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Toward a Unified Writing Curriculum: Integrating WAC/WID with Freshman Composition

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THE RELATION BETWEEN WRITING across the curriculum and freshman composition is both complex and sometimes controversial. While a few institutions have eliminated composition requirements in favor of courses taught by faculty in all disciplines, most have retained freshman composition in some form.[1] All too often, though, the freshman writing program and the writing courses in the disciplines have operated with little or no coordination, as though they were taking place at different institutions. Sometimes WAC has been conceived as basically an advanced extension of composition, but as research has revealed the complexity of a student's inculcation into a particular disciplinary community—its forms of knowledge, its procedures of verification, and its generic conventions of discourse—the pendulum has shifted in the other direction, as advocates have begun describing "WAC-oriented composition" (Sidler) or "anchoring WAC by focusing on rhetorical analysis in first-year composition" (Merrill). My concern here is not primarily with the administrative challenges raised by the separation of freshman composition from WAC/WID, but rather with describing a possible curricular model for pedagogical integration.

What I want to suggest is that it's not so much that freshman composition needs to become more like WAC courses, or that WAC courses need to become more like freshman composition. Rather, instructors at each of these levels need to be aware of how a particular course fits in to the big picture of a student's

academic writing development. This essay will propose a "Unified Writing Curriculum," designed as a continuous scale of goals for student competencies, that progresses from the entering freshman right through the graduating senior. Thus I will address the crucial segue from freshman composition to discipline-specific writing courses from both sides of the divide:

1) For freshman writing programs: How can composition instructors best prepare students for that transition?
2) For WAC faculty: All discipline-specific writing courses cannot be taught on the same level, and so a hierarchy of expectations must be described, regarding student preparation in critical thinking, reading, writing, and research. Such a scale will provide guidance for faculty in the disciplines as they produce appropriate assignments for students with various levels of preparation and experience in writing in the discipline.

In a unified writing curriculum, every instructor at every level—from "basic writing" developmental courses to freshman composition to senior seminars that function as capstone writing courses in a particular discipline—would have a clear idea of the writing competencies and outcomes that should be set as a goal for the course. The result, for the student, should be a more seamless sequence of writing instruction, not merely a collection of random courses in which some writing is assigned.

I. Distinguishing Between Advanced, Intermediate, and Introductory Writing Intensive Courses

The "Across" in "Writing Across the Curriculum" does not merely signify that the doing of writing and the teaching of writing are going on everywhere in the university, in every department—although that's part of it. The further implication is that writing instruction should be linked and coordinated across the campus. If an institution develops a common approach, then instructors in various departments and at various levels will be on the same page in terms of expectations of student writing and standards for evaluating it. WAC must be concerned not only with the horizontal breadth of writing instruction (the fact that it's happening simultaneously in the social sciences, in the humanities, and in the natural sciences), but also with the vertical integration of writing instruction at various levels and at various times throughout the whole period of a student's undergraduate career.

By its nature, a program that depends on Writing in the Disciplines, taught by faculty attached to every academic department in the university, will be somewhat decentralized. It is neither possible nor desirable to impose a rigid, centrally-controlled template on the far-flung diversity of courses offered in so many different subjects in such varied modes by so many idiosyncratic instructors. There are many roads by which a good teacher can guide students to the same destination. What is necessary, however, is to define that destination as specifically as possible, so that both students and instructors at every level will be aware of the expectations and goals in a given course in terms of student writing, reading, research, and critical thinking.

Our WAC approach at Rutgers-Newark is really a hybrid of two important models for program structure. This is partly an accident. The original plan was to require two "writing intensive" courses for each student within the department of the major, which would have been a pure version of a "Writing in the Disciplines" program, whereas the final version, which envisions that many students will get their second writing intensive course from a general education requirement or from an elective outside their major, invokes elements of a classic "Writing Across the Curriculum" approach. The two terms are sometimes used interchangeably or linked acronymically (WAC/WID), but Jonathan Monroe argues that they're really quite different animals: "While WAC emphasizes the commonality, portability, and communicability of writing practices, WID emphasizes disciplinary differences, diversity, and heterogeneity" (2). WAC, that is, believes that it is teaching transferable writing skills, and aims for a general academic analytical language, while WID suggests that there is no such thing as a single scholarly language, only the various specific languages indigenous to particular disciplinary communities.

Our current criteria make no distinctions between levels of post-freshman courses—they're all just "writing intensive"—but all discipline-specific writing courses are not created equal. The best place to begin the process of building a unified discipline-specific writing curriculum is at the top, with a definition of what is expected from graduating majors in a particular field. Each department needs to articulate a clear idea of the ultimate goal of its undergraduate writing curriculum, a goal that will vary widely since each will be making different kinds of writing demands upon its students depending on the nature of the discipline.

**Key Questions for Reviews of
Writing Curriculum in All Disciplines**

Articulating Goals: What, exactly, should our graduating majors be able to do, in terms of reading, writing, critical thinking, and research?

Assessment: Does our current program of courses that assign writing take our students progressively from where we can expect them to be after freshman composition to where we need them to be by graduation?

Curriculum Development: If assessment revealed any gaps in our writing offerings, what adjustments do we need to make to departmental curricular requirements or particular course designs?

Support: When students need extra help to meet our goals for reading, writing, critical thinking, and research, what is our department-specific plan for getting them extra help? (This might include referring students to WAC tutoring or WAC workshops, developing discipline-specific WAC workshops, embedding tutors in specific courses, etc. The key is to front-load support by making referrals early in the semester on the basis of, for example, a first-week diagnostic essay.)

Professional Development: What does our department faculty need to learn to make us comfortable with the pedagogical challenges of writing instruction, and what is the most effective way to learn it? (This might include encouraging faculty to attend colloquia sponsored by the WAC Program, or developing a department-specific training program.)

One approach to a WAC requirement is to designate a "capstone" course—often a majors-only advanced "Senior Seminar" or an individualized "Senior Project"—as writing intensive. Such advanced courses, in which all the students have significant background in the discipline, can provide opportunities for critical reading and writing at the highest level reasonably required of undergraduates. Different departments structure these courses in different ways, but I think that it is safe to say that most such courses incorporate some variation on the principles described in "Advanced Level Discipline-Specific Writing Course" (see Part II below).

If such a high-level discipline-specific writing course were to become a standard practice across the campus, then it would become possible to speak of a "writing capstone course" as the highest level of WAC instruction—and of undergraduate student writing achievement. Such decisions should not be imposed from the outside, but must be made internally, since the designation of final expectations for graduating majors is very near the heart of a department's undergraduate curriculum and even its professional identity. But a general model, which can be adapted for local circumstances, has the advantage of offering clear guidelines for instructors. A unified writing curriculum calls upon all departments to expect and to demand an ambitious—but attainable—level of writing proficiency from their graduating majors.

Once this final standard has been established, everything in the undergraduate writing curriculum can be calibrated backward from there. A description of an undergraduate "writing capstone" course in the major discipline can be used as a basis for describing the goals and expectations of all courses that involve writing instruction across the curriculum, at all levels. A clear definition of what students should be able to do by their last undergraduate semester will make it possible to construct a better paradigm for all earlier writing courses. Everything from developmental writing through freshman composition through earlier levels of discipline-specific writing courses can be described as variations on these final goals, a set of graduated steps designed to allow students to progress incrementally toward where they need to end up.

If the Advanced course describes the final destination for an undergraduate writer, the Intermediate discipline-specific writing course marks a crucial transition in the life of a student writer. It is at this level that students may first begin to think of themselves as members, however provisional, of a particular disciplinary discourse community. These courses are intended primarily for majors in the field, or at least for students with more than a passing interest in the subject matter. The demands, in terms of content, may be accelerated, but the key change is that students are now being asked to begin to write in an approximation of the way that real biologists or sociologists or historians do. The "approximation" is critical: these are students who are only beginning an initiation into the community, and cannot be expected to write fully professional-level disciplinary documents as yet, although the progression toward that goal is beginning in earnest. Our Rutgers English Department, for example, offers a course called "Foundations of Literary Study" that is required of all English majors, who are supposed to take it relatively early in their college careers. It provides a systematic introduction to the basic concepts and tools that they're going to need

as English majors—a level of detail that wouldn't be appropriate for a course which included a lot of non-majors. A lot of departments have similar courses, many of which feature extensive writing, and in general I believe they could be said to approximate the pedagogical principles described in "Intermediate Level Discipline-Specific Course" (see Part II).

All courses offer a process of initiation into a particular disciplinary community, but for many students in introductory-level courses, they're only going to be visitors, not permanent members of that community. At my institution, and I suspect at many, the most frequent type of course to be designated as "writing intensive" is a sophomore-level course that fulfills a general education requirement: students typically take this type of course immediately after completing freshman composition, and so it offers the first opportunity to transfer their newly-developed critical reading and writing skills. (See "Introductory Level Discipline-Specific Course" in Part II.) It is at this introductory level that the continuity between freshman composition and WAC/WID either does or does not mesh; this is the crucial segue in the whole unified writing curriculum. Departments in the disciplines, calibrating downward from the capstone course, offer this level of discipline-specific writing instruction for the general student population, who are emerging from the writing program courses, which have been calibrated upward from developmental writing through freshman composition. In an introductory discipline-specific writing course, instructors ought to be able to assume a certain level of competence, yes, and a certain level of familiarity with using analytical style and making interpretive arguments. But the discipline-specific writing teacher at the introductory level has to be willing to go back to composition-level skills, on occasion, for review, just as intermediate-level instructors need to spend some class time going back over introductory-level skills, and advanced-level instructors need to refresh intermediate-level expectations.

These distinctions between levels of discipline-specific writing courses already exist in practice, though they are not usually recognized or distinguished in most versions of writing intensive criteria. Students must be invited into research communities gradually, in a way that makes clear to them at every step that knowledge is produced by groupings of people, who interact principally by means of texts. John Swales suggests that a discourse community has six defining features: "common goals, participatory mechanisms, community specific genres, a highly specialized terminology, and a high general level of expertise" (29). Even introductory-level students are not just taking a course; they are visiting a community, one which they

may wish later to join as a full member. A unified writing curriculum can help to provide a road-map for the new kids in town.

II. Model of a Unified Writing Curriculum: Competencies in Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking, and Research from Freshman Composition through Three Levels of Discipline-Specific Writing Courses

In April 2000, the Council of Writing Program Administrators adopted an "Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition," which attempted to articulate "the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes sought by first-year composition programs." In setting goals for "rhetorical knowledge," "critical thinking, reading, and writing," "processes," and "knowledge of conventions," the statement follows a two-part formula: first, "by the end of first year composition students should ..." and then, "faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn ..." The announced rationale for this approach was this:

> As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, students' abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge.

Freshman level writing is conceived here as relatively unitary, standardizable; the statement seeks what student writing should have in "common" at the end of first-year composition. Upper-level writing, by contrast, is seen as more divergent, multiplicitous, and more difficult to describe. In most institutions, the freshman program is taught by a fairly coherent group of instructors, under a single administrative structure, as opposed to the decentralized nature of the WAC experience. At the freshman level, the job of the writing instructor would seem to be not so much to induct student writers into a specific disciplinary community as to invite them to become part of a more general academic community.

The upper levels of the following model curriculum, therefore, have been described in fairly general terms; as part of its internal program review of their writing curriculum, each department would need to compose a discipline-specific version of these standards, substituting its own language for the generic descriptions. This process of articulation is perhaps the most important aspect of the curriculum development process: once departments have decided *what* they want their students to be able to do, all the rest becomes a matter of *how*.[2]

Model Curriculum – Advanced Level

Advanced Level Discipline-Specific Writing Course
Any department's highest-level undergraduate writing course: senior seminars, honors seminars, senior projects, advanced independent study or internships

Population
All students have significant familiarity with the discipline; they are probably seniors or at least juniors majoring in the department.

General Goals
This is the highest level of writing achievement at the undergraduate level.

Critical Thinking: Awareness of the making of knowledge
Ability to make specialized distinctions within key concepts, and to identify ongoing issues/areas of tension within the discipline.

Reading: Intermediate discipline-specific critical reading skills
Students should be able to read scholarly review articles describing the state of knowledge in the field, as well as articles distilling specialized knowledge for a general audience.

Writing: Ability to produce non-technical but discipline-informed mixed-mode documents
Ability to make an informed argument about current issues in the field using appropriate analytical language that incorporates some specialized terminology along with the student's own voice.

Research: Becoming familiar with the current state of knowledge on a particular topic
With the guidance of the instructor and the librarian, students should be able to describe what is known, what is not known, and what is in dispute about a particular assigned topic.

Model Curriculum – Intermediate Level

Intermediate Level Discipline-Specific Writing Course
Courses intended primarily for majors, but not "capstone"

Population
Generally these will be students who are either already majors or strongly considering majoring in a subject area, but it is a course that they will be taking relatively early in their college careers.

General Goals

Students need to be initiated into the discipline; the presumption is that they will be staying awhile, perhaps the rest of their lives. Foundational ideas and professional procedures of the discipline.

Critical Thinking: Absorbing knowledge and making it one's own
Students need to actively master the material of the course, and be able to put it together in different formats, not just recite memorized facts on exams.

Reading: Elementary discipline-specific critical reading skills
Students must demonstrate ability to understand key basic concepts of a field, and manipulate them in different intellectual contexts.

Writing: Ability to express and explore key basic concepts of field
Students must use their own words, appropriate analytical language, and carefully defined technical terms to write about their understanding of course material.

Research: Tracing knowledge back to original sources.
Students should get beyond the textbook presentation of the field and demonstrate a familiarity with some of the key historical sources upon which modern distillations of specialized knowledge are based.

Model Curriculum – Introductory Level

Introductory Level Discipline-Specific Writing Course
Courses with minimal prerequisites and many non-majors registered.

Population
Generally these will be students without an extensive background in the field. Some may be potential future majors, but most will only be looking for a one-semester visit to the disciplinary community. One should generally assume that they have passed freshman composition, but no more—and even then one needs to keep an eye open for students who need additional support services.

General Goals
Build on, reenforce, and extend the skills gained in freshman composition, flavoring its generalized analytical language extensively with the content and terminology of a particular academic discipline.

Critical Thinking: Accommodating complexity and ambiguity
Students need to develop the ability to hold complex or ambiguous ideas in the mind long enough to explore their ramifications in a nuanced way, without prematurely over-simplifying them.

Reading: Intermediate "culturally-aware citizen" lifetime critical reading skills
Students can demonstrate through close textual readings an awareness of ambiguous levels of meaning in language; can articulate a critique of a current movie or book more sophisticated than "liked it"/"hated it"; can profitably read representative genres from the disciplines, or popular approximations of them.

Writing: Ability to produce essays that analyze complex texts, and defend a student's own interpretation of ambiguous layers of meaning
Students should develop the ability to articulate how various sources disagree with, partially agree with, build upon, take off from, re-apply the insights from other sources, and to do the same in their own writing. Students may be writing about expository prose from any field, but they will always be supporting their own interpretive points with appropriate evidence.

Research: Synthesizing multiple voices
Students should be able to find and apply appropriate sources to supplement their assigned readings, and to gain a deeper understanding of their assigned subject matter using the insights of various disciplinary communities. Students must consider and interact with alternate interpretations of their chosen texts, or with sources that provide historical or other context.

Model Curriculum – Freshman Writing

Freshman Writing

Population
Students who have successfully completed the first level of freshman writing—either second-semester freshmen, or students who have previously completed one or more courses in developmental writing before taking freshman composition.

General Goals
Familiarize students with variations in discipline-specific writing conventions, and equip them with tools to adjust to the rhetorical demands they will face in upper-level writing courses.

Critical thinking: actively contributing to the process of making knowledge
Students should strive to interact with their sources and their instructor in a way that demonstrates provisional membership in the disciplinary community, and an attempt to contribute, at however minimal a level, something valuable to current debates and issues within the field.

Reading: Advanced discipline-specific critical reading skills
Students must be able to read, analyze, understand, and respond in writing to complex, professional-level documents in their chosen field of study. At this level the instructor should feel free to assign, for example, current articles from specialized peer-reviewed journals, in the expectation that, with the aid of the instructor's guidance in class and in office hours, these graduating seniors will be able to gain a reasonable comfort with and understanding of this level of discourse.

Writing: Ability to produce near-professional quality documents in discipline-specific genres using appropriate specialized language and formats
It is, of course, only the very rare undergraduate senior thesis that is readily "publishable" as is, but that is the ideal toward which we should strive. At minimum, a graduating senior should be familiar with the types of writing customarily produced by professionals in the field, and be able to produce something that at least approximates the diction, the conventions, the structures, and the ways of thinking that are endemic to the discipline.

Research: Ability to conceive, propose, carry-out, and write a specific self-defined research project within the context of the course and the standards and procedures of the particular disciplinary field.
Students are encouraged to pursue their own intellectual interests, within the purview of the particular course. The canned "writing assignment" that might be necessary at earlier levels should be avoided here. Students are now assumed to be "self-starters," having internalized the ways of thinking and codes of behavior expected of professionals in the field, and within the limits of available time (one semester, or sometimes two), they propose a topic or set of experiments or method of inquiry, which is then approved by the instructor, and carried out by the student under the instructor's supervision.

III. Before the Segue: Models for WAC-Preparatory Freshman Composition

Under a unified writing curriculum, WAC and the freshman composition sequence are intimately intertwined. WAC proponents are constantly and justifiably re-asserting the principle that writing instruction is not only the responsibility of the writing program or the English department. It is essential that faculty in all disciplines let go of that displacement of responsibility, and take up full ownership of their charge as writing instructors in the disciplines: yes, teaching writing is your job, too, and it is essential that all departments have a carefully articulated writing curriculum.

Salutary as that reminder of shared responsibility may be to the overall purposes of WAC, it remains equally inarguable that the composition sequence forms the indispensable foundation for a student's success in upper-level writing courses. Linda H. Peterson describes the central role of freshman composition in the student's university writing experience:

> The practical reality, at many institutions, is that freshman English is the one required course in writing, one that all students hold in common. What freshman English requires often defines for students what "writing" is. If freshman English is a course that asks students to read literary texts and write about them, then it represents "writing" as training in literary criticism. If freshman English instead asks students to read and write contemporary prose forms (the autobiographical essay, the character sketch, the cultural critique, and so on), then it provides an introduction to non-fiction writing. If, however, freshman English asks students to read and write various academic genres, then it may provide a foundation for writing in the disciplines. (43)

Peterson here briefly articulates three models of freshman composition that are widely practiced today, which may be designated in shorthand as: the introduction to literature model, the rhetorical forms model, and the WAC-preparatory model. Obviously the third approach will be my primary focus here, but it is worthwhile to note that these are not mutually exclusive forms. In fact, some approaches to WAC-oriented composition stress rhetorical analysis and generic competency, while the literature-based model could be conceived as part of a discipline-specific approach—the discipline in question being, of course, literary criticism.

If writing intensive courses need to be defined from the top downward, with the advanced course serving as the paradigm of which the intermediate and introductory courses are variations, the freshman writing program has to work from the bottom up, taking students from where they are as they enter college from their different backgrounds, with uneven levels of academic preparation and diverse language backgrounds. All students, regardless of their eventual major, need to reach, by the end of the second composition sequence, a relatively standardized level of achievement, what has been called "generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting other's opinions, and learning to write with authority" (MacDonald 187).

The goal, then, is to define a WAC-preparatory version of freshman composition. This involves accepting rather than contesting, for the most part, "the 'service course' concept of first-year composition—the idea that the course, in part, helps to prepare students for the writing assignments they will later receive in other academic disciplines" (Sutton 46).[3] A further assumption would be that such upper-level WAC/WID courses already exist at a particular institution. From the perspective of the composition instructor, the primary goal then becomes to "prepare the ground for acquisition of disciplinary style—which typically takes place gradually throughout the period of undergraduate and graduate study" (Linton, Madigan, & Johnson 64). How can this "preparation" be conceived?

A good place to start is with Susan Peck MacDonald's four stages describing a student writer's journey from outsider to full membership in a disciplinary discourse community:

1. Nonacademic writing
2. Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting others' opinions, and learning how to write with authority
3. Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge
4. Expert, insider prose (187).

At many institutions, the first semester of freshman composition is typically concerned with what either MacDonald's stage 1 or Peterson's "contemporary prose forms," or possibly with MacDonald's stage 2, "generalized academic writing." Bruce Sutton asks the question "does such a thing as 'generalized academic

discourse' exist?" He concludes that it does, and argues that it is not incompatible with an insistence on "disciplinarity" (49). The second semester of freshman composition (for those institutions that require it) is the crucial transition point for students' preparedness for success in academic writing. From here, they need to be able to move ahead smoothly into introductory level discipline-specific writing courses. And yet it seems almost impossible that the transition will be smooth: so much knowledge, both explicit and tacit, will need to be absorbed before they can even begin.[4] There are two basic strategies for that necessary preparation, for defining a composition course as WAC-preparatory: they might be called the "exemplary discipline" model and the "multi-disciplinary" model.

The exemplary discipline model (sometimes called "freshman seminars") begins with the supposition that all writing is local, situated in a particular rhetorical context, and, in academia, within a disciplinary discourse community. To pretend otherwise, to suggest that students can acquire a generalized academic language or a common linguistic competency, is, according to this view, untenable, even at the introductory level. Students thus need to pick a discipline, and stick with it for at least a semester, becoming a beginning apprentice member of that community. Thus the freshman level course, rather than remaining at MacDonald's stage 2, seeks to move toward stage 3, "novice approximations of disciplinary genres." Jonathan Monroe argues that "a first-year writing requirement embedded in the disciplines signals that all writing takes place in particular contexts, for particular purposes and audiences" (5).

The same rationale that would justify freshman seminars could also be used in partial defense of the introduction to literature model, which has been criticized as too narrow, a by-product, perhaps, of composition being housed in the English Department. But if students at the freshman writing level need to be introduced to the specific language of a discipline, then that discipline might just as well be literary criticism as anything else, especially if there are a number of other choices. Many second-semester composition courses also have a research component: students have to be introduced to the practice of writing from multiple sources that will be a key skill in their upper-level courses. Assignments that require students to seek out sources which supplement their experience of the literature by shedding light on historical context can lend a multi-disciplinary flavor.

The multi-disciplinary model of second-semester WAC-preparatory composition would call for extensive analytical writing based on texts drawn from several academic disciplines. By the end of the course students should be able to artic-

ulate the differences between the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences—what counts as knowledge in each, how each structures its written communications, what it means to be a member of a disciplinary community. Instructors could choose to structure the course around a particular theme as seen by various disciplines (e.g., dreams as interpreted by psychologists, by literary critics, by neurologists), or they might present a series of discrete units, each of which would introduce students to texts exhibiting common traits of writing in a particular field, and addressing issues important to members of that disciplinary community.

If freshman composition were a vacation to Europe, the exemplary discipline model might spend all its time in Spain, aiming at a feeling of immersion and belonging, if only for a short visit, while the multi-disciplinary model would attempt something more like a grand tour of many nations, offering only a tantalizing glimpse of each, while hoping to whet students' appetites for a more in-depth visit at a later time. The hope, of course, is that this would not turn into an "If it's Tuesday, this must be Belgium" confusion of genres, but rather a systematic effort to help students recognize the distinguishing features of various discipline-specific rhetorical forms. One approach would be to ask colleagues in the disciplines for examples of good writing in their fields and structure the semester around a rhetorical analysis/imitation of them (see Peterson, Merrill).

Whatever the chosen approach, the freshman writing program needs to see its mission as enabling students, at the end of the composition sequence, to make as smooth a transition as possible to the demands of disciplinary-specific writing at the introductory level. But just as crucially, discipline-oriented faculty must calibrate their writing assignments to the abilities of the post-composition student. This implies a mutual, two-way responsibility: the freshman writing program needs to ascertain exactly what kinds of writing will be assigned in these introductory disciplinary courses, while the instructors in these courses will need to be versed in what they can reasonably expect from students emerging from the composition sequence. The Unified Writing Curriculum thus can serve as a common point of reference for faculty at all levels, from developmental writing faculty teaching "basic writing" through freshman composition specialists, through faculty in the disciplines teaching specialized courses that are part of their department's writing curriculum at all levels up through the capstone course.

The process of constructing a unified writing curriculum in a university needs to proceed from both ends, both upwards and downwards at the same time. I have discussed the responsibilities of individual departments to articulate their writing goals

for their graduating majors, with introductory and intermediate courses in the disciplines building on what was accomplished in freshman composition, and creating a terraced structure of their own: sophomore-level writing courses can introduce students to the practices and conventions of a particular disciplinary community at a fairly elementary level, but still much more specifically than is possible in freshman composition; intermediate courses for majors can encourage students to deepen their understanding of what it means to function as an effective participant in an ongoing disciplinary conversation, while advanced "capstone" courses (such as senior seminars) present opportunities for students to become active contributors to the making of knowledge, operating now at a near-professional level.

Needless to say, this portrait of a unified writing curriculum is not an accurate description of the typical pedagogical situation at most institutions—in fact, it may not describe any existent curriculum. Traditional frictions continue to apply: faculty in the disciplines guard against what they view as encroachment by the composition specialists who may try to export their humanities-based notion of academic writing to places where it doesn't belong,[5] while the compositionists, for their part, resent the implication that they are only teaching a "service course" to prepare students for disciplinary writing, with some arguing very strongly for a more distinct and central role for the freshman writing course. (66) The entire process of constructing a Unified Writing Curriculum depends on the articulation, in conference rooms across the campus, of an internal writing curriculum for each department—and this depends on the recognition that a department needs to think of itself as actually having a writing curriculum. In such discussions, the segue with freshman composition is seldom directly thematized as a conscious concern. The goal of a unified writing curriculum may perhaps be useful principally as an ideal toward which we can aspire. But it is the absence of such an integrated progression of writing instruction that makes the development of many students' writing ability a chancy proposition. My purpose here has been to articulate what such a unified writing curriculum—or at least one model of it—might look like.

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Notes

1. David W. Chapman traces the development of this trend from the 1980s through the 1990s, including the rise of the "freshman seminar" (54-56), and argues that freshman composition instruction remains necessary because it provides an indispensable introduction to the basics of academic discourse (57).

2. The model of the Unified Writing Curriculum included in Part II of this essay was originally developed as part of my review of our WAC program at Rutgers-Newark. That version includes specific goals for several additional levels not included here: two levels of developmental writing, and a first level of freshman composition. The full scale may be found at http://wac.newark.rutgers.edu/Administrators/Report_WAC_at_R-N.htm#Unified.

   The developmental writing and freshman composition levels of the unified writing curriculum were later elaborated, revised, and adopted by an English Curriculum Review committee and are now being implemented in the Rutgers-Newark Writing Program. That version may be found at http://english.newark.rutgers.edu/01_undergrad_09_writing_program_handbook.htm#COURSE_DESCRIPTIONS.

   I have retained for purposes of this essay the original "Freshman Writing II" language from the WAC report, just slightly revised, because it is both more compact and more clearly calibrated to show the differences from the various discipline-specific levels.

3. Sutton at least partially defends the "service course" concept against those (Sutton cites Kurt Spellmeyer, among others) who argue that a focus on disciplinary conventions will obscure a student's "authentic voice." Sutton argues persuasively that this is a false dichotomy

4. For a summary of research on the "hidden curriculum" or "tacit knowledge" see section IV of Hall (2005).

5. See the opening pages of Waldo for a discussion of how such initiatives sometimes appear to discipline-based faculty.

6. See Sutton (52-54) for a spirited refutation of Kurt Spellmeyer's argument that "discipline-specific writing instruction encourages both conformity and submission."

WAC Websites as Knowledge Webs

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BOOKS FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING Writing Across the Curriculum such as McLeod and Soven's *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs,* Fulwiler and Young's *Programs that Work,* and McLeod et al.'s *WAC for the New Millennium* provide helpful advice for starting a WAC initiative: designing workshops, organizing a faculty writing committee, creating a newsletter, planning a retreat, etc. This advice, however, doesn't include creating a website as an important first step in developing a WAC program. The creation of a website is often an afterthought for those building WAC programs—something to get to after the program is off the ground. In this essay, I argue that creating an online presence for WAC is an important initial step, as crucial as designing workshops, organizing a campus writing committee, or creating a newsletter. As Sarah Kimball argues in her essay "WAC on the Web," "decisions involved in designing and revising a website are rhetorical" (62). The goal of this essay is to provide not technical advice but a rhetorical framework for building a WAC website, with reflections on my experiences creating a WAC website and my observations about model websites from three WAC programs that I looked to for inspiration in designing a site: Writing Across the Curriculum at George Mason University, the University of Missouri at Columbia Campus Writing Program, and the North Carolina State University Campus Writing and Speaking Program. Using these models, I argue that WAC websites should be thought of as much more than tools for delivering information. WAC websites can be used to persuade, connect, and support students and faculty to create what distance learning theorist Chris Dede terms a "knowledge web": a

socially constructed clearinghouse of information connected by hyperlinks in an ever-expanding web. I end the essay with my vision of the future of WAC online and use the example of the *WAC Clearinghouse* to argue that a website should be thought of not as a supplement to a WAC program but as the center of the WAC "knowledge web."

In the fall of 2003, I was hired to start a WAC program at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). Along with the usual first steps that are familiar in the literature on starting WAC—a series of workshops, a newsletter, meeting with departments to talk about writing—I decided that I wanted to build an online presence as quickly as possible. I felt a website would be a nice complement to the newsletter I was planning to circulate and the advertising I was going to do for my first workshops. When I created the website, my primary purpose was informative: I wanted to have a place online where faculty could get easy access to a list of upcoming events and basic information about the WAC program. I created a brief mission statement, an explanation of the WAC movement, and a "News and Events" section. In my first semester as a WAC director, I was thinking of the rhetorical purposes of the site in extremely limited terms.

As useful as a website is for disseminating information, I soon began to see it as much more than a space to achieve informative aims. A website can also persuade, and I found that much of what I was posting online as I expanded the site was meant not to inform but to persuade both faculty and administrators. The simplest example of this is a quote from Barbara Walvoord that is the first piece of text on the main frame of the home page of the website: "Writing is so complex an activity, so closely tied to a person's intellectual development, that it must be nurtured and practiced over all the years of a student's schooling and in every curricular area." The home page begins with persuasion, then, and this includes visual persuasion: just above the Walvoord quote is a series of pictures of diverse faculty attending a WAC workshop (see Figure 1). A more extensive kind of persuasion happened when the Faculty Senate Writing Committee created a position statement on class size. I added a "position statements" link to the home page and posted the Writing Committee's position statement along with links to other position statements by NCTE and CCCC, and I often refer to this site when I make arguments for smaller class sizes or a focus on teaching writing as a process. Persuasion is also the goal when I post links to WAC research. On the website there's information from our WAC program's survey of faculty attitudes toward writing and a pilot study of alumni writing, both of which make arguments for the importance of teaching writing in every discipline.
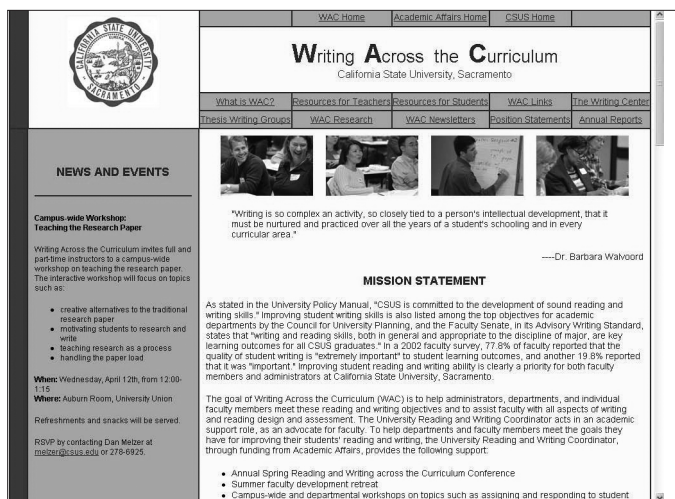
Figure 1: California State University, Sacramento Writing Across the Curriculum Home Page
www.csus.edu/wac

Persuasion is a primary aim of the three WAC program websites I used as models. The websites for both the North Carolina State University Campus Writing and Speaking Program and Writing Across the Curriculum at George Mason contain links to the *U.S. News and World Report's* issue ranking colleges, which honored both colleges for their writing in the disciplines programs. Of course, sometimes informing is also persuading: by including news and events, links to resources for students and faculty, WAC newsletters, position statements, and annual reports on the CSUS WAC home page, I hope that I am persuading faculty and administrators that I've created an extensive WAC program. North Carolina State's Writing and Speaking Program's website certainly would persuade any audience that they have an impressive breadth of programs and resources: there are links from the home page to workshops, grants, seminars, resources, outcomes, professional activities, and the advisory board. Even the list of advisory board members is persuasive, with fifteen members from across disciplines listed (see Figure 2). In an educational climate where many WAC programs struggle to get funding and faculty support, persuasion is an important aim of a WAC website, and creating an online presence could help persuade faculty and administrators that your program is extensive and valuable.

In his essay "Negative Spaces: From Production to Connection in Composition," Johndan Johnson-Eilola encourages us to think of hypertext in

terms of connections and relationships. He argues that building connections and relationships is part of the creative power of the hyperlink. Focusing on the connective power of the CSUS WAC website was another way I moved beyond the merely informative function. The links that I chose to include at the top of the website, for example, signify WAC's connection and relationship to other academic programs. There's a link to Academic Affairs, which sponsors our WAC program, and a link to the Writing Center, which I often collaborate with. The WAC website's URL links me closely to CSUS itself: you simply add "wac" to the CSUS root to get to the site. I am also linked to the institution through my connection from the CSUS home page. By clicking on the "faculty and staff" button from the CSUS home page, the link to WAC can be found under the "Professional Development" heading. Being just two links away from the CSUS home page reinforces the institutional support of the WAC program and is a kind of argument for its legitimacy. In addition to WAC connecting to other programs, sometimes other programs and faculty members link to WAC. For example, Graduate Studies includes a link on their website to WAC's thesis writing workshops and peer response group programs, and the library links to WAC from their preventing plagiarism website. Because the WAC website includes resources for students, some instructors include a link to it on their syllabus. This kind of linking reinforces the spirit of collaboration and connection

Figure 2: North Carolina State University Campus Writing and Speaking Program Board
www2.chass.ncsu.edu/CWSP/header/board_info.html

that WAC programs stress and provides concrete examples to administrators that the WAC program is collegial and works with other campus programs and faculty across disciplines.

This connection goes beyond just links, however. In WAC workshops, retreats, and conferences, faculty often share favorite writing assignments, grading rubrics, peer response prompts, etc. The website allows me to connect to these faculty-generated materials with one click of a hyperlink. In the collection of resources for students and faculty, there is material created by the WAC program as well as material generated by faculty. For example, a writing guide created by the philosophy department which is now linked to the WAC student resources page, a guide to peer response created by a faculty member from geology and the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, and advice for thesis writers from a Public Policy and Administration instructor. Currently my WAC student assistants are working on creating writing guides for different disciplines in collaboration with the professors from the disciplines, an idea I borrowed from the George Mason WAC program. WAC at George Mason uses the connective power of hyperlinks to create writing guides for a variety of disciplines: biology, history, psychology, nursing, etc. Each site is faculty-driven. The biology site, for example, has a link to "Professors' perspectives on student writing." This link contains tips from the professors, example
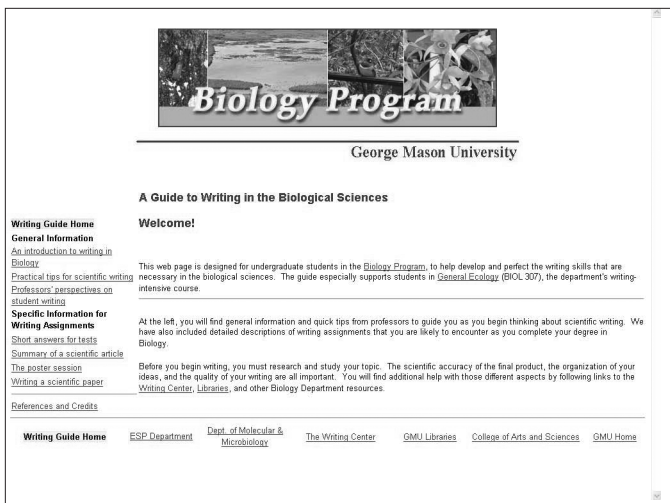

Figure 3: George Mason's Guide to Writing in the Biological Sciences
http://classweb.gmu.edu/biologyresources/writingguide/index.htm

assignments, and even entire course descriptions (see Figure 3). WAC websites allow programs to make connections to professors across disciplines in ways that we are just beginning to take advantage of in the WAC movement.

Connection is also a theme of the home page of the University of Missouri at Columbia Campus Writing Program. From the list of links at the top of the page instructors can learn more about Writing-Intensive courses, tutoring, and news and events. The left-hand frame has links to the Writing Program faculty and staff. The "CWP Info" link has further links to other WAC programs and campus programs that have a relationship with the CWP, such as the English Department, the Teaching and Learning Council, and General Education (see Figure 4). The CWP website is also linked closely to the University of Missouri itself: it is only a few links away from the University's home page.

A unique feature of a website published on the Internet is how quickly it can connect to a national and even international audience: I connected the CSUS WAC website to a broader audience beyond campus by including it in the *WAC Clearinghouse's* list of links to programs as well as the National Network of Writing Across the Curriculum's list of programs and their websites. You can also find my WAC program through a Google search using key terms like "writing across the curriculum," and over time it has joined a kind of WAC web ring of programs: one of the websites I am using as a model, the University of Missouri at Columbia Campus Writing Program, has a link to the CSUS WAC website as well as the other websites I am using as models in this essay. Although it's difficult to gauge just how often audiences beyond campus are visiting the CSUS WAC website, a number of institutions, from Alaska to New York, have
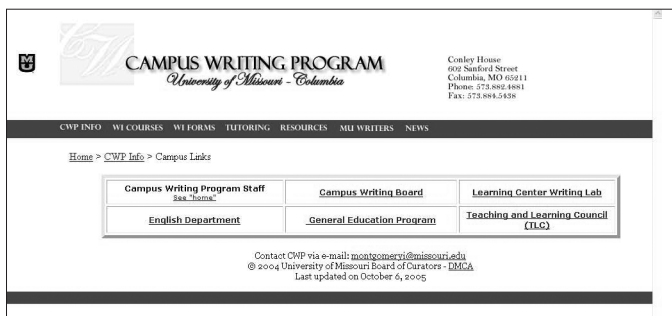

Figure 4: University of Missouri Campus Writing Program Campus Links
http://cwp.missouri.edu/cwpinfo/campuslinks.htm

requested consultations after coming across the website, and I've received emails from teachers all over the United States asking if they could draw from a survey I posted online or use one of the handouts on the website in their own WAC workshop. Hyperlinks provide a unique opportunity to connect a WAC program to other academic units, faculty from across disciplines, and an audience beyond the campus. This idea of ever-expanding resources and information, connected by hyperlinks both within campus and beyond, leads me to my discussion of WAC websites as knowledge webs.

Chris Dede's notion of knowledge webs, as applied to distance learning, describes the phenomenon of Internet resources linking through search engines, hyperlinks, web rings, etc. to form multiple layers of information. Since each link leads to further links, there's a sense of an ever-expanding web of knowledge. This web of knowledge is a socially constructed series of relationships and connections, with dispersed but like-minded members of a discourse community connected through the linking powers of websites. The Writing Across the Curriculum website that most closely resembles Dede's definition of a knowledge web is the *WAC Clearinghouse* at http://wac.colostate.edu. I will focus on the *Clearinghouse* website to explore what I think will be the future of WAC websites as knowledge webs.

In my vision of WAC websites as knowledge webs, the power of hyperlinking will provide almost unlimited connections to resources aimed at a variety of audiences both on and off-campus. Consider the information and resources available through hyperlinks on the home page of the *Clearinghouse:* a list of members, a meeting room, news and updates, recent publications, WAC programs and consultants, WAC journals, WAC conferences, the WAC-L listserv, etc. Most of these links lead to further links. For example, the link to WAC programs will lead you to a list of links to the home pages of over twenty WAC programs, each of these home pages will lead you to links of WAC resources, these resources are often connected to other resources, and so on. As hypertext theorist Jay David Bolter argues, "a hypertextual network can extend indefinitely, as a printed text cannot" (24). One way a hypertext network can extend indefinitely is through the participation of the readers in the creation of links and content. In the case of the *Clearinghouse,* anyone visiting the site can add news and events, information about conferences, links to their program's website, resources for teachers, etc. In one section of the Clearinghouse in particular, the "Teaching Exchange," instructors can post writing assignments and syllabi (see Figure 5). To be truly hypertextual networks, WAC websites would allow instructors from across

disciplines to add assignments, writing activities, and advice from their disciplines to the knowledge web, much like the *Clearinghouse's* "Teaching Exchange."

In addition to the layers and layers of links, the audience for a knowledge web can also extend indefinitely. *Clearinghouse* visitors include everyone from those who want to know more about the WAC movement, to experienced WAC program directors, to faculty from across disciplines, both inside and outside of the United States. In my role as the News and Events editor of the *Clearinghouse,* I've received emails from Germany, New Zealand, and Africa. Our primary audience for WAC websites may be faculty on our campus, but we should also consider students, administrators, and off-campus audiences as well—both national and international.

As much as I admire the *WAC Clearinghouse,* I think there is one crucial aspect of the ideal WAC knowledge web that the *Clearinghouse* lacks. The builders of the *Clearinghouse* knowledge web are, for the most part, WAC program or Writing Center coordinators. Contributors to the Teaching Exchange, the News and Events, and other sections of the *Clearinghouse* are mostly faculty directing WAC programs, not faculty from across the disciplines, and the majority of the advice, tip sheets, model assignments, etc. do not come directly from instructors in the disciplines. The *Clearinghouse* is an excellent site, but it is not as broad a representation of faculty from across the curriculum as I envision occurring on WAC websites of the future.
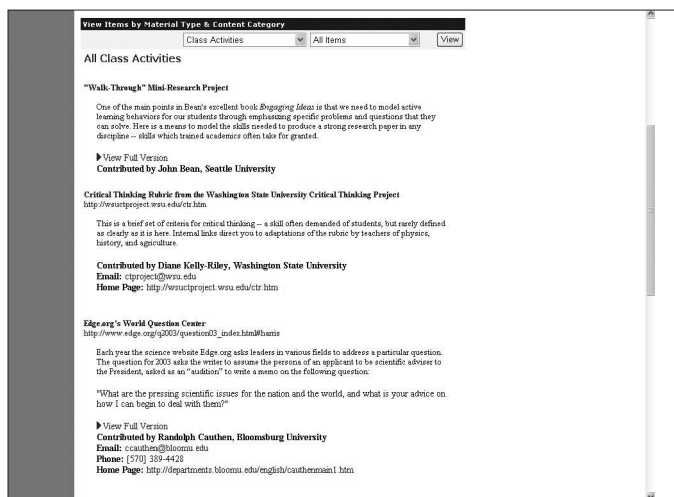

Figure 5: *WAC Clearinghouse* **Teaching Exchange**
http://wac.colostate.edu/exchange/index.cfm

The CSUS WAC website is in its infancy, but someday I hope to have a truly faculty-centered, socially constructed knowledge web. I imagine a place where faculty can post favorite assignments, rubrics, course syllabi, and other materials using their campus email user name and password. I can envision links to student essays from across disciplines, as well as links to innovative writing projects such as class websites or electronic portfolios. Someday I hope to have extensive links to both research I've conducted on campus as well as writing research being conducted by faculty across disciplines at my institution. I can foresee a nearly endless layering of hyperlinks, but with faculty adding links and pointing students to further resources in their discipline. This might include writing guides similar to those being created at George Mason or a campus-wide guide for the teaching of writing with advice and resources from faculty who have served on the university writing committee or participated in the summer faculty development retreat. It might include materials that are generated by a departmental writing assessment, such as example student essays or discipline-specific grading rubrics. WAC websites of the future, like WAC programs themselves, should be ground-up: coordinated by the WAC director, but with content generated by faculty across disciplines.

The WAC movement has just begun to explore what can be done with WAC websites, in part because for many of us the creation of an online presence was an afterthought or at best seen as a complement to the more important tasks of workshops and consultations. I hope I have made a convincing argument that websites should be central to fulfilling our most important goals as well as promoting our program to students, faculty, and administrators. Through the power of the hyperlink, the audience for a WAC website can even extend beyond our campus and connect us to the online community of WAC programs and resources in an ever-expanding web of knowledge and support. This online presence might begin with the directors of WAC programs, but in the future it is faculty in the disciplines who must expand the WAC knowledge web.

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Peer Response: Helpful Pedagogy or Hellish Event

LINDA FERNSTEN, DOWLING COLLEGE

MARNIE, A TALL, GRACEFUL Dominican woman, was a junior in my required WAC class at a large Northeast university. She had nervously approached me the first week of class saying she "couldn't write," but needed this course to graduate. The anxiety monster glinted in her eyes as they filled with memory's sting and the frustration of previous writing experiences. I reached into my ready grab bag of sincere but well-worn clichés: "We would run the class as a workshop," "A multiple draft approach would be used for all high stakes pieces," "All effective writing was about revision," and "I would be the guide by her side, not her red-penned critic." This formula seemed to work as she promised to return the next week, comfortably assured, marginally inspired, and, I believed, ready to write. She seemed to relax into the hope of a positive experience, and, for that week and the next, she kept our class chuckling and thinking with her witty remarks and homespun stories about language and writing.

Three weeks later, Marnie's smile, which lit up our drab concrete classroom in the February grayness of that New England winter, was oddly missing as I caught a quick glimpse of her outside my classroom. A bit obsessive about time from the haunting feeling that there was never enough, I prepared to begin class, wondering what was up with Marnie and why she hesitated out in the hall. The usual before-class visitors with their excuses about missing homework and chat about reading assignments clustered around me as I organized notes and wrote group assignments on the board for the evening's first round of peer response. Time to begin arrived … yet still she lingered … no hello, no smile, no movement.

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I began giving directions regarding how response groups would be run. "People were in charge of what they wanted others to review. Words like 'That's great' and 'That's awful' were useless phrases without more helpful feedback about what specifically was working or what, in the responder's opinion, might need more work. We were a team, thinking together as readers and writers to help one another communicate most effectively with the writing in our discipline." It was a well-rehearsed speech, given to many writing classes of various ages.

As peer response groups began to form, Marnie beckoned me into the hallway. No, she would not come in, but did not want me to think she was skipping class. She also wanted me to know she had the night's assignment but would absolutely not, under any circumstances, give it to classmates to discuss and review. "What about all we had talked about? Team, remember? Coaches, not critics? We were all there to help?" What had gone wrong? If we had been standing at the top of the Empire State Building and I asked her to jump, she could not have been more resolute in her determination to avoid my requests. Her frightened face glistened and her hand was shaking as she reached out to mine in the warmth of a gesture that both touched and frustrated me. "I don't want to disappoint you. But I can't let those people see what I have written. You can. Not them."

Culturally entrenched in my own views, I was absolutely convinced that talking Marnie into participation was valuable and constructive. Not until some time later would I come to recognize that there are some components of peer response I had not understood. At the time, getting Marnie to participate seemed akin to encouraging my own children to take that first unsteady ride on a two-wheeler. It was scary, but somehow a movement forward into something exciting … wasn't it? Well-meaning but culturally illiterate in many ways, I mistook Marnie's refusal to enter into peer response as simple performance anxiety.

This Story's Purpose

Marnie's story suggests far more was happening in this process-writing classroom than I realized. Her actions sparked my realization that one's perception of peer response and participation in it are complex and tremendously socially and culturally layered. It is possible that, despite the best of intentions, a practice designed to be supportive and cooperative can be threatening, even terrifying and humiliating. How could I have missed that?

Many of today's writing instructors have never been aware of or have abandoned the earlier view of peer response as a radical pedagogy, designed to

allow more students to enter the discourse communities of universities (Bruffee, 1984). The voices of the Eighties that had questioned aspects of power relations in Peer Response (Myers, 1986; Trimbur, 1989), addressing issues of cultural difference and the silencing of some voices, seemed hardly audible above the joyous cacophony of Process Writing enthusiasts like Elbow, Murray, and Atwell. Many educators (like me) had come to see peer response as simply another form of classroom collaboration, an important step in the writing process that helped move instructors across the curriculum away from the mechanistic correct and return policies that preceded it. Rather than reading papers as a finished piece of literature, we could think of the writing as 'in process." It seemed such an important pedagogical advancement, helpful to students, teachers, and multidiscipline educators.

However, those murmurs of concern from the eighties are growing louder. In the 21st century, when teachers are expected to better understand the multicultural dimensions of their classrooms, it becomes imperative to recognize the cultural conflicts that can and do exist within them (Delpit, 1995). Educators are challenged to take a more sociocultural view of writers and identity (Ivanic, 1997; Gee, 1999), thus bringing together who we are, how we write, and how we respond to writing. The discourse community of the classroom is a culture with its own historical norms and conventions (Ivanic 1997), however little discussion takes place in those same classrooms as to how participants are shaped by elements such as privilege, ethnicity, dis/ability, gender, or a myriad of other identity-defining factors.

In this paper, I want to add to the discussion that problematizes the relationship writers may have with one another and with themselves as they enter into and interact in peer response groups. I do not feign "the answers," but my practice, research, and collaborations oblige me to share the questions.

An Unexpected Lesson

I was in the midst of a doctoral dissertation on writer identity when an invitation to work in cross-country collaboration of teachers and professors was extended to me. Neck deep in studies and teaching full-time, I conceived of the collaboration as a chance to refocus on core research issues, a place to share concerns, question, explore, and revisit aspects of my investigation through the fresh eyes of far-flung colleagues. Perhaps their unique "insider but outsider" perspectives would further help me confront issues of writing with, if not new eyes, at least a wider focus.

With stories like Marnie's never far from my thoughts, I continued my study and analysis of writer identity and came to question the idea of a unified self, unique and individual. Not long into my work, I had adopted poststructural theory's concept of multiple and conflicting identities (Foucault, 1984; Sarup, 1989; Berlin, 1992). Compared to the humanist idea of a self that is unified, coherent, and autonomous, this theory made more sense given the contradictory behaviors I was witnessing in writing classes. In fact, a key finding of my dissertation would be that students construct their writer identities in not only multiple ways, but also in ways that conflict or bump up against each other. Surprisingly, even students who claimed to dislike and fear writing, like Marnie, felt very strongly about their efforts and took great joy in writing when circumstances required less formal academic discourse. When the student writers of my research took up discourses that were familiar and comfortable to them, they reported feeling positive and secure in their writing, even when that writing was complex and technical. After all, it was not writing they feared, but feeling unable to live up to the varied expectations of "good writing" required in certain places in the academy. Many of them felt the voices they were required to take up sounded contrived, put on, or foreign to their home discourses. To be an "outsider" in the academy often means being in conflict with practices that insiders feel are quite natural, even commonsensical, practices like peer response. While peer response was not the focus of my dissertation research, it certainly became tangentially important.

One case study in my dissertation involved a student I call Len. He was a college senior from Haiti, tri-lingual, who had put off this required writing course until his last semester because he feared it so much. Len felt that peer response was the worst experience with writing he had had in his schooling. In the following excerpts from his portfolio, he shares some powerful insights regarding response groups.

> "The first evaluation is always full with numerous remarks on how to improve the writing. I hate watching someone evaluate my writing because of the remarks and comments … It makes me feel very low, meaning unable to write anything well … I am an individual that has strong feelings for my writing … I am a writer that likes to express my childhood stories to those that can relate to my childhood stories. I have a difficult and different life from many American kids …
>
> I hate in-class group work that includes students reading other students papers…The reader might tell me that my paper needs specific

corrections but at the same time the reader say in his or her mind that my writing is weak, poor. I only ask people that know me first and my writing to read my writing because they have a better understanding of my writing. … I do not feel uncomfortable around them when they are helping me … But I do feel uncomfortable around those that I don't know when they are reading my writings."

Len's words speak to issues of identity. It is not writing he dislikes. It is not even the idea of peer response. What he dislikes is being judged for his non-conformity to the writing practices of academia, especially by folks who do not know him or understand his life. Len takes an outsider's view of his writing experience in the university. He is familiar with the not-so-subtle institutionalized racism that can be a part of everyday life. When people look at him and his writing, they are not amazed that he speaks three languages nor do they marvel that he has managed to get to where he is when poverty and family circumstances have created cruel and unyielding roadblocks. Instead, he is simply judged a poor writer, someone who struggles with standard grammar and the subtleties of formal academic writing.

According to poststructuralist theory (Britzman, 1990), the *discourse* of experiences rather than the experience itself is at the center of identity. It is not just our past experiences that allow us to retell or invent our identities, or even an intuitive sense of who we are, but our access to particular discourses that allows us to create the experience. This, in turn, is limited by our histories, beliefs, and socially constructed conceptions of "truth," knowledge, and power. Discourses, according to Foucault (in Weedon 1997) are ways of creating knowledge, thinking and producing meaning. Gee (1999) theorizes that as teachers we are not teachers of literacy or language, but of social languages within discourses. The discourses with tremendous power in American society often have strong institutional backing, as does academic discourse. From the time they entered school, Len and Marnie probably bumped up against this powerful discourse and were judged lacking. Now, it was not just their teachers doing the painful and humiliating judging. Their peers, schooled in the discourse of "good and correct writing," would now add to the chastising chorus.

Like Marnie, Len knew that outsiders in the academy face a special judgment by peers and professors. Color, class, and dialect accentuate their difference, making others wonder if they are afforded "special" treatment, no matter how talented they are or how hard they work. While his personal friends might be trusted to assist him

with the writing process, his more typical college classmates eye him suspiciously when they first see his drafts written in a dialect so different from their own. Their judgment of "broken" English (for isn't that the way we refer to the language of non-native speakers?) created the same fear that I had witnessed in Marnie. Len knew his peers' questions. Why was he here? What was "wrong" with him? Why couldn't he write?

When one's language is substantially different from what is familiar to peer responders or if writers perceive themselves to be socially or culturally distanced from their responding peers, the process can be nightmarish. Working with our AVD group made me realize how dreadful this "helpful step in the writing process" might be for students when Amy read her paper.

Another Unexpected Lesson

During a response group meeting for teacher-researchers, the leaders decided it would be helpful to model a process of peer response for review of our research articles. Because I had to go back to New York a day earlier than the others, our facilitator asked if he could use my draft for modeling with our group of about 18. Because I both preach use of peer response techniques for students and use it regularly with teacher-candidates in my classroom, I said sure. However, my own draft had not moved to data analysis and we realized it would not be particularly useful to this group, many of whom had advanced to final draft stage. So I offered up a young, talented colleague, Amy, whose story writing ability was legendary not only in our group, but with her colleagues. The youngest of our team, this teacher had amazed us with her powerful narratives, creative teaching, and insightful observations. Despite incredible visits to each other's classrooms and field trips to schools that were worlds apart from our own, nothing proved more stirring than listening to the stories Amy wrote and told about growing up poor. Her talents were the envy of our group, so I figured if anyone had a draft that could help others, it would be she.

While Amy would not have volunteered to act as "guinea pig," as a dutiful team member and practicing English teacher, she relinquished her draft when our facilitator made the request. He set us up around the table, handed out copies of her paper, and told us to prepare three responses. What stood out in a positive way? What intrigued you but could use clarification? What suggestions would you make? These general types of responses felt familiar and comfortable, a low-risk way to discuss writing and prepare for eventual publication.

As participant and observer, I thought the process went very well. As might be expected from a gathering with more than its share of writing instructors, our group was not shy about offering opinions or ideas. When the session ended, though, and the facilitator asked Amy about her reaction to the process, she glanced down at the table and responded "Painful." I could feel my chest tighten as the words of Marnie and Len thundered in my ears. Amy did not jokingly say, "Painful." Her expression and body language let us know that the hurt was real. She was not thinking, "Boy, did I get lots of ideas to incorporate or ignore." She was not saying, "Thanks, everyone. That feedback will really make a difference in my drafting process." Instead, she was upset that she had not had more time to work on her draft before becoming what must have seemed to her a public spectacle. She had faced "response" from older, experienced teachers and felt somehow humiliated by the process … and *her* paper was wonderful. Oh my gosh … if this was happening to Amy, certainly an accomplished writer and teacher, what must all the Marnies and Lens in our classes be going through?

That partnership provided a re-thinking space, unique for sure, and somehow more powerful, more jarring, because I was no longer in my Massachusetts birthplace or even my familiar Northeast corridor. Amy's accounts of partying Cherokee relatives and a Southern trailer-life childhood juxtaposed to her spectacular vision and practice in the teaching of writing had challenged my thinking in subtle ways before. Now, set along side the pain of her reaction to our peer response session, Amy's reaction disrupted and challenged my local knowledge in a way that Marnie's and Len's stories alone could not do. My colleague's reaction helped crystallize and give meaning to my students' voices. Like the friends outside the classroom who Len trusted to review his work, I was Amy's friend, now able to better investigate her internal dialogue because I was outside of my role of teacher. I could see how the collaboration that most of us around the table assumed was useful and productive was something else for Amy, just as it had been something else for Marnie and Len.

Ironically, the actions of a doctoral student in my home cohort group also came to mind through Amy that day. The only African-American in the cluster, this woman did not want to work with other doctoral students in peer response groups despite pressure from advisors to do so. At the time, I thought of her discomfort as overly sensitive, perhaps even naive about writing and process elements. Now, I felt ashamed of those thoughts and realized it was not her over-sensitivity, but my insensitivity and lack of understanding of the sociocultural factors at work in our lives. Why had I not thought of her until I heard the word "painful" from my young collaborator?

I began by saying I have more questions than answers, and I do. As we move to more multicultural understandings in our classrooms and cultural readings become a staple of composition classes, are we failing to recognize the part that conflict plays in all power relations, including collaborative groups? Our histories shape aspects of our identity and introduce the discourses we use to make sense of our experiences. School and collaboration may evoke widely differing memories, especially given the less-than-proud history of "correct and return" associated with academic writing in educational institutions. Response groups involve interactions that can be layered and complicated. For years I have had students relate stories of teacher responses to writing that were unhelpful or humiliating, making me wonder if an additional question regarding peer response groups we should be contemplating is, "What can happen in response groups that hinders or thwarts our goals in the writing process?"

As promised in my statement of purpose, I have generated diverse but related questions as I reflect on the peer response process. How often do we unwittingly silence difference as we move to maintain an established practice? Is there a contradictory tension between valuing difference and working toward the norms of academic writing? Are we simply setting students up to refine their prose to the academy's satisfaction, or do we have a part in assisting students' understanding and appreciation of the value and power of their voices? If writing is a way to develop the confidence and habit of mind needed to participate more fully in the world, how can we safely and comfortably make response groups a part of that process? While Marnie and Len are bilingual and bicultural, what about students with learning disabilities, especially those disabilities that affect language? What about those many students whose home dialects do not shift easily to academic discourse? Is it possible that the educational practice of peer response that I have adopted for its libratory possibilities could be replicating some oppressive aspects of society? What can we do explicitly in our classrooms to demonstrate we understand and value difference at the same time we are charged with teaching writing that "works" within the institutions in which we function?

Fecho, Graham and Ross (2003) describe an authored space of uncertainty in our lives that lies between and among figured worlds as a "wobble." I have come to wonder if somewhere between my practice and strongly held beliefs, and the enacted world of classroom peer response there also exists a wobble. I am certainly experiencing the unsettling state of vertigo they defined.

There is so much about peer response we need to know if we want to use it successfully in our classes, including power dynamics, culture, writing history, and

academic norms. While I thought I understood these, Amy's story and our group experience have sent me back to the drawing board. In a few weeks, when my graduate students bring their drafts to class, I will once again try to make peer response a productive experience for everyone. I will remember Marnie's face, Len's words, and Amy's reaction and know that we, too, are in process … and we need one another in so many different ways to keep moving the discussion and examining the issues. Without collaboration, without the wobbles, complex questions may be hushed by calm of routine—and remarkable stories and significant voices quashed.

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INTERVIEW

Martha "Marty" Townsend: A Different Kind of Pioneer

CAROL RUTZ, CARLETON COLLEGE

WAC JOURNAL READERS KNOW that WAC programs thrive in various institutional settings, often driven by the energy and commitment of a key person or group who keeps WAC pedagogy visible and refreshes faculty and administrative understanding through assessment and faculty development. For fifteen years, Martha "Marty" Townsend and her colleagues at the University of Missouri (Columbia) have led such a program. Missouri has been the exemplar of a well-run, thoroughly established program that combines WAC and WID, drawing on support from all areas of the university and generating impressive student gains that are well documented through multiple assessments.

When I approached Marty for this interview, neither of us expected that the subtext might require an elegy for Missouri's wonderful, long-standing WAC/WID program. Nor did we anticipate Marty's personal changes, which include a transition year in Missouri's English department and a future move to the University of Vermont, where she will once again be in charge of a university-wide WID program. In fact, my original reasons for interviewing Marty had to do with her gender—previous interviewees have all been male—and her scholarship, which has foregrounded WAC since her graduate student days. Those reasons still obtain, and Marty's responses to such questions are included here.

I have to admit that I had one other criterion for seeking her out for this interview series: Marty is what we like to call a non-traditional student, a person

whose education was parceled out over decades rather than following a continuous path from high school through the doctorate. She left college early to marry and finished much later, when her children were in school and her life as a "corporate wife"—her words—was becoming less satisfying. As a graduate student, she took the intellectual agility that made her a superb volunteer and civic booster, and applied it to scholarship that, as you will see, has made the WAC world a larger, richer, more inclusive educational endeavor. I am pleased to introduce readers to Marty Townsend, a different kind of WAC pioneer.

CAROL RUTZ: You are the fourth person I have interviewed in this series for *The WAC Journal.* Every one of you (John Bean, Chris Anson, Bill Condon, and yourself) is a WAC pioneer in some sense of the word. You differ from the other three in at least two important ways. First, you are female, and second, you have come to higher education with WAC as your scholarly focus, whereas the others were all trained in literature before taking on new interests in rhetoric, composition, and WAC. Can you tell us about your scholarly journey? Why WAC for Marty Townsend?

MARTY TOWNSEND: "Why WAC?" is fun to recount. I had just completed my first year of doctoral studies at Arizona State University when my dean's office was awarded a three-year Ford Foundation grant to develop a new "Literacy and Liberal Arts" program. Having been assigned responsibility for managing the grant, and seeking advice on how to proceed, Mary E. Green, the associate dean and a British literature professor with no composition background, enrolled in the 1988 WPA Summer Workshop. To my endless good fortune, she encountered my former University of Utah professor, Susan Miller, at the conference. Susan suggested that the Dean's Office hire me as the graduate research assistant for the project. I got to spend the next three years reading everything I could find on WAC and WID; planning faculty workshops; and serving as the "handler" for the likes of John Bean, Ed White, Chris Burnham, and Carole Holder when they came to consult for us. At this same time, David Russell had just published his first article on WAC in *College English,* and I called him out of the blue to talk about his research, as a means of informing our own program development. With opportunities like those, it was impossible not to see my professional future laid out for me.

I'd known going into my doctoral studies that composition, not literature, was my passion. It's not that I don't love literature. I do. But composition and pedagogy seemed more "practical" to me. I liked seeing the immediate results that composition

instruction produced. I liked knowing that my teaching was going to make a difference in my students' future study at the university. With the WAC research assistantship, I also found that I enjoyed the organizational and administrative aspects of composition work. Also, during my doctoral studies, I got divorced and became the single mother of two high-school-aged kids. I was concerned about helping them through college on what seemed to me the fairly meager entry-level assistant professor salaries. A WAC WPA position seemed the obvious choice for this confluence of reasons. I've never doubted the choice, nor regretted the career path. It's been tremendously rewarding.

CR: According to lore, WAC originated in small colleges, like my own, and as a pedagogical movement, it has swept through institutions of all kinds, enjoying greater or lesser success. Your program at the University of Missouri is among the largest and sturdiest examples of WAC in terms of longevity and broad disciplinary acceptance. As you step back from your experience there, what do you see as the factors that foster WAC's health at Missouri?

MT: The two-decade success of WAC at the University of Missouri is a remarkable record. The Campus Writing Program (CWP) was five years old when I came to it, and I've directed it for fifteen years. I've often remarked that CWP's longevity and vitality result from the "top down" and "bottom up" coming together in the middle. That is, the faculty wanted this program to happen. In 1984, a group of faculty took their concerns about student writing to then dean Milton Glick, and he appointed Winifred Bryan Horner to chair a task force to study the matter. A year later, the task force recommended a WAC program with a writing intensive requirement, and two years later, a college-by-college faculty vote endorsed the initiative. 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.

It's a bittersweet subject to address now, though, because in a very short time, all this may be changing. Faculty buy-in is still strong; their willingness to offer intellectually demanding WI classes is solid. But administration's support for teaching and learning initiatives in general has been gradually weakening over recent years, and the WAC program could change significantly. We've begun to refer to it as "Missouri's ECB Moment"—a reference to the demise of the English

Composition Board (ECB) at the University of Michigan a decade or so ago. Both my colleague Marty Patton and I are stepping down from our roles as assistant director and director, respectively, and are going into the English department as full-time faculty members. The administration is being very slow to announce any plans to replace us, and the system by which WI courses are approved is being altered. Ed White taught me long ago that institutions fund what they value. Sadly, the administration's valuing of the WAC program seems to be in question, despite the national and international reputation it has achieved.

CR: That's a hard story to hear. Picking up on the international reputation of your program, could you tell us how you got involved in international WAC? Do you expect WAC to gain acceptance in more educational systems internationally?

MT: Like my "finding" WAC, this, too, happened serendipitously. Jeff Chinn, the vice provost who handled the search when I was hired, is a political scientist who at that time had a large U.S. government grant to help rebuild the social science infrastructure at Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, Romania. This was only six years after the fall of Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu and the first time in fifty years that Romanian universities had access to what had been happening in academe outside of the eastern block. Over the period of Jeff's grant, some forty faculty from our two universities spent a month or more on the other's campuses, observing, talking, learning, exchanging information. I spent March 1995 in Sibiu interviewing faculty about their teaching practices, asking especially about how writing was used.

As a sidebar to this story, Nicoleta Raileanu, the very bright young woman who had been assigned to be my "handler" in Sibiu subsequently came to MU and lived with my family and me. Her one-month visit extended to a semester, and that turned into three years, during which she earned her Ph.D. in our English Department. Her husband and twin daughters spent most of that time here, too, and our families are very close.

That initial experience in Romania heightened my awareness of the international possibilities in academe. Now, I search for similar opportunities to travel abroad to study how other academic cultures use writing in their curricula. I've been privileged to visit universities in South Korea, South Africa, Thailand, China, and Costa Rica. Once you start looking, you find ways to do this. In the decade that I've been studying writing pedagogy internationally, WAC's

international focus has expanded widely. In 2004, CWP hosted the National WAC Conference in St. Louis with its first international theme; over ten percent of our participants and presenters that year were from outside the U.S. Just one WAC Conference later, the event is now titled the International WAC Conference. The National WAC Network, too, has re-labeled itself the International WAC Network. It's all very exciting and fitting. And the National Council of Writing Program Administrators is exploring ways to expand their work internationally. I'm quite sure, though, that we won't be seeing wholesale promulgation of American pedagogies elsewhere. That would obviously not be appropriate for a host of reasons, not least that educational cultures vary widely. What works or what's right in one place is not automatically workable or right elsewhere. American WAC scholars must approach these exciting exchanges sensitively and guard against an uncritical assumption that we have the best answers. We have much to learn from our international colleagues, and the acceptance of WAC that I see will go both directions.

CR: Another of your strengths is assessment. How do WAC and assessment fit together in your work and within your institution?

MT: Good question! From my first semester as the WAC research assistant at Arizona State, I was aware of the importance of assessment. I learned early on that if the Ford Foundation's soft money was to translate into permanent, institutional funding for WAC, convincing evidence had to be presented that the program was making a difference.

Another sidebar here: again, serendipitously, I became the Ford Foundation's reviewer for the entire nineteen-grant Literacy and the Liberal Arts series. I knew that the Ford program officer in charge of the grants had resigned, and I asked if I could do this work. *Asked,* mind you—just called them up, noted that I was aware they'd need to have this evaluation done, and volunteered to review the grants as part of my dissertation. To my amazement, Program Director Peter Stanley agreed! It helped, I'm sure, that I was a non-traditional student. But the point I'm getting at is this: I was able to study how previous Ford Foundation reviewers and other philanthropic organizations had judged whether their grants had been effective. I looked at how each of the nineteen institutions had evaluated the grants themselves. And I asked key administrators on each campus how they determined the projects' effectiveness. I was surprised to learn that, while project directors were often scrambling to amass

quantitative data "proving" that students were writing "better," knowledgeable administrators didn't necessarily see this as necessary. University of Kentucky Chancellor Robert Hemenway (now Chancellor at the University of Kansas), for example, acknowledged society's bias toward quantitative assessment, but claimed that the evidence he looks for is that which comes from "common sense."

Of course, that was in 1991, and the assessment culture has shifted since then. In our work with MU's Campus Writing Program, we adopted Toby Fulwiler's admonition to collect everything you can and share it widely, in concert with Ed White's advice to assess yourself before someone does it to you. We see assessment as integrated into our everyday work, defining it as any information that can be collected, analyzed, and fed directly back into the instructional loop for use in improving teaching and learning. We use the terms "assessment" and "evaluation" more or less interchangeably. Missing by design from our work is (1) any university-wide, standardized assessment of student writing (since we believe assessment of student writing should take place in context), and (2) barrier or exit exams (since we believe resources to mount these activities are better channeled toward instruction). The set of multimodal activities that we undertake are characterized by an emphasis on qualitative measures using multiple methodologies, mixed with some quantitative measures using the simplest methodologies available. The various components are intended to be seen as a collective whole, with no one part used to determine high stakes decisions.

Among our regular, ongoing assessments are:
- Periodic and/or end-of-semester contact with WI faculty by CWP staff
- WI course approval by an eighteen-faculty-member Campus Writing Board
- WI course files showing historical development of each professor's course(s)
- Selected departments' direct, authentic assessment of student writing
- Student course evaluations
- Faculty workshop evaluations
- Annual program reports to the provost, dean, board, and interested others
- Student evaluations of WI tutorials
- Participant records of who attends our various functions

Among our occasional assessments are:
- Faculty and student attitude surveys
- Student petitions to waive WI courses (a portfolio process)

Among our single-instance assessments are:
- A formal internal and external program review, in 1993
- An Office of Student Life Studies survey of students' writing experiences, in 1995
- A transcript evaluation, to determine WI compliance by college, in the mid-1990s
- An alumni telephone survey of satisfaction with WI courses, in 2000
- A Student Success Center focus-group study of WI courses, in 2003-04
- A graduate alumni telephone survey of former WI TAs, in 2005

We would very much have liked to implement a system of electronic portfolios which students would keep over time, and which students' major departments would review as a process of awarding degrees. Faculty have expressed an interest in doing this. We have also been lobbying hard for the past five years for another internal and external evaluation of the kind that was done in 1993 by Lynn Bloom and Ed White. The administration, however, has been slow to commit resources for either of these two projects, and we are considerably behind other campuses in this regard. When the Conference on College Composition and Communication awarded CWP a 2004 *Certificate of Writing Program Excellence* (the first year these were given), the committee singled out our assessment program as one of the three main factors in our being selected. CWP staff are very proud of that. Ironically, one of the things administration is presently calling for, now that Marty Patton and I are stepping down, is an evaluation to determine how effectively the program is working. Something feels amiss to us.

CR: I find myself wondering about the "feminization" of composition/rhetoric in terms of faculty and administrative staffing in many institutions, and whether there are any gender moves that affect your experience of WAC administration.

MT: For fifteen years, I have not experienced any gender-related problems working with faculty, staff, or administration. However, a few months ago, when I realized that communication between our program and the male administrator to whom

we report had broken down, I tried what might be considered a feminist approach to resolve the conflict. I asked for a formal mediation—a process that has a long history at MU, a process with wonderful training that I had participated in myself. The mediation was arranged, but with only two hours' notice, the administrator refused to participate. Was that a failure of a feminist move? It could have been. At any rate, it was the wrong strategy for that particular moment.

With this single exception, I can confidently report that a spirit of inclusivity plus strong relationships has been effective in working through problems. The Program has had the support of an excellent faculty Writing Board, and we have worked successfully through the faculty governance system. The current situation has not been amenable to the usual remedies.

CR: What advice do you have for *The WAC Journal* readers who may be asked to defend WAC pedagogy and/or assessment?

MT: Read the now-voluminous research. Talk to scholars at institutions that have WAC programs. Heed the findings of Richard J. Light in *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (Harvard UP, 2001), who reports, "Students identify the courses that had the most profound impact on them as courses in which they were required to write papers, not just for the professor, as usual, but for their fellow students as well" (64). Heed the findings of Langer and Applebee in *How Writing Shapes Thinking: A Study of Teaching and Learning* (NCTE, 1987) who report, "there is clear evidence that activities involving writing (any of the many sorts of writing we studied) lead to better learning than activities involving reading and studying only" (135). And for those who require quantitative data, read Alexander Astin's "What Really Matters in General Education: Provocative Findings from a National Study of Student Outcomes," *Perspectives,* Vol. 22, No. 1, Fall 1992, pages 23-46, especially Table 13, "Effects of Taking Courses that Emphasize the Development of Writing Skills."

CR: Finally, if you were to forecast the effects of WAC and assessment for the future of higher education, what do you see as the problems ahead? The successes?

MT: I see no slowing of interest in WAC/WID nationally, despite the Missouri program's current status. The lesson here, as others elsewhere have learned, is that only one or two administrators are capable of jeopardizing a healthy program.

However, many more institutions continue to be interested in the benefits of WAC/WID. The need for improving students' critical thinking and writing is certainly still high; the roadblock will always be securing ample resources. Aside from the funding issue, I have some concern that we're not producing enough graduate students who have formal training in WAC/WID. We're doing much better in Composition Studies as a whole field, but we need to enlarge the graduate coursework and experience we offer in writing to include WAC/WID. I know that my graduate preparation has made a substantial difference in my ability to work in the field.

Assessment is here to stay—as it should be. I look for it to become more sophisticated and nuanced—less focused on immediately measurable outcomes. With writing, outcomes can be notoriously difficult to document, not least since some of the desired outcomes don't manifest themselves until after graduation and students are in the workforce. My hope is that e-portfolios become the norm, portfolios that ideally would be evaluated by departments whose faculty take responsibility for articulating what they want and expect for their students.

REVIEW

Centers for Learning: Writing Centers and Libraries in Collaboration

DANIELLE CORDARO, PURDUE UNIVERSITY

FOR DECADES, WRITING CENTERS and academic libraries have provided a haven for students needing assistance, information, or simply a quiet "friendly" place to focus on learning and literacy. Recently, these two entities have begun to consider formal partnerships. Why? Because, as writing center directors, WAC professionals, and librarians are well aware, the academic environment is rapidly changing on all fronts. Administrators are more concerned than ever with writing proficiency, information literacy and student retention. And students, though more tech savvy, often seem to be unprepared to judge the credibility and usefulness of sources of information and unskilled at incorporating such material into their writing. In response to these developments, librarians and writing center professionals have recently begun to examine one another's discourse and have discovered some remarkable and productive affinities in their evolving theory and practice. For example, as Colleen Boff and Barbara Toth note, there is a growing consensus among theorists in both fields that "research and writing are complementary parts of a recursive process of inquiry"

(148). As faculty continue to demand library research as an integral part of assigned writing, students look to the writing center and the library to help guide them in these complex tasks.

Centers for Learning is a practical introduction to collaboration between libraries and writing centers. Editors James K. Elmborg and Sheril Hook provide a synopsis of the political and theoretical intersections of these two campus entities and present case studies based on different manifestations of library/writing center partnership. Most chapters are co-written by writing center professionals and librarians; they document the successes and failures of collaboration at diverse types of institutions ranging from large research universities to small private colleges. The resulting collection is useful to both writing center directors and librarians considering the establishment of such partnerships at their own institutions; the theory, practice, and research elements also provide a solid foundation for grant proposals aimed at administration or government bodies.

Chapters in *Centers for Learning* cover diverse topics in writing center/library collaboration. Some, like "Roots Entwined" by Lea Currie and Michele Eodice, and "Yours, Mine, and Ours" by Sarah Leady and Becky Reed Rosenberg, focus on describing the institutional conditions necessary to support sustainable partnerships. These chapters emphasize that sustainable library/writing center collaborations depend on an already-existent campus culture that supports inquiry, student assistance, and cross-disciplinarity. Eodice and Currie, in particular, insist that partnerships not be "people-based" initiatives founded on ephemeral ties between particular individuals; rather, they should be long-term projects with established sources of institutional support and plans for continuing assessment. Along these lines of institutional sustainability is a chapter entitled "It Might Come in Handy: Composing a Writing Archive at the University of New Hampshire" by former WAC/WC director Cinthia Gannett, assistant director Kate Tirabassi, assistant WAC director Amy Zenger, archivist Elizabeth Slomba, and historian John C. Brereton. This chapter reflects the rising recognition in composition studies of the importance of archiving to the long-term sustainability of projects and programs; it details the establishment and maintenance of an archive for the purpose of recording the particulars of collaboration between the library, WAC program, and writing center at the University of New Hampshire. Other chapters illustrate tutor training and day-to-day operation of libraries and writing centers committed to collaboration. "From Cross-Referencing to Co-Construction" by Casey Reid and "Better-Connected Student Learning" by Boff and Toth both suggest ways in which peer tutors might be "cross-trained" in writing center pedagogy

and the basics of information literacy. Boff and Toth report on research and writing project clinics held in the library and facilitated by specially trained peer tutors, and Reid provides insight into overcoming the disciplinary and bureaucratic hurdles that can stand in the way of tutor cross-training.

Though each chapter provides a unique view of writing center/library collaboration, there are commonalities among them. The contributing authors ground their collaborations in a common mission to facilitate information literacy and responsible use of source material in writing. The authors also see affinities in the political and institutional position of libraries and writing centers. For instance, Elmborg asserts that both libraries and writing centers inhabit spaces that are traditionally outside the academic power structure buttressed by tenure, funded research, and conventional classroom practice, placing both entities in the often precarious position of being "service fields" in a scholarly institution. Beyond these foundations in theory and politics, the authors also agree on some practical necessities to productive and lasting collaborations. For example, all seem to concur that the most productive collaborations begin with libraries physically housing writing centers or writing center satellites. They argue that this is the most pragmatic situation for both parties for obvious reasons; if a writing center tutee needs to speak to someone with expertise in research, a tutor can walk him or her to the reference librarian on duty. Likewise, if a librarian is faced with a question more firmly in the realm of composition rather than research, a writing tutor is conveniently on hand.

Centers for Learning has a pragmatic flavor that moves each chapter quickly from theory to practice and assessment, making it ideal for those seeking defined models for their own collaborative work. The authors of each chapter come from a diversity of backgrounds; some are WAC professionals, writing center directors, or writing program administrators, others are archivists, research, reference or systems librarians, or library instructors. The breadth of experience and the generalizable knowledge these specialists create in *Centers for Learning* demonstrate the possibilities inherent in institutionalized cooperation between the disciplines of library science and composition studies.

REVIEW

John Henry vs. the Machine:
Machine Scoring of Student Essays: Truth and Consequences.

JACOB S BLUMNER, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, FLINT

I THOUGHT IT WAS serendipitous that I was listening to Johnny Cash's "Legend of John Henry's Hammer" when I received a copy of *Machine Scoring of Student Essays: Truth and Consequences,* edited by Patricia Freitag Ericsson and Richard H. Haswell. As I skimmed the book's table of contents and glanced at random pages, I thought about the parallels between Henry's story and that of writing teachers. Certainly the comparison breaks down on many levels: for example, I don't imagine English teachers' hearts giving out from working so hard. But, the obvious comparison of "man vs. machine" proves accurate.

Though the book is primarily directed toward writing teachers, for a WAC audience the book serves an excellent purpose as well. WAC coordinators can use it to inform faculty who have questions about the value and process of machine scoring, particularly when faculty are understandably trying to find ways to ease a heavy workload. In fact, many faculty ask about machine scoring because they have heard about it in the news, have received promotional materials from a company offering machine scoring, or

from others in academia. For faculty across the disciplines, the book provides valuable insight into what writing teachers value in writing, how one goes about valuing it, and what machines currently can and cannot do when assessing it. There is much to learn in this book for all teachers, administrators, and community members.

In the introduction of *Machine Scoring,* Ericsson and Haswell approach the topic of machine scoring with a true spirit of inquiry, listing questions they will address in the book and claiming this is the first significant volume that provides a voice to teachers and students—two constituencies that have not had a voice in the debate of this "emerging technology." Chapters in the book cover topics ranging from Ken S. McAllister and Edward M. White's book-opening history of machine scoring in "Interested Complicities: The Dialectic of Computer-Assisted Writing Assessment," to practical, application-focused chapters such as Edmund Jones' "ACCUPLACER's Essay-Scoring Technology," and finally to Bob Broad's examination of the future implication of machine scoring in "More Work for Teacher? Possible Futures of Teaching Writing in the Age of Computerized Writing Assessment." It ends with a thorough bibliography by Richard Haswell that is helpful for readers who want to better understand the development of machine scoring and begin to track what the future might hold. In many ways, *Machine Scoring* is a response to Mark Shermis and Jill Burstein's edited collection, *Automated Essay Scoring: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective,* a book in which nearly all the contributors are involved with the machine scoring industry. *Machine Scoring* lays a parallel track to Shermis and Burstein's book, providing writing teacher/scholar perspectives on the role of computers in writing assessment.

McAllister and White acknowledge writing teachers' apathy in addressing the growing demand and fiscal appeal of machine scoring. They note that writing teacher's voices have been nearly silent, allowing a commercial industry to grow up and tap into legislative, administrative, and public demands for "objective" accountability with a small price tag. Neglecting to respond, they note, has let the industry build a head of steam that appeals to the aforementioned constituencies. Much of the chapter, though, is dedicated to explaining the foundation upon which electronic scoring is based: formalism and natural language processing, a linguistic process used to gather content information from texts. Natural language processing was not developed to assess writing, but according to McAllister and White, many commercial programs designed to assess text use it. Then, after introducing the general process used for machine scoring, McAllister and White describe why formalism and natural language processing fail to accomplish what evaluators

of college writing want. The chapter is a well-crafted key to understanding and appreciating the rest of the book.

A pattern in each chapter emerges in the middle of the book. A scholar examines an automated scoring program, explains that he or she can only guess the criteria by which a program evaluates text because the company won't reveal proprietary secrets of their programming, and submits essays to the program to try and finesse an understanding of how the program works. I must admit I wasn't surprised by many of the results. Most of us have heard stories of teachers testing these programs, creating nonsense essays, submitting them, and receiving excellent results. You can do a small test for your own amusement to see how this works. Create a Microsoft Word document in which instead of typing words, use the letter "x" repeatedly. So your text might look like this, "Xxxx, xxxx xxxxxxx xx xxxxxx, xxxxx xxxxx xxxx, xxx." Run the spelling and grammar feature, simply ignoring all of the misspellings and grammar suggestions. What you will see at the end is a box that includes "Counts," "Averages," and "Readability," an evaluation using the Flesch-Kincaid system of evaluation. The nonsense quote above had 0% passive sentences, a Flesch reading level of 28.5 and a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 11.5 (out of 12). Not bad for a bunch of x's.

Of course ACCUPLACER, WriterPlacer, and E-Write are more sophisticated than the evaluation Microsoft Word performs, but the results relayed in this book are not that different. Still, the results are enlightening about work that needs to be done so interested parties can better understand what the programs are and are not capable of accomplishing. Despite my lack of surprise, the chapters in which teachers test the programs are my favorites because they begin to pry open the black box of computer scoring. In Jones's chapter, his tests of ACCUPLACER reveal ridged, narrow assessment techniques. Jones tested a paragraph that demonstrated that ACCUPLACER looks for grammar errors but cannot adequately judge syntax or usage problems. Jones digs deeper to find that ACCUPLACER is only good at certain kinds of sentence-level problems, but not mechanical ones. Another discovery is that ACCUPLACER values text length—400 words or more. These results lead readers to question what is valuable in writing and what is lost by using this and other machine scoring programs.

Richard N. Matzen Jr. and Colleen Sorensen describe Utah Valley State College's research into placement tests in "E-Write as a Means for Placement into Three Composition Courses." Their experience is disturbing and hilarious; they experienced technical difficulty after technical difficulty, from essays receiving no

scores to e-Write's server crashing. Ultimately, they concluded, "the validity of e-Write scores is questionable. If the e-Write scores had been used for placement purposes, for example, apparently only 4 of 298 students would have enrolled in the lower-level basic writing course, an outcome that the experienced basic writing teachers at UVSC believe is inaccurate" (137). Of course these results assume that the server is working. Though not explicitly stated, Matzen and Sorensen's results remind readers that technology needs to work for it to be useful.

One of my favorite chapters that tested software is Tim McGee's "Taking a Spin on the Intelligent Essay Assessor." McGee takes aim at the program's claim that it "is the only essay evaluation system in which meaning is dominant" (80), and tests Intelligent Essay Assessor's (IEA) definition of meaning to his own. IEA provides sample essays, and McGee used them to test the program's understanding of meaning. In one test he looked at a sample essay's test score, and then he reversed the sentences of the essay, noting, "the effect is more like that of the movie *Memento*" (86). The scores were identical. Next, McGee tested the program's ability to measure factual information. He simply changed facts in the model history essay to completely contradict known facts. The opening sentence reads, "There were few problems facing the nation in 1929, following the stock market crash in 1938 and at the end of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal" (88). Again the machine awarded the text a high score. I found myself laughing out loud.

The problem is this isn't simply a laughing matter. Not taking machine scoring seriously led to the apathy described by McAllister and White. With a better understanding of how machine scoring works, readers approach the last section of the book ready to examine the implications for teachers and students. Beth Ann Rothermel, in "Automated Writing Instruction: Computer-Assisted or Computer-Driven Pedagogies?," asserts that machine scoring companies, MY Access! in particular, "show … disdain for classroom teachers working at the primary and secondary levels" (199) and that they have an ideology "that defines not just writing, but also teaching and learning, as formulaic and asocial endeavors" (200). MY Access! "constricts and narrows the learning environment" (204), and it won't "say back to the student in its own words what it thinks the student 'means'" (205). William Condon continues the critique in "Why Less is Not More: What We Lose by Letting a Computer Score Writing Samples" by listing the costs of using machine scoring, including the loss of local control; loss of the human element that contributes to professional development and writing program cohesion; and the limitations of a short, timed-writing exam.

And finally, in the last chapter of the book, "More Work for Teachers? Possible Futures of Teaching Writing in the Age of Computerized Writing Assessment," Bob Broad accomplishes two things. He provides a fascinating insight into the misnomer that technology saves us time, and he passionately argues that assessment is an integral part of teaching and that we should value it more and fight to keep it. For the former point, he uses Ruth Schwartz Cowan's book, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave,* to show that new technology can unexpectedly create more work. He points to the wood-burning stove and the vacuum as two tools that increased the demands on women in the home rather than alleviating the workload. Broad warns that this can happen to teachers as well. When I consider the increased demands placed upon faculty because of the advent of email, Broad's fears ring true. Broad's latter argument, though, leaves a greater impression. He asks us to consider what our courses are about, to define rhetoric for ourselves, and to ask if machines can measure those things we value in writing. The answer for me is a resounding "no."

As many authors in this collection note, there is a place for technology in the teaching of writing, and we have much to learn about machine scoring. But what is more important is that teachers and students be more involved in the conversation about machine scoring. Pry open the black box and see what makes it work. Try to influence changes in the programs so that they better serve our pedagogical needs. This book is a beginning. It starts to build a body of literature that teachers can use to influence policy decisions. The bigger issue it addresses, though, is what makes us human, and how do we value that in writing. John Henry knew who he was and what he stood for. Teachers need to continue to lay the track that will define us as human and clearly articulate how that manifests in writing.

Contributors' Notes

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