

An Affordance Approach to WAC Development and Sustainability

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How can we create institutional change? That remains one of the central puzzles for writing program administrators, especially for those working on writing across the curriculum and/or writing in the disciplines. Dozens of articles and books have addressed this question, arguing for the importance of building relationships, thinking systemically, shifting discursive frames, and more.¹ We want to suggest a different, though related concept: affordances. Psychologist James J. Gibson introduced the term to describe a relation between an object or environment and an organism. The concept has been taken up by many disciplines, including architecture, computer programming, organizational behavior, and more. Within writing studies, affordance has been used most often to articulate the pedagogical and communicative potentials of new media technologies, but we find it equally useful to highlight the way we, as WPAs, both respond to and act on the conditions of our institutional environment.

While affordances sometimes refer to pre-existing and mostly stable physical attributes in organizational and institutional settings, affordances evolve over time, through our responses to and uses of them. In other words, they at once influence what we can do in the local environment and emerge from the actions we take. Our experiences at Georgetown University demonstrate the value of affordance as a way of understanding institutional change and the role of WPAs. In part because it has been used in so many settings, affordance can be a slippery concept, and to make it more concrete, we describe the conditions and development of affordances using the analogy of gardening. We began by tilling fertile soil, prepared over many years by our predecessors but also left fallow in the decade or so before we arrived. Over time, we have added a bit of fertilizer, planted seeds, fertilized a bit more, and spent a lot of time watching things grow. We've also prepared for more growth, building new beds, if you will. Even as we must work with existing conditions, our work is changing the local landscape in ways that establish affordances for the future. At the same time, building any writing program is, like gardening, a cyclical activity that doesn't end with harvesting one season's juicy ripe tomatoes.

Based on our experience at Georgetown, we argue that WAC/WID developers should recognize how our work is at once shaped by and contributes to local affordances. That WPAs must be responsive to local conditions is not news, of course. As Martha Townsend has noted, it is already "axiomatic" that "each institution must grow the program that works within its own constraints and possibilities" (547). The

concept of affordances, however, offers three key extensions to this idea. First, if we recognize how our work is both enabled and limited by existing affordances, we can make strategic use of local conditions rather than simply viewing them as obstacles or problems to overcome. Second, if we understand that affordances reflect local history and culture but are also evolving, we can understand our own agency more clearly. Finally, if we see ourselves as developing affordances, we can focus on creating conditions that enable our colleagues' work with writing, rather than on controlling or constraining their work, and this will generate more productive, sustainable outcomes—for our programs and ourselves.

The Uses of Affordances

While a conceptual history of affordance is beyond this article's scope, its migration from psychology into other fields helps frame our use of it in writing program administration. Gibson first coined the term in "The Theory of Affordances" in Robert E. Shaw and John Bransford's *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing* (1977) and developed it in his book *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979). Gibson uses "affordance" to refer to a specific relation between an animal and the material environment. A particular aspect of a physical environment "affords" an animal specific opportunities for action (*Ecological Approach* 127–143). Door-opening devices provide the most common illustrations of affordances: knobs afford twisting and pushing or pulling; plates afford pushing; handles afford pulling. This example suggests why the term found real footing in material design-related fields even though it emerged from psychology. Furthermore, scholars in business and organizational behavior have wedded affordance to habitus in order to consider larger scale practices relative to structure and setting (Weeks and Fayard). Educational researchers use affordance to design curriculum and cultural inclusivity (Barab and Roth; Rasi, Hautakangas, and Vayrynen). User/interface designers and engineers have developed what they call "affordance structure matrices" that map system level affordances to individual components, as in the design of a drilling rig.² Some cognitive roboticists consider the ways code can include internal libraries of affordances, recognize affordances, and interact with them (Touretsky and Tira-Thompson). Because it so effectively articulates the relationship between conditions and responses, the concept of affordances has been widely used and adapted.

Gunther Kress is often credited with adapting affordance for writing studies, linking the term to "modes" in a series of arguments on alphabetic text, image, and other interfaces. In Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher's special issue of *Computers and Composition*, "The Influence of Gunther Kress' Work" (2005), published in the wake of his session at the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication, some of our leading scholars on multimodality consider Kress's theoretical

formulations and impact (Paul Prior, Marilyn Cooper, and Anne Frances Wysocki among them). At bottom, the connection between mode and affordance is relatively simple. Different modes (like the features of material environments) carry different affordances: a handwritten letter allows for stylized script flourishes and sketching with circulatory potential limited to the paper on which it is written, while Facebook limits the font in which one may write but affords the inclusion of other media like photographs and video, as well as wider circulation. Ten years later, affordance and modality in general have so saturated our field that they appear in reference guides like Routledge's *Handbook for Literacy Studies* and Oxford's *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. They even appear in texts without definition at all.

As in psychology and business, affordance in writing studies has traveled and expanded. Scholars in our field consider affordance at the structural level, as we design interventions into pre-existing environments to bring about desired outcomes. Thinking on this systemic level, we suggest an affordance approach to writing program administration: culture-building through a distributed strategy involving both policy-making and on-the-ground cultivation. As WPAs, we need both to recognize how our work is shaped by existing affordances and actively craft new affordances. To return to the gardening metaphor, we must recognize the affordances of local soil and select the seeds that will grow best in those conditions. We must also fertilize, construct trellises, irrigate, and so on in order to strengthen those conditions.

Existing Affordances: Finding Fertile Soil

Our experiences at Georgetown demonstrate why we find the concept of affordances useful. Long before we could begin acting *on* the local environment, we had to act *in* it, and from the beginning our work was shaped by existing affordances. In 2011, during Matt's first year and just before Sherry was hired, Georgetown completed a self-study for Middle States accreditation that included a proposal to shift students' second encounter with writing from a general education humanities course into the major. As new faculty, we were charged with turning that concept into a proposal, a task that occupied much of our attention during the fall of 2012. After a good deal of reading, a consultation with Terry Myers Zawacki, and attending IWAC 2014—all incredibly valuable experiences for WPAs whose backgrounds lie in scholarship of teaching and learning (Sherry) and rhetoric (Matt)—we crafted a proposal. We had been warned that making change at Georgetown was almost impossible. This is a cautious institution in some ways, and faculty are especially resistant to top-down efforts to change their practices or control their work. Nonetheless, the new “integrated writing” requirement was approved in February, 2013, the first formal change to the institution's core curriculum in thirty years. While colleagues congratulated us on this

achievement, we knew that the success of this proposal was rooted in years of prior work. We didn't yet understand just how fertile the soil was, however.

We sensed this fertility early in the process, as we began to meet with department chairs and directors of undergraduate studies (DUS) before drafting the proposal. Many seemed wary of integrating writing into their major, expressing concern about what we might force them to do and explaining why they could not teach writing. Their worries will be familiar to WAC/WID leaders everywhere: writing would distract from content; faculty don't know how to teach grammar; their classes were too large; our oversight would be intrusive. Some insisted that Georgetown's elite students didn't need help with writing, while others claimed that students really needed a basic grammar course—taught by the writing program, of course. We were prepared for these responses, and we tried to assure our colleagues that we understood their concerns and had no desire to become the “writing police.”

Yet we also discovered something we hadn't expected: colleagues from several fields responded to our questions with thoughtful and articulate explanations of their disciplines' genres and conventions. The DUS of computer science explained how his students needed to learn to translate their work as designers of software programs and other technologies into language that their clients and funders would understand. The chair of the mathematics and statistics department spoke eloquently about how students needed to master the writing conventions involved in mathematical proofs. It wasn't until we met with the chair of the sociology department that we began to understand what was going on. Offhandedly, he referred to workshops and discussions about the teaching of writing that he'd been part of back in the '80s, when Jim Slevin ran the writing program.

While we had both heard colleagues speak with some reverence of Slevin, who founded the Georgetown writing program in the early 80s, we only recently learned the whole story of the work he and others did to engage faculty in thinking about and teaching writing in the disciplines. As Slevin, Keith Fort, and Patricia E. O'Connor explain in a 1989 report, Georgetown's WID program was always “envisioned and shaped entirely by Georgetown faculty,” rather than as a top-down administrative initiative. NEH funds supported annual faculty symposia and workshops that reached more than one hundred faculty from twenty-seven departments across campus. Writing faculty also trained graduate teaching assistants from across campus, since they worked directly with students on writing (14). The article indicates that they were able to create a “permanent” program that was, as of 1989, “entirely supported by the University” (13). The program continued into the early '90s, but it dwindled over time as leading faculty became involved in other projects and as funding was redirected. By the time we arrived, both the active work and the funding had disappeared.

Georgetown had not abandoned attention to teaching, however, nor to writing. In 2000, the university created the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), directed by Randy Bass, which offers an annual spring teaching conference that regularly includes workshops on the teaching of writing. It also runs a teaching apprenticeship program for graduate students that includes workshops on designing writing assignments and responding to students' writing. CNDLS also sponsored a Teagle Foundation grant for another iteration of work with faculty from across the disciplines, the Georgetown Student Writing Study, led by Maggie Debelius, who was the director of the writing center (she is now director of faculty initiatives at CNDLS). That project, which ran from 2010 to 2012, provided funding and facilitation for teams of faculty from nine programs to examine sample student writing from their programs and develop rubrics for writing in specific projects or courses. The project helped Georgetown address the assessment criteria for institutional accreditation, but it also engaged faculty in conversations about the relationship between writing and threshold concepts in their disciplines. While more modest in scope than the earlier WID project, the Georgetown student writing study similarly encouraged faculty to think about student writing and their teaching.

Both of these projects contributed to the local environment in which we would design, propose, and implement the integrated writing requirement. Because of their work, many faculty across campus were thinking about writing long before we introduced the integrated writing requirement, and they had positive experiences working with faculty from the writing program. These efforts also established some core principles and local expectations about writing: that it is not the property or responsibility of the writing program, that all faculty had expertise in writing, and that we could improve writing education by integrating it into existing courses. Faculty members' prior positive interactions with the writing program fed the soil we would now till.

These elements of our ecosystem function as affordances. As we drafted the proposal for the new writing requirements, we were guided by models from other WID programs to define fairly open-ended criteria, such as asking departments to identify specific courses, to exclude first-year courses, to ask students to write in multiple genres, and to embed writing in smaller courses so that faculty could provide sufficient feedback to students.³ We also suggested creating a committee that would review proposals and provide feedback. However, Bass, in his role as chair of the core curriculum committee, suggested fewer guidelines and less oversight, though the rationale for this was not immediately clear. As newcomers to Georgetown, we believed that his aim was expedience; Bass wanted to get the requirement passed, even if it was weak. Now we recognize that a shift away from explicit guidelines and review processes reflected the affordances of earlier labor. Both Slevin's faculty-centered, requirement-free approach from the 1980s and Debelius' collaborative, conversational, deductive

approach from the more recent past emphasized faculty ownership of writing in their disciplines and an attitude of respect and trust of our colleagues by the writing faculty. Like an architect designing a building to suit a site's affordances, we sought to design a requirement that would not merely respect these existing conditions but would use them strategically. In other words, we needed to design an affordance, not just a requirement.

These affordances allowed us to shape the integrated writing (IW) requirement in a way that Bass termed "legislating the aspiration." Our proposal asked all programs to answer two questions:

- What kinds of writing should our students learn to do?
- How will we help students develop the ability to write effectively in the genres and forms that matter in our field?

Programs had complete control over these strategies; no individual or committee would review or approve them. They could develop any strategy that satisfied them. We asked every program to post its strategy on its website and in the academic bulletin, and we have links to the strategies on the writing program website.⁴ This allowed the writing program to position itself as a resource to help colleagues design and implement their strategies, rather than defining us as either the sole experts in writing or the arbiters of sufficient strategies.

While it may appear that by taking an affordance approach we relinquished not only oversight but even the access needed for assessment, we instead have adopted the role Barbara Walvoord calls "the changer": those who "[focus] on faculty change and WAC's impact on change, without trying to define what kind of change it should be" (529). In the two years between the passage of the requirement and the deadline for developing IW strategies, core writing faculty met individually with colleagues from a number of departments and attended some department, college, and committee meetings. We also hosted two working groups, both under the aegis of CNDLS. The first involved teams from four departments that seemed especially well-prepared to address the IW requirement. We consulted separately with each team, but the teams also met together, comparing notes and critiquing each other's approaches. The second cohort focused on individual faculty who wanted to work on teaching writing in their specific courses. We continue to consult with faculty across campus as they develop assignments and teaching strategies in response to the IW requirement and as some programs begin to assess writing in their majors.

More than forty programs have now posted IW strategies, taking varied approaches. A number of programs, especially those in the humanities, identify writing as embedded across the major, from introductory courses through senior

capstones. In a typical example, the classical studies major describes the writing students perform at each level of the program:

. . . students at the 100-level write more frequent and shorter papers that develop analytical and argumentative skills. Papers at this level will make use of primary sources (ancient authors, inscriptions, objects) as well as secondary reading (i.e.,] modern scholarship). At the 200-level, students will write more than they do in 100-level courses, usually in the form of longer assignments that make use of more sources. These courses also typically expect independent student research into specific problems. At the 300 and 400 levels, students write longer research papers which require deep engagement with primary evidence as well as modern scholarship. Students . . . progress through a curriculum that develops their writing skills at each step.⁵

Other programs have identified a category of courses in which students write major papers, such as the upper-division seminars in the history and government programs. Some programs require students to take specific courses. Mathematics and statistics identifies three courses that fall near the beginning of the program and address the structure and specialized language of the written proof. Several interdisciplinary programs require all students to write a senior thesis and offer one or two semester courses that provide intensive guidance as students develop these large projects. In the school of nursing and health studies, a first-year seminar is being redesigned around several goals explicitly focused on writing, including writing for reflection and the conventions of writing in the sciences. The biology department created a new sophomore-level course.

The diversity of these approaches reflects the influence of institutional history. On the one hand, that many programs were able to address the requirement by pointing to existing practices suggests a fairly high level of faculty engagement with writing. Of course, some departments dealt with the requirement in this way because they did not want to be bothered. But what WAC or WID program does not have resistant participants? Overall, we have been impressed by our colleagues. A number of programs engaged in department-wide discussions, sometimes with lengthy and contentious debates, and for them the requirement afforded serious consideration of writing in their fields.

Our approach and our colleagues' response to the IW requirement have not only been shaped by the affordances we inherited from our predecessors. Our decisions and our interactions with colleagues, as well our colleagues' work, have also constructed new affordances. To return to the gardening metaphor, we began our round of writing program work with soil that was much more fertile than we initially recognized, and together with colleagues across campus, we've sown our first crops. The

question now is how do we continue to use the conditions of the past and those we have helped to create to build a sustainable program? How do we foster a productive campus ecosystem for writing?

Affording Renewable Growth

While Bass described the flexible approach of the integrated writing requirement as “legislating the aspiration,” we have come to think it might better be characterized as “constructing an affordance.” As the varied programmatic responses suggest, we had designed a flexible requirement that created the conditions for serious conversations about writing within disciplines and programs. Yet without oversight powers, we worried that we might also have legislated ourselves out of position to influence writing instruction on campus. Indeed, we were disappointed that so few of our colleagues responded to our offers of help as they developed IW strategies. We were also concerned that a requirement without standards or review processes would yield little; integrated writing could well turn out to be a requirement in name only. While the results so far are mixed, we believe that the requirement has functioned as an affordance for both our colleagues and the writing program itself. Faculty retained ownership and control, and we have been able to focus on—to return to the gardening metaphor—feeding the soil and collecting seeds that will afford future growth, rather than on weeding. Put differently, the open-ended IW requirement emphasizes our agency rather than potential power. Instead of guarding the gates of writing pedagogy, we have been able to deploy our social and intellectual resources to advance the interests of writing on our campus—as a program, a practice, and a subject of intellectual analysis.

For writing programs, we would argue, deploying this kind of agency is more valuable than securing the power to evaluate or approve our colleagues’ work as teachers of writing. If we view our efforts as shaping affordances rather than defending policies, we become not only resources to help colleagues integrate writing pedagogy into their courses but also sources of new opportunities for and ideas about teaching writing. However, as we learned from our experience at Georgetown, we must be attentive to the affordances shaping our work, to opportunities to construct new ones, and to how these affordances enable and/or constrain the work of our colleagues across campus. While our local ecosystem features unique conditions, our attention to affordances offers a strategy that can benefit other WPAs.

As our discussion of the development process suggests, our affordance approach echoes a foundational element of WAC work: coordinating with faculty across the disciplines. As an affordance, our open-ended model invited active engagement by users, and it enabled a diverse range of responses, reflecting particular cases of “filtering” and generating “changes in the user’s expectations” in the process (Kannengiesser and Gero 61). To further illustrate the value of viewing WAC/WID efforts as affordances,

we offer two additional examples, drawn from the work we have done in the two years since the IW requirement was approved. In each case, our work has been enabled and shaped by affordances that were already in place, and we have, as Udo Kannengiesser and John S. Gero suggest, “interact[ed] with and reason[ed] about” (51) these affordances, generating new affordances in the process.

In the past two years, a major campus innovation project has provided a second affordance that is shaping our work and helping us develop new affordances for both the writing program and our colleagues. “Designing the Future(s) of the University” challenges faculty, staff, and students at Georgetown to imagine new ways of approaching higher education, posing big questions about the structures and processes of liberal arts education.⁶ Along with an undergraduate course in which students design the university of the future and a series of presentations about the challenges and opportunities facing higher education in the twenty-first century, “Designing the Future(s)” has supported several faculty-driven, collaborative design projects that are generating new courses, programs, and models. We have been active in several of these projects, positioning the writing program as collaborative and innovative while also heeding Walvoord’s admonition that WPA’s must either “dive in or die” (70). Most notably, we have been working with colleagues trained in computer science and communication to develop a studio-based undergraduate certificate in writing, design, and communication (CWDC). The CWDC has been designed from the beginning as an experiment to test whether and how a studio-based approach will work—for students, for faculty, and within the structures and practices of the institution.

As an affordance, the CWDC provides two important possibilities for the writing program. First, it has expanded our own thinking about both how we teach writing and the role of the writing program on campus. While some elements of the studio model fit well with common writing pedagogy, such as its attention to process, peer critique, and audience, it also pushes the boundaries of these practices. For example, the certificate replaces coursework with studio time, so that individual and collaborative projects and critiques from faculty, peers, and outside experts provide the primary basis for learning. It also broadens the range of possible student projects to include digital and material artifacts. Both the process of designing the certificate and the experimental framework within which we are working are changing our expectations and encouraging us to rethink our own goals and concepts—even as this process and framework change others’ expectations for us and the scope of the writing program.

Additionally, our participation in the CWDC and other “Designing the Future(s)” projects constructs a new affordance for our colleagues across campus by defining the work of teaching writing as flexible, creative, and exploratory and by identifying writing faculty not as representatives of a body of already-established theories and practices but as scholars engaged in innovation and collaboration. These efforts are in

their early stages, but responses so far suggest that, if nothing else, they are broadening our colleagues' sense of who we are, what we do, and what writing can be.

Our interest in creating affordances for our colleagues dovetails with one final example, our approach to assessment. Georgetown has lagged behind national trends in assessment, and many faculty resist what they see as an externally-imposed and largely meaningless, unrewarded, and time-consuming activity. However, the 2012 Middle States accreditation review explicitly asked the university to develop its assessment of writing, and by 2017, we must report to the accrediting agency on our assessment efforts. In 2013, we began a standard assessment practice, collecting sample papers from our first-year writing course and reviewing them using a rubric based on the course goals, with the idea that we would define a benchmark against which we could measure improvement in the program.⁷ Given the range of assignments and strategies used in our first-year writing course, this model proved problematic, as it so often does, and the results were uninspiring and predictable. Meanwhile, the open-ended design of the integrated writing requirement and our efforts to avoid being defined as “the writing police” made us wary of evaluating the work of other departments or their students, and faculty resistance to assessment made it clear that we could not demand that programs conduct their own assessments of students' writing. We needed a better approach. At the same time, we were beginning to articulate the idea that our work was creating affordances for our colleagues, and we wanted to test that idea and seek out further opportunities for helping to shape a “culture of writing” at Georgetown.

All of this led us to institutional ethnography (IE) (LaFrance and Nicholas). A presentation from University of Michigan faculty at the 2014 International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference (Gere, Silver, and Pugh) and subsequent consultation with Michelle LaFrance helped us recognize the affordances of this approach. IE treats the object of study, in this instance the work of our writing program and the effects of that work distributed across the university, as a complex system. As Julie Jung suggests, “a complex system cannot be understood by reducing it to its component parts, since it's the *interaction* among parts and not the sum of their individual properties that produces macrolevel behaviors attributable to the system as a whole” (11). We hoped that institutional ethnography would allow us to trace interactions and understand how they were shaping writing in the campus ecosystem. We have already begun studying samples of student writing and course syllabi, surveying students and faculty, and conducting focus groups that build on survey results. Like other aspects of our work, IE positions us not as judges but as scholars and explorers, roles that are valued on a research-oriented campus. IE works within but also examines local structural, social, economic, and political conditions. It considers how faculty work structures—the nature of labor contracts but also the organization and functioning of

four very different undergraduate schools and dozens of majors—affect how we teach writing. It also engages faculty and students across campus in the process and defines assessment not as an act of judgment but as an opportunity for us to learn. So far, colleagues have responded enthusiastically to invitations to focus groups and interviews. Those who are anxious about the writing program intruding on academic freedom or judging their work are less likely to feel threatened by an ethnographic project, which emphasizes exploring the culture of writing rather than on evaluating students' writing and, by implication, faculty instruction.

Even more important, we believe, the ethnography will, like our initial round of conversations, generate insights that will help us understand and respond productively to existing affordances in ways that will foster engagement with and excitement about writing at Georgetown. We have framed the ethnography around two core questions:

- What variables—faculty status and perspectives, disciplinary expectations, institutional resources, curriculum and pedagogical design, student experience, and so on—shape people's teaching and learning about writing?
- What opportunities for strengthening the culture of writing at Georgetown emerge from this analysis?

By pursuing these questions, we hope to develop a descriptive analysis that we can share with our colleagues as another means of defining both our role and ways of thinking about writing. It will also suggest opportunities for further work for the writing program. In other words, our ethnography will generate new affordances, for us and for our colleagues.

Conclusion

Our circumstances at Georgetown are unique. Of course they are. We're not advocating that colleagues do what we did. Everyone's circumstances demand specific responses. We're advocating a disposition, a perspective and pose that we bring to WAC/WID development and writing program administration more generally. Viewing our work as responding to and developing affordances allows us to productively address one of the long-term challenges that most WAC/WID programs face: sustainability. In a 2012 chapter about program "vulnerability," Martha Townsend discusses the "devolutions" of some WAC programs, and she lists the "characteristics of successful WAC programs," including faculty ownership, administrative support, and mission symbiosis. We're struck, however, by characteristic 15: "patience and vigilance" (554). She quotes David Russell, noting that WAC requires, "personal sacrifices . . . and offers personal rather than institutional rewards" (554). While this may be true for many, because an affordance approach requires flexibility and responsiveness from both the writing program and faculty in other disciplines, we believe that

it can help us develop sustainable WAC programs that need not rely so heavily on the patience and vigilance of WPAs.

This focus on change shifts our attention away from the completion of a product—a WAC/WID program centered on a well-defined set of rules and practices that we must then defend—toward attention to ongoing coordination. It defines us as agents of change who respond actively to fluid conditions and emerging opportunities. Rather than establishing and preserving our power to define what “counts” as good enough writing instruction, we can enable and facilitate our colleagues’ work with student writing and respond to their unpredictable reformulations. This approach also assigns to our colleagues the responsibility for attention to writing, a move that respects their expertise even as it calls upon them to do their own thinking about what their students need and how their programs will work. No doubt, being responsive takes time and energy, but it also allows us to be adaptive and thus more effective.

An affordance approach also changes how we interact with other people on campus. We’re less interested in training individuals and cultivating particular allies than we are in crafting environmental affordances that don’t require the perpetual investment of professor X, department chair Y, and associate dean Z. We also hope that these affordances depend less on us as sustainers of integrated writing, that our affordances will allow us to accomplish what Jeff Grabill identifies as the work of rhetoric itself: “to assemble a . . . public around a matter of concern and to care for that assembly” (258). If the aspiration we legislated is Grabill’s “matter of concern,” our writing program’s increasing involvement with innovative initiatives on campus is how we “care for that assembly.”

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, viewing our work in terms of affordances encourages us to pursue the intellectual curiosity and programmatic creativity that can keep WPAs engaged and energized as professionals. On a basic but crucial level, we hope that this approach will enable us to find more pleasure and meaning in our work. We will find more value in being creative inventors, researchers, and collaborators, rather than vigilant enforcers. We’ll likely never be entirely free from the frustration of resistant colleagues, and we cannot protect our programs from budget cuts or changing institutional priorities more than any other WPAs. But an affordance model does make us and our programs less vulnerable to burnout or institutional problems.

This may provide an answer to the question we posed at the beginning of this essay. How do we create institutional change? We don’t. We contribute to the conditions that enable change. The concept of affordances reminds us that the real job of WPAs is to create possibility rather than hierarchy and to remain mindful of the nature of agency. We are always in motion with resources and partners, things and people, and while we never bring any real control to bear, we always and happily work in fluid call and response. To return to the gardening metaphor one last time, even the

most assiduous gardener must work in partnership with the soil, the climate, and the seed. And for many, that is where the pleasure lies.

Notes

1. We've been influenced especially by Condon and Rutz; Fulwiler and Young; McLeod, Miraglia, Soven, and Thaiss; McLeod and Soven; and Monroe.

2. http://www.iadc.org/wp-content/uploads/ASM_Concept.pdf.

3. We found Pamela Flash's work on the "Writing-Enhanced Curriculum" at the University of Minnesota and the consultative model used at Quinnipiac University especially helpful, since both focused on facilitating departmental conversations about writing rather than on "training" faculty or establishing formal guidelines.

4. To see the integrated writing strategies, visit our website, writing.georgetown.edu and click on the "For Faculty" tab.

5. <http://classics.georgetown.edu/Integrated%20Writing>.

6. To learn more about these initiatives, visit the "Designing the Future(s)" project website at <https://futures.georgetown.edu/about/>.

7. Along with developing the IW requirement, we also revised the first-year writing course and began regular faculty development, so we hoped to see change over time.

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