section, I describe three initiatives I developed to sustain the program that Art built and that model the values he demonstrated: adaptability, community building, and innovation.

## **ADAPTABILITY: GRAD WAC FELLOWS**

The Pearce Center started the Graduate WAC Fellowship Program as a way of stealthily reviving WAC programming, which had experienced a significant dip, through other than a faculty workshop model, which faculty, as I'd heard, had grown tired of. The director of the Writing Center and I collaborated to establish a two-semester fellowship seminar for graduate students, meeting once a week as a one-credit course. The seminar originally progressed from theory to practice, but most recently it advances from WAC to writing in disciplines (WID), with theory and practice intertwined in both sections. The fellowship is limited to 12 TAs in each section. Most participants come from engineering, science, and social science, chosen each semester from a competitive applicant

pool. Many apply after hearing about it through word-of-mouth; lately, as word of the success of the program spreads, more have applied upon recommendation from their advisors. Grad WAC fellows may start either in the fall or spring since we offer sections each semester. Doctoral fellowship recipients are most often between their second and fourth year of their program. One of the most important criteria for selection is a teaching assignment. Although a few fellows also serve as research assistants or lab mentors in their departments, the Grad WAC Fellows program centers on pedagogy and classroom practice. This focus attracts many international applicants who seek to improve their teaching and, indirectly, their own writing skills by teaching others. Even though Grad WAC fellows improve their own writing as they learn to integrate it into their teaching, the program's primary goal is to expand the culture of writing on campus and help more students use writing as a learning tool.

Our initiative identifies a particular need on our STEM-oriented campus for graduate teaching assistants in science and engineering departments, who are expected to teach often in the first year of their assistantships. In situations when the TAs are still familiarizing themselves with the curriculum, the Grad WAC fellowship focuses on helping TAs figure out ways to assign writing and assess those assignments when they are inexperienced college teachers charged with what may be unfamiliar genres of disciplinary writing. The challenge is often greater for international TAs, who are not only new to Clemson but also to American students and classroom conventions.

The Grad WAC Fellows niche recognizes graduate TAs as occupying an epitome of in-between positions, i.e., working between the professoriate and the student body, they are preparing to negotiate the middle position of *mezzaterra*. Such positioning makes them perfect ambassadors for WAC programming on campus. Their medial situation is, again, especially clear for international TAs (ITAs) who are not only negotiating subject matter between experts and novices but also translating across linguistic sites. Language gaps—between disciplinary jargon and colloquialisms, and between the native languages TAs and professors speak and English that most of the students speak—define the territory international students navigate daily. Like Tamara Mae Roose et al. (2024), I have found that WAC second-language ITAs, necessarily fluent in translation practices, become excellent models for liminal work, both between professors and students and between disciplines (Bushnell, 2020).

In that respect, the Grad WAC Fellows initiative provides both theoretical and practical instruction. The program calls attention to the capacity of words to affect readers, to the rhetorical situation that makes clear how those effects reach readers, to the connections between brain and page through the pen that not only records thought but generates it. The program is arranged in workshop style,

conveying writing strategies that can be tried out in class, such as the three-minute jot or the exactly-25-word summary (Bean & Melzer, 2021). Everything we do in class may be refashioned by the fellows for use in their own classrooms. We also introduce conference abstracts, rubric design, and assignment design (small groups prepare a writing lesson appropriate for their students and present it to their peers), among other assignments. The result is that fellows leave our course with a sense of writing as process, strategies for informal writing, awareness of how to address multiple audiences, and a clear idea of the connection between writing and thinking. The most remarkable outcome is often confidence—fellows help their own students (as well as themselves) learn to trust writing as a mode of learning.

Over the last eight years of its existence, we have reported the success of the program through Pearce Center annual reports and conducted assessments through ever evolving end-of-semester surveys. In annual reports, we spotlight the experiences of one or two grad WAC fellows which also serves to promote the visibility of the program. Assessments have, in the last two years, moved from inconsistent student evaluations to the university's standardized course-evaluation system, which focuses more on individual instructors than on the program as a whole. Over this same period, we have supplemented those data with our own annual surveys of the graduate WAC fellows to capture program-specific outcomes. We review these surveys alongside course-evaluation data to identify recurring patterns—such as shifts in fellows' confidence with disciplinary writing or increases in students' reported ability to write within their majors. A final reflective narrative, in particular, has been central to our assessment as it allows us to code responses for themes such as adaptability, rhetorical awareness, and transfer of writing knowledge, which then informs program revisions and future training sessions.

From the most recent fellows survey (AY 2024–2025), one fellow wrote what is a common sentiment, that she has changed her attitudes about her own writing and her approach to teaching: “This semester as a Grad WAC Fellow has been a transformative experience, both personally and professionally. One of my biggest takeaways is the importance of adaptability in teaching and mentoring writing across diverse disciplines. It was memorable to witness students develop confidence in their writing, especially when breaking down complex scientific ideas into accessible language.” Another fellow makes a similar observation: “As a Grad WAC Fellow this semester, I was able to see writing as an adaptable, student-centered process. Even in technical subjects, I discovered how to help students think critically about their audience and purpose. One of the highlights was helping a STEM student simplify their writing without sacrificing intricacy.” Finally, one fellow articulated a sense of the ways writing had begun not only

to infiltrate her research practice, but also to transform the laboratory space itself as a site of writing practice:

This class has taught me patience within the writing process. Though some of the skills being taught in this course [are] things I've previously learned or knew intuitively, taking the time to handwrite things out helped me learn so much about what was actually frustrating me. ... this course has taught me skills that I could bring back to our lab students as they navigate this new academic space and journey into their graduate programs .... I enjoyed being able to learn more about the writing process and implementing that work in my own writing subconsciously has felt rewarding!

In aggregate, triangulating these assessment data—course evaluations, survey responses, and reflective narratives—allows us to track program effectiveness over time and adjust mentoring practices, workshop design, and curricular integration accordingly. By so doing, assessment becomes not an endpoint but an adaptive practice, evidence of WAC's ongoing capacity to learn from its own learning.

## **BUILDING COMMUNITY: SERVICE-LEARNING FACULTY FELLOWS**

Pearce Center's newest initiative, the Service-Learning Faculty Fellowship, was started by the Assistant Director of the Pearce Center, Ashley Fisk, while I served as Interim Director of the newly created Interdisciplinary Studies department. Ashley designed this initiative to support faculty willing to embark on a unit designed to be part of an existing course that involves working with a real-world client, for example, the local African Art Museum or the campus Sustainability Commission. Courses across the campus implemented service-learning projects, which not only facilitated undergraduate student connections with the world of work but also emphasized the human dimensions of disciplinary practice—how professional decisions, designs, and research affect people and communities. A case in point is provided by David Williams, a faculty service-learning fellow from the Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design program. He focused a service-learning unit on representations of the Holocaust in old and new media. Students in his first-year composition classes worked with a non-profit client with an educational mission focused on helping teachers and students develop rigorous historical knowledge and critical thinking about the Holocaust. Williams' goal for students was learning composition skills and gaining professional experience while practicing humanitarianism. Each class researched, wrote, and

produced a 20-minute podcast on Holocaust history, one examining Jewish life before the Holocaust, the other exploring its aftermath. Together, the two projects were intended to broaden understanding of this global event by extending Holocaust studies beyond the war years. Both the questions Williams posed to students and the required reflections on the process, Williams found, led them to think differently about a large and difficult subject. Unexpectedly, the question/reflection process also created space for a deeply personal connection, as he learned when one of his students revealed that her grandfather had survived Auschwitz despite being subjected to medical experimentation at the camp (D. Williams, personal communication, May 12, 2024). For Williams, the process of listening, narrating, and reflecting, as part of the service-learning experience, were the means of creating the community and acknowledging the humanity of the writing process, treating writing not as a technical skill but as a human practice grounded in empathy and relationship.

## **INNOVATION: PEARCE RESEARCH FACULTY FELLOWS**

During the post-Young years, 2009–2011, the Pearce Center was briefly dormant. WAC programming restarted in 2012 with undergraduate student internships and client-based projects conducted in collaboration with interested English Department faculty. These developments raised a need for both rebuilding and thinking anew about Pearce Center’s mission. To that end, one big challenge consisted of identifying faculty members across the campus who were already involved in writing-oriented projects. In 2021, supported by Pearce Center endowment funds, we launched a Pearce Research Faculty Fellows program. While undergraduate internships and graduate student fellowships continued, we explored what we believed was a subterranean current of respect and understanding of the value of writing based on Art’s earlier work and continuing recognition for Clemson by *U.S. News & World Report* as a top university for “Writing in the Disciplines” (Newall, 2011). This recognition led to an idea: rather than positioning the faculty fellows as a force for disseminating research about writing, the program could be a magnetic force, attracting faculty interested in teaching writing through diverse modes and models.

Research Faculty Fellows combines two undertakings: faculty learning communities (FLCs) and individual projects. The FLCs require an application in which faculty propose a project that they will design in the first semester and implement in their course(s) during the second semester. The group also meets once a month to discuss a series of readings around a topic, ranging from transfer of writing knowledge and skills to strategies for meaningful reading, web optimization, and team writing. Our meetings are punctuated by mini lectures

from a guest speaker whose work we are reading. For example, in the first year of the initiative, Kathleen Yancey spoke on transfer, Joanna Wolfe on team writing, and Chris Anson on discourse communities. These were three of seven guest speakers that year, all hosted via Zoom in the midst of the pandemic. As the faculty explored WAC concepts and how writing works in the disciplines, I gained insight from interested faculty about where writing was occurring and what kinds of writing instruction and interventions were already being done. I subsequently conducted informal interviews with five of the inaugural faculty fellows in December 2022, six months after the end of the first-year program, to learn what WAC pedagogies and practices remained useful to their programs.

Among other insights related to the above, I learned from the interviews that, with Pearce Center backing, faculty were interested in starting graduate courses in science writing, in augmenting undergraduate education with authentic projects, and in making intercollegial and international connections based on writing pedagogy projects. So, for example, Professor Karen High launched two new graduate writing and communication courses for the Department of Engineering and Science Education; Professor Shanna Hirsch in Education developed the “ECHO Telementoring Model,” to reach over 200 special education teachers across disciplines, and Professor Carl Blue presented his Technical Writing in Graphic Studies (TWIGS) tool, which started a new collaboration with British Anglo-Ruskin University, hosts of the Cambridge Innovation Center.

Given the two variations of the Faculty Fellows program that I’ve described—Research Faculty Fellows and Service-Learning Faculty Fellows—our future plans are to run the two faculty programs in parallel, concluding each with interlocking assessments. Relying on exit surveys, we plan to continue to not only measure the success of these programs by their tangible project outcomes, but also to use these assessments to generate new models of WAC programming and opportunities for collaboration.

Overall, my conversation with Art Young raised questions for me about how the Pearce Center can contribute to Clemson’s strategic plan, Clemson Elevate. Clemson has ambitious goals for “doubling research expenditures by 2035,” for providing “the #1 student experience in the nation,” and for transforming lives by emphasizing just how “service builds community” (Clemson Elevate, 2025). These goals, while highlighting research, depend on human interactions and successful collaborations. The structural metaphor of the *mezzaterra* has helped me think through the ways that WAC programming, as Art has advocated, can remain critical amidst the university’s increasingly research-oriented ambitions.

*Mezzaterra* offers a metaphor for a medial territory which WAC programming often occupies. The term describes: 1) a meeting place for different ideas across the cultural landscape of the university, 2) a central exchange for ideas,

theories and practices, and 3) a space that comes into being through the creative efforts of its participants. These kinds of middle ground describe WAC programs as I envision them, with the three initiatives I've described—Graduate WAC Fellows, Service-Learning Faculty Fellows, Research Faculty Fellows—acting as hubs for knowledge collection about writing and student writers, as contact zones for knowledge production about writing in the disciplines, and as crossroads for knowledge dissemination about the teaching of writing across the curriculum. Following Art Young's model, the Pearce Center is ready to be part of the university's goals to transform lives through community and service. By adapting to the evolving conditions of our ambitious research university, we position Pearce Center not just as a middle ground, but a generative, dynamic *mezzaterra*, a vital engine of innovation, learning, and institutional change.

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CHAPTER 15.

REALIZING THE POTENTIAL  
OF WAC MICRO-CREDENTIALS:  
DRIVING PROGRAM  
GROWTH ON NEW PATHS

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*Abstract. This chapter focuses on the emerging trend of micro-credentialing in higher education, which draws on corporate training models and responds to employer demand. While micro-credentials (badges) have raised concerns that a skills-training approach could devalue traditional college education, we propose suggest that micro-credentials can be tools for innovative faculty development, student learning, and WAC program growth.*

Micro-credentials in higher education are often a response to the business community's desire for detailed and easily accessible credentials that verify skill competencies specific to certain hiring needs. They draw on corporate training models and are usually offered in shorter timeframes and are more flexible than traditional degree or certificate programs. As defined by the SUNY Micro-Credentialing Task Force, "micro-credentials verify, validate, and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved" (2018, p. 2). The term "micro-credential" is often used interchangeably with "badges," and when awarded, they are commonly web-based and "clickable," allowing them to be displayed online on LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

Universities, including Purdue, University of Michigan, SUNY, University of Utah, and University of Minnesota, offer micro-credentials as a means of both meeting business and industry needs and preparing students with marketable skills. However, micro-credentials have raised concerns that what has traditionally been largely a skills-training approach could devalue traditional college education. For example, while SUNY's Micro-Credentialing Task Force ultimately recommends the support and development of micro-credentials across the university, they are clear to qualify that in such programs, "academic quality is paramount

for micro-credentials, and faculty governance participation is required” (SUNY, 2018). With similar concern, Glotfelter et al. categorize micro-credentials in what Randy Bass labels the “disintegrative paradigm” for learning, one that “emphasizes dimensions of education that can be commodified: targeted online learning, granular or modular, driven by algorithms that deliver micro-data on student understanding, often with a diminished role for faculty” (Bass, qtd. in Glotfelter, et al., 2022, p. 10). Such a paradigm, in Bass’s description, fails to support deep learning, moving views of learning “away from the complex and messy to simpler, more linear measures of success” (Glotfelter et al., 2022, p. 5).

We agree fully on the need to foster deep learning experiences; however, we argue that micro-credentialing can be an effective delivery method for enriching and change-making faculty development. Our experiences leading a WAC program at a large Hispanic-serving university suggest that WAC programs are poised to productively influence not only the future of digital micro-credentials within the academy but also the future of WAC impact on campuses. More specifically, we contend that since micro-credentials in the academy are still new enough that the definition is malleable, our role as WAC specialists puts us in the position to define how micro-credentials might work in our specific context. In other words, as the experts at our institution in training faculty across disciplines to teach with writing, we are uniquely positioned to design micro-credentialing experiences that benefit our faculty and goals for our institutions’ writing cultures. Doing so allows us to not only capitalize on the interest across campuses in micro-credential programs but also promote WAC principles and writing pedagogy best practices. Relatedly, our experiences suggest that micro-credentials can be used for promoting equity and access for students across campus.

To support our claims, we describe a strategic partnership with our Office of Micro-Credentials (OMC) to launch faculty and student-facing WAC micro-credentials. As we have discussed previously (Fang et al., 2023), in an effort to sustain our WAC program in a context of budget short-fall and political contention, we work to “link to highly connected institutional structures” with the goal of increasing “program stability by not being perceived as marginal or temporary, but integral to the institution” (Cox et al., 2018, p. 80). As Cox et al. (2018) have so clearly argued, WAC programs do well to “focus on points of high interactivity and leverage to shift the university culture” (p. 37). WAC administrators, they point out, can connect their program “to the structure of the institution through collaborations with highly connected units” which in our context is the OMC (2018, p. 67). A strategic partnership with the OMC not only helps to keep our WAC program visible and relevant but also aligns with university priorities. Our most recent Quality Enhancement Plan, *Critical Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, promotes micro-credentialing and prompted the

development of the university's Office of Micro-Credentials, led by our vice president of academic affairs. Partnering with our OMC brings visibility and increased funding to support faculty participation. However, the above-mentioned benefits would be insufficient if the program did not align with our WAC program's values and provide opportunity to engage faculty in meaningful and lasting work that creates increased opportunity and equity for their students. In what follows, we provide an overview of our micro-credential courses and share participants' self-assessment results, which support our view that micro-credentials, when designed with clear and context-specific WAC goals in mind, can lead to meaningful pedagogical change.

### **AN OVERVIEW: FACULTY-FACING AND STUDENT-FACING MICRO-CREDENTIALING COURSES**

Our WAC faculty micro-credential, "Teaching with Writing in the Disciplines," is a six-week summer intensive course designed to help faculty across disciplines learn best practices for teaching with writing so that they can effectively incorporate writing into their courses, create writing assignments, and respond to student writing. Faculty are selected for the course via an application process. At the time of this writing, we have offered the micro-credential four times, starting in Summer 2022, and we consistently have high faculty interest in the micro-credential. On average, we receive 70 applications and accept 20–25 faculty per cohort. Since we intentionally limit the number of faculty in each cohort as one way of responding critiques of micro-credential courses that assume the faculty role is diminished. By keeping each cohort at 20–25 faculty, we ensure that our faculty-facing micro-credential is designed around close interaction between the WAC team and faculty participants. We divide the larger cohort of 25 faculty into smaller cohorts of four or five, with a dedicated WAC team member assigned to each small group to foster connections, collaboration, and ongoing communication. Each WAC team member provides individualized feedback to the members of their small group throughout the course. To help with acceptance decisions, we developed five criteria to guide our selection process.

When faculty apply to the micro-credential course, they identify the specific course in which they would like to integrate the student micro-credential, explain their motivations/intentions for applying, and describe their current pedagogical practices associated with writing. Thus, we evaluate faculty submissions according to the following: 1) The fit of the proposed course with the micro-credential content; 2) The applicant's understanding of and/or depth of interest in writing; 3) The potential impact of the student micro-credential at the program/department level; 4) The likelihood of faculty continuing to offer

the student micro-credential in subsequent semesters; and 5) The potential to strengthen connections between WAC and various programs/departments on campus. In developing these criteria, we kept in mind Barbara E. Walvoord's (1996) distinction between micro-level actions (those that focus on individual faculty and students) and macro-level actions (those that focus on larger systems and programs). Thus, we take a multi-pronged approach, considering not only the potential impact of the student micro-credential within each individual course, but also the potential for the faculty and student micro-credentials to promote WAC growth and impact across campus.

The faculty course is a virtual, hybrid course that consists of online discussions and weekly Zoom meetings. The weekly meetings complement the online portion of the course by offering faculty the opportunity to dive deeper into concepts discussed in the asynchronous discussions. For this reason, Zoom meetings often begin with a WAC-led presentation that further explores that week's topics and then concludes with small group activities and/or group discussions. Throughout the course, there are seven assessments: two online discussions and five writing assignments. To maintain consistency with the other micro-credentials offered through the OMC, faculty must earn a minimum grade of 80 percent on all assessments to be qualified to implement the student micro-credential in an upcoming course.

Five learning outcomes guide the content of the faculty micro-credential course. By the end of the course, faculty should be able to: 1) describe best practices of teaching with writing; 2) recognize that students come to the course with a wide range of resources; 3) describe and apply various approaches to responding to and assessing student writing; 4) apply best practices for teaching with writing in their respective discipline; and 5) reflect on the application of teaching with writing in accordance with their specific disciplinary conventions. To meet these outcomes, we cover various topics throughout the course, including how to design writing in the disciplines (WID) assignments, the importance of embracing a process-based approach to teaching writing, strategies for responding to student writing, suggestions for incorporating AI literacy into the teaching of writing, and leveraging the benefits of multilingualism. For instance, in Week 1 of the course, we discuss Write to Learn (WTL) and WID assignments and the ways in which both can be integrated into disciplinary classrooms. Week 2 focuses on effective design of writing assignments, including transparent assignment design and strategies for scaffolding smaller assignments. In Week 3, we discuss effective feedback and assessment practices, including rubric design, strategies for using AI for feedback, and how to incorporate peer and self-feedback. Finally, Week 4 focuses on best practices for working with multilingual students, such as adopting a culturally responsive approach to assignment design

and focusing feedback on idea development and clarity rather than prioritizing only Standard Academic English.

Throughout the entirety of the course, faculty create or revise a writing assignment according to WAC principles on effective assignment design. Faculty revise their assignments multiple times in response to WAC team feedback, create an assessment tool to accompany the assignment, and develop teaching artifacts designed with multilingual students in mind. During the final two weeks of the course, faculty write a Teaching with Writing Philosophy Statement in which they reflect on their experiences in the course and formalize their takeaways about teaching with writing within their specific discipline.

For example, during the Summer 2022 course, Dr. Mike Hampton from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management designed an assignment that asks students to analyze a business website according to marketing aspects and write a marketing analysis report. During the course, we helped Dr. Hampton apply the tenets of Mary-Ann Winkelmes' (2023) transparent assignment design to his assignment, develop a corresponding rubric, and create a student-facing self-editing exercise. Dr. Hampton's work offers one example of the type of writing assignments and artifacts faculty create in the "Teaching with Writing in the Disciplines" course.

Upon successful completion of this course, faculty are certified to incorporate the student-facing micro-credential "Writing in the Disciplines" into one of their upcoming courses. In the student micro-credential, we seek to promote equity and access for faculty and students across campus. For faculty, this approach means respecting their disciplinary expertise so that they are empowered to take what they have learned in the faculty micro-credential and effectively teach writing within their disciplines. One way we value disciplinary expertise is by inviting faculty to personalize the module assessments for their own courses and decide when/how they will integrate them. The student micro-credential includes designated areas for faculty to insert the discipline-specific pedagogical materials they created during the faculty WAC micro-credential course. Also, since faculty can create *or revise* a WID assignment, much of the work assigned to students in the micro-credential is work that they would do anyway in the course; however, as a result of the WAC micro-credential, faculty create stronger versions of the assignments, and students gain additional incentive to succeed in the assignment with the opportunity to earn a writing micro-credential that could be valued by potential employers.

Our partnership with OMC has been a positive collaboration build on mutual respect and has enabled us to offer an extended faculty training program that reflects our institutional WAC priorities and values while furthering the OMC's goal of hosting a wide array of badge programs. However, as with

any partnership, challenges arise. In this case, we had to negotiate assumptions regarding micro-credential standardization. Specifically, while honoring faculty disciplinary expertise was essential for our WAC team, our idea to allow personalization of the student micro-credential was initially questioned by the OMC. Traditionally, once a micro-credential had been developed and approved by the OMC, it would be taught the same way each time, regardless of the specific faculty teaching the micro-credential. This standardization ensures that all students earning a particular micro-credential will have a consistent experience. However, since our student micro-credential aims to teach writing *in the disciplines*, we knew that the student micro-credential needed to have discipline-specific aspects, and we therefore advocated for the importance of instructor choice within the student micro-credential. After working with the OMC to understand the requirements for each new micro-credential, we ultimately developed a student micro-credential that satisfied the OMC requirements while also providing opportunities for instructor personalization.

For instance, one of the student micro-credential modules focuses on genre awareness. An accepted premise of WAC theory is that genres are discipline-specific, and gaining familiarity with discipline-specific genres is inextricable from learning disciplinary writing. As Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2022) argue: “naming and providing ways for students to practice with the conventions of these genres ... is a critical part of providing disciplinary access. That’s because written genres ... reflect the ways in which people join or belong to fields and perpetuates the ideas circulating within those fields” (p. 45). From this perspective, who better to select the genres for student analysis than the faculty—the disciplinary experts—teaching the WID micro-credential? Therefore, in the genre awareness module, we provide faculty with readings on genre that include “Genre/Form” (Gross et al., 2022) from the open-access book, *Howdy or hello? Technical and Professional Communication* and “Navigating Genres” by Kerry Dirk (2010) from the open-access book, *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*. We also provide an editable genre analysis chart, and each instructor uses their disciplinary expertise to select the specific genre for their students to analyze (See Appendix for the editable genre chart).

Relatedly, just as genres are discipline-specific, so too are the characteristics of effective writing. Put simply, “disciplinary communities of practice ... determine what ‘counts’ and what doesn’t” (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2022, pp. 46–47). Thus, as we designed the self-editing module of the student micro-credential, we knew we also needed to embed instructor choice. Effective editing and revision in a scientific lab report, for example, will look different than it does in an anthropology narrative. Therefore, in this module, we provide resources on the importance of editing and revision, and then we work with faculty to

develop a self-editing activity that is specific to writing in their discipline and with their students.

We also aim to use the faculty micro-credential to promote equity for our specific student population. As previously mentioned, our institution is a large Hispanic-serving university. Most of our students identify as Hispanic and multilingual. Accordingly, the faculty micro-credential includes content on equitable grading, teaching, and feedback strategies with our multilingual writing students in mind. For example, in our discussions of rubrics, we emphasize the need for clear, plain language rather than advanced, discipline-specific jargon, as well as the impact of weighting content, ideas, and organization over sentence-level grammar and mechanics. We also discuss the value of providing multilingual student writers with models of successful student work and we offer resources focused on productively responding to errors in multilingual student writing (i.e., this flowchart from the Purdue OWL's faculty guide, p. 34). While these are good pedagogical practices for all students, our discussions with micro-credential faculty focus especially on the importance of these efforts for multilingual student writers.

## **EVALUATING, REFLECTING AND REFINING: MICRO-CREDENTIAL COURSE ASSESSMENT**

Having delineated the structure and rationale of both faculty and student micro-credentials, this section discusses the preliminary data results of both micro-credentials. While we plan to engage in more robust assessment frameworks that would incorporate additional measures such as analysis of student writing artifacts, faculty course redesign outcomes, and longitudinal tracking of pedagogical changes. Currently our assessment data offers encouraging insights particularly through high levels of self-reported satisfaction and perceived learning gain. Specifically, we focus on the outcomes of the micro-credentials, exploring the perceptions of the program by faculty and students and its impact on faculty teaching and student learning experiences. Additionally, we examine whether the integration of writing micro-credential content into the disciplinary curriculum has fostered enhanced writing skills in students, as anticipated, and how faculty have reacted and adapted their instructional approaches. Through this analysis of program feedback, participant testimonials, and empirical data, this section aims to evaluate our micro-credential program in achieving its objectives.

### **FACULTY-FACING MICRO-CREDENTIALING COURSE**

In assessing the micro-credentials, we hope the initial results will highlight achievements and areas for further refinement. The data sources for faculty assessment are

faculty surveys, course statistics, and course artifacts. The faculty micro-credential program, aimed at integrating writing pedagogies within various disciplines, has been met with robust participation and approval. The program yielded high completion rates, with 16 of 18 faculty completing the first cohort, and 21 out of 23 completing the second cohort. Faculty who dropped out due to overwhelming responsibilities all expressed regrets. Since faculty have limited time and many demands on their schedules, including teaching, research, and service, attending professional development sessions can be difficult to fit in among these other priorities. Competing demands remains a common reason for faculty dropout in professional development programs (Wadhwa et al., 2014).

Survey data from the first cohort of faculty participants revealed overwhelming satisfaction, with 100 percent of respondents expressing satisfaction with their experience in the program. Additionally, 77.78 percent of participants acknowledged gaining more from the experience than expected, and 88.89 percent reported feeling more knowledgeable about teaching with writing than their peers who did not participate in the program.

Qualitative feedback from faculty underscored the practical applications of the course content. Participants implemented new teaching strategies immediately, such as revising assignments to clarify audience expectations and align with disciplinary writing genres, and integrating self-editing prompts into their courses. One faculty commented:

There are several elements of what I've learned in this class that I have already begun to implement in my current summer course and I've flagged for inclusion in my future classes and my approach to writing in these courses: 1) I've revised a few assignments to give prompts about audience, or make the audience more explicit; 2) I've revised two assignments to tweak the writing portion to align with disciplinary writing genres, and made that connection explicit; and I've added self-editing prompts to a couple of assignments. ... I'm really pleased at how this course has given me new ideas for teaching and assignment design.

As we see in this quote, such writing assignment revisions have the potential to not only enrich the faculty's course content but also further WAC best practices in the disciplinary course. Additionally, although the faculty micro-credential is tied to only one course the faculty members teach, faculty can apply the acquired knowledge of teaching with writing to all the courses they teach.

The overall reactions of the faculty to the course, an important measurement level of the effectiveness of professional development programs (Guskey, 2002),

indicate positive outcomes and areas for enhancement. For example, one participant noted the tangible benefits of the training, stating: “With the training, I believe my course is more engaging for the students.” This comment shows the course’s impact on improving classroom engagement. Another faculty member expressed appreciation for the program’s practical applications as he personalized the learning to his course: “Thanks for organizing and offering this course. It helped me achieve the goal of developing a writing assignment for my computer science course.” However, feedback also highlighted challenges related to the course’s demands, as one participant remarked: “It was a great deal of work, and one must be able to find the time to complete the process.” These insights not only affirm the program’s immediate benefits but also provide information for refining future iterations, ensuring that the course remains effective and accessible for interested faculty members.

### **STUDENT-FACING MICRO-CREDENTIAL COURSE**

The student-facing micro-credential, implemented by the trained faculty, also reported positive outcomes. Over two consecutive semesters, a considerable number of students earned the writing micro-credential—141 from 11 courses in Fall 2022 and 174 from 10 courses in Spring 2023. Satisfaction rates were high among these cohorts, with over 90 percent of participants each semester reporting “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with their micro-credential experience. Over 93 percent of the student learners in each semester expressed that they feel more or much more knowledgeable about learning with writing than peers who did not complete the micro-credential. Over 90 percent of the student learners expressed that they would include the micro-credential experience in their job applications, which reveals that the micro-credentials were seen not only as a testament to their writing ability but also as a valuable addition to their professional profiles, potentially enhancing their employability.

Student feedback on the micro-credential also highlights the program’s role in enhancing both academic and professional communication skills. For instance, one student remarked: “I thought it was helpful in learning how to be a better communicator in general,” emphasizing the practical benefits of the training. Further, participants found the experience not only insightful but also applicable to their future career paths. As one student noted: “This was a very insightful and interactive experience that prepared me for my professional career. I hope to expand my knowledge in this same way by taking other additional micro-credential certifications in the future.” Moreover, the program addressed specialized academic needs, as highlighted by a student who appreciated learning how to read primary scientific literature: “One of the main things I really valued was

learning how to read primary scientific literature, as I believe that is something that is really common within my discipline, and it is something that is important with my future career in order to keep up to date with the trends on various treatment methods.” These testimonials in the surveys show the micro-credential’s effectiveness in equipping students with critical skills for academic and professional success.

## **REFLECT AND REFINE**

Based on feedback and assessment results, several revisions are slated for both the faculty and student micro-credentials. For the faculty micro-credential, we are planning several key revisions. Our focus includes reducing the workload to alleviate the pressure on participants, ensuring they can fully engage with and benefit from the course content without feeling overwhelmed. For instance, we streamlined the faculty workload by reducing the number of required readings in each module and simplifying the assignment prompts to focus on fewer, more targeted questions. Reducing faculty workload is not merely a logistical improvement, but a deliberate effort to make professional development more inclusive and sustainable, especially for faculty teaching high-enrollment or labor-intensive courses. We will also update the content to address teaching writing in the age of artificial intelligence. For example, with our most recent cohort, we discussed the potential to create AI-infused writing assignments and the ways in which students can productively and ethically use AI for feedback on their writing. Additionally, we aim to further encourage the use of multimodal assignments, which will enrich the learning experience and cater to diverse learning styles. Finally, we plan to enhance peer interactions among participants to foster a more collaborative and supportive learning environment. These revisions are designed to improve the program’s quality and address the specific needs and challenges identified by our faculty members. Meanwhile, these revisions will help ensure that our micro-credentials do more than deliver content; they cultivate reflective, equity-minded faculty equipped to support all students, especially in our minority-majority teaching context. For the upcoming iteration of our student-facing micro-credential, we are committed to implementing several revisions based on feedback and the evolving needs of our participants. Key among these revisions is the improvement of students’ metacognitive reflection prompts, which will be refined to better support critical and sustained reflection on what they are learning about effective communication in their discipline and writing as an iterative process that involves regular drafting and revising. We also plan to integrate more engaging and interactive content throughout the program,

aiming to boost student involvement and retention of the material presented. We will ask faculty to track the ratio of earners to learners, providing us with data to continually assess and improve the effectiveness of the micro-credential program. At the time of this writing, we have already implemented some changes. For instance, recognizing the importance of early buy-in, we have introduced motivational content in the first module, emphasizing the value of the micro-credential and its potential impact on students' academic and professional successes. Additionally, a pre-learning survey has been implemented to better understand and align with students' expectations right from the start of the course.

## **CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS**

This chapter has detailed an important initiative within our WAC program, focusing on the implementation of both faculty-facing and student-facing micro-credentials. We have explored the outcomes and content of these micro-credential courses and presented an analysis of the assessment results that showcase the tangible benefits and the challenges encountered. The feedback and data collected reflect a strong validation of the program's impact, yet also underscore several areas that were initially underestimated, including faculty interest, especially among graduate faculty, the program's potential reach, the overall course workload for faculty participants, the budget required for effective WAC support, and the level of autonomy of our WAC program.

These insights have led to the identification of challenges related to the micro-credentialing program's process and administrative aspects. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for future phases. We will also focus on collecting and reporting detailed assessment data to further refine the program's effectiveness. Based on the outcomes, there will be considerations to request renewal of funding and plan for the sustainability of the WAC initiative. Looking forward, there is potential for expanding the WAC team and leveraging faculty within specific disciplines to provide more targeted support, thereby enhancing the overall structure and reach of the WAC programming.

We argue that micro-credentialing can serve as an effective method for faculty development within the context of a WAC program, leading to pedagogical changes conducive to students' deep learning. Our vision of using micro-credential programs to enrich the academic writing culture across campuses will empower faculty and students with tailored, accessible micro-credential content, fostering a deeper engagement with writing and communication skills across disciplines that are essential for academic success and professional readiness. Our ongoing efforts to refinement and adaptations in the micro-credential program

underscore a dynamic and responsive approach to faculty development, positioning WAC to significantly influence both the practice and perception of a strong writing culture on campus.

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**APPENDIX: GENRE ANALYSIS CHART**

	<b>Analysis of the genre</b>	<b>Specific evidence from the genre</b>
What do you notice about <b>the purpose</b> of the text? Is the purpose explicitly stated or is it implied? Is the writer trying to inform, educate, persuade, prove a point, describe, narrate, or something else? Does the text want the audience to do, think, or understand something specific?		
What do you notice about the <b>content/ message</b> ? Is the main message directly stated or implied? Is there an introduction and/or conclusion? Is support/data provided for the claims that are made?		
What do you notice about <b>word choice/ language</b> ? Are there context-specific words used? Is the language advanced or is it able to be understood by a general audience? What sorts of transitions or other signpost phrases are used? Are there abbreviations used, and if so, are they defined/explained? Is first-person used (I or we)?		
What do you notice about how <b>the audience</b> is addressed? How does the text engage with its target audience? Is the audience directly named? Is the audience directly addressed with “you?” Is it clear what the audience can be expected to already know or believe? What does the writer want the audience to do, think, or feel as a result of reading/viewing the text?		
What do you notice about <b>the visual appearance and/or organization</b> ? Are there images/photos? If so, where are they in relation to the alphabetic text? Are there columns, bullet points, or headings? Does the text use sections and/or sub-sections? Columns? Bullet points? Varying font sizes? How does the text use color?		



CHAPTER 16.

**PARTNERING, SCAFFOLDING,  
AND ADAPTING: LESSONS  
LEARNED FROM A MULTI-  
YEAR PROJECT TO EMBED WAC  
ACROSS A BSN CURRICULUM**

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*Abstract. In this chapter, faculty from both the School of Nursing (SON) and WAC at the University of Virginia speak to the challenges and rewards of implementing an ambitious writing-enhanced Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) curriculum. The SON's commitment to WAC within the BSN curriculum and the positive outcomes thus far have made the SON a model for other schools and programs across our university. In support of the SON's goals, the WAC initiative aims to work within the broader nursing curriculum to enhance student writing, deepen student learning, develop student confidence, and advance student professional identity.*

As anyone working in writing across the curriculum knows, partnership and adaptation make possible so much of what we do. The principles that guide our work, as articulated by the *Statement on WAC Principles & Practices* (Cox et al., 2014), speak to the mutual articulation of partnering and adapting—collaborating and revising. Often the only way to provide students opportunities to develop their “written abilities across their academic careers” and deepen their “engagement with learning” is through partnering with faculty across campus. In the process, we seek to “foster a culture that supports writing” and a “community of faculty” centered around the teaching of writing (Cox et al., 2014). Perhaps nowhere is this mutuality between partnering and adapting more clearly presented than in Chris M. Anson and Pamela Flash’s (2021) edited collection, *Writing-Enriched Curricula: Models of Faculty-Driven and Departmental Transformation*. They not only present an increasingly influential “writing-enriched curricula” (WEC) model for WAC programs; they also emphasize the need for partnerships that center WAC in the disciplines.

Throughout the collection, the authors recognize and reiterate the critical value of supporting departmental power in determining both curricular goals and assessment strategies. In defining the features of a WEC model, the authors discuss the foundational importance of locating control within a specific unit or department, which allows for effective articulation of context-specific writing expectations, practices, and target outcomes. Furthermore, supporting the development of writing curricula in one specific domain promotes departmental leadership and faculty buy-in (e.g., Anson & Flash, 2021). This essentially grass-roots approach, wherein WAC leaders serve as supportive consultants—“guides, listeners, and distillers of information” (Anson & Flash, 2021, p. 8)—rather than evangelists or enforcers, provides greater agency for departments and disciplinary experts in developing curricula for their students, and it also promotes better longevity within domain-specific programs. For the larger institutions, those departments also pave the way for other units to observe and adopt/adapt methods appropriate to their own contexts.

WAC at the University of Virginia was inspired by this conception of partnership, one that invests a kind of power in and prioritizes the expertise of the disciplines and thus situates WAC leaders as guides and even learners. In this chapter, we will focus on the roles of partnering, scaffolding, and adapting in a multi-year project to design and implement a writing-enhanced Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) curriculum. More specifically, we will describe the key strategic activities of our project:

1. Gathering research-based insights on writing development and instruction recognizable to nursing faculty,
2. Leveraging existing commitments and course materials designed by nursing faculty,
3. Adding strategic tools for improving transfer across BSN courses,
4. Developing materials that adopted disciplinary language and infrastructure, and
5. Encouraging evidence-based pedagogical strategies through targeted faculty meetings and workshops.

In documenting these activities, we seek to provide transferable lessons for forming partnerships, scaffolding writing across a multi-year curriculum, and adapting both materials and expectations.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT: UVA AND THE SON**

The University of Virginia (UVA) first adopted WAC in 2017, as a model to enhance the culture of writing across the institution. UVA has a total

enrollment of approximately 24,000 students (undergrad/grad combined) and about 3,000 full-time faculty. The College of Arts and Sciences offers more than 50 undergraduate degrees and concentrations and more than 25 graduate degree programs; WAC also serves another 11 schools (e.g., engineering, commerce, nursing, etc.). Our earliest tasks included networking, developing prototype projects and services, and piloting these with paired assessments.

Across UVA, we piloted the following activities:

- Individual consultations
- Targeted workshops and training sessions
- Course pilots (using a new set of “writing-enhanced” criteria)
- An institutional Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing
- An institutional Graduate Instructor Seminar on the Teaching of Writing
- Embedded Writing Fellows (in partnership with the UVA Writing Center)
- Student writing assessments
- Programming partnerships
- Joint research
- Curriculum scaffolding

We refined this suite of resources over time based on assessment data, but throughout our initial pilot period of five years, we saw wide variance in types and saturation of engagement, with some schools opting for an occasional workshop or to send a single faculty member to take the Faculty Seminar and others choosing higher levels of commitment. The School of Nursing (SON) approached us early on, and we were fortunate to find faculty there spearheading their own efforts to scaffold writing instruction across their four-year BSN degree program.

The SON at UVA is an intense environment, consistently placing in the top 3 percent of nursing programs nationwide. The student body is comprised of about 400 undergraduate and 400 graduate students across the bachelor’s, master’s, doctor of nursing practice, and PhD programs. The school’s 60 full-time faculty also have clinical practices and administer residency and continuing education programs. The students, too, move quickly into practice. Our project has focused on BSN students, who by their second year are already in clinicals, where they provide hands-on nursing care to patients. Indeed, the professional practice and identity of these students has been significant in the development of writing goals and adapting to programmatic realities.

## **PARTNERING AS LEARNING, TRANSLATING, SCAFFOLDING ... AND ADAPTING**

Our experience tells us that one key component of forging WAC partnerships should be the search for common ground. Often that common ground can be found in the educational research of the disciplines and fields with which we partner. Those who work with nursing faculty will learn quickly that research into nursing education shows a well-developed WAC tradition. For nearly two decades, BSN programs across the country have successfully incorporated WAC approaches to curriculum and instruction to improve students' engagement with course content and their ability to write in their discipline. (For overviews of initiatives, see Cowles et al., 2001; Luthy et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2017; Silva et al., 1999; Tesh et al., 2014). Ruth Davidhizar (1993) specifically identified four reasons to teach and mentor BSN students to write more proficiently and effectively: (1) to enhance student learning; (2) to develop student confidence; (3) to develop students' skills in scholarly writing; and (4) to advance the profession. By analyzing the research literature and descriptions of actual programs, Heidi Troxler et al. (2011) offered a taxonomy of common elements of WAC initiatives in BSN programs, and their findings mirror WAC best practices. For example, most BSN programs that incorporate a WAC approach to writing instruction include short assignments, longer sequenced/scaffolded writing assignments, opportunities for revision based on faculty and peer feedback, and examples of model or successful writing (often accompanied by the use of evaluation rubrics). Recently, BSN programs have sought ways to develop students' scientific or scholarly writing abilities, using assignments that require students to engage with scholarly research (Bailey et al., 2015; Friberg & Lyckhage, 2013; Hunker et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2017). However, as Annette Bailey et al. (2015) have argued, mandating that all BSN students produce original, publishable, scientific research is not realistic considering students' differing levels of preparedness and reading/writing aptitudes as well as the curricular constraints of most BSN programs.

BSN students *can* develop their competence in scientific writing through assignments that require them to engage with sources, present their findings, and offer some intervention or response. Research in nursing education and WAC provides numerous examples of these assignments, such as literature reviews that increase students' proficiency in scientific writing while introducing them to the genres and research of nursing (Friberg & Lyckhage, 2013).<sup>1</sup> Research-based

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1 For other examples of research-based/source-based writing in BSN programs, see Cowles et al., 2001 (an "ethical principle" paper); Luthy et al., 2009 (an "ethical issue paper"); Silva et al., 1999 (an issue + intervention paper); Tesh et al., 2014 ("research-based writing" similar to a literature review).

writing assignments seem to work best when implemented as part of a larger WAC-based pedagogical approach. Empirical assessment has demonstrated that effective WAC-based initiatives, like writing-enhanced or writing-intensive courses, can improve nursing students' writing competence and self-efficacy (Blakeslee et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2015). For example, Louise C. Miller et al. (2015) found that “carefully designed, scaffolded writing assignments” and “giving [students] opportunities to practice their skills” were two highly effective practices that increased students' competence and self-efficacy (p. 178).

## **DEVELOPING RECOGNIZABLE RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHTS**

Because WAC approaches were already consistent with expert nursing practice, the question for us became, how do we tap into this expertise and make it recognizable? For decades, scholars of WAC have demonstrated that one way faculty in the disciplines can better appreciate their role in teaching writing is by helping them make explicit their own disciplinary expertise (Carter, 2007). Recent work by Angela Glotfelter et al. (2020) describes an “expertise-based” faculty seminar model that incorporates the threshold concept approach to help faculty recognize and develop their expertise in the genres, conventions, and practices of their disciplines. Building from this, Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2022) offer a research-based approach to WAC, specifically faculty development, that provides disciplinary faculty opportunities to make explicit their tacit knowledge as a form of expertise development. Heidi Nobles and T. Kenny Fountain were inspired by this appreciation for the role of expertise and also influenced by the sociologist of science Robert Evans's conception of expertise (Collins & Evans, 2007). For these scholars and others, expertise is not an all-or-nothing, have-it or don't-have-it characteristic. Often expertise involves making tacit knowledge explicit, so that one can have not only know-how and know-what, but also what might be described as “know-how-about-what.” Our faculty in the disciplines often do not realize what they know, how to make that knowledge explicable, or how to translate that knowledge into pedagogy.

After reviewing the research literature in our field and in educational psychology, and after researching what other universities and colleges required in similar writing-enhanced or writing-intensive courses, we came up with the following *research-based insights* that shaped both our larger approach to WAC at UVA and also our work with the SON. By taking widely recognized, evidence-based findings in our field and coupling them with writing research in nursing, we were able to develop a kind of mantra, if you will, that we used to center our various workshops, seminars, and consultations:

We all learn to improve our writing (capacities & products) through *repeated practice* over time, with *multiple occasions* to write and *revise* our work in light of *meaningful feedback* and *instruction* that is informed by the *knowledge, skills, and habits of mind* we are working to develop.

This is not a blindly original idea, and that is exactly the point. In our work with faculty across the disciplines, we would break this insight down into a set of practices that could be incorporated in courses and even labs and mentoring relationships across disciplines:

1. Inclusion of deliberate, focused practice in writing through multiple occasions to write. (Graham et al., 2016; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Klein et al., 2017)
2. Incorporation of some type of multi-step drafting process for major writing assignments. (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2018; Sommers, 1980; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002)
3. Opportunities to revise one's writing in response to meaningful feedback. (Anderson et al., 2015; MacArthur, 2017; Traxler & Gernsbacher, 1993)
4. Guidance, instruction, or mentorship that models the ways of thinking, reading, and writing students are expected to develop. (Carter, 2007; Santangelo et al., 2017; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006).

The last of these, of course, leaves a great deal to unpack. In our specific project with nursing, we enacted this modeling for students through forms of instruction including teaching for transfer and pedagogies centered on the development of genre knowledge.

## **SCAFFOLDING RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHTS INTO A WAC CURRICULAR FOCUS**

In supporting the SON, our WAC team (comprised of writing and rhetoric faculty and nursing faculty) faced the ongoing challenges of transfer, and we have seen how varying approaches to embedding writing in a curriculum can promote or discourage transfer. In the 2012 issue of *Educational Psychologist*, contributing authors focused on these challenges for transfer, exploring approaches across disciplines and pedagogical stances. In the issue's final article, David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon (2012) synthesize the entire collection along with outside research to identify a series of bridges that educators can adapt to promote transfer: "detecting a potential relationship with prior learning, electing to pursue it, and working out a fruitful

connection” (p. 248)—or “detect, elect, and connect.” In doing so, educators can minimize the losses that occur when students learn content only as a transitory means to an end and can instead promote “knowledge to go” that students continue to use and apply well beyond any specific assignment or class. Writing studies, and especially WAC, has taken up Perkins’s and Salomon’s call for more research into writing pedagogies that include positive transfer and discourage negative transfer (Moore & Bass, 2017; Nowacek, 2011; Yancey et al., 2014.). One widely recognized way of encouraging positive transfer is to provide students with a common or shared language, a set of “writing concepts or key terms,” in the words of Liane Robertson and Kara Taczak (2017), that students can use to label, reflect on, and come to understand their own writing. If keyed to the kinds of writing students will do across their academic careers, these shared writing concepts can aid transfer.

To translate theory into practice, we began adapting these transfer principles to our ongoing work with the School of Nursing. In working closely with faculty in the SON, we all came to realize that most of the groundwork for WAC had already been laid. Because faculty in the School of Nursing (SON) were already incorporating writing in many of their courses, and many nursing faculty had taken our institution’s four-day Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing, WAC efforts had already made a much larger impact in the SON than in other schools and disciplines at the university. Working together and partnering with other nursing faculty, we three decided to focus our WAC efforts on the following:

1. To identify the building block moves—critical skills, ways of knowing (Carter, 2007), discursive conventions—prized by the SON, the larger discipline, and its professional organizations. We did this by adapting language from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (2021) into a set of larger writing-related moves and capacities that BSN students should learn to develop.
2. To emphasize commonalities across courses to facilitate transfer, turning those key ways of knowing into what Anne Beaufort, expanding on Perkins and Salomon (1989), called “mental grippers” (2016, p. 25). Mental grippers can be understood as ways of presenting knowledge, skills, and capacities that resonate with students and make it easier for them to “detect, elect, and connect” (Perkins & Salomon, 2012, p. 250).
3. To focus on writing instruction as guidance and mentorship in specific conventions and ways of knowing that nursing faculty already knew (thus making the implicit explicit for themselves and their students).
4. To encourage the continuation of writing assignments that exemplify what Michelle Eodice et al. (2016) identify as “meaningful writing

projects.” That is, many of the major writing assignments in the BSN courses offered students “opportunities for agency,” “for engagement with instructors, peers, and materials,” and “for learning that connects to previous experiences and passions and to future aspirations and identities” (Eodice et al., 2016, p. 4).

This particular focus provided the space for us to collaborate with the SON to create an approach that would work for their BSN program.

## **DISTINCTIVE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BSN STUDENTS**

BSN students enter into a high-stakes profession from day one. In recent years, nursing students have been taking on work that would be demanding at any time but is particularly grueling in this time of an ongoing nursing shortage. When these nursing students begin clinical rotations in their second year, they are not working in a simulation setting; they are in clinical settings with live patients. Furthermore, they follow a structured curriculum throughout their four years with limited room for meandering; the curriculum is science- and clinical-heavy (e.g., courses included anatomy, microbiology, chemistry, pathophysiology, and pharmacology; students also perform hundreds of hours in clinical rotations); and students must take rigorous, national board-certification exams in their fourth year. Upon passing, they are in demand in the workforce as nurses on the frontline. This reality was on full display during the pandemic (and not incidentally, the third year of our project), when the SON worked intensely to prepare graduating nurses to meet the medical demands of a massive public health crisis.

The SON faculty have communicated repeatedly the critical role of writing for their profession. The urgency of writing is tied, for them as for us, to critical thinking and communication: nursing students must learn to read texts and situations attentively; to identify and work with high-quality research sources; to synthesize material and formulate effective responses; and to communicate clearly with other professionals, with policy makers, with patients, and with the general public. Our institution’s nursing faculty and leadership opted to take on the project of scaffolding writing across their BSN program to improve those outcomes in ways that would be manageable and enduring.

## **MAPPING TOWARD NEW GOALS**

Before proposing any particular intervention, Ashley Hurst (associate professor in the SON and also the student learning assessment coordinator) stepped back and created a map of the existing curriculum. She reviewed the BSN degree

plan as a whole alongside recent program syllabi to identify where writing was already taking place. This step proved pivotal. Up to that point, faculty had associated “writing” with “research papers,” which was daunting and left invisible a significant portion of existing writing instruction and activity. What the map highlighted instead was that (a) writing was already happening in most non-science focused classes and (b) the assignment types included research papers but also reflective journaling, case analyses, ethics case studies, history papers, op-ed pieces, research posters, and patient assessments. The map also exposed a severe lack of coordination among courses with regard to transfer, including mismatches in assignments (i.e., more than one course assigned “reflective writing,” but the definitions of those assignments were starkly different between courses). Students, Hurst also found, were frustrated and felt they had “too much writing.”

After reviewing this data, the SON and WAC first prioritized building better coordination of courses to improve transfer. One important precedent: nursing classes already leverage transparency for transfer of physical skills; our goal was now to help students see connections not only between assignments within a given class, but across their classes.

Our adaption took shape in response to how participants engaged with the initial model: We began our first year with a type of “metagenre” (Carter, 2007) that we identified by studying SON writing assignments—the research-report-respond model. We encouraged faculty and students to think about each writing task as incorporating some or all these larger rhetorical moves, such as identifying research, summarizing that research, and responding to or implementing a plan based on that research. While our audience seemed to “understand” the model, they never embraced it fully; the model seemed to be another item to memorize and take on, rather than something that could work organically with their existing activities. One problem with this approach was that the research-report-respond metagenre seemed external to the languages and practices of the nursing profession; rather than being endogenous to the field, it was an exogenous add-on. The next year, we pivoted to promoting a “Write to Learn/Write to Communicate” (W2L/W2C) model, which framed writing in more accessible, transferable terms that faculty and students could readily apply across their courses. This shift effectively internalized the work of writing within their own teaching practices, making it part of what they already did rather than something imposed from outside. This adaption, as we discuss below, gained better traction with the nursing faculty and students. Once the W2L/W2C framework became integrated into faculty practice, we shifted our focus to sustaining that framework through consistent, discipline-specific messaging. Rather than adding new requirements, we built on existing faculty meetings and consultations to circulate common language around writing goals.

## ROLL-OUT INFRASTRUCTURE

What proved most effective were a few simple but consistent points of contact:

- **Brief WAC messaging:** A short spot at the annual opening nursing faculty meeting to review WAC highlights and requests; occasional notes in faculty-wide announcements; and prompts during assessment meetings to connect program goals with writing outcomes.
- **Targeted engagement:** Once-a-semester “lunch and learns,” small-group consultations on assignments, and invitations to participate in our Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing.

These touchpoints made it possible to normalize WAC discussion without adding administrative burden. We found opportunities to talk to nursing faculty about designing writing assignments to improve student performance, guiding students in writing with sources, streamlining feedback, and assigning writing for transfer across the BSN curriculum, all guided by research-based insights

When we realized that our research-report-respond metagenre was not an effective way to characterize the major moves of nursing writing, we turned to the AACN’s *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (2021) as a bridge. We identified key skills within *The Essentials*—explore, consider, reflect and generate, synthesize, and apply—that paralleled WAC’s “Write to Learn” and “Write to Communicate” distinctions. This linking of WAC concepts to nursing’s professional outcomes provided a shared framework for talking about writing as both a mode of learning and a form of professional communication. To make that connection visible and usable, we created two cut-and-pasteable visuals—our “Write to Learn/W2L” and “Write to Communicate/W2C” stickers (see Appendix). Faculty could embed them in syllabi or assignments to signal how a given task functioned rhetorically and cognitively. In all our messaging, we highlight the pedagogical value of these two kinds of writing: W2L assignments help students think through content and can often be graded for completion, while W2C assignments benefit from explicit scaffolding, feedback, and criteria for final communication.

The linking of WAC concepts to nursing skills and capacities only worked because the nursing faculty’s write-to-learn and write-to-communicate assignments already required students to enact those capacities in and through those writing tasks. We made those stickers widely available to faculty for inclusion on their syllabi and assignment sheets. In all our messaging, we review the key features and pedagogical benefits of these two types of writing assignments, where we discuss W2L assignments (such as writing summaries, responses, or reflection, taking notes toward analyzing a case, or brainstorming for a longer project) as “building

block” work to help students think through content. W2L assignments, accordingly, can often be graded for completion only; students may receive only peer feedback in person or on discussion boards; and faculty need not be concerned with features such as poor organization or grammar. With W2C assignments (literature reviews, problem-solution papers, research proposals, posters, and presentations), we talk about strategies for scaffolding that allow for a drafting-feedback-revision cycle; we also talk about establishing clear and reasonable criteria early on, then letting that criteria guide both formative and summative assessment.

Having these “stickers” and circulating them among the SON faculty offers a few advantages: First, W2L/W2C concepts are now part of the sustained discourse surrounding writing in the BSN program. Second, when faculty consent to put the stickers on their assignments or syllabi to indicate which set of skills they are prioritizing in that situation, the goals become more apparent to the faculty members themselves, which promotes greater awareness and alignment of profession-specific expectations. And third, by repeating these two simple visual indicators across the BSN curriculum, we can reinforce writing concepts and a shared language designed to facilitate transfer, in that students can recognize the recurrence of the two assignment types across their courses.

## ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE STRATEGIES

Managing assessment over a four-year curriculum can be challenging, as the number of and changes in co-factors can complicate meaningful data collection and analysis. In the years we review here, we had been scheduled to conduct a follow-up assessment on student papers in 2020. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, students were writing in dramatically different circumstances than in the initial assessment in 2019, and we could not justify making any policy or curricular changes based on our inevitably inconsistent assessment data.

In our case, too, the writing assignments and circumstances of the first-year students are quite different from those of the fourth-year students, so at this time, we are not yet able to compare longitudinal scores. That is, first-year students currently write a series of low-stakes W2L papers with minimal research requirements during a relatively spacious time, whereas fourth-year students write more polished W2C research papers but during a time when they are necessarily focused on their national licensing exams.

For the next period of our WAC-BSN project, then, we are working toward the following assessment goals:

1. **Alignment across courses.** We have identified three courses that include or could appropriately include similar writing assignments (in the first,

second, and fourth years). Most of these are taught by multiple faculty across sections with reasonable continuity. We are working progressively with the groups of faculty members across these courses to revise one assignment in each course, to ensure continuity in the skills students will demonstrate at each level.

2. **Assessment timeline.** We plan to conduct new assessments with these revised assignments across a five-year period, studying baseline results in Fall 2024 and then observing outcomes again in Fall 2026 and Fall 2028. We hope these assessments will speak to whether our interventions are working to support the SON faculty's goals for their students' writing development across the full BSN curriculum.
3. **Faculty confidence measures.** We plan to conduct bi-annual surveys to measure faculty confidence with regard both to teaching writing in their content courses and to the efficacy of WAC in the BSN.

This partnership between the SON and WAC has been mutually enriching. We in WAC have greatly benefited from our partnership with the SON, as we have gained valuable insights into practices in which the nursing faculty excel—among these, their own self-awareness of their institutional culture, demands, and constraints, which has improved our recognition of often less-visible parallels in other schools and programs. The situations in which they write, as well as the genres and conventions they use to navigate those situations, have expanded and enhanced both our understanding of and the availability of models for text creation across fields. As Chris M. Anson and Pamela Flash (2021) suggest, too, we have found that the visibility and success of the BSN project has invited interest from other schools; and we now have a pool of resources that we can adapt across other disciplines.

## SPEAKING BACK TO THE FIELD

Our experience affirms WEC's emphasis on departmental ownership while extending it in two pragmatic ways:

1. **From ownership to legibility.** Locating control within the unit is necessary but not sufficient; the curricular metalanguage for writing must also be *legible across courses* so faculty and students can connect prior learning. In our case, the shift from an external metagenre to a simple, transferable distinction (W2L/W2C) internalized writing work within existing practices rather than adding an exogenous template.
2. **From initiatives to infrastructure.** Sustainable uptake hinged on low-burden, recurring touchpoints (brief faculty-meeting inserts,

assessment-meeting prompts, semester “lunch and learns,” small-group consultations, seminar invitations) that normalized a shared vocabulary without adding administrative load. Visible cues (the W2L/W2C stickers) then made the conceptual linkage operational at the syllabus and assignment level.

From this experience, we offer a practical heuristic for WAC and WEC implementers. Sustainable writing initiatives begin by translating WAC principles into discipline-legible categories, normalizing them through recurring, low-burden routines, making them visible with simple cues, and assessing them through aligned tasks distributed intentionally across the curriculum over time.

For the field, this BSN project affirms that sustainable WAC requires both conceptual clarity and infrastructural patience. Partnering, scaffolding, and adapting are not preliminary phases but ongoing habits of disciplinary translation that can help WAC practitioners in any context build legible, resilient writing pedagogies.

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## APPENDIX: WRITE-TO-LEARN/WRITE-TO-COMMUNICATE STICKERS



CHAPTER 17.

WAC EMERGENCE IN ENGLISH  
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
CONTEXTS: A TALE OF TWO  
JAPANESE UNIVERSITIES

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*Abstract.* This chapter seeks to profile writing sequences at two Japanese universities and explores their potential for WAC. The universities—Kanazawa University (KU) and Akita International University (AIU)—are well-known, but the former is a large national university, while the latter is a small public university that is famous for its university-wide English immersion approach. Important to international WAC conversations are the role that English for academic purposes (EAP) curriculum and pedagogy play in academic writing instruction. English for academic purposes is an approach to English language acquisition that prepares students from EFL countries to operate successfully within primarily English-speaking universities. The first case study reveals that KU's EAP sequence provides few opportunities for developing WAC without major curricular changes. However, a recent study has demonstrated faculty support for WAC if it is tailored to the local context. The case study of AIU reveals WAC challenges due to the university's status as a small liberal arts institution with limited resources, but the unique English immersion structure of the university-at-large and the American-style writing sequence, have paved the way for pedagogies and student writing that align with WAC. A formal WAC infrastructure, however, would be difficult to implement.

Writing across the curriculum is primarily a US-focused initiative. However, there has been growing interest in WAC in international contexts (Hall & Horner, 2023; Martins, 2015; Zawacki & Cox, 2014). International WAC is understood as students learning content knowledge in another language, but it also entails domestic WAC pedagogy like notetaking, reflection writing, essay

writing, and journal writing, among others (Kwon, 2023; Martins, 2015). Important to international WAC conversations is the role that English for academic purposes (EAP) curriculum and pedagogy play in academic writing instruction. This chapter seeks to unveil the promises and potential barriers to WAC in Japan against the backdrop of growing internationalization, or *kokusaika*, in two unique higher education contexts.

In exploring WAC potential within Japan, this chapter profiles two universities and their writing sequences. The universities—Kanazawa University (KU) and Akita International University (AIU)—are well-known but differ in that the former is a large national research university that offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate degrees, while the latter is a small public liberal arts university with limited undergraduate offerings, but a famous university-wide English immersion approach. These two universities are compared to determine the extent to which disciplinary writing is taught in their different contexts, and their potential for future WAC endeavors.

National universities like KU are both overseen and funded by the central government, and they carry low tuition and high prestige—notably, most of the top ten ranked universities in Japan are national universities (Wadden & Hale, 2019). In comparison, public universities like AIU receive funding from local—i.e., prefectural and municipal—governments, and their tuition also tends to be cheap. Public institutions hold less prestige, but AIU is a notable exception. Driven by *kokusaika*, KU and AIU aim for their students to be able to learn and operate within academic English environments. EAP is a key component for how they intend to accomplish this goal.

EAP is an approach to English language acquisition that prepares students from English as a foreign language (EFL) countries to operate successfully within primarily English-speaking universities. It is also used to prepare students for English medium instruction (EMI). EAP and EMI have often been overlooked in rhetoric and writing studies, but they are crucial for understanding how universities around the world approach academic writing. In short, EAP is a pragmatic system for teaching English that seeks to teach students via different genres ranging from essays to emails. Rachel Ruegg and Clay Williams (2018) argue that “EAP programs prepare students with more than just proficiency in the English language; they prepare students with particular skills that are necessary to succeed in tertiary-level studies in English” (p. 3). On the other hand, Ernesto Macaro (2018) argues that EMI primarily focuses on teaching content in disciplines, rather than language learning. Ideally, EAP prepares students for EMI at both KU and AIU. However, it remains unclear the extent to which discipline-specific writing is taking place under an EAP umbrella at these universities.

WAC and EAP share commonalities, as Suresh Canagarajah (2002) points out. He notes that EAP has been

[helped] by the research and pedagogical approaches of ... Writing across the Curriculum ... [EAP instructors have developed] pedagogical approaches that facilitate communicative competence among their students in addressing the discourses of the academic community in general and disciplinary communities in particular. (p. 32)

EAP's aim of building students' competence in disciplinary communication seems like a potential way that Japanese writing programs could incorporate disciplinary writing. However, there are limits to how much discipline-specific writing instruction can be accomplished in an EFL context where language acquisition and study skills are also the goals. EAP also often takes on a remedial role, and it is often taught by instructors who are not subject experts (Wingate, 2018). Nevertheless, EAP holds potential for WAC, and this dynamic is worth exploring.

This chapter begins by demonstrating the method used to collect information about the EAP programs at both KU and AIU. The following section contextualizes the creation and enhancement of EAP at KU and AIU through the government's push toward *kokusaika*. The chapter then transitions to the case study on KU's relatively recent adoption of EAP, including details of how the program has evolved throughout the years, and recent internal scholarship on its reception. KU's case study concludes by analyzing positive reception towards WAC at the university, as well as challenges of implementing WAC there. Next, the chapter transitions into a case study on the well-established EAP program at AIU. Particular attention is paid to the university's unique English immersion environment that positions it as a globally minded university. The chapter then moves into an analysis of AIU's writing program. It pays particular attention to AIU's similarities to an American university writing program. AIU's case study concludes by identifying traces of disciplinary writing that are already occurring in the university. The discussion section synthesizes the KU and AIU case studies and demonstrates how WAC emerges in these different contexts.

Results from the two case studies demonstrate that both KU and AIU are proactive in their attempts to prepare students for EMI in their university settings and beyond. These efforts are reflected in research by faculty on their EAP programs. In KU's context, EAP is currently insufficient in preparing students for disciplinary writing. However, the idea of WAC has gained acceptance at the university as long as it pays attention to local curricula and contexts, and instructors and students are allowed to draw on both their L1 and L2 linguistic resources. The case study on AIU demonstrates that the university's beating heart is EAP, and it has a

writing program in all but name. Students receive a substantial amount of writing instruction in a curriculum that mixes EAP with a writing program-infused WAC pedagogical approach. However, WAC on an infrastructural scale would be difficult to accomplish without increased enrollments and funding.

The following case studies on KU and AIU are based on a synthesis of existing scholarship written about these universities; materials such as syllabi and web pages that are publicly available from these universities; informal correspondence with faculty in both EAP programs; and the author's experience of working at KU.

## KOKUSAIKA IN JAPAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

While interest in English education has grown locally, top-down government initiatives have also sparked much activity in English education. Namely, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), which is a government ministry in charge of managing and regulating education in Japan, overhauled English education in Japan. The plan they formulated was called the "English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization," and it specifically targeted elementary and junior high school education. Within this context, the reform increased the number of English classes required for grades 3–5, hired more English-speaking assistant language teachers (ALTs) to assist with English classes while increasing their training, and emphasized external exams for testing K-12 English subject teachers' English abilities, among other changes. The proposal, which was decided in 2014, set up councils and frameworks for the education reform plan and began incremental implementation in 2018 and full implementation in 2020 to correspond with the Tokyo Olympics (MEXT, 2014), thereby marking a timely and symbolic motivation for improving students' English abilities.<sup>1</sup>

Top-down initiatives in English education also moved beyond K-12 when MEXT began a larger national move towards globalizing Japanese universities (MEXT, n.d.-a). KU and other selected universities have begun implementing English medium instruction (EMI) courses to improve students' English abilities.<sup>2</sup> EMI is an approach in which instructors use English in countries where the L1 is not English to teach academic subjects (Dearden, 2015). Universities hope these changes will provide students with opportunities to use English and engage in global leadership. Particularly noteworthy is that when KU applied for the Top Global University Project in 2013, 2.4 percent of undergraduate

1 The COVID-19 pandemic would soon make this motive into a moot point.

2 Important to note is that KU considers courses to be EMI "[if] 80% of a lesson is conducted in English and 80% of all the lessons consist of such lessons" (Brown et al., 2023, p. 48). Therefore, EMI courses can use less than 80 percent English during the span of the course.

courses and 3.9 percent of post-graduate courses were EMI. However, KU's TGUP application document planned for 50 percent of undergraduate courses and 100 percent of post-graduate courses to be EMI at the program's conclusion in 2023 (Brown et al., 2019, p. 19). Thus, KU demonstrated the enormity of their English ambitions to implement EMI across the curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

AIU, an already established EMI institute, has joined TGUP to transition from a domestic university into a world-class liberal arts college (MEXT, n.d.-b). Both AIU and KU are a part of TGUP Type B, the Global Traction Type, which aims for select Japanese universities to help "lead to the internationalization of Japanese higher education by leveraging their strength" (Shimmi & Yonezawa, 2015). However, AIU's aims are different from KU's. AIU's project, "Japan's World-Class Liberal Arts University," has the following four aims in mind:

1. Promotion of around-the-clock liberal arts education
2. Enrichment of world-standard curriculums
3. Facilitation of English education reform in Japan
4. Global benchmarking (MEXT, n.d.-b).

AIU intended to use its funding from TGUP to do things like transition their dormitories from living spaces into learning spaces by way of grouping dormitories by subject (aim 1), as well as benchmarking their initiatives against those from liberal arts universities around the world (aim 4). AIU's TGUP activities therefore demonstrate how an already well-established EMI university can augment its *kokusaika* efforts through government funding to become more globalized.

Top Global University institutions are also providing more study abroad programs for Japanese students and culture exchange programs for non-Japanese students, as well as both English only and English and Japanese bilingual language degree programs (Kwon, 2023). These efforts aim to attract more international students and faculty members. The plan adheres to Western conventions in a Western education environment in that it emphasizes active learning while encouraging students to produce knowledge in English (Kwon, 2023). Considering Japan's environment of increasing investment in international higher education, the next section of this chapter will focus on the case of KU.

## CASE STUDY 1: KU

KU is a large national university located in Ishikawa Prefecture on the west coast

<sup>3</sup> Brown et al. (2019) point out that another TGUP university, Tokyo University which has long been considered the top university in Japan, aimed for only 10 percent of undergraduate and 25 percent of graduate courses to be EMI.

of Japan. The university traces its roots back to 1862 when it was established as a vaccination center. It officially became KU in 1949, but it experienced major changes throughout its existence—notably, the campus was relocated from Kanazawa Castle in the downtown area to the nearby green hills of Kakuma in 1995 to accommodate the university’s expansion (Kanazawa University, 2013).

In 2024, admissions records identify roughly 10,787 students, which translates to 8,216 undergraduates and 2,571 graduate students, including masters and PhD students, and those seeking professional degrees or a special degree in nursing education (Kanazawa University, 2025). KU offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees across a wide range of subjects in engineering and the sciences, medical and health sciences, humanities, and social sciences. KU has been ranked as the #19 university in Japan by *Times Higher Education*, which demonstrates its prestige<sup>4</sup> (Times Higher Education, 2025). The university has therefore drawn the attention of not only domestic students, but also students around the globe.

As mentioned in the previous section, a major part of KU’s plan to become a top global university involves implementing EMI in various undergraduate and graduate courses at the university. The EAP department was developed to prepare students for this large expansion of EMI class offerings at KU.

## EAP AND WRITING INSTRUCTION AT KU

Writing instruction at KU takes place under the EAP umbrella of EMI. EAP is a school of English as a second or other language (ESOL) that focuses on preparing students to write in academic settings in English speaking contexts. EAP programs often focus on the four skills of speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

KU’s EAP program was implemented by the Division of Foreign Language Education within the Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2016. It is a compulsory subject of general education. The EAP program requests that instructors in the program use English as the language of instruction. It also encourages students (primarily Japanese L1) to use English when speaking with each other to give them practice in the language. However, Japanese may be used to support individual students who are struggling with the content, or for important announcements. Japanese may also be used when students are working together on tasks. Although the goal is EMI, students are not necessarily required to use English all the time.

The EAP program includes a four-course sequence that emphasizes the four skills. Because KU operates on a quarter system, each class lasts only eight weeks,

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4 The *Times Higher Education* list includes 271 universities.

therefore, two classes take place consecutively in the time of one semester. The sequence from the 2024 academic year consists of the following:

- **EAP I** – Writing paragraphs. Students learn to organize their writing logically in a paragraph form, and by the end of the course, write a stand-alone paragraph.
- **EAP II** – Writing summaries. Students learn to write summaries of readings on academic topics/social issues and evaluate the summaries of others.
- **EAP III** – Delivering presentations. Students learn presentation skills and deliver their own presentations based on source materials.
- **EAP IV** – Writing essays. Students learn to write a short academic essay with reference to sources (Oyabu et al., 2024).

In addition to the short description provided above, each course includes learning outcomes on things like engaging with the writing process, collaborating with peers to complete work, and analyzing or producing texts, among other outcomes.

EAP classes consist of up to 30 students, and between 60–90 sections are taught depending on the quarter. The syllabus, rubric, readings, worksheets, and other education materials, are all developed centrally by the EAP Course Management Committee for use by instructors. This is done to make instructors' classroom preparation more efficient so that they can devote more time to giving feedback to students and to ensure consistency across different sections of each course. Importantly, grades awarded across course sections should be comparable (Oyabu et al., 2024).

## RECEPTION TO THE EAP CURRICULUM

Internal research has been conducted on KU's EAP program by faculty to gauge how well the program is preparing students for EMI. In a survey of EMI instructors' assessment of students' needs, English input skills such as listening to lectures, reading articles and books, watching videos, and taking notes were considered students' strong suits. However, output skills involving writing essays, engaging in discussions, writing summaries, and finding sources were considered weak areas (Brown et al., 2019). Similarly, in a survey of students' perceptions about EAP and EMI at KU, the students responded that EMI instructors emphasized input skills such as listening to lectures and note taking, while paying less attention to output skills like engaging in discussions, writing reports, and giving presentations, thus demonstrating that output was perceived "as a relatively minor part of these courses" (Brown et al., 2021, p. 31). Students were split evenly on whether EAP courses were helpful (33% no, 32% yes, 35%

not sure). While students felt EAP courses supported their English development as a whole, they felt EAP program should do more to prepare students for the technical terms/specialized language that EMI coursework requires (Brown et al., 2021). EAP courses are general courses, however, so it would have been impossible to provide this change. Instead, the EAP department has since integrated a new academic vocabulary learning program into their curriculum as a helpful step (Hammond, 2024).

One scholar (Morikawa, 2024) has likened the use of EMI at KU to an English only-approach that is pedagogically ineffective. However, as stated, the EAP program does not have an English only policy. In fact, internal research by Kana Oyabu et al. (2024) acknowledge the support that translanguaging approaches to teaching receive—for instance, in valuing linguistic backgrounds. At the same time, they acknowledge the governmental and institutional pressures to conduct courses mostly in English. For instance, The High School Curriculum Guidelines, which were announced in 2018 put more emphasis on classes in English and calls for teachers to use English and students to use English amongst themselves during activities. Dale Brown et al. (2023) in their research on KU as a translanguaging space echo the need for the students' L1 to be used in the classroom. They critique the idea of English only in EMI as unrealistic and counterproductive, and further point out how the EMI and EAP at KU is already a translanguaging space in many ways. EAP courses are not 100 percent English, and conversely, none of the Japanese classes are 100 percent Japanese. EMI applies to the instruction occurring in class (Brown et al. (2023). However, while this research recognizes translanguaging in the classroom as an inherent reality, there are no specific policies to codify translanguaging approaches to teaching. Monica Kwon (2023) suggests that “[translanguaging] approaches may play a role in [the] junction of medium of instruction content knowledge in degree-based programs in Japan” (pp. 199–200). Building off of this idea, she suggests instructors should acknowledge that knowledge should be formed in the first language, in addition to the second language (2023, p. 200). Using the first language in certain collaborative and writing tasks can also be more efficient. Tomoaki Morikawa (2024), Kwon (2023), and Brown et al. (2023) all agree that both the L1 and L2 should be used for learning English effectively.

Not all models of EMI require English to be used to such a large extent, and one alternative is EMEMUS. The framework of EMEMUS (English-medium education in multilingual university settings) by Emma Dafouz and Ute Smit (2020) places more of an emphasis on education, thereby allowing for more research agendas, pedagogies, and education types. The “multilingual” portion of the acronym is also important because it represents the linguistic context (Dafouz & Smit, 2020). They analyzed EMI universities from around the world

and identified a variety of institutional approaches that tailor their instruction to local needs, thus demonstrating that EMI programs need not be a one size fits all approach. For instance, the University of Basque Country provides a trilingual model (Basque, Spanish, and English) (Dafouz & Smit, 2020). All KU courses contain a mixture of English and Japanese due to natural language practice, but perhaps the use of the L1 in EAP courses can be codified or encouraged in policies like the University of Basque Country. The lack of formal documentation addressing the role of the L1 in EAP classrooms has perhaps led to KU instructors believing the EAP classroom is an English only space. Relevant to these conversations is the need to teach disciplinary writing in addition to rethinking EMI.

### **EXPLORING WAC RECEPTION AT KU**

Recent research taking place at KU explored faculty opinions about EMI and potentially developing WAC within KU. Former EAP curriculum committee member Monica Kwon (2023) interviewed engineering department faculty about their thoughts on implementing WAC on campus. Some declined the idea of teaching engineering in only English because, among other reasons, they felt they did not have the appropriate competence to teach in all English. Others felt that EMI might only benefit non-Japanese students who are familiar with English literacy skills. Still others felt that it is better to learn concepts in one's mother tongue before moving onto another language. Despite the skepticism around EMI, study participants acknowledged that they must read and produce engineering research in English. And in the end, they voiced support for a WAC approach that used both English and Japanese, although it was unclear what form this might take (Kwon, 2023).

From the studies conducted by KU faculty, it becomes clear that EAP programs and WAC are not unpopular in themselves, but EMI policies can generate controversy. In the end, EAP programs and WAC should be localized. Kwon (2023) argues that to do so, we should take students' L1 into account and the skills required in the discipline they're entering. In localizing writing programs or teaching EAP in an EFL context, it is important to understand local context, as well as why and how we manage these programs. To be clear, EAP is not the only program that provides courses to build students' academic literacy or English competence. Other departments provide English courses for second-year students that extend beyond the EAP program's four-course sequence for first-year students. Additionally, English academic literacy courses have started to be offered as electives beginning in 2024. Considering the results of needs assessments EAP faculty have conducted at KU, preparation for writing and learning in the disciplines is also needed. An approach like academic literacies across the

curriculum (Wingate, 2018), which gets inspiration from WAC, could provide a model for how to combine discipline-specific learning with EAP. It furthermore calls for collaboration between EAP specialists and subject lecturers to make this disciplinary learning happen (Wingate, 2018). Tailoring WAC in this way would make great sense.

English for academic purposes at KU is a relatively recent development. The program is a general education requirement, and the sequence of EAP courses builds up basic skills in writing, such as paragraph writing. The EAP program's short writing sequence provides insufficient time for teaching disciplinary writing. However, research indicates there is support for WAC if the L1 and L2 can be used for instruction. A translingual approach to teaching disciplinary writing, or perhaps an Academic Literacies Across the Curriculum or EMEMUS approach may provide opportunities to think about localizing WAC for KU.

## CASE STUDY 2: AIU

AIU is a prestigious four-year liberal arts public university located in the rural Akita prefecture. The university's roots are transnational. Born out of trade summit meetings in the mid-1980's, the university was established as Minnesota State University – Akita in 1990. Minnesota and Akita Prefecture aimed for MSU – Akita to produce globally-minded students. Japanese students were to study English and general courses at the Japan campus, then complete major courses at one of the MSU campuses in Minnesota (“Minnesota College”). American students were to spend at least one semester in Akita and take International Studies or Japan Area Studies courses. The university hoped that 175–200 American students and 750 Japanese students would enroll, but enrollments lagged far behind these goals. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) were losing a substantial amount of money on each student, so its continued operation became unfeasible.<sup>5</sup> Negotiations began for phasing out the university by 2001 (Anderson, 1999). In the late 1990's and early 2000's, various councils and committees were formed to establish a new university at the campus, and in 2003, MEXT accepted the establishment of AIU. The university was formerly inaugurated in 2004 (Akita International University, n.d.-e).

Despite AIU's relative youth, its reputation is exceptional. As of 2025, AIU was ranked #10 in *Times Higher Education's* Japanese university rankings (Times Higher Education, 2025)—thus, it is the only public university ranked as a top 20 university in Japan. AIU is also one of few Japanese universities where all credits

<sup>5</sup> Reporting by *The Japan Times* reveals that during Japan's economic bubble in the 1980s, there were over 40 American-style universities in Japan, but that number dwindled to only four, including MSU – Akita, in 1997 (1997).

earned are taught via English. The student body is also small—as of September 1, 2024, AIU recorded 790 students (Akita International University, n.d.-a).

AIU is the only university in Japan that requires students to spend an entire year abroad. The university has partnerships with 208 universities from around the world that allow for cross-credit student exchange (Akita International University, n.d.-f). Roughly one quarter of the undergraduates studying at AIU are international exchange students, and half of the teaching faculty at AIU are not Japanese. Furthermore, most Japanese faculty received their postgraduate degrees abroad (Ruegg & Williams, 2018) and thus have significant international experience.

Coursework at AIU is international in focus and the curriculum is divided into three categories: Global Studies Program, Global Business Program, and Global Connectivity Program (Akita International University, n.d.-b). All students have to live in the dorms their first year and interestingly, Japanese students are paired with international students as roommates (Ruegg & Williams, 2018). Also worth noting is the fact that AIU's admissions process requires a significant amount of testing compared to American counterparts. The AIU admissions process consists of 16 possible tests, depending on the student's status (domestic, international, transfer, etc.). General students, for instance, can choose among Schedule A, B, or C. Schedule A consists of six subjects including geography, mathematics, English, and others that are part of the Japan Common Test for University Admissions, Japan's standardized test organization. Students who take this route will also take additional Japanese and English tests which are administered by AIU. Schedule B consists of English and two other subjects, in addition to tests administered by AIU. And Schedule C consists of only one subject, English, which is administered by the Common Test, and an English essay test administered by AIU (Akita International University (n.d.-a)). The picture that arises here is an internationally focused university that effectively turns Japan's EFL situation into an ESL one while at the same time having a high barrier to entrance.

### **AIU'S WRITING PROGRAM**

AIU's writing sequence contains elements that resemble a North American writing program. It offers similar courses; EMI; and an ESL context, as opposed to an EFL one. The course sequence, curriculum, and genres students write within also overlap with the American university writing programs. Similar to KU, EAP courses share a common curriculum and the major writing assignments (and their writing requirements) are also the same. This practice ensures equity of workload (Williams & Bennett, 2024).

AIU offers EAP courses that cover content similar to KU's. For instance, AIU has an EAP 1 course which focuses on paragraph writing skills, an EAP 2 course which focuses on multi-paragraph essays, and an EAP 3 course which focuses on various formats of full essays. During their time in each of these courses, students also receive instruction in listening and speaking, reading, writing, and computer training. Lower-level students may also receive instruction in TOEFL preparation (Williams & Bennett, 2024). Figure 17.1 demonstrates how students progress through the writing program.

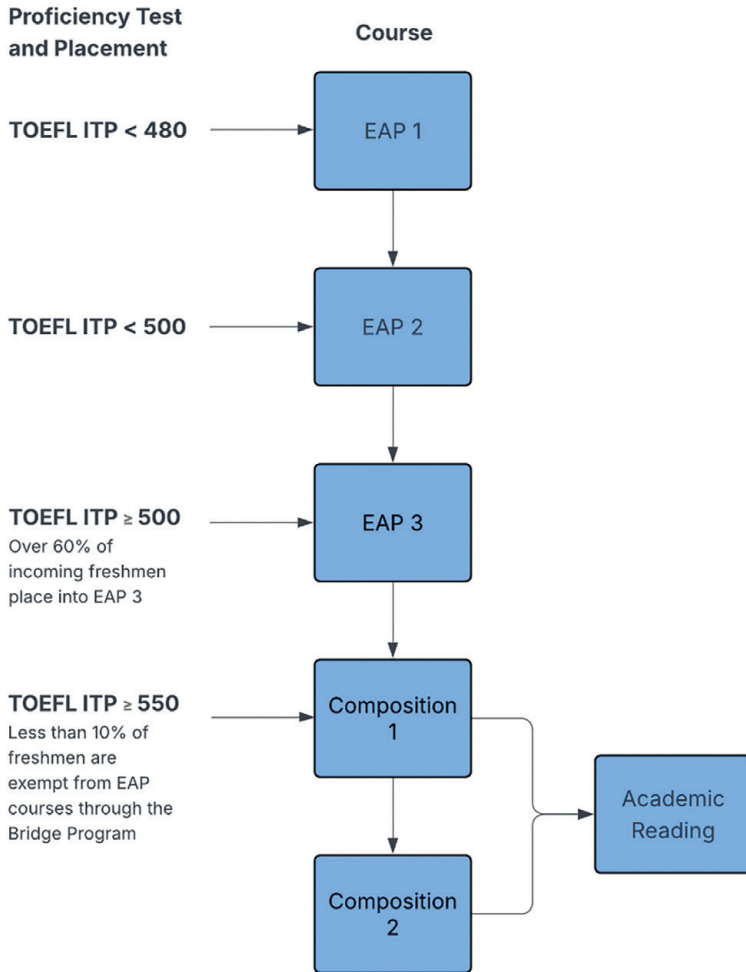


Figure 17.1. AIU writing curriculum flowchart (adapted from Ruegg & Williams, 2018; Williams & Bennett, 2024).

Depending on a given student's TOEFL scores, they can place into the program at the EAP 1 level (TOEFL score of lower than 480), EAP 2 level (TOEFL score ranging from 480 to 500), EAP 3 level (TOEFL score greater than or equal to 500), or they can go straight into the first year curriculum bridge program if their TOEFL score is greater than or equal to 550 and they have studied in an EMI context for a minimum of three years (Williams & Bennett, 2024). Students will also need to conduct an interview with a faculty member for their placement.

All students, besides bridge students, must take a freshman orientation course called CCS100 Orientation. EAP 1 and EAP 2 are intermediate and upper intermediate level, respectively, so students must also take a TOEFL class in order to improve their test scores if they are placed in either of these courses. The bridge students take computer literacy instead of the orientation course. Over 60 percent of students place into EAP 3 (the advanced courses), and in a typical year, 10 percent of students are placed into the bridge program, therefore skipping EAP altogether (Ruegg & Williams, 2018). This sequence demonstrates that the typical beginning point for an AIU student (EAP 3) is the endpoint for a student at KU.

After EAP is finished, students will enter the foundation courses, which includes two courses—Composition 1 and Composition 2—that teach skills equivalent to an English composition course in the United States. One other compulsory course, academic reading, is usually taken concurrently with Composition 1, although some students enroll concurrently with Composition 2. Ruegg and Williams (2018) reveal that the three to five-semester writing curriculum focuses on the writing process with topics like self-review, logic, critical thinking, in-text citations, and others. While the first two levels of EAP (intermediate and upper intermediate) focus on students incorporating their own knowledge and opinions into their writing, EAP III and the composition courses move more towards secondary and primary research. Most students place into EAP 3; therefore, the average student will take three writing courses, and this usually occurs in their first year and a half at AIU. Therefore, AIU students start the writing sequence at a more advanced writing level than KU students, and they stay in writing courses for a longer period of time.

The syllabi from AIU's composition courses demonstrate the skills students will be expected to incorporate in their writing, and how these skills overlap with American composition courses. For instance, in Composition 1 students learn rhetorical knowledge such as audience awareness, voice, and tone, in addition to incorporating outside sources, APA referencing, evaluating and analyzing issues, and other skills associated with English-based writing courses. Students are also expected to conduct peer review, write responses to texts, and draft multi-draft academic essays ranging from 1,000–1,500 words (Akita International

University, n.d.-c). Composition 2 builds on Composition 1's course emphases. Students in this course are supposed to understand the difference between primary and secondary research, how to synthesize sources, how to utilize secondary research, and how to conduct primary research, among other skills. Students are also expected to write multiple papers, including a scaffolded multi-draft primary research paper that is 3,500 words and draws upon at least 10 secondary sources. Furthermore, students produce genres such as reflections, synthesis papers, abstracts, literature reviews (Akita International University, n.d.-d). The aims of Composition 1 and 2 overlap significantly with American writing courses that emphasize primary and secondary research, responding to research, peer review, evaluating sources, and citing correctly, among others. WAC pedagogies are more likely to flourish in these conditions.

### AIU'S WAC POTENTIAL

AIU has not published the same internal research on its writing program as KU's EAP program, so it is difficult to understand how the students have received it. Additionally, external research on faculty reception to the idea of WAC at the university hasn't been conducted. However, faculty at the university have been very productive in publishing on EAP pedagogy and AIU's writing program.<sup>6</sup> This scholarship demonstrates not only the success of the writing program, but also the disciplinary writing that is happening at AIU.

While AIU has a writing program that shares much in common with U.S. institutions and a rigorous EAP/composition curriculum that emphasizes composing in various rhetorical modes, a full-blown WAC program at an infra-structural level at AIU seems unrealistic. As a small public university, limited funding and fewer degree programs make WAC initiatives unrealistic.

However, there are green shoots of WAC in the writing program in terms of pedagogies. For one, an academic reading across disciplines course is required at the university. The university also publishes its own free digital textbook called *Readings for Academic Writing* (RAW) which includes examples of professional level writing in various rhetorical modes (critical analysis, argumentative synthesis, empirical research papers, and many others) written by faculty themselves. The introduction emphasizes that these writings come from faculty across various departments and that it "offers an opportunity for students to become familiar with some key concepts and ideas from the disciplines they will be studying in the near future" (Bennett, 2022, p. ii). The book explains that AIU's new Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA) curriculum attempts to bridge disciplines and

6 This includes Ruegg and Williams' edited collection, *Teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Japan* (2018), which features all chapters written by AIU faculty.

requires students in Composition II “to design and carry out an interdisciplinary primary research project that incorporates learning from two additional courses they are also taking” (Bennett, 2022, p. iv). Students are also encouraged to branch out beyond APA style (the standard style they learn) to use the style that is appropriate for their disciplines, thus providing more opportunities to write within various disciplines (Bennett, 2022, p. v.). AIU is very much involved in exposing students to writing in various disciplines, and it connects this interdisciplinary idea to students working across and beyond borders in the future.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction to the textbook furthermore highlights interdisciplinary research students have produced. Their work covers sustainability studies, feminism, gender studies, psychology, STEM, and macroeconomics. These writings are found in the appendix and often have an author profile where the student reflects on writing their essays in the given discipline/from the disciplinary lens. Students sometimes address disciplinarity within the essay itself, such as the essay titled “Closing the Gender Gap in STEM Fields in Japan.”

The case of AIU demonstrates that the school aligns well with WAC. The institution has built an English immersion environment from the beginning, which includes a mandated one-year study abroad and dorm experience with international students. The course sequence begins at an advanced level for most students, and it includes a thorough sequence, so the students will have ample time to develop their writing abilities. Faculty are also comfortable with WAC pedagogies, as their curriculum and publications indicate, despite the lack of a formal WAC program in the university.

## DISCUSSION

KU and AIU both aim to produce globally minded professionals through their EAP curriculums which both serve EMI. However, while EAP is more of an add-on for KU, it has been integrated into AIU’s approach from its founding. KU has implemented EAP in its first-year general education sequence to develop students’ English abilities for EMI, but English education continues in different degrees and departments beyond EAP. It is unclear how much of this additional coursework focuses on English instruction (and English writing instruction in particular), as opposed to content courses taking place in English because there are so many undergraduate and graduate programs at the university. On the other hand, the English writing curriculum is the “beating heart” of AIU. These compulsory courses provide much more preparation for the EMI content courses after the sequence has finished.

<sup>7</sup> RAW is also an example of localizing English writing instruction, such as content and teaching focus, for a specific Japanese EFL student audience (Williams & Bennett, 2024).

Internal research on the needs of students in KU's EAP program, as well as WAC research give credence to the idea that Japanese should be used to teach content knowledge in EAP. Of course, Japanese is used as a medium of instruction in various academic programs outside of the EAP program. In terms of perceptions of WAC, faculty are receptive to the WAC movement as long as no strict EMI requirements are attached. A translingual approach has been forwarded to implement WAC. However, while there are no plans to establish a WAC program, efforts are being made to better prepare students to take EMI courses in their disciplines as the addition of the academic vocabulary learning program to the curriculum demonstrates.

AIU, on the other hand, ensures that all courses are EMI. Students enter the university with a desire to learn English, and most begin at the advanced level of EAP. After EAP III, all students continue to write in Composition I and Composition II—courses that resemble their Comp I and Comp II cousins in the United States. For instance, these composition courses focus on primary and secondary research, as well as writing within various rhetorical modes, or genres, just like some institutions in the USA. While the size and funding of AIU raises doubts about the viability of a WAC program on the infrastructural level, the new Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA) curriculum ensures that students get practice writing within, as well as reflecting on, the disciplines. The proof of this disciplinary work can be seen in AIU's in-house textbook on academic writing.

## CONCLUSION

Two universities in Japan—KU and AIU—were compared for their approaches to teaching writing and potential for WAC initiatives. These universities both rely on a primarily English approach to EAP to prepare their students for EMI. Students at KU would prefer more preparation via the compulsory EAP program to be able to operate successfully in their disciplinary EMI contexts. EAP faculty are aware of the issue and have recently developed a standardized vocabulary learning program to better equip students for operating in English academic settings. The EAP program is constantly evolving, so more changes will occur to help prepare students (Oyabu et al., 2024). However, students likely need significantly more preparation if the university expects 50 percent of their undergraduate courses to be EMI. The idea of WAC enjoys support among faculty at the university as long as the bilingual resources of students and instructors can be negotiated going forward. On the other hand, AIU has had a burgeoning EAP program from its inception, and pedagogies that align with WAC are being deployed in the university. However, a WAC infrastructure at the university would be highly unlikely.

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## CHAPTER 18.

# CONNECTING THE DOTS FROM ACADEMIC LITERACIES TO PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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*Abstract. At the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), we offer a first-year academic literacies module called Critical Thinking & Communicating (CTC) to all SIT students. The university focuses mainly on engineering, information technology, allied health sciences and hospitality degree programmes. CTC employs a critical thinking model to teach students how to write and present for academic purposes in contexts and problem scenarios that are customised for their fields of study. All teaching materials are designed based on the “Understanding by Design” model, beginning with discussions with content professors to understand the academic writing and speaking outcomes required of students in their degree programmes and then working backwards to design instructional materials. While CTC is designed to help SIT students with their writing and speaking needs in their content curricula, research informs us that a single academic literacies module taught at the start of students’ degree programmes may be inadequate in enabling students to adapt and repurpose the communication of their content through students’ undergraduate years and into their professions.*

The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) offers approximately 40 undergraduate programmes that range from engineering, health and social sciences, chemical engineering and food technology, infocomm technology to design and specialized business spread over five academic clusters). The academic clusters are business, communication and design (BCD), engineering, health and social sciences (HSS), infocomm technology (ICT), food, chemical and biotechnology (FCB) (Jaidev, 2021; Singapore Institute of Technology [SIT], n.d.).

About 95 percent of the students who apply to SIT degree programmes are likely to have completed a three-year diploma programme at one of the five polytechnics in Singapore (SmileTutor, n.d.). A small percentage have completed either the G.C.E “A” Level or the International Baccalaureate (International Baccalaureate Organization, n.d.). In general, students who have completed their “A” levels and IB have had some instruction and experience in academic writing, citation conventions, etc. and are, as a result, more likely to transfer this prior knowledge to their university assignments (Robertson, Taczak & Yancey, 2012). By comparison, those who have taken the polytechnic route, which would be the majority of SIT students, tend to be less competent in academic writing because they enroll in the polytechnics after their G.C.E “O” Level examinations (SEAB, n.d.) and polytechnics usually focus less on academic writing and more on communication skills for the workplace, such as resume and cover letter writing, job interview skills and possibly some report-writing. As can be gleaned, students come into SIT with varying levels of communicative competence in academic writing and, as such, it makes good sense to provide some focused instruction in it to help all students manage their university assignments. It is precisely to address this need that the Centre for Communication Skills (CCS) was formed in 2015.

CCS was rebranded as the Centre for Professional Communication (CPC) in January 2024 so that the centre could better align itself with the university’s concerted effort to build ties with industries, companies and overseas universities of applied learning where faculty and students could engage in translational research in real projects. Herein lies the challenge for CCS/CPC faculty to equip students to manage their university assignments through instruction in academic literacies while also preparing them to become adept at professional communication that they need when they go out on their extended work attachments and into their professional world. This chapter will explain how curriculum decisions were made in SIT to help students to recognize the similarities and differences between academic and professional communication and to draw on prior knowledge to repurpose their writing and speaking skills to suit different audiences, purposes, and contexts (Beaufort, 2007; Robertson, 2011). It will also provide insights into some of the challenges encountered when proposing and implementing large scale curriculum change in the way communication is taught in SIT.

## **THE CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION**

Historically, the Centre for Professional Communication (CPC) at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), previously the Centre for Communication

Skills (CCS), was instituted in 2015 to provide instruction in both writing and oral presentation skills to undergraduates through distinct or “stand-alone” communication modules. While the communication modules were designed based on typical academic literacy needs in a predominantly engineering and science university by including such topics as technical report-writing and scientific presentation skills, at that time these modules were not compulsory for all students. Content professors who were degree programme leaders included these modules in their content curriculum based on time and space “left over” after they had incorporated all of the subject matter content modules they felt were essential for students. The situation was compounded by the fact that, at the time, assessment of content assignments focused almost exclusively on the inclusion of required material, with minimal, if any, consideration of how that content was written or presented orally. Consequently, there were several programmes that did not have a communication module but with students who required writing instruction to help them write their content assignments or those who needed input and guidance in designing and delivering an audience-centered technical/scientific presentation.

As it stood then, students who did not have a communication module consulted with CCS faculty through an online writing and presentation service provided by CCS faculty called CCS Communication Helpdesk. Students could book a one-hour consultation slot to seek help with their content assignment writing or presentation needs. It was common that at certain points of the year, when students were writing their capstone, final year projects, honours theses, etc., there would be a surge in the number of those seeking consultation through this Helpdesk. In time, however, due to the increased demand for such consultations and faculty’s inability to cope with the number of requests for face-to-face consultations, CCS Helpdesk became an online peer tutoring service involving SIT student peer tutors. Peer tutors who were competent at writing and presenting were carefully selected through recommendations from their faculty and encouraged to apply to be peer tutors who would provide online consultation to other students. Applicants were interviewed, selected, trained on how to provide consultation and feedback by CCS faculty and then assigned students. Successful students are not only paid \$20 an hour for providing consultation and feedback that they provide but also would have this extracurricular activity documented in their degree transcripts when they graduate. The online reservation service is managed by a CCS and now CPC administrative assistant. A significant point to note here is that, while these one-off consultations were useful for students to pass the particular assignment or project paper, it is possible that they did not provide adequate, follow-up instruction to help students to draw on previous knowledge and adapt it to new writing tasks (DePalma & Ringer, 2011).

It became apparent that students needed more purposeful and sustained, follow-up instruction throughout their degree programmes to equip them with the knowledge and skills to recognize similarities and differences in writing demands and required outcomes of new tasks (Yancey et al., 2018, 2019).

Common practice for effecting major curriculum change in any institution of higher learning (IHL) is to gather adequate concrete evidence to support the need for change. As a first source of evidence, feedback was sought from discipline faculty about their students' ability to write their content essays. Feedback was also sought from workplace supervisors of SIT students on attachments in companies regarding students' ability to communicate their content, write emails and simple reports. Additionally, input from professionals who served on SIT programme advisory boards and survey findings on the views of employers of SIT graduates were gathered. With information from such key sources that SIT students needed to not only communicate their disciplinary content in university assignments but also engage different stakeholders at the workplace, CCS was in a better position to request that communication skills be taught as a core university module in all degree programmes in as early as Year 1.

There were a few other considerations in support of this proposal as well. First, the majority of SIT students came from polytechnics in Singapore where the communication modules focused on workplace communication. Thus, few were equipped with the ability to write extended content assignments where they needed to synthesize and cite information from multiple sources to develop a cogent argument. Another consideration was that male Singaporean students typically came into the university after having served two years of national service in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) or Singapore Police Force (SPF), during which time it is likely that they have had little opportunity to think, write or talk about disciplinary content. These important considerations underpinned the need for a core academic literacies module aimed at equipping students with the necessary writing and presentation skills for survival in university. Consequently, in September 2020, at the start of a new academic year, an academic literacies module entitled Critical Thinking and Communicating (CTC) was launched in four-degree programmes: robotics (RSE), digital communication and integrated media (DCIM), pharmaceutical engineering (PHE) and speech and language therapy (SLT).

## **CRITICAL THINKING AND COMMUNICATING**

The CTC curriculum was designed based on critical thinking models, such as the Paul-Elder critical thinking model (Paul & Elder, 2020), and the kind of writing outcomes the content professors expected from students. Typically,

CTC taught students the basics of writing a critical reader response, a persuasive proposal that required them to conduct mostly secondary research, and presentation skills. Contexts and problem scenarios were customised for every discipline using backward curriculum design principles or the “Understanding by Design” model by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005). The decision to use backward design involved CCS faculty working closely with content faculty in each of the disciplines to create typical contexts and scenarios that students could easily identify with for both classroom activities as well as continual assessments. For instance, students might be asked to write a proposal for a robot designed to direct traffic in a busy mall, or to read an article on the media’s role in advancing the United Nations’ 16 Sustainable Development Goals and develop a critical response that engages with multiple perspectives. Classroom activities included several smaller scaffolding tasks on how to synthesise information from multiple sources, analyse published material for accuracy, depth, breadth as well as to write with logical sequence, etc. Similarly, oral presentation lessons include scaffolding activities on how to select information to develop and deliver a persuasive scientific presentation to meet the needs of a specific audience. A student who went through this system and who now works as a consultant at Det Norske Veritas (DNV) Maritime Advisory expresses that he writes proposals and coordinates projects with shipowners, charterers, and internal experts as part of his daily work. He adds that he learned about adapting his communication style to match an audience’s needs at SIT which he applies at work “before presenting proposals on maritime decarbonization strategies, I study my audience’s background and adapt my communication style accordingly” (Personal Communication, Tuesday 2 September 2025).

Since its inception in September 2020, CTC has offered first-year students in all SIT university programmes help in managing their writing and presentation demands in their content modules at university (Lillis, 2003). Despite that, it was clear even before this curriculum overhaul was effected that a single 12-week module offered in Year 1 would be inadequate in equipping students to write more complex and lengthy assignments such as fieldwork notes, user requirement manuals, technical reports, literature reviews, capstone projects, honours dissertations, final-year projects, critical reflections on their clinical attachments, and reflective logs on their extended work attachments as they progress to Years 2, 3, and 4. It became clear that, while CTC exposes students to academic writing genres such as critiques, report and proposal writing as well as research and citation conventions, we needed to continue to scaffold more advanced writing skills by helping students to repurpose the basic writing knowledge and skills acquired in CTC in year 1 to other more complex, writing tasks in later years (Boyd et al., 2020; Langer & Applebee, 1987).

At this juncture, it is important to note that although CTC was initially designed as a writing-intensive course to strengthen students' academic writing and, to some extent, their oral presentation skills, its focus is likely to shift in response to the widespread use of AI in writing and SIT senior management's encouragement for faculty to integrate this technology into their teaching. One suggestion has been to encourage students to use AI at the brainstorming stage of writing and to incorporate more opportunities for them to talk about the content of their writing in a viva or oral defence to validate assessment of students' true level of critical thinking and communicative competence. With this, it is possible that the initial conception of CTC with a 70:30 ratio in favour of writing, may change. Currently, students have to submit a signed declaration both on the percentage of AI use and on what it was used for, for example, points of discussion, paraphrasing, or grammar. Additionally, the assessment rubrics of written assignments have been tweaked to focus more on discussion and evaluation of content rather than language because grammar and sentence structure can easily be perfected with the help of AI software. Curriculum revisions related to AI use are a work in progress.

## **COMMUNICATING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

Along with the proposal for CTC to be offered to all SIT undergraduates, the inadequacy of a single academic literacy module offered to students at the start of their university education was raised to the SIT Board of Studies (SIT-BoS). The proposal which represented the collective views of CCS faculty argued that a single 12-week academic literacies module, taken in the first trimester of their first year in university would not prepare students adequately for the longer, more complex university assignments which they would need to do in their senior years. Also, while faculty agreed on the need for professional communication skills, including email, minutes writing, and intercultural interaction, the content curricula had no room for additional standalone modules. Therefore, CCS faculty proposed to the SIT-BoS that it embed advanced writing knowledge and skills instruction in subsequent years, i.e., from Year 2 onwards, based on outcomes identified by content professors in their discipline-specific assignments within the content curriculum. Additionally, professional communication instruction including such topics as interpersonal communication at the workplace, email, and meeting minutes could also be embedded within curriculum time before students embarked on their extended work attachments and at intervals and when they returned to the university to meet with their academic supervisors. Communicating Across the Curriculum (CAC) was also approved by the BoS and launched along with CTC in September 2020.

At this juncture it is important to state that CCS had already been piloting CAC based on requests from individual content professors. For example, a food technology professor who required his students to write a literature review on sustainable solutions for food shortage requested a CCS faculty to deliver a three-hour workshop on how to write a literature review for that assignment. To deliver the workshop, content professors and CCS faculty discussed what to cover so that students might draw on their prior knowledge of synthesizing, verifying and citing accurately when incorporating information from multiple sources, taught in their first year CTC module and then transfer and adapt that knowledge to new assignments in subsequent years with the addition of discipline-specific conventions (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). A third-year food technology student who has taken CTC and subsequent CAC workshops explains that in her third year, when reading research papers for her capstone project, she “made sure to assess the authors’ tone and check whether the paper was results-focused rather than containing too much personal opinion.” She added that the process helped her to be objective and not to immediately arrive at conclusions until after “sufficient analysis was carried out.”

Another example of knowledge and skills transfer can be observed in this quote from an SIT student who now works as a tunnel engineer who explains that he regularly updates his senior management via email, “translating technical details into clear, concise insights for decision-making.” He adds that the knowledge and skills he acquired from the professional communication CAC workshops at SIT have equipped him with “the ability to communicate complex engineering concepts in a structured and professional way, whether in writing or during high-level discussions.” In short, the proposal for CAC to be formalised alongside CTC was based on the rationale that there would be a *light but uninterrupted emphasis* on the importance of communicating effectively, both for academic purposes as well as for the workplace. The CAC model thus positions the Integrated Work Study Programme (IWSP) as a site of writing transfer, where students must apply rhetorical knowledge gained in academic settings to professional contexts. Thus, the aim of this continual scaffolding of writing and speaking for both academic and professional purposes, audiences and contexts is to enable students to transit seamlessly from university to a professional workplace realm such that they are able to communicate their discipline knowledge and to interact socially with their colleagues and superiors (Eady et al., 2021; Peltola, 2018).

CTC and CAC were approved and formalised by the BoS and had the full support of the senior management of SIT because they were aimed at elevating the communicative competence of SIT graduates when they entered the professional realm and workforce even as early as in their extended work attachments.

To ensure that students took CAC seriously, senior management decided that it should be credit-bearing. Consequently, attendance at CAC workshops was awarded a total of three credits from Year 2 to 4. To make it easy to incorporate CAC within the content curriculum of degree programmes, CAC was delivered in a few different ways including face-to-face seminar/workshops in small groups, synchronous online large group lectures, asynchronous e-modules with in-built assessments, and consultation clinics where CCS faculty would answer questions and provide feedback on student writing in small groups. In addition, CCS faculty also sat in to assess content presentations especially for final-year and capstone projects, honours thesis presentations and Integrated Work Study Programme (IWSP) presentations.

At SIT the extended work attachment (six to 12 months) is a 20-credit compulsory module referred to as the Integrated Work Study Programme (IWSP) and students must complete it to graduate with a degree. Students who pursue degrees in the allied health services must complete a clinical attachment similar to the IWSP that other students complete. The IWSP and clinical attachments are, therefore, real workplace contexts where students have to apply their disciplinary knowledge to real workplace problem situations, write and talk about their content to superiors and peers, work with senior colleagues on team projects, contribute proactively to discussions, write emails and take meeting notes/minutes, etc. They also need interpersonal and intercultural communication knowledge and skills to complete their attachments successfully. So, during the IWSP, professional communication often takes precedence over academic literacy and this was an important consideration for CAC.

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED WHEN PROPOSING CURRICULUM CHANGE**

One the main hurdles when proposing a major curriculum change was the process of getting the support of content professors, some of whom believed that all students who came into SIT would have completed some form of communication skills module; as such allocating time in the content curriculum for a 12-week, 48 hour, 4-module credit compulsory academic literacy module was in some way diluting the content curriculum. They argued that, as a university of applied learning, distinct from Singapore's research-intensive universities SIT needed to maximize curriculum time beyond content delivery by giving students opportunities to work on real projects in laboratories and makerspaces. Some even argued that it was uncommon, particularly among universities in the UK, to incorporate a compulsory academic literacies module in science and engineering degree programmes and that it was only students whose English

proficiency fell short of university entry requirements that should be required to take such courses and that such courses should not be credit-bearing.

Our response to this argument was that about 90 percent of SIT students were from the local polytechnics where any communication module that students had taken would have been focused on workplace communication such as resumes, cover letters and job interview skills because the polytechnics in Singapore train students for the workforce. While many polytechnic students do enter the workforce upon graduating with diplomas, there are a significant number who apply to universities such as SIT to obtain degree qualification. There is a high likelihood that many of these students would never have written a position paper or research-based essay which they would be required to do in their content assignments. In fact, here are some students' feedback on the CTC module:

Beginning the first trimester of university learning about proper presentation skills and report writing, teamwork and communication skills are essentially what I always wanted and needed. I definitely feel that this provides a firm foundation of what is expected of students when doing and approaching report writing and presentations not just for the module itself but also for further similar assignments in other modules. This allows students to be on the same page, especially when it comes to citation, how to approach report, etc. (Student A/robotics programme)

Being structured differently compared to other modules, CTC allows me to have more opportunities at groupwork and allow me to hone my speaking and writing skills through project work. It also allowed me to explore many interesting topics and provide meaningful solutions to intriguing present issues. (Student B/Sustainable Infrastructure Engineering-Building Services)

Being able to analyze information and back up my claims will allow me to gain the confidence and trust of my intended audience. (Student C/Mechatronics Systems)

This module made me realize that purely having knowledge of our core subjects isn't enough in today's world. We should continue to improve on other skills such as our soft skills, etc. in order to perform well. (Student D/aircraft systems engineering)

Following the university-wide implementation of CTC and CAC, CCS faculty were assigned the role of module leads to oversee the delivery of both CTC and

CAC in the four clusters. In keeping with this, CCS faculty liaised with content professors to understand the specific writing and speaking outcomes in their content assignments so that they could develop customised teaching and assessment materials. This part appeared to be fairly uncomplicated as CTC was a university core module. However, getting useful feedback from content professors on the writing outcomes of their assignments as well as scenarios and problem situations in their disciplinary fields was tricky because, while some could not quite identify what their students needed to be able to do, others were simply difficult to contact or pin down to get useful information. Scheduling for CTC classes was also left till after time had been allocated to content modules so that some CTC classes had to be taught late in the evenings. This was a problem because CCS has always operated on a lean full-time team of faculty; we rely, as a result on a large pool of part time tutors who sometimes found it inconvenient to teach in the late evenings. However, since 2020, some of these teething problems have been resolved.

At the time of writing this article, CTC and CAC have been offered across all degree programmes for approximately four years and the first batch of graduates who have had this *light but uninterrupted emphasis on* communicating effectively are out in the workforce. At this point, systemic longitudinal research on the effectiveness of the new curriculum is underway but the results are unavailable.

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED WITH COMMUNICATING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

Within clusters, CCS faculty who served as CTC module leads (ML) for programmes also provide individualized and customized support to each of those programmes by way of planning the CAC instruction for their Y2 and Y3 cohorts. This support includes liaising with the content programme leaders and the administrative personnel who assist with the scheduling of the embedded instruction. Such support provides a crucial step in the whole process of CAC delivery because only after the scheduling is done, can the CCS faculty who serves as ML begin to develop materials for the CAC and deploy faculty (both full time and part time) for the CAC engagements. As a rule, we try to deploy full time CCS faculty to conduct the workshops before we recruit part time tutors for a number of reasons. First, full-time CCS faculty are required to teach a certain number of hours per trimester (the university academic year is divided into trimesters) and conducting CAC workshops is counted towards fulfilling those hours. Second, it was decided that to maintain oversight of the quality of the workshops, full time faculty needed to be involved. Third, and perhaps the most important reason is that teaching CAC to help students to draw on their prior learning to repurpose that knowledge and skills for new purposes,

audiences and contexts provides valuable data for research. Also, as CAC provides opportunities for faculty to teach professional communication skills that students need at the workplace, facilitating such workshops is one way in which CCS/CPC faculty could experiment with helping students to connect the dots from writing and speaking for academic purposes to writing and speaking for professional purposes. However, not all CCS faculty shared this last perspective as some preferred other areas of research in applied linguistics and therefore viewed teaching CAC as a distraction or an additional burden to their main work at CCS SIT which was to teach CTC. As a result, the teaching of CAC workshops has come to rely more and more on part-time tutors with just the oversight of the CCS faculty who serves as the ML.

To help retain a steady and committed pool of part-time tutors to teach CAC workshops, a survey was distributed to all of them in 2022 requesting them to indicate the topics they are interested in. This was because CAC topics were and still are quite diverse and we wanted to ensure that we only deployed tutors who were skilled in delivering specific workshops, for example, writing systematic literature reviews for nursing students, writing fieldwork notes for engineering students, poster design and presentation, product pitching, scrum meetings, etc. The majority of the part time tutors responded to this survey, the results of which were collated and current deployment of CAC teaching is matched against the tutors' indicated preferences.

To ensure the quality of instruction in CAC workshops, all full-time faculty and part time tutors delivering workshops are evaluated by the students. Prior to the commencement of CAC workshops, all facilitators will receive an automated email (set up by the CAC administrative team) to confirm their engagement along with a QR code that they can use during the workshop. The QR code contains a link to a survey on Qualtrics that students are required to fill out at the end of the sessions. This survey contains questions regarding the perceived effectiveness of the workshop content and the facilitators' delivery.

One of the problems that we have encountered continually with CAC workshops is student attendance. Students are sometimes not aware that CAC is credit-bearing and therefore attendance is mandatory. Sometimes it is because the degree programme leaders have not highlighted this to them. Poor attendance can be demotivating for the faculty, regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time because they have spent time preparing for the workshops.

Another problem arises when content professors delay sharing their assignment briefs, assessment rubrics and the discussion that CCS faculty need to have with them in order to customize the workshops for their students' specific communication needs. This delay can cause considerable stress to CCS faculty who need to develop the materials and share them with other tutors so that all

those involved in the teaching of that CAC workshop may be equally prepared to deliver it. Yet other content professors request CAC workshops without identifying the specific writing or speaking requirements of the assignment which makes it difficult to prepare the materials. Finally, there are some who forget that CAC is a requirement from Year 2 onwards and as such do not schedule any for their students. Among this category of content professors are those who get to the end of the academic year and realise that they now need to fulfill the CAC hours and, therefore, request random workshops that are not pegged to any assignments which defeats the whole purpose of CAC.

## CONCLUSION

Since late 2020 when the module critical thinking and communicating (CTC) as a university core module and communicating across the curriculum (CAC) a university-wide embedding programme to elevate the quality of writing and speaking of SIT students through university and beyond were officially launched, both have matured in many ways. Most of the teaching materials have been developed for CTC although there is continuous improvement of activities and assessment and several CAC workshops have been delivered across degree programmes with favourable feedback from both students and content professors. Having said that there are still occasional administrative glitches such as timetabling issues and the problem of inadequate facilitators, both full-time and part-time to deliver the embedded instructional workshops. As a result, discussions are ongoing about developing more self-directed learning e-modules that could be customized to serve as CAC workshops.

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CHAPTER 19.

A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON A  
THREE-PRONGED APPROACH  
TO SECOND-LANGUAGE  
ENHANCEMENT AT THE CHINESE  
UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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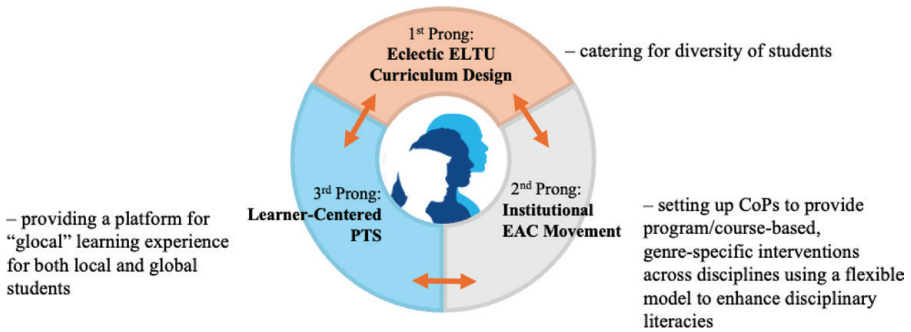
***Abstract.** In preparing university students for academic success and beyond, disciplinary literacy, the ability to understand and contextualize the use of language within a subject/discipline for academic purposes, is found to be a much needed yet easily neglected area in higher education. While content professors are mostly preoccupied with teaching subject knowledge, students are often unaware of their insufficient academic literacy for successful learning in the disciplines. To address these challenges, a language unit which plays a central role within a university's overall language enhancement program in Hong Kong has strived to create a collaborative community for enhancing disciplinary literacy across the university to bridge this gap and to facilitate student engagement. This chapter documents a critical reflection on the unit's endeavor in developing an integrated three-pronged approach to language education whereby all stakeholders—language educators, content professors, and students—are involved to bring about institutional change. In addition to outlining the formal core language curriculum, it analyses how a joint-force of change agents was formed through the launch of the English across the curriculum (EAC) Project, an institutional movement since 2016, as well as the inception and implementation of the peer tutoring scheme (PTS), a student-centered platform for enriching student experience. It also underscores the insights obtained from the process and discusses its way forward.*

In the past two decades or so, the challenges of English-medium higher education have received considerable attention in a wide range of settings, especially in Europe and the Asia-Pacific where English is used as a second or foreign language to teach academic or content subjects (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Mahboob, 2014; Zhao & Dixon, 2017). Research has also been conducted to understand and address the complexity of the pedagogical and policy issues involved (Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Macaro et al., 2016; Lei & Hu, 2022). These concerted efforts reflect the exigency for English language educators and researchers to respond to the transforming landscape of higher education in which disciplinary literacy plays a pivotal role in ensuring student engagement and success where English medium instruction is adopted.

Disciplinary literacy refers to the ability to understand and contextualize the use of language within a subject/discipline for academic purposes. It emphasizes “the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within the disciplines” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 8.). This ability is found to be crucial yet easily neglected in higher education where English is used as the medium of instruction (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Mahboob, 2014; Pun & Jin, 2021; Zawacki & Cox, 2014). This is certainly true in Hong Kong and has become more pronounced with the territory-wide education reform in 2012 whereby secondary schooling was shortened from seven years to six. Due to the change, freshmen have one year less of advanced English training prior to entering university, resulting in a gap between what they can do and what they are expected to do (Lai et al., 2020).

Noting the complexity of the issues involved, language educators at the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) of CUHK have strived to bridge this gap by creating a collaborative community that engages language specialists, content teachers, and students using a flexible model to cater for diversity and to enhance student engagement, a crucial factor affecting student success (Coates, 2008; Kahu, 2013; Zepke & Leach, 2010). We firmly believe that unless there is an institutional culture that upholds inter-disciplinary collaborations and nurtures the importance of disciplinary literacies collectively, the problem of disconnect will remain, adversely affecting students’ overall success in and out of university. To forge this culture, a three-pronged approach has been adopted to address said challenge and enhance student engagement, a multi-faceted construct which primarily emphasizes students’ cognitive investment in, active participation in and emotional reactions to their learning tasks (Chapman, 2003) as well as “students’ involvement with activities and conditions likely to generate high quality learning” (Coates, 2008, p.vi).

To enhance student engagement, ELTU has developed a comprehensive formal curriculum since 2012 as the foundation (1<sup>st</sup> prong), which is complemented by two non-formal provisions, the English across the curriculum (EAC) movement (2<sup>nd</sup> prong) and the peer tutoring scheme (PTS) (3<sup>rd</sup> prong) since 2016. While the formal curriculum operates at the university level (graduation requirement for all undergraduates unless exempted), the EAC movement functions at a faculty/program/unit/course level through collaborative community-of-practice (CoP) projects (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), and the PTS runs at an individual level through the support of trained peer tutors (Figure 19.1). We adopt CoP as the key implementation strategy for EAC due to its collaborative nature. It allows regular close contact and knowledge sharing between content and language teachers to address common goals (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These provisions are necessarily needs-based, genre-specific, and learner-centered, with the common goal of maximizing student engagement. In this chapter, emphasis is placed on the EAC movement as it acts as a catalyst for the (re)development of the core courses and the adaptive implementation of PTS.



*Figure 19.1. A three-pronged approach to second language enhancement at the Chinese University of Hong Kong*

## THE SETTING – THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND THE THREE-PRONGED APPROACH.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is the only higher institution in Hong Kong that adopts a bilingual language policy whereby both English and Chinese are official languages (Lai et al., 2020; Lin & Man, 2011). Unless specified, students are free to choose their preferred language to complete assignments. With 90 percent of our undergraduates being local students, it is expected that they tend to opt for Chinese primarily if given the choice. It is thus not uncommon for both content teachers and students to neglect the gap.

### FIRST PRONG: AN ECLECTIC ELTU CURRICULUM THAT ADDRESSES DIVERSITY

With the inception of the new curriculum in 2012 because of the territory-wide educational reform in Hong Kong, an eclectic curriculum structure that caters to the diverse needs of our undergraduates (~10,000 annually) was designed, progressing from general English for academic purposes (EAP) to English for specific purposes (ESP) and English for professional purposes (EPP) (Figure 19.2). To date, all the 50 courses on offer are closely monitored by our rigorous quality assurance mechanism and processes, which include insights and feedback gained from the two non-formal prongs in question, leading to course (re)development and expansion.

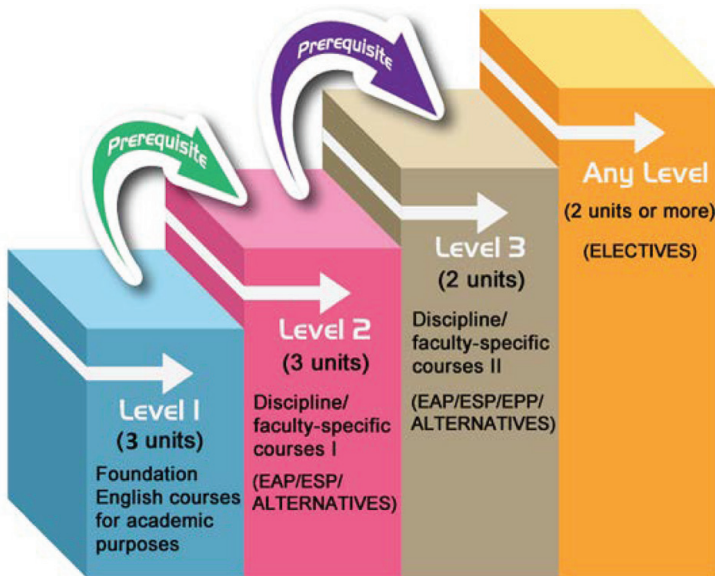


Figure 19.2. Formal ELTU curriculum structure

### SECOND PRONG: EAC AS A CATALYTIC INSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT AT CUHK.

The design and development of an eclectic/wide-ranging, faculty-based ELTU curriculum is in itself both a great challenge and accomplishment. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of this formal curriculum (average student course rating is around 5.4 out of 6.0 over time), due to student diversity, some faculty-based courses still cannot fully prepare students for genre-specific/disciplinary requirements necessitated by different academic departments/programs, resulting in a gap between what students are expected to do and what they are able to do,

particularly in writing, as reflected by content teachers. Informed by the writing across the curriculum (WAC) scholarship (Anson, 2002; Ferris & Thaiss, 2011; Wingate, 2016; Zawacki & Cox, 2011; Zawacki & Rogers, 2012), as well as its early practice of WAC at CUHK (Braine & McNaught, 2007) and in Asia (Wu, 2013), the Unit officially started launching the EAC movement in 2016 with government funding. Jose Lai et al. (2020) explain that

This initiative extends the WAC tradition and previous WAC implementations at CUHK, which exclusively focused on academic writing, to include all language modalities in an L2 setting, allowing English acquisition for students to proceed beyond traditional English as a second language (ESL) courses directly into their chosen disciplines. (p. 226)

To develop an institutional culture that involves inter-disciplinary collaborations, we have identified clear goals to guide our EAC movement: 1) to explore different academic literacies with content professors through establishing CoPs; 2) to support content teachers in implementing an assessment approach that encourages a dual attention to content and language; and 3) to cultivate a joint ownership of language education.

This movement is implemented by setting up inter-disciplinary CoP collaborative projects with content professors across the university using a flexible model which can accommodate diverse expectations and evolving changes to address a range of disciplinary needs. To date, our EAC movement has established 36 CoPs (many are repeat collaborations) with some 70 content teachers across the University (Figure 19.3), benefiting nearly 13,000 students.

Arts	Business Administration	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anthropology</li> <li>▪ Cultural and Religious Studies</li> <li>▪ Linguistics</li> <li>▪ Music</li> </ul>	BA Programs: Workshops for Case Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Early Childhood Education</li> <li>▪ Sports Science and Physical Education</li> </ul>
Engineering	Law	Medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Biomedical Engineering</li> <li>▪ Information Engineering</li> <li>▪ Mechanical &amp; Automation Engineering</li> <li>▪ Systems Engineering and Engineering Management</li> </ul>	School of Law: Linked course <i>ELTU2015 English for Law Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Biomedical Sciences &amp; Pharmacy</li> <li>▪ Chinese Medicine</li> <li>▪ Nursing</li> <li>▪ Pharmacy, Nursing, Public Health, Chinese Medicine, Biomedical Sciences</li> </ul>
Science	Social Science	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Earth and Environmental Sciences</li> <li>▪ Natural Sciences</li> <li>▪ Physics</li> <li>▪ Statistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Architecture</li> <li>▪ Gender Studies</li> <li>▪ Psychology</li> <li>▪ Social Work</li> <li>▪ Urban Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ College Education</li> <li>▪ University General Education</li> </ul>

Figure 19.3. EAC collaborative projects

### **THIRD PRONG: PTS AS A PERSONALIZED SUPPORT TO ENRICH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.**

EAC is further strengthened by its extended arm, PTS. The idea of peer-tutoring was first incubated during the early years when the territory-wide education reform was implemented in 2012. This was prompted by our observation that freshmen were found quite disoriented with regard to academic literacy. This need was confirmed by our QA data and through our pilot trial of EAC in 2015–2016 with content professors. Students are found ill-informed of genre knowledge and features of scientific writing, for instance. Encouraged by the fact that peer-tutoring has been found effective as an instructional strategy in offering alternative provisions to students in a great variety of situations (Topping, 1996), our Unit was determined to extend the EAC initiative and further complement the formal curriculum by launching the student-centered PTS in 2016, which provides the platform for enriching student learning experience and enhancing student engagement (Kahu, 2013).

In brief, PTS aims to (1) recruit and train peer tutors of different academic and cultural backgrounds from different disciplines to provide personalized and student-centered language support to all CUHK students in enhancing tutees' general proficiency and disciplinary literacies; (2) support internationalization of CUHK and help integrate local and non-local students; and (3) offer a positive platform for the peer tutors to grow personally, socially, culturally, and professionally. To date, PTS has supported almost 1,300 students in over 5,200 one-hour sessions by nearly 250 trained peer tutors.

### **CRITICAL REFLECTIONS OF THE EAC AND PTS CORE TEAMS**

With the challenges of bilingual language policy, student diversity, general disengagement in English learning, low awareness of the importance of disciplinary literacy, and weak ownership of language education by content teachers and students, we recognize the exigency of joining hands with all stakeholders concerned to provide holistic language education through an integrated approach. Reflecting on our experience of establishing EAC CoPs with content teachers across disciplines, and providing personalized support through PTS to complement our ELTU core curriculum, we realize the importance of the following.

#### **1. CONDUCTING INITIAL AND ONGOING COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Experience from the first rounds of implementation alerted us that students across faculties often share a common concern—whether language teachers have

the proficiency in comprehending the technical content and providing constructive assistance to enhance their disciplinary literacies. The secret to fend off such skepticism lies in the thorough preparation work we invest in. Regardless of the model of intervention, the following cycle of implementation has been applied to ensure quality, consistency, and generalizability of practice. Conducting comprehensive needs analysis by working closely with content teachers marks the significant first step of starting any newly established CoP (Figure 19.4).

To this end, it is important that we obtain the necessary information by all means: soliciting course documents and expectations from content teachers, analyzing graded student samples for language issues, auditing lectures to note students' responses to subject content, and interviewing former course takers to gauge their challenges (which almost always include their fear of using English in academic/professional contexts) and coping mechanisms. Our goal is to acquire an in-depth understanding of their struggles and requests to provide them with relevant inputs that align with course expectations.

It is worth noting that needs analysis should be conducted in an ongoing manner throughout the project implementation process. Post-intervention survey feedback is often revealing. By deliberating with content teachers on students' voices, we make collective decisions to make modifications to our provisions, reflecting our flexible and evolving model. A recent successful cultural and religious studies CoP emphasizing writer-as-reader noted a strong request in the post-intervention survey for more training in academic reading. Similarly, in the case of the sports science and physical education CoP focusing on research writing, we were surprised but delighted to note during the interviews that students were eager to receive speaking support as well.

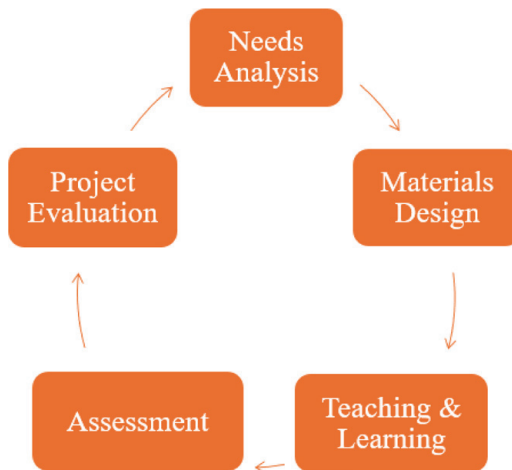


Figure 19.4. Implementation Cycle

With the support of the content teachers as outlined above, we can identify specific needs and address them step by step with prudence and sensitivity, including referring some students to consult our trained peer tutors. It is evident that both initial and ongoing needs analyses have enhanced student engagement and contributed to the implementation of a wide range of bespoke interventions for a diverse student body.

## **2. ADOPTING A FLEXIBLE MODEL TO PROVIDE BESPOKE INTERVENTIONS**

Noting the wide range of disciplinary needs, we believe a flexible model, capable of accommodating diverse expectations and evolving changes, should be adopted to accomplish our goals. This belief is premised upon a strong advocate by WAC practitioners (Anson, 2002; Braine & McNaught, 2007) that any educational interventions or practices are always best developed with sensitivity towards unique contexts and exigencies. As one size cannot fit all, different forms of interventions emerged through thorough needs analyses as well as the regular interplays between the EAC team and our collaborator(s) (Figure 19.5).

These provisions often complement the existing ELTU curriculum by addressing areas of needs not covered by the formal courses, and they take different forms to provide bespoke interventions to our target groups. For instance, for Cultural and Religious Studies, we provide customized workshops to support students in writing a wide range of genres including academic abstracts, compare-and-contrast papers, and critical book reports. At the request of a professor from the creative industries course, we also train students' pitching skills for presenting funding proposals. For gender studies majors, we offer interactive training sessions on response essays about feminist theories. For psychology, we guide students to analyze and tackle various writing tasks in their mid-term and final assessments. For social work majors, we offer linked courses to equip them with case recordings and funding proposal writing skills needed to navigate through their fieldwork practicum. For natural sciences program majors, we provide onsite feedback on their poster presentations. Other offerings include professional development for teaching staff, discipline-specific eLearning platforms and tailored assessments such as graded quizzes.

In doing so, the team finds the importance of subscribing to a sound linguistic theory and pedagogical approach to implement our provisions. Drawing from functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and the genre-based approach to language development (Hyland, 2007; Swales & Feak, 2012; Wingate, 2012, 2016), most interventions are designed to draw students' attention to the distinctive linguistic features, functions, and purposive language use within a particular disciplinary context.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customised Workshops (on academic writing, pitching, presentation skills, etc.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile App for FYPs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and Learning Materials Development</li> </ul>          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linked Courses</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invited Sessions</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment Rubrics and Guidelines Development</li> </ul>        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guest Lectures</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation Talks</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-on-1 Consultation Sessions</li> </ul>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-modules</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Forums</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development</li> </ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eLearning Platforms</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitions</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops for Teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs)</li> </ul> |

*Figure 19.5.A Flexible EAC Model of Interventions.*

The aim is to induct learners into these specific features and help them navigate the discourse in different disciplines effectively. For example, through the EAC project, we first understood the needs of different engineering departments, from which we received requests for support in final-year projects (including report writing and presentation skills). Since many departments sought similar support, we proposed a course, ELTU3024 Communicating Engineering Research, which specifically focuses on research writing and presentations for engineering students. This course takes a genre-based approach and uses engineering research papers from different fields as examples. Where appropriate, we also use authentic published works from the discipline concerned, including some written by the collaborating professors.

It is noteworthy that, rather than providing one-off support, the interventions often involve ongoing efforts. A case in point is our collaboration with the Department of Information Engineering where we support students and teaching assistants in developing communication skills for successful completion of research-based projects in their capstone project courses. We provide different forms of support based on the intended learning outcomes and assessments over two academic terms. We start with a briefing session where we introduce the assignment requirements and our interventions. Subsequently, students are provided access to online modules that focus on the research-related assignments to be completed. These are followed by workshops on selected topics and training for teaching assistants who help to assess and provide tailored feedback on students' work. While we work with numerous departments on capstone projects, our approaches differ based on the specific needs of each target group.

Our work has been successful due to the flexibility of our approach and the commitment of our collaborators who share common goals. Equally important is the provision of individualized peer feedback through the PTS. Many typical

L2 language issues, including both higher-order concerns and lower-order concerns, can be covered in depth by our trained peer-tutors, whose service has been extremely well received. As tutees' requests have to be submitted with their work at least two days in advance of the appointment, the peer tutors can often provide bespoke support at a personalized level.

### 3. BUILDING TRUST AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

As a social learning theory, CoP considers learning in a social context among “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This definition has outlined in clarity the three key and interconnected components of CoP: The Domain, The Community, and The Practice (Figure 19.6).

Translated into our EAC setting, CoP refers to the formation of a community (trusting relationship) between our team of English language educators and content professors/teachers across the disciplines to address a common goal (disciplinary literacies) with the aim of enhancing the practice (engagement of students to produce expected standard of work within the disciplines). It is this partnership and trust between our collaborators and the team that makes the delivery of relevant, discipline-specific language support possible.



*Figure 19.6. Components of COP. The Domain refers to the shared goal collectively pursued by the Community who are bonded members engaging in joint activities and discussions to develop a shared Practice.*

Given the highly specific nature of our collaborations, a decent understanding of the target disciplines and genres is necessary for the EAC instructors to teach disciplinary literacy to students. However, it takes time and specific effort. The CoP model allows us to address this by essentially learning from the subject experts in authentic situations through reading seminal papers and being with them. With our background in applied linguistics, we can conduct genre and language analysis for particular disciplines accordingly. For architectural studies, we meet with practicing architects as well as professional consultants from the Architecture School to solicit their input and feedback on our material design. We also sit in design review sessions to observe the interactions between visiting architects and students. For urban studies, we source and conduct textual analyses of published works on popular disciplinary topics authored by the content professors, who are also leading researchers in the field, and adapt selected works as samples for teaching. For social work, we invite external fieldwork supervisors to participate in a discussion forum to share their observations on students' performance during their practicum, based on which we then adjust the focus of our interventions. For physics, we audit the lectures of content professors to strengthen our science knowledge—while this is often a steep learning curve for language teachers without a science background, knowing what students are learning and why they are doing an experiment in a particular way help us give more effective feedback on their writing. This approach allows us to not only gain subject knowledge but also to better “speak the language” of the target discourse community, which in turn provides language teachers with many learning opportunities for professional development.

On the other hand, the practice of CoP has also allowed the EAC team to showcase the importance of disciplinary literacy for academic success and an assessment practice that focuses both on content and language. Through regular interactions, most collaborators have become more open to adjusting their course structure to accommodate EAC interventions. In some cases, they even modify their course delivery mode by embracing some WAC pedagogy, such as the writing-to-learn approach. All in all, this mutual respect and trust has not only lead our collaborators to assume a greater ownership of language education but also to become our EAC ambassadors. Many new CoPs are established through word-of-mouth, and the new collaborators are normally quite ready to adopt and adapt the practice of our early adopters.

#### **4. ENHANCING LEARNING MOTIVATION WITH INCENTIVES AND PERSONALIZED PTS**

Despite our thorough work on understanding students' needs and providing them with bespoke interventions, a notable challenge is observed across the

board concerning student participation in non-compulsory provisions. As Kathy Durkin and Andrew Main (2002) have suggested, these provisions often fail to attract students who need it the most. Despite perceiving our offerings as beneficial, as reflected in surveys, students often require extrinsic motivation to participate. Considerable efforts have been made with our collaborators to motivate students strategically.

Experience shows that when EAC interventions are tied to subject course assessments, students are more likely to take us seriously. To this end, we work hard at both our collaborators and students. In the first place, we need to convince content teachers to make these interventions compulsory and to include language marks in their assessment scheme to reflect a dual emphasis on content and language. To facilitate this change in assessment practice, we volunteer support in designing the assessment rubrics and training their teaching assistants in grading. When a complete overhaul of assessment scheme is impracticable, bonus marks will be given for participation. Identifying with our belief, the Department of Sports Science and Physical Education has made EAC interventions a compulsory assessed component in their Final-year Project (FYP) Handbook, giving us a rightful position in jointly advancing their students' learning. This policy change will also be adopted by the Early Childhood Education Program.

Another incentive is to let students experience the authenticity of language learning in context. For example, our EAC intervention for the architectural studies actually takes place during students' regular design studio presentations while both content professors and language teachers review and comment on their performance simultaneously. This practice has inarguably enhanced student engagement.

These incentives have worked, but the best incentive is to let students experience the practical values of our interventions. Students from the earth and environmental science program, on average, exhibit a much higher level of English proficiency compared with other science counterparts as many are aspiring research students-to-be. They tend to harbor doubts about our ability to guide them in their FYP research writing and regard our consultations an imposition on their time. To gain their trust, we interacted regularly with our collaborator, confirming our understanding of content knowledge raised in students' drafts, and maintaining constant communication to discuss student progress. This intense collaborative effort paid off. Students became motivated intrinsically by witnessing their own progress through our interventions. They were pleasantly surprised at the improvement made at this final yet crucial phase of their academic journey.

Students are further intrinsically incentivized by yet another level of learner-centered support made available through PTS. With the aim to supplement the formal ELTU curriculum and the EAC movement, PTS is implemented

with a clear mission to provide individualized language support to further address the needs of a diverse range of students. To yield synergy, PTS is seamlessly integrated into and promoted through our courses and EAC interventions though this service is open to all students on campus. Often at the recommendation of their teachers, students from ELTU courses and content courses will approach our peer tutors voluntarily with their work for personalized feedback. For special cases, we also match the peer tutees with suitable peer tutors. This learner-centered and stress-free learning platform has inarguably enhanced students' learning motivation and enhancement.

## DISCUSSION

In pursuit of an inter-disciplinary collaborative community and excellence in language education, we have worked tirelessly towards an integrated three-pronged approach by complementing the well-established ELTU Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> prong) with EAC (2<sup>nd</sup> prong) and PTS (3<sup>rd</sup> prong) since 2016, which has been increasingly well received. The positive post-intervention survey results reflect not only students' satisfaction of the provisions but also their uptake of learning, and indirectly, student engagement. There have been challenges and achievements along the way, and it is the synergy resulting from the seamless articulation of the three prongs in question that is worth celebrating.

First and foremost, the outcomes of our EAC movement have been more than pleasing. With a start-up number of eight CoPs in 2016–2017, our movement has successfully established 36 CoPs by reaching out to some 70 content professors/teachers/teaching assistants from all eight faculties and other units, benefitting nearly 13,000 students to date. We have been exploring a wide range of disciplinary literacies with content teachers collectively across the university (Figure 19.3); supporting them in their assessment practice by incorporating language marks in their assessments (notably faculties of arts, education and engineering); and cultivating joint ownership of language education through enacting CoPs collaboratively and reviewing our practice regularly. In reflection, we find vision, passion and mutual trust important drivers for our institutional movement to address students' disengagement in disciplinary literacy. Realizing that holistic language education should be a joint effort between content teachers and language specialists, we daringly set institutional change in the landscape of language education and enhanced student engagement as our goals. With this mission, we took a leap of faith by setting up inter-disciplinary CoP projects with content professors to co-create the necessary learning conditions for student engagement with mutual trust. We also adopt a flexible model to implement CoPs in a timely manner using authentic materials with empathy, tact,

and sensitivity for the learners. It is this flexible and evolving model that allows us to address issues of student diversity, institutional culture, and ownership of language education effectively.

Secondly, the outcomes of our effort in supporting individual students and enhancing students' "glocal" learning experience (Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2021) through PTS are equally worth noting. Starting off with 26 trained peer tutors in 2016, the demand for more comprehensive service has been on the rise. This learner-centered provision has become an indispensable and greatly welcome provision for the students in need. Since its inception, the number of sessions has soared to over 5,200, serving close to 1,300 tutees by 271 peer tutors on board. Amazingly, peer tutees' satisfaction of these sessions has been consistently high over time with nearly perfect attendance rate. What has set PTS up for success is probably its affordance of an exclusively needs-based, learner-centered, and flexible learning approach whereby the peer tutees are free to specify their learning needs, choice of peer tutors (self-introduction videos are available on the project site), and preferred learning mode (in-person, Zoom, or sheer written feedback) when they book a time slot for support. Besides, this scheme speaks to the minds and hearts of all concerned. The stress-free and supportive learning platform has created an ideal condition to foster learning relationships. While peer tutees feel they are fully supported to achieve their own learning goals, peer tutors find their satisfaction in service and personal development with enhanced self-confidence and self-image as indicated in the post-intervention surveys (often scoring well above 5 on a 6-point scale) and focus-group interviews (Arrand, 2014; Hammond et al., 2010). These intangible rewards have become an impetus for sustaining commitment from both parties.

Thirdly, both non-formal provisions have provided tremendous insights for formal curriculum review and reform. Suffice to say that review reports generated by the voluminous data obtained from different EAC and PTS interventions have inspired regular course revisions and expansion. Besides, linked courses for professional programs are constantly reviewed and revamped based on on-going discussions with content professors and the QA data. Students' specific needs identified through EAC and PTS have indeed provided the ELTU curriculum committee with much food for thought and actions. In this regard, the synergy generated by this integrated three-pronged approach cannot be underestimated. While our formal curriculum provides faculty-based academic skills training, the EAC CoPs allow us to address specific and evolving disciplinary needs in a timely manner. Whenever needed, personalized support is provided by our fleet of well-trained peer tutors. This way, students can be provided with holistic language support at all levels, which is coherently articulated under the same leadership within the same university.

## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Undoubtedly, we have encountered challenges along the way. For our EAC movement, besides the issues of students' participation in non-compulsory provisions, their skepticism about language instructors' ability to advise them on disciplinary work, and low-learning motivation, there are other situational problems. The challenge of sustainability resulting from the substantial turnover of staff within the Unit, which is reflective of the wider ELT job market in Hong Kong, poses a concern. Due to the highly specific nature of our collaborations, we have to invest much effort in grooming new EAC instructors by providing them with professional development opportunities. Besides immersing them in authentic learning situations, we also create eLearning resources, keep detailed records of previous lesson plans and reflective reports for their reference. Speaking of sustainability, we are grateful to note that this EAC movement has been awarded with an earmarked grant by the university since 2022–2023 based on merit. To provide professional development opportunities, we have also organized international forums and conferences to encourage scholarship.

As we look towards the future, we can also foresee more challenges. One of them is the growing interdisciplinary nature of different disciplines. This requires a broader knowledge base and the ability to support students in navigating complex interdisciplinary projects. The EAC team will need to continuously assess and revise the program and provisions (Cox et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is also worth considering how collaborators can assume even greater ownership of the EAC provisions. While significant strides have already been made in integrating EAC into the relevant subject courses, it is of interest to further encourage and empower content specialists to address students' academic literacy needs in their own teaching and to recognize the importance of literacy in curriculum and assessment design. The collaborative efforts of both content and language specialists are expected to further enhance the quality and sustainability of our initiatives.

As for PTS, our main challenge is to continuously provide an effective learning platform which will not only benefit both peer tutors and tutees in respective aspects, but will also respond well to changing needs. We believe our knowledge of students' needs obtained through formal course implementation and EAC interventions will allow the PTS team to provide more tailored training for the peer tutors to come. The foreseeable increase in non-local students and interdisciplinary programs of CUHK will bring new challenges for us. To address the increase in diversity of student body and program mix effectively, we recognize the need to purposively recruit potential candidates of diverse academic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to systematically prepare them for service through topic-based training workshops, e.g., peer-tutoring pedagogy,

genre-based pedagogy, academic and research writing, intercultural communication, presentation skills, and independent learning.

Despite the relative success of the PTS, our team is convinced that to further improve and sustain this meaningful practice, we need to take further action. We plan to further strengthen the connection between PTS and EAC by matching peer tutors with tutees within the same faculties or even departments. We will also empower our peer tutors with more systematic training and monitoring. In addition to the review of service quality, more time and manpower could be allocated to exploring how peer tutees transfer their language skills acquired from peer tutoring to other academic settings. Last but not least, peer tutors should be encouraged to reflect systematically on their own gains through the process. Only through their realizations on “learning by teaching” in peer tutoring (Topping, 1996, p. 324) can they become more intrinsically motivated to provide quality service. We truly believe that the purposive selection, thorough preparation, and on-going monitoring of these highly motivated peer tutors are fundamental and yet instrumental to motivating student engagement.

## CONCLUSION

Through the three-pronged approach, we have attempted to develop an integrated framework of holistic language education to maximize student engagement at a system level. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that the EAC movement is the catalyst for change, informing both the curriculum development and the effective implementation of PTS, and more importantly, effecting an institutional change in the landscape of second language education. As Vicki Trowler and Paul Trowler (2010) put it, responsibility for engagement is a shared entity, requiring the agency of the individual student, the role of the institution, teaching staff, and all support staff.

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CHAPTER 20.

CRAFTING A RHETORICAL  
ODYSSEY: PIONEERING A  
WRITING ACROSS THE  
CURRICULUM PROGRAM AT  
A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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*Abstract: Given the limited literature on WAC-building at community colleges, we offer here a four-part heuristic for inventing and operationalizing a WAC initiative at a two-year college. After briefly describing the exigence of our unlikely partnership with a public-ivy university (Miami University, OH) that informed this heuristic, we unpack the inward/outward rhetorical work that we engaged in to establish this fledgling project at one open access institution and eventually operationalized it at the district level (our community college is one of ten colleges that comprise our community college district). These rhetorical activities are as follows: Allying, Navigating, Framing, and Brokering. We argue that the rhetorical work involved in these activities is relevant and transferable to other contexts and provide readers of this collection who might be interested in beginning a WAC program at open-access institutions with a productive framework to begin and engage in that work. We echo the need for WAC leaders and programs to be what Elizabeth Wardle recently referred to as “boundary crossers” and believe the short history of our WAC Program reflects the productive potential of such a call.*

Composition faculty at community colleges have long been invested in the dual objectives of facilitating writing knowledge transfer into and beyond their courses and creating accessible and inclusive learning environments. In light of these aims, scholars have emphasized the importance of extending writing instruction and support beyond the confines of a single semester or two of first-year composition (FYC) and collaborating across the college (Anson & Moore, 2017; Bazerman et

al., 2017; Goldschmidt, 2017; Wardle & Mercer Clement, 2017). This highlights the pressing need to not only refine individual courses but also to reconceptualize the broader learning ecosystem within which students operate: to pursue change. In response to calls for extending writing instruction and support beyond the confines of FYC, the integration of writing across the curriculum (WAC) surfaces as a promising mechanism for change, especially at a community college. Community colleges, known for their diverse academic paths and technical and career education, provide an ideal environment for embedding writing instruction across various disciplines students recognize as relevant and meaningful to their goals. This alignment positions WAC as a catalyst for change in the college ecosystem, a pivotal driver of student success, enhancing not only academic preparedness but also future career prospects. However, despite this apparent alignment, research on WAC programs at community colleges presents a narrow and fragmented picture. WAC is not thriving, surviving, or often even present at two-year colleges.

Community colleges, noted for their emphasis on teaching and learning, student development, and a curriculum rich in both general education and career-oriented programs, remain largely absent from the WAC movement. Chris Thaiss and Tara Porter's 2010 national survey, coupled with UC Davis-based International WAC/WID 2015–2020 survey (n.d.), reported the stark reality: only 32 percent to 33 percent of two-year institutions in the United States have a WAC program. These figures stand in contrast to the network of WAC initiatives thriving in four-year institutions across the country: 65 percent at PhD-granting; 60 percent at BA/BS-granting institutes (Thaiss & Porter, 2010). Beyond the scarcity of programs, Leslie Roberts' seminal 2008 study documents some of the internal struggles that plague new and existing community college WAC programs, which range from institutional underinvestment and fragmented ecosystem, to faculty passivity and disengagement. Chief among these challenges is the demanding workload faced by two-year faculty, who must navigate a 5/5 teaching load alongside mandatory committee work, leaving them limited time and resources for the additional research, planning, and piloting necessary to establish a WAC initiative. Needless to say, the convergence of challenges reflected here presents a sobering reality.

Within this context, as two community college English faculty members interested in establishing a WAC program, we embarked on an investigative journey to the Howe Center for Writing Excellence at Miami University. Directed by Dr. Elizabeth Wardle, the program is renowned for its innovative WAC initiatives and was honored with the 2022 Exemplary Enduring WAC Program award by the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum. Of particular interest was the Writing Fellows program, a faculty-centric initiative supporting disciplinary teams as they explore writing across academic fields.

An initial email with Wardle in 2021 evolved into a productive exchange, reflecting a shared commitment to WAC principles and curiosity about the relationship between a four-year public ivy and a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution. This dialogue led to an invitation to observe the upcoming Writing Fellows cohort in summer 2021, followed by co-facilitator roles in Miami's 2022 cohort. Participation in these cohorts offered invaluable insights into the seminar's curriculum (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2022) and its emphasis on faculty collaboration and agency—elements that strongly aligned with our vision for a robust WAC project at our community college.

With this backdrop in mind, below we offer a WAC-building heuristic that describes the rhetorical labor requisite for the initiation of a grassroots WAC program at a community college. We begin by introducing the heuristic, explaining each of the four rhetorical moves and then, illustrating their application through vignettes grounded in the empirical evidence collected in the work at our two-year institution. The final section of the article delves into the implications for educators interested in undertaking similar WAC work within their own institutions, offering insights and recommendations garnered from our experiences. While we recognize that readers may be interested in student outcomes, assessing direct student impact is beyond scope of this chapter; instead, we offer a scholarly examination of our efforts that aims to enrich the limited discourse surrounding the development and sustainability of WAC initiatives in community college settings.

## INTRODUCTION TO HEURISTIC

Below we describe a four-part heuristic we developed for initiating, growing, and sustaining a WAC/WAC-like program in community college contexts.<sup>1</sup> This heuristic builds on the work of Michelle Cox et al. (2018), who argue that the practices, procedures, and processes of building, running, and sustaining a WAC program must be theorized. In *Sustainable WAC: A Whole Systems Approach to Launching and Developing Writing Across the Curriculum Programs*, they introduce a whole systems approach to emphasize the complexity of organizations, highlighting the need for change agents to consider structure, culture, processes, and people holistically. To account for this integrated view, we employ organizational change theory to understand activities that facilitate change within complex systems. We also draw on Adrianna Kezar's (2018) *How Colleges*

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1 The heuristic we present here is drawn not only from work at our two-year college, but from the culmination of numerous conversations, work sessions, and collaborative presentations with Wardle. These collaborations include conference sessions at the American Association of Colleges & Universities and the International Association of Writing Across the Curriculum.

*Change: Understanding, Leading, and Enacting Change*, which provides theories, frameworks, and strategies for leading and implementing change. Particularly germane to our conversation is Kezar's (2018) definition of change, which she frames as "those intentional acts where a particular leader drives or implements a new direction" (p. xii). Finally, we situate this heuristic within the broader national conversation on leadership in higher education, drawing on Elaine P. Maimon's (2018) *Leading Academic Change: Vision, Strategy, and Transformation*, which frames WAC development through a leadership lens and highlights twelve principles of transformative leadership.

By embedding our heuristic within change theory and through a leadership lens, we highlight the importance of regarding those involved in WAC program initiation and development as change agents, and the tasks they perform as rhetorical activities that make such change possible. On the one hand, this perspective acknowledges individuals' agency in altering "the operating systems, underlying values, and culture of an organization or system" (Kezar, 2018, p. 62). On the other hand, our heuristic broadens widely the rhetorical ecosystem—the contexts, stakeholders, exigencies, texts, and purposes that WAC leaders must engage to begin, develop, and sustain a WAC program.

## ALLYING

The first rhetorical activity that change agents must engage in when initiating a WAC program is *allying*. We refer to allying as a coalition building strategy (Kezar & Lester, 2011) aimed at forming cooperative relationships between individuals, groups, or entities for two distinct purposes. First, given the grass-roots nature of many WAC creation initiatives (Cox et al., 2018), it is essential for change agents to ally with relationships that can garner support and enhance credibility. Allies may also offer insights on potential resistance or suggest additional partnerships to build momentum.

Second, the relationships formed through allying lay the foundation for sensemaking, which involves creating order and making retrospective sense of events (Weick, 1995). Allying helps change agents identify key stakeholders suited to sensemaking and positions them to leverage alliances when necessary. Though we have cultivated many relationships, the two allies highlighted below operate at the college and district level respectively. This illustrates the need to ally across organizational scales and reflects dynamics similar to those in statewide two-year college systems, where multi-level collaboration is essential for effective program implementation.

The first coalition we forged was with Jennifer Fay, an exercise science faculty at our college. Fay had influence at both our college and district through her

leadership in the Guided Pathways (GP) initiative from 2016 to 2020, creating transparent pathway maps to support student progress and transitions. Over this time, Fay gained the trust and respect of faculty, staff, and administrators. Although her formal GP role had ended, she remained active in student and faculty and chaired her department.

Given her positionality, Fay emerged as a primary contact because her endorsement lent credibility to our initiative. Through formal meetings and informal interactions like texting and coffee conversations, she demonstrated clear support. With her backing, we strategically leveraged her advocacy in discussions with key stakeholder—including the Vice President of Academic Affairs, instructional deans, and the Center for Teaching and Learning director, where Fay’s support for the initiative, later called the Literacy Partners Program (LPP), was pivotal in securing endorsement and cooperation.

Additionally, Fay provided names of other potential partnerships to contact. While many were within our college, some were at the district level. Given her GP experience, she identified stakeholders who could help our initiative develop across the district. This guidance proved invaluable. Following her advice, we requested meetings with key upper-administration stakeholders at both college and district levels, often strategically referencing our alliance with Fay. In some instances, Fay graciously reached out herself before or after our meetings, helping create favorable conditions or solidify support gained during the meeting.

Another individual we strategically sought out was Meredith Warner, a District Director in the Academic & Student Affairs Division. Her involvement in the GP initiative and recent collaboration with Arreguin on a district-wide faculty development event made her a key ally. Reaching out to Warner was instrumental in two ways.

First, her positionality at the district office gave her insight into district-wide student and academic affairs initiatives, informing how we framed the LPP to stakeholders, a process detailed in the Framing section. Warner helped us explore ways to position the LPP as both a student affairs *and* an academic affairs initiative, a departure from our initial academic affairs-only vision. Second, Warner’s awareness of district budget lines prompted us to seek funding from one historically earmarked for the Maricopa Summer Institute (MSI). Though MSI had run successfully for 20 years, it needed redefining, making it an ideal fit for the LPP.

## NAVIGATING

*Navigating*, in the context of organizational change, entails a change agent’s ability to maneuver through the diverse spaces and people within an organization.

While many faculty development initiatives target individual faculty, Barbara E. Walvoord (1996) situates WAC program work as macro-level rather than micro-level. Given this, those engaging in WAC work must navigate various institutional spaces and stakeholders to make “what is going on in the organization [and the proposed change] meaningful and sensible to the organizational participants” (Cameron, 1984, p. 130).

Thus, we came to see navigating as a fundamental rhetorical activity in initiating the LPP. Early on, it became clear we needed to tread carefully when speaking about the LPP to multiple voices, including disciplinary sub-groups within our English department (journalism, humanities, literature, ESL, creative writing) and across the district’s ten English departments. Thus, any widespread initiative such as a WAC program would need the support of both our own college’s department as well as nine others across the district. Although we were confident conceptual support existed, publicizing the initiative too early could invite scrutiny and potentially derail the program before launched.

Beyond maneuvering through these disciplinary territories, other spaces we learned to navigate carefully were contexts that were already engaged in faculty development programming. Of note here are the Centers for Teaching and Learning that exist in every one of our 10 campuses. On the one hand, our CTL director showed early support for our project given our willingness to collaborate with the center. Interestingly enough, our college’s CTL supported our very first LPP programming back in 2022 by providing the space to hold our two-week workshop as well as providing us with a quasi-project manager. However, when we initiated conversations about an LPP 2.0, we were met with some hesitation related to a number of factors. First, given our expressed desire to grow the LPP in size, scope, and influence, it became clear that our initiative would be competing from the same funding streams as the CTL. Second, given that the LPP was seen as a faculty development initiative, questions arose about overlapping/competing programming. In other words, although we were confident that content/programming of the LPP would be different from the kind of faculty development programming traditionally offered by CTLs, we began to field criticism that our work was drifting too close to the CTLs territory.

Additionally, even once the LPP received initial support from upper administration at the district level, we still needed to carefully maneuver the different district initiatives as well as the personalities leading those initiatives. From directors leading our development education and first-year experience initiatives, to those charged with our guided pathways, research fellowship, and student success initiatives, we constantly navigated between seeking support from these directors while also articulating the ways that the LPP priorities aligned to their existing strategic priorities.

## FRAMING

In the context of WAC-building, *framing* is a crucial rhetorical activity for managing meaning and promoting change. It involves crafting, aligning, and communicating a perspective on new initiatives to align with stakeholders' values and expectations (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014; Fairhurst, 2005; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 2014). Within the intricate landscape of higher education institutions, characterized by hierarchical structures, bureaucratic processes, and competing interests, framing is essential for clarifying the purpose, direction, and potential outcomes of proposed changes, while addressing potential concerns or resistance from stakeholders. It emerges as what Karl E. Weick (1995) refers to as "sense giving vehicles," a mechanism for leveraging language and communication to facilitate the evolution of an individual's thinking (qtd. in Kezar, 2018, p. 68). Engaging in this rhetorical activity, WAC developers can inform and potentially transform the mental frameworks people employ to organize knowledge, shape perceptions, and make decisions.

An early instance of framing occurred at the college level, where we, recognizing the need for both endorsement and financial backing to initiate the LPP, reached out to Nora Reyes, our college's Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA). Reyes was a familiar and supportive figure, someone we had collaborated with on previous projects and who shared a similar professional trajectory. She was an ally. Informed by this history of collaboration and common disciplinary background, we were confident she shared our belief in the synergy of interdisciplinary work and the transformative power of writing to enhance deep learning. This conviction prompted us to undertake *visionary framing* as described by Pamela L. Eddy (2003, p. 329) and William Hamilton (2016, p. 628). In our first email to Reyes, we emphasized the potential of the LPP to reshape our ecosystem and enhance our students' experience at our college. By articulating program goals and processes aimed at breaking down disciplinary silos and supporting faculty building inclusive learning environments, we aimed to align with Reyes's values and present a compelling vision intended to spark interest, initiate a productive dialogue, and secure her conceptual support for the LPP. This framing proved successful.

Our second interaction with Reyes was centered on securing her commitment to fund the LPP, necessitating a shift in our framing. As the chief academic officer and a financial steward of the institution, it was crucial to not only present the LPP as an innovative project but also to articulate how the resources we sought would further the college's overarching mission of enhancing access and supporting students in their educational journey. Therefore, in our initial discussions and the subsequent formal funding proposal, we connected the LPP with

the college's most current strategic plan, embedding it within the broader context of existing initiatives such as GP and the emerging diversity equity and inclusion initiative. This approach aimed to dispel any perceptions Reyes may have had regarding the LPP as an isolated or conflicting initiative. Instead, we underscored shared values and objectives, emphasizing its potential to complement ongoing endeavors and utilize existing resources. Our framing also anticipated concerns Reyes might have about program efficacy. Thus, we presented qualitative data from Miami University's Writing Fellows program (Glotfelter et al., 2020; Glotfelter et al., 2022) upon which the LPP is modeled, as well as research from George D. Kuh (2008) highlighting how faculty using high-impact practices, promoted and facilitated by the LPP, significantly benefit students from marginalized and underserved demographics. Ultimately, this framing was successful in gaining Reyes's support both conceptually and financially.

A second example is related to our framing efforts towards grant directors from colleges across the district. Framing to this new audience involved crafting narratives that underscored the ideological alignment between the LPP and each grant. This frame-bridging tactic was essential for navigating the strict constraints grants have on fund allocation. For example, a Title V government HSI-grant at one institution was committed specifically to promoting learning communities as means of promoting the success and retention of students. Understanding this priority, we highlighted the need for teams from nursing and dental hygiene, teams that taught learning communities, to have access to LPP programming and support. Our framing to this grant manager accounted for faculty development grounded in a WAC pedagogy of access with proven connections to supporting traditionally marginalized students, thereby directly advancing the grant's mandate. Emails and discussions also emphasized the LPP's ability to catalyze change through the support of faculty-led grassroots projects specifically tailored to overcome barriers to student success faculty identify within the learning communities they teach. Framed support of the LPP as a means to not only ensure the attainment of the grant's objectives but also sustain progress beyond the timeline of the grant through continued faculty engagement was key. This deliberate alignment underscored the efficacy of the LPP and its potential to operationalize meaningful change, rendering it a compelling candidate for the allocation of Title V funds, so compelling that grant funds were successfully distributed to support the LPP.

## **BROKERING**

The fourth rhetorical activity we discuss is *brokering*. Particularly germane to this conversation is Etienne Wenger's (1999) notion of boundary-brokering that he

introduces as part of Jean Lave and Wenger's (1991) early work on communities of practice. More specifically, as we have described above, WAC directors and practitioners must engage in allying, navigating, and framing activities across scales (department, college, district, external) where they inevitably interact with stakeholders from shared and varied communities of practice. As they do so, they must cross boundaries from one community of practice to another, brokering practices, norms, power relations, and values to potentially create "generative space(s) where differences across communities of practice can be bridged and new insights and unusual learning can arise" (Lai et al., 2019, pp. 1107–1108). Given that more often than not institutions "implement reforms [only to] find it difficult to sustain them in the face of competing priorities, changing demands, and teacher and administrator turnover" (Coburn, 2003, p. 6), we find boundary-brokering a useful metaphor to describe the kind of work that is required to scale up and sustain a WAC program. Below, we situate our own boundary brokering activities within an inward-outward continuum that accurately encompasses the wide and diverse boundaries WAC directors must cross for their WAC programs to endure.

Even as the LPP scaled up from one college to the district, we turned our attention to brokering efforts along two fronts. First, we recognized that to maintain the momentum that was created since the LPP's inception, we needed to continue to look inwardly in order for the LPP to effect the kind of change that Cynthia E. Coburn (2003) argues, moves well beyond surface structures or protocols and actually takes root in classroom practice. To do so, as the LPP's program director, Stacy Wilson, focused her efforts inwardly—at the faculty and college levels respectively. In terms of her work with faculty, this consisted of continuing the partnerships with LPP faculty participants that had been created over the last two years. At times, this meant that she worked throughout the academic year alongside individual or teams of faculty to implement the LPP-related project that had been proposed at the end of the LPP workshop. At other times, past LPP participants invited Wilson to run WAC-related workshops at their particular campus, hoping to introduce other faculty to the kinds of theory and pedagogical conversations that had been discussed during the two-week workshop. Still in other instances, Wilson was invited by faculty to collaborate on framing emails intended for deans and VPAs at their respective campuses meant to secure meeting times and/or support. In these inward-gazing endeavors that focused primarily at program-related activities, boundary-brokering emerges as a sustaining strategy, fostering continued collaboration and integration across institutional contexts. Wilson's multifaceted engagement with faculty and college administrators underscores the continuous inward gaze that WAC directors must maintain to foster sustained institutional change.

Beyond its internal focus, brokering as a rhetorical activity also has an outward facing gaze. Here once again, in order to both scale and sustain our LPP initiative, we focused, as Coburn (2003) also suggests, “on threading reform ideas throughout the district office, creating knowledgeable leaders who can influence policy, procedures, and values” (p. 7). Whereas Wilson’s positionality as LPP director facilitated her ability to engage in the aforementioned inwardly sustaining activities, Arreguin’s role as District Faculty Development Coordinator positioned him well to focus his sustaining efforts at primarily the district level. First, during our LPP’s inception year, Arreguin’s secured several one-on-one meetings with our provost to speak broadly about the state of faculty development in our district and when appropriate, continue to make a narrower case for the LPP. In many ways, these meetings reflected an early attempt at shifting the ownership over the LPP initiative from us to the district. In other instances, the outward sustaining work prompted Alex to invite district and college stakeholders to sensemaking sessions around faculty development. The primary goal here was to provide participants with an opportunity to share their goals for faculty development and to begin to develop a collective vision for it throughout our district. However, an important secondary goal was simply to build more coalitions and partnerships (allying) with other VPAAAs, CTL Directors, Student Affairs Directors, and other district personnel. Finally, another example of the externally sustaining work that Arreguin engaged in related to our district signature professional development events. We saw these events as ideal sites to introduce our entire faculty body to the kinds of scholarly and pedagogical values and frameworks that our LPP initiative hopes to engender. In light of this, Arreguin was able to leverage his position as district faculty development coordinator to invite Wardle, Dr. Linda Adler-Kassner, and Jessie Moore to serve as keynote speakers for some of these signature events over the course of several years. These writing studies, knowledge-transfer, WPA, and WAC studies scholars would go on to lay the foundation for the kind of topics and conversation that our LPP programming would offer at the district and college level respectively.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Although beyond the scope of this article, as part of our efforts to ensure both quality and sustainability as the LPP continues to expand across ten colleges, we have prioritized several district-wide strategies. First, from the program’s inception, we have envisioned the formation of a district-wide advisory group composed of faculty and administrators representing each campus. This group will serve as a collaborative body to guide program direction, ensure equitable representation, and maintain alignment within institutional goals across the district. Second, to promote continuity and build internal capacity, we are adopting a “train-the-trainer” model in which returning LPP fellows will assume facilitation and mentoring roles in future cohorts, creating a self-sustaining network of faculty leaders who can support WAC work within their own colleges. Finally, to assess the program impact and refine our approach, we recently completed a formal

## IMPLICATIONS

There are three implications that we believe are relevant for those community college faculty asking the question, “How do I start a WAC program at my college?” First, we believe that the heuristic above underscores the dynamic, temporal nature of beginning, developing, and sustaining a WAC program. On the one hand, perhaps clearest through our empirical analysis is the heuristic’s recursivity. In other words, though we presented the activities in a linear fashion, the reality is that the work of allying, navigating, framing, and brokering was never a “one and done.” For instance, while allying in the initiation phases may see WAC-agents assessing and building relationships with department chairs, allying efforts occurring while trying to scale up an initiative may be focused on building alliances with upper administration stakeholders, illustrating the breadth and scope of these activities. Likewise, WAC-directors may find themselves brokering connections with CTL directors one day and months later find themselves at the table with vice presidents of Academic Affairs or a vice-chancellor. On the other hand, perhaps less apparent but equally important is the pre-rhetorical nature of WAC program creation. Here, we would argue that although we situated the four activities above within the rhetorical situation of actively trying to begin a WAC program, it must be noted that we also engaged in these activities long before we ever decided to formally initiate a program. And though this pre-discursive nature is beyond the scope of this article, we believe it might provide a novel and fruitful research trajectory within future WAC scholarship.

Second, while we value and have been influenced by Cox et al.’s call for a whole systems approach to WAC work (2018), our discussion highlights the productive potential of applying an additional change and leadership theory lens to such efforts. Employing the former, we argue, would help us to more concretely recognize, categorize, and describe the activities that WAC practitioners can engage in to facilitate change. Alternatively, when we employ a leadership lens to WAC work, we bring to the surface the agentic potential that resides within those who are interested in initiating change in their institutions. And in doing so, we position ourselves to engage in the kind of transformative leadership that Maimon (2018) calls for; the kind where leaders are engaged in activities such as those we describe, activities that are ultimately “more focused on relationships, more open to multiple interpretations, more adaptable to new

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evaluation of the LPP in partnership with Jessie Moore of Elon University. This assessment has provided us with empirical data on faculty learning and cross-disciplinary collaboration, which will inform future refinements of the program and strengthen its foundation for long-term scalability and effectiveness.

situations, more flexible in adjusting to new environments, readier to multitask, and capable of paying attention both to the goals themselves and to the process for achieving those goals” (p. 5).

Finally, our journey to create a WAC program at a community college underscores the value of partnering with four-year institutions that have established WAC programs. As austerity measures continue to be taken across higher education, we argue that our four-year partners have perhaps a responsibility for using their resources to help support programs at two-year schools. In our case, Dr. Wardle’s willingness to share already-tested curriculum materials that we could localize for our context was instrumental in the beginning stages of our efforts. In addition, we were able to leverage assessment data provided by Wardle regarding Miami’s Fellows program with upper administrators to make a case for the efficacy of our proposed initiative. Finally, equally significant to our efforts was Wardle’s willingness to share the labor of Rena Perez, a doctoral student at Miami. In addition to collecting data related to her research agenda, Rena spent two weeks in Arizona serving as one of five facilitators during our 2023 summer LPP workshop, all of which was funded by Wardle’s institute. These represent just a few examples of the resources shared with us by Miami throughout our journey. And while our partnership has provided Miami a unique research site as well as valuable insights related to working with faculty with career and technical education and industry background respectively, it seems fitting that we end our article with Wardle’s simple email response to Arreguin’s request to begin a dialogue between our institutions:

Dear Alex, I would be thrilled to talk with you about this. It is always exciting when there is a kairotic opening for innovation. -Liz (E. Wardle, personal communication, March 22, 2021)

Three years later, with a funded Literacy Partners Program serving 10 colleges, it truly stands as a remarkable innovation.

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## WRITING WORLDVIEWS

Framed by the IWAC 2023 conference theme of WAC in transitional times, *Writing Worldviews* offers a diversity of perspectives on growth and change in the field amid social, political, educational, technological, and global pressures. Across histories and futures, equity and linguistic justice, and place-based program practices, the contributors to this edited collection take up questions defining WAC's next decade: What principles and practices do we carry forward? What do we leave behind? How do we prepare to meet future challenges and the opportunities they afford as WAC becomes increasingly translingual and transnational? In response, this volume offers both a map of the field and a call to shape it with intention as we participate in writing and rewriting existing worldviews through the languages we use, the methods we apply, the interpretive and discursive practices we employ, and the rhetorical positions we assume. As the title suggests, it is through scholarly conversations, like those begun at IWAC 2023 and extended here, that the values structuring our work become visible and contestable, providing WAC leaders with frameworks for decision-making, program design, and institutional action.

**Christopher Basgier** is Director of University Writing at Auburn University. His research spans WAC, writing centers, and generative AI pedagogy. **Terry Myers Zawacki** is Emerita Professor at George Mason University. Her publications include *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines* and edited collections on graduate writing support and WAC and second language writing. **Magnus Gustafsson** is Associate Professor of academic writing and communication in the disciplines at Chalmers University of Technology. His research focuses on peer learning and collaborative writing and the integration of language and content. **Sue Hum** is Professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She specializes in visual rhetoric, multimodal literacy, and writing-enriched pedagogy. **Maureen Mathison** is Associate Professor in writing and rhetoric studies at the University of Utah. Her research and teaching focus on rhetoric of science and WAC, with an emphasis on STEM fields.

### PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING

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