Potential of WAC in Graduate Writing Support: Helping Faculty Improve Systems of Graduate Writing

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In the past 50 years, writing across the curriculum (WAC) as a movement has grown and expanded in meaningful ways, starting in part as a response to various literacy "crises" prevalent throughout our educational history (Martin, 2021; Russell, 2002) to becoming an established part of work at and across universities. Indeed, WAC has grown to have a national organization in the form of the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum (AWAC), a bi-annual conference of the International Writing Across the Curriculum (IWAC) Conference, established publication venues such as *The WAC Journal* and *Across the Disciplines,* and more. From its origins, however, WAC has focused almost exclusively on *undergraduate* education, with less explicit focus on supporting *graduate students* as writers and graduate faculty as writing teachers, even when they are an important and historically overlooked population of student (and faculty) learners.

Writing at the graduate level is complex; students face many challenges while learning how to write for increasingly disciplinary contexts (Bosanquet & Cahir, 2016; Brooks-Gillies et al., 2020; Caffarella & Barnett, 2000). Certain high stakes writing tasks like comprehensive exams and doctoral dissertations mediate graduate students' activity through their programs and are sites that require specific and long-term support. For this reason, faculty are crucial elements of support for graduate students, as graduate education is inherently more decentralized than undergraduate education, typically consisting of more individualized learning supported directly by faculty (Simpson, 2012). That is, as students write these high stakes writing genres in a more individualized manner than in previous forms of education, they rely on faculty members to teach, mentor, and support them—making the professional development of faculty (such as through WAC programming) an important part of supporting graduate student writers in the long-term.

In this article, I argue that WAC has historically overlooked its capacity to support graduate student writing and that WAC programs have generative potential to provide more targeted, explicit support for graduate faculty who mentor graduate writing. After a brief overview of WAC's undergraduate-focused history, I highlight examples of graduate faculty reimagining their graduate writing structures and

supports through ongoing participation in WAC offerings from the Howe Center for Writing Excellence at Miami University, analyzing these examples through the lens of activity theory and as case studies of faculty members remediating the tools of their activity systems. These examples highlight how WAC programs can serve as an important boundary broker (Wenger, 1998) in helping faculty change writing systems, as well as demonstrate a future of WAC where graduate-level writing instruction is more intentionally supported. In sum, this article highlights how WAC programs can lead effective change around graduate writing pedagogy and writing structures—an admirable aim as the movement advances into its next stage of development and innovation.

Brief Overview: Undergraduate Focus of WAC Movement

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) as a movement was born partially in response to the increased role and attention to (undergraduate) disciplinary writing, as well as in response to public concerns about students' abilities to write (Martin, 2021; Russell, 2002). WAC's beginnings as a more formal movement in the United States is often credited to a semester-long seminar Barbara Walvoord led at Central College during the 1969-1970 academic year. This seminar, which arose from Walvoord and her colleagues hearing complaints from faculty across disciplines about student writing, provided faculty participants with the opportunity to look at student writing and discuss writing assignments (Palmquist et al., 2020). In response to rising student enrollment after World War II, a series of public concerns about student writing arose similar to those in the late 1800s that spurred the first compulsory composition course at Harvard. "Why Johnny Can't Write" was the cover story of Newsweek magazine in December of 1975 that brought a lot of national attention to the issue of student writing abilities and spurred new WAC programming, including the teaching groups Elaine Maimon started at Beaver College that served as a strong and early model of bringing faculty together to talk about writing (Palmquist et al., 2020).

While Walvoord, Maimon, and others did not specify the exact level of student writing and assignments discussed in the above-referenced WAC initiatives, it is assumed to be *undergraduate-level* writing, especially given the institutional contexts of being four-year, private colleges dedicated to undergraduate education. Undergraduate-level writing differs from graduate writing in key ways, as there is an important transition that occurs in students' writing and learning as they progress from their undergraduate studies to their graduate studies. The stakes of graduate writing, for example, are often higher than those in undergraduate contexts, as well as more public-facing (Clark, 2005). Further, due to the more decentralized nature of graduate education where learning often exists around and outside of coursework (Simpson, 2012), graduate students write larger papers over a longer period of time.

Whereas in undergraduate programs students typically work on projects throughout a semester for a course and then move on, graduate students often continue to work with ideas across and throughout sequences of courses, as well as work on longer-form thesis and dissertation projects in the more research-focused programs. Even from these brief examples, it's clear that the activity of writing at the graduate level differs from that at the undergraduate level, and that the instruction of such writing would also differ and benefit from specific pedagogical support.

It's worth reflecting on the fact that the WAC movement was founded at smaller and undergraduate-focused institutions with faculty who were invested in teaching writing at that level. It was not founded at public R1s with doctoral and medical and other professional graduate programs. The kind of writing discussed was likely not theses or dissertations but undergraduate-level essays from disciplinary courses or, perhaps, undergraduate research projects. The specific challenges faculty may have faced with these undergraduate writing tasks likely differed from the challenges faculty faced working with graduate students on longer-form, higher-stakes, and more discipline-specific writing. WAC as a movement was also established and positioned amidst a large crisis in undergraduate writing vis-à-vis the "Johnny Can't Write" era—as there were similar and concurring crises of graduate-level operating around the same time and afterwards (Summers, 2019).

Likewise, other similar movements tend to focus predominantly on undergraduate writing instruction. The Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) model first developed by Chris Anson at North Carolina State and expanded by Pamela Flash at the University of Minnesota also tends to favor undergraduate writing, explicitly helping departments and programs develop "undergraduate writing plans" (Anson & Flash, 2021). At Minnesota, the Writing Across the Curriculum program is actually a unit within The Office of Undergraduate Education, and thus funded to explicitly support undergraduate writing (and, ostensibly, not to focus on graduate writing support). Attendees at the annual WEC Institute gather to discuss primarily undergraduate-level writing; WAC has also historically included overseeing advanced writing courses or sequences on campuses, which inherently supports undergraduate-level writing instruction.

This isn't to say that efforts to work on matters of graduate writing did not or do not exist in broader WAC contexts, of course, or that contexts do not relate. In personal communication, Elaine Maimon relayed to me that she did a few consulting jobs charged more exclusively on working with graduate students, such as at Yale, focused on PhD candidates in a variety of disciplines and at the University of Pennsylvania. The latter went on to develop a plan where English PhD candidates would serve as "moles," infiltrating various courses in other disciplines and researching the rhetorical questions embedded in those courses. There are also undoubtedly

more stories like this across WAC programs: faculty seeking support for advising doctoral dissertations, or attending workshops to focus on a graduate-level course. These accounts are largely anecdotal, however, with few published accounts circulating in the field. Work may have been done for or with graduate students, but when it comes to specific WAC professional development for *faculty* around teaching graduate-level writing and focusing on creating better writing assignments and environments for graduate student writers, that does not appear to be the original intent of WAC (nor its current focus)—perhaps due to a larger (mis)conception across the academy that graduate students should "already know how to write" (Brooks-Gillies et al., 2020; Khost et al., 2015; Micciche & Carr, 2011; Sullivan, 1991).

There is also, of course, extensive work done across writing center studies to support graduate students *themselves* as writers, and it's important to note that WAC initiatives historically have been closely aligned with the work of writing centers. The collection *Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center* (2018) edited by Susan Lawrence and Terry Myers Zawacki includes chapters that address the ways writing centers meet the unique needs of graduate writers. In another collection dedicated to graduate writing support, *Supporting Graduate Student Writers: Research, Curriculum, and Program Design* (2016) edited by Steve Simpson, Nigel Caplan, Michelle Cox, and Talinn Phillips, the chapters likewise discuss generative support structures and program design to support graduate student writing. In these collections, though, the focus is primarily on supporting *graduate writers themselves* and not as much on the *faculty* who teach them, which WAC as a movement often takes as its charge. While Simpson (2016) in that collection notes the need for more explicit and intentional faculty development on working with graduate students as a direction for future research (as do Brady et al., 2018 in Lawrence and Myers Zawacki's collection), Wynn-Perdue (2018) goes further to highlight the importance and necessity of it. As she argues, in order to truly help students become better writers in the system of graduate school, they need for their advisors to have "more explicit preparation for and knowledge of the writing process than their own experience as supervisees had provided" (p. 257). The work of supporting graduate writers in this way also lies in supporting their *faculty* through faculty development offerings and programming, which has not been a large focus of WAC work (or writing center work) to date.

Overall, then, WAC as a movement did not initially seek and has not historically sought to improve writing instruction for graduate students, or to explicitly support faculty in the teaching of graduate-level writing. WAC was spurred and ignited in large part due to public outcry in (undergraduate) student writing and the need for more faculty support in teaching writing. The aim of WAC was and remains to help faculty provide students with opportunities to write across their academic careers,

increase student engagement in learning, enhance student writing proficiency, create a campus culture that supports writing, and foster a community of faculty around teaching and writing (Cox et al., 2014)—and can serve as an important means of support for *graduate-level writing instruction* as well as undergraduate-level writing instruction. Graduate students are an advanced population of learners who often face pressures of feeling as though they should "already know how to write" but who, as we as WAC professionals understand if we embrace everything we've learned from writing studies research, are still students learning new disciplinary ways of writing, thinking, being, and doing throughout their programs. They thus require scaffolding and support for their writing just as much as undergraduate students—which is an area in which WAC programs have invaluable expertise and can assist faculty, as the next section discusses.

WAC's Potential for Graduate Writing Support

WAC administrators and practitioners want to help faculty change their writing instruction for the better—to support faculty in their classroom endeavors, in their departments, and across the university campus at large. One of WAC's strengths as a movement is its ability to bring faculty together to talk about writing and talk about teaching, as well as inspire and support faculty in sustaining conversations around writing in their larger departments and programmatic contexts. In this way, as Glotfelter et al. (2022) argue, "change" has always been a goal of WAC programming, in terms of helping faculty adopt research-supported practices in their teaching of writing and, increasingly, changing how disciplinary faculty understand and conceive of writing. These change efforts can apply to undergraduate as well as graduate-level writing instruction. Indeed, faculty serve as important change agents in designing graduate programs and support graduate writing, as departments serve as the locus of control for the writing structures in place in graduate school (Golde, 2005). In the wider context of supporting graduate writing on campus, then, a meaningful intervention would be to work directly with the faculty who design, facilitate, and revise the writing structures and support systems in place at the local, departmental level.

In this way, WAC programming can take on the role of a boundary "broker" who can "make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and . . . open new possibilities for meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). A key role of brokers in communities of practice is participating in multiple communities and sharing practices from one into the other and vice versa. As Martin and Wardle (2022) argue, WAC directors serve as important administrators and leaders on campuses, which puts them in the position of being able to broker faculty conversations and development around creating change in their programs and in their teaching. WAC program

leaders can thus be "part" of a community by way of working closely with faculty and learning about their writing pedagogies and issues yet still offer the language, tools, and perspectives of someone more squarely outside the community, which lends the faculty members different expertise from which to learn and work.

Importantly, WAC boundary brokering is a generative way to help faculty resolve certain *contradictions* within the activity systems they and their students operate within. The concept of contradictions is theorized as tension points between opposing forces in an activity system that can also be understood as a source of change and development (Engeström, 1987; Ilyenkov, 1974). Contradictions are felt and perceived in a system when components of the system don't quite line up, when there is a "misfit" within elements of the activity system (Kuutti, 1996). A composition instructor who takes an inherently rhetorical approach to teaching writing, for instance, might experience a contradiction starting a new job where the required syllabus adopts an inherently formalist approach to teaching writing focusing on correcting grammar. The syllabus's/department's motive here (teaching students to use grammar correctly) will sharply conflict with the instructor's motive (teaching students to better understand and consider their audience when making writing choices). Importantly, changes in an activity system are triggered by these contradictions. The composition instructor will have to choose how to remediate this contradiction—they will have to either accept the formalist approach (the provided motive), push forward their rhetorical approach (their own motive), leave the system altogether (abandon the motive), or find another workaround to pursue their own motive within the existing system.

Contradictions are necessary parts of all activity systems, including those of graduate writing. Graduate education, as the above has indicated, is more decentralized than undergraduate education in terms of more specific and individualized learning (Simpson, 2012). This decentralization leaves much room for faculty to innovate structures and assignments on their own or as a department. Doctoral students enrolled in the same program can leave becoming experts in vastly different areas due to the independent and prolonged study one undergoes in doctoral programs. While students may share genres and tools of writing (such as writing seminar papers in coursework and completing dissertations in doctoral programs), the conventions (rules) can vary widely between them depending on the kind of work students are doing, the methods they use, the theories that inform their work, and other elements that shape the community in which they operate. Contradictions emerge in these variances, even among disciplines and subdisciplines where there might be specific sets of rules that completely conflict with how the student views and understands the system.

Another important factor in this conversation is considering faculty also as *subjects* in the activity system of graduate writing—that is, as important people with motives who use tools to achieve outcomes and who can be supported in their activity throughout the system. Faculty members exist themselves as vital subjects in their own systems, which overlap and co-exist with those of students' but that still have unique elements. Faculty members' objectives and motives might differ from their students', as is the case in general education courses where faculty teach such "general" courses to a "general" audience while still adopting their specific discourses as specialists in that field—with students often not wishing to becoming specialists in that area (Russell & Yañez, 2001). There thus arise contradictions not only in one activity system but in the overlap of activity systems.

Acknowledging these complicated nuances, in the remainder of this article I explore what might happen if WAC programs more intentionally support graduate writing structures by way of helping graduate faculty navigate these messy activity systems and the contradictions around writing that arise. What can be gained if WAC programs help faculty better understand how graduate students learn as writers and how they can design writing tasks not based on "how it's always been" or on gatekeeping but on what is conducive to student learning? Thinking about what we know from supporting undergraduate students (scaffolding, aligning course outcomes with assignments, building in time for meaningful reflection), how else could we as writing studies experts help faculty teach writing to their graduate students? What meaningful change can happen if a WAC program takes this up as a dedicated charge?

Case Examples: Faculty Working to Improve Systems of Graduate Writing

In this section, I briefly offer a few examples from Miami University's Howe Writing Across the Curriculum Program (referred to hereafter as HWAC) that illustrate the kinds of changes that can happen when faculty are explicitly supported in improving graduate writing instruction—and not just at the individual course level but *also* at the wider department-level.

Driving Framework: WAC Programming Designed Around Conceptual Change

Importantly, a key component that drives HWAC programming is the core premise that deep changes in curriculum and institutional writing culture require stakeholders to first change their conceptions of writing. This means that true change in writing instruction comes not from faculty adapting practices because *other* people tell them to but because they *themselves* have come to change their conceptions about writing and what might work within their contexts and for their purposes. As an example, a faculty member could start assigning "reflection journals" after attending a workshop

that discusses the benefits of them, but this change will be surface-level and not necessarily meaningful unless the faculty member realizes for *themselves* that reflection is a key part of learning and students will benefit from having a regular, formalized space to keep track of their progress as writers and communicators in their fields. In our programming, then, we aim for the latter: we design events that help faculty think more conceptually about how writing and learning work, and after leading them through the research and reflective activities support them in innovating their *own* changed practices that work best in their local and disciplinary contexts.

HWAC's program offerings thus primarily focus on engaging faculty in conversations around how learning and writing work and how writing functions in their disciplines. For example, HWAC workshops might discuss the metacognitive element of learning to write by reviewing research from the field and inviting faculty to reflect on their own progress as scholarly writers, prompting them to think about what they might do in their own courses to encourage students to similarly take stock of where they are in their learning process. The structure of our workshops and events reflects this attitude as well, as we offer less one-off workshops on a particular topic but, in line with our dedication to deep change, offer multi-part workshops that provide faculty with the ability to read and reflect on research as well as leave time to digest it and then come back again to brainstorm and put the research into practice. As a whole WAC program, this explicit focus on change bleeds through into different types of programming—and focuses on both undergraduate and graduate student writing support, as the next section will entail.

HWAC Programming to Support Graduate Writing

HWAC has supported faculty in reimagining systems of graduate writing both implicitly and explicitly through different programming. First is through faculty work in our Faculty Writing Fellows Program (hereafter referred to as Fellows), which is a semester-long faculty development program designed to engage teams of disciplinary faculty in enacting deep conceptual changes around writing drawing on research from change theory (Kezar, 2018), learning theory (Ambrose et al., 2011; Bean & Melzer, 2021), and the threshold concept framework (Meyer & Land, 2003). Participants attend the program in disciplinary teams and are asked to engage in embodied reflection and application about writing on a more conceptual level: considering how writing operates in their personal and professional lives, challenging their conceptions and misconceptions about writing, and imagining what these conceptions and new conceptions might mean for their work in the classroom. The program culminates in a final project related to writing, such as surveying how writing is taught across the department or redesigning a sequence of courses. These projects often lead faculty to further collaborate with department members outside of

Fellows, as well as invite important stakeholders like department chairs and deans to learn more about their findings and thoughts.[1]

While the program never specified the *level* of writing instruction faculty could work on, it was not designed to intentionally support graduate writing structures, even though several teams who completed the program (first launched in 2017) have done so. For example (and as I'll describe more below), one of the early teams of Fellows from gerontology began the program seeking to revise individual courses and, after learning about threshold concepts and the important role writing plays across a student's entire time in a program, decided to innovate the way they teach writing in gerontology across their entire graduate program. Again, while not necessarily intentional, HWAC served here as an important source and inspiration of change for this group of faculty members who have gone on to innovate for themselves graduate writing supports and structures designed around writing studies research and best practices.

In addition, HWAC has supported graduate faculty members more explicitly by offering a year-long faculty learning community (FLC) dedicated to graduate writing support. During the 2020-2021 academic year, eight participants from three disciplines (English, music, and psychology) worked across cohorts (and with the associate dean of the graduate school) to identify areas in their programs that needed improvement, bringing with them issues—contradictions within their activity systems—they had already identified in their regular work and/or through previous participation in WAC programming. The aim of the FLC was to help faculty take ownership of their disciplinary writing and then complement it with research and best practices focused specifically on graduate learning and writing. In addition, the FLC facilitators explicitly made systems-level thinking its main focus, encouraging faculty to not only think about support in-the-moment (i.e., how to help a student struggling through the comprehensive exam) but also more systematically (might the exam itself need to be updated or revised to make for better student learning experiences?).

Overall, HWAC as a WAC program has made meaningful strides in supporting graduate writing instruction at Miami University, including not only individual instructors' practices in the classrooms but larger, more systematic changes to curricula. In fact, the faculty working on these graduate-level charges have fared well with great success in their efforts, both in the designed programming itself but also with several of the faculty dedicated to graduate writing publishing about their efforts as

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1. This Fellows program has been published about extensively elsewhere. For the purposes of this article, the program is only briefly mentioned to introduce the important work faculty have engaged in during and afterwards on graduate writing structures. For more information about this specific Fellows program and Fellows' experiences after completing it, please see Glotfelter et al. (2022) *Changing Conceptions, Changing Practices: Innovating Teaching Across Disciplines.*

well as winning university awards. External recognition is not the only sign of success or progress, of course, but is another way that faculty and their work on and around graduate writing are recognized, rewarded, and valued.

Case Examples: Gerontology and English

While I don't have the space in this article to go into large depth about faculty innovating structures of graduate writing, I wanted to briefly highlight two case examples of faculty members working to innovate two different structures of graduate writing in an effort to showcase WAC programming's reach and potential in this area[2].

Gerontology: Restructuring a Master's Degree Culminating Project. As I mentioned above, after participating in Faculty Writing Fellows in 2017, a team of gerontology faculty set out to redesign graduate-level courses and ended up reimagining how writing is supported in and across their graduate programs. One important feature of that was the master's thesis project in their master of gerontological studies (MGS) program. Prior to the revised curriculum, MGS students completed master's theses (or critical inquiry projects) with the intent to graduate in the spring semester. As one of the gerontology faculty, Jennifer (she/her), described it, the MGS program had historically adopted a more "traditional" social sciences master's thesis model where students developed a topic idea, selected an advisor and two readers, submitted a five page proposal, and then completed their (empirical) thesis.

There was a tension regarding the master's thesis project, however: not all students in the MGS degree program moved on to PhD programs, and thus experienced different levels of motivation and interest in completing thesis-level work, which could extend beyond the final spring semester in which they were meant to complete it. Not all students were interested in research, however, as many of the jobs students enter with MGS degrees do not require them to conduct research —such as working with an area agency on aging planning and administering services, or working in long-term care administration (which requires additional training). As Jennifer put it:

> Not all of our master's students had interest in research professions, so we were forcing a research model on them . . . Research just really wasn't a passion for some of them, and it's not that they couldn't do it . . . Having done a thesis was not going to make a difference in the kinds of jobs they were

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2. Both case examples draw on IRB-approved research protocols that entailed interviews with the faculty members, observations of their classes and participation in WAC program, and interviews with their students, as well as detailed textual analysis of their program documents and procedures.

pursuing . . . it just became unwieldy and too many students were taking too long [to finish/graduate].

The thesis or critical inquiry project, then, was not necessarily helping students achieve their goals beyond the MGS degree, and was in fact operating as a certain barrier to students graduating on time during the spring semester.

The faculty had felt this tension over the years, and Jennifer and her colleagues began to make some broader graduate curriculum changes after participating in Fellows. As I referenced above, Jennifer entered the Fellows wishing to improve some assignments in a specific course but realized with her colleagues that they could do more to explicitly teach and discuss writing throughout the gerontology graduate program. One of the initiatives she took on was reviving a 700-level gerontology course (GTY 705) and making it a course explicitly about writing in gerontology. This course served here as a direct support for MGS students finishing their degrees, too, as students took this course during their last semester while writing their final projects—more recently (effective during the 2019-2020 school year) categorized as "culminating papers" based more on a journal article than a traditional thesis.

Jennifer has continued to revise GTY 705 over the years, having converted it from a general "communicating in gerontology" course to a writing workshop model focused more explicitly and dedicatedly to supporting graduate students in their writing. Throughout the course MGS students work on their culminating paper while doctoral students work on a journal article manuscript. She draws from *Writing about Writing* (Wardle & Downs, 2019) and engages students in genre analysis where they break apart and critically examine each part of a scholarly journal (or culminating paper for MGS students). In addition, students submit components of their writing every other week and receive formative feedback from both the instructor and peers, who undergo a detailed peer response process based around reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978). Overall, students receive a robust writing education *in gerontology* through these change efforts, which Jennifer and her colleagues achieved after being introduced to theories about writing through Fellows and supported to draw from their own expertise to more explicitly teach writing.

English: Revamping a Doctoral Comprehensive Exam. One member of the English team who participated in the 2020-2021 FLC on graduate writing support focused on reimagining the comprehensive exam for the composition and rhetoric PhD program. Jason (they/them) had long felt that the comprehensive examination was not ideal for both students and faculty, recognizing that it was an inherited structure. As it stood, students read seventy total works, were given five questions about the readings by their committee, and were charged with answering one question during a one-week time period where they could not talk to anyone about their writing. Going into the FLC, Jason wrote as their goals in a beginning survey:

I especially want to think through structures of support for students working on candidacy exams, dissertations, and publications. How can I best work with graduate students to co-design structures of support that work for them? How can we most effectively reach out to and support students who are struggling?

During the data collection portion of the FLC, Jason and their colleagues administered a survey to all current graduate students asking about their writing and writing support needs. Several of the composition and rhetoric students expressed concerns over the comprehensive exam procedure, noting issues and frustrations for preparing and submitting the reading list/rationale required of all students.

There was thus a tension with the comprehensive examination process where students were struggling with the examination, and Jason (along with other faculty members) didn't think the structure (i.e., writing alone for one week answering a question someone else asked) was particularly effective for their goals (i.e., helping students learn more in depth about an area of the field that interests them on the path toward developing a dissertation project around it).

After hearing from the associate dean of the graduate school, who told Jason and their colleagues at our FLC session that the graduate school had no requirements for the exam and departments set what the contents would be, Jason realized it was a problem their department could actually address. Jason asked for time during a faculty meeting to discuss the exam with others who taught in the composition and rhetoric program, which led to a subcommittee of faculty working to imagine a new structure. They met as a full group and underwent a thought process together where they discussed and reflected on the following questions:

- What is (or should be) the goal of the comprehensive exam? Specifically, what do we hope that students are able to learn and then do after completing the process?
- What are some core principles about writing, reading, and learning we share as scholars and teachers in rhetoric and writing studies that might help guide our redesign process?
- How might we redesign the exam process to better align it with our goals and principles for student learning? [we can suggest specific processes here but also broader goals like for example, like "building a structure that enables feedback and revision over time"]

Together, the committee proposed a new structure designed intentionally around the social nature of writing (Roozen, 2015), where students wrote a literature review on their readings over a period of months and could seek support and feedback on

it from faculty and peers along the way, as is more aligned with how writing in the academy works. At the time of this writing (about one year after the FLC finished), several students are undergoing the new exam procedure pilot, with qualitative research on both student and faculty member experiences underway. Overall, Jason leveraged what they had learned and discovered during the FLC to make meaningful change in their graduate program, seeking support from the WAC facilitators but also engaging and brainstorming directly with their colleagues.

Implications of WAC's Potential to Help Mediate Contradictions in Graduate Writing

As these case examples illustrate, faculty have great potential to improve their graduate writing instruction and change graduate writing structures in their programs. Regarding the comprehensive exam process, Jason and their composition and rhetoric colleagues hold invaluable knowledge about how writing works and were able to draft a new design that was well-aligned with writing studies research as well as their own motives and goals for the exam, in lieu of the gatekeeping ones that were thrust upon them with the previous iteration. They made these changes on their own but supported by HWAC programming. Jason was given time, space, and funding in the FLC to explicitly investigate and pursue support for graduate writing (and then was encouraged to partner with faculty outside the FLC group to continue these efforts). In gerontology, Jennifer and her colleagues felt guided by HWAC programming but possessed the agency to revamp their curriculum to not only change the master's thesis into a culminating paper but also to require specific coursework that was designed intentionally to support MGS students in completing their culminating paper. Jennifer and her colleagues did this work on their own; members of the HWAC staff did not suggest and force these changes upon them. They made these changes in conjunction with what they learned during Fellows, and continued to seek and receive HWAC support as they carried on with further revisions.

An important implication of these examples, too, is that part of WAC's support in graduate writing structures might simply be gathering faculty together to explicitly focus on graduate-level writing instruction, which is something graduate faculty historically do not do (Keefer, 2015). As the beginning section described, WAC has not historically focused on graduate writing support, but the WAC programming described here provided faculty with an opportunity to actually discuss these matters—be it intentionally from the start with the FLC as with Jason, or organically through the work of Fellows with Jennifer. Jason benefitted from sitting down and learning about how other graduate programs discussed writing with their students and structured assignments/requirements. Jason, too, benefited from learning about their own agency in creating changes—Jason discovering the department could set

its own comprehensive exam procedures after meeting with the acting graduate dean, for example.

At this point, a reader might ask what, exactly, does "change" in some of the ways mentioned throughout this article have to do with writing? A broader question for WAC programming writ large might be: how much of programming like this is about writing vs. larger systemic change? The best answer to this question is that it is about *both*. The work of these faculty members happened in large part because they recognized the issues discussed as systemic and systematic. That is: learning to write in graduate school exists within a local activity system and is impacted by larger, systemic history and cultures, such as the way high stakes writing is structured (and has been historically). Student struggles with writing exist in part because of the traditional writing structures themselves, which can—and should—be adapted over time to align better with faculty members' goals for student learning. Jason and their colleagues realized their comprehensive exam structure did not promote learning as much as enforce gatekeeping. Jennifer and her colleagues realized the master's thesis was asking students to do the kind of work they didn't necessarily intend to do postgraduation. Once both groups recognized and understood these tensions, they could then go about making change. While helping faculty locate who to talk to about changing comprehensive exam structures and the like might not exactly be in the purview of WAC, effecting change on graduate writing instruction *is*—even if we help them with a few other non-writing-related things along the way.

Moving Forward: WAC as Change Agents in Graduate Writing

Overall as a movement, WAC has not intentionally sought to improve graduate-level writing instruction, but as these case studies indicate, WAC centers and programming can serve as vital support to impact not only classroom-level instruction but wider systematic support for graduate writers. Faculty face writing-related instructional challenges at *all* levels, undergraduate and graduate alike. They come to our programs and events with specific needs as writing teachers, and are also faced with wider challenges vis-à-vis programmatic structures and local conditions.

How might other WAC programs more intentionally support graduate educators in both their day-to-day teaching of graduate-level writing as well as the design and structure of writing tasks themselves? WAC programs might consider starting with a needs assessment where they can gauge the needs graduate faculty members have on campus and learn more about their specific challenges related to teaching graduate-level writing. As I've argued elsewhere, graduate faculty often have no direct instruction on how to teach graduate writing (Olejnik, 2022). They are thus in need of more explicit conversation about the topic, and benefit (as the FLC example demonstrates) with talking to other faculty about similar goals and challenges and learning what

innovations they can do. WAC sessions could even be framed as such, and promote the opportunity for graduate faculty to gather and discuss ways to support their graduate writers as well as their undergraduate writers.

Moving forward, WAC centers can serve as sites that can support faculty members who are not otherwise receiving support for graduate writers specifically. Not every university has graduate programs, of course, or some may have very specific kinds, such as professional graduate programs that lack the sort of research-based focus that both the master's and doctoral programs profiled in this article have. Nonetheless, universities and contexts that *do* have graduate programs likewise have faculty who face specific challenges and can benefit from targeted support. And in a world that chases efficiency and where universities are beholden more and more to paradigms of education that are more neatly and easily assessed and designed, who better to support faculty and programs in designing meaningful, thoughtful, learning-based structures of writing instruction than WAC programs? In this way, I charge WAC programs with reclaiming the task and role of writing instruction in graduate education—perhaps before someplace else with less generative potential does.

Acknowledgments

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