

Moira Casey and Karen Cajka
with Stephanie Roach

From Other to Another: Regional Campus Freshman English in Transition

The ideal Freshman English Program that we are working toward is one in which quality writing instruction—that is, instruction that centers academic writing on inquiry, that appeals to student curiosity and intellectual ambition, and that enriches the intellectual life of instructors as well—permeates the whole University system.

—Tom Recchio, UConn Director of Freshman English

One policy, document, program does not fit everywhere and everyone.

—Becky Caouette, UConn Co-Assistant Director of
Freshman English

IN HIS ESSAY ON “HETEROTOPIAS,” MICHEL FOUCAULT PROPOSES THAT THE INTERESTING aspect of the various sites within a society lies in “the set of relations by which a given space can be defined” (“Of Other”). To describe a site, then, for Foucault, also involves describing the other sites to which it relates and the nature of these relationships. For many years, a description of the sites at which the composition work at the University of Connecticut (UConn) occurred would most likely have excluded the program’s relationships to its regional sites—to the spaces where composition work occurred at the regional campuses. Like other flagship state universities where some of us, faculty and particularly graduate students, do composition work, UConn educates the majority of its undergraduate and graduate students at a residential main campus located far from its state’s urban centers. Yet a significant number of the University’s students are being educated at the regional campuses, smaller spaces that work to offer the same University education to students in other, primarily urban, areas of the state. Although each regional campus, or what the University calls its “other major

instructional sites" ("NEASC"), is developing its own four-year academic specialty area (Marine Sciences in Avery Point, Business in Stamford, Urban Studies in the Tri-Campus consortium of Hartford, Waterbury and Torrington), they exist primarily as two-year commuter campuses, serving traditional-aged students intending to complete their degrees at the main campus at Storrs as well as adult returning students completing their degrees through the Bachelor of General Studies Program. In providing "local access" to University offerings and "act[ing] in common for the benefit of the entire University" (Becher), the regional campuses of UConn are fulfilling part of the mission that the Strategic Planning Task Force on Regional Campuses articulated in 1997 and that the Board of Trustees endorsed as a ten-year goal of the University. At the time the regional mission was endorsed, the director of the Torrington campus hoped the statement showed "all campuses can become full service education centers and not just adjuncts in far-off places" (Becher). Five years later, the UConn Freshman English program faced the fact that it had fallen short of this goal in terms of supporting writing instruction at the regional campuses. We (Moira and Karen) worked as writing program administrators at UConn's regional campuses; we witnessed and participated in an attempt to reframe the nature of Storrs' relationship to the "far-off" places where UConn Freshman English was taught.

Moira served as the Composition Coordinator at UConn's Waterbury campus in 2002-03, while in 2003-04 Karen served as the Tri-Campus Freshman English Coordinator, based in Waterbury and was responsible for that campus along with those in Hartford and Torrington. When first approached about the position of Composition Coordinator, Moira was looking forward to her final year of graduate study in the UConn English Department, and the idea of gaining practical experience in writing program administration sounded great—she would expand her work experience and apply much of what she had learned working as a graduate assistant and composition teacher at the Storrs campus. Karen experienced a similar entry into her role as Tri-Campus Freshman English Coordinator; although hers was a full-time, one-year lectureship, she too had come straight from the graduate program at Storrs and was set to defend her own dissertation during the fall 2003 semester. Thus, we both inhabited dual roles, as Writing Program Administrators and as English doctoral candidates, as products of main campus composition pedagogical training and as representatives of regional campus priorities.

To better understand her new job, Moira first asked why Waterbury might need a "Composition Coordinator" at all. Her conversations with Waterbury composition faculty and administrators revealed that they needed more guidance and support than they had received from the Storrs Freshman English Office. Some instructors habitually gave students A's on essays not too far evolved from "What I did on my Summer Vacation." Students, many who

had begged to be over-enrolled (as the Waterbury registrar confirmed), packed these sections. Other instructors failed nearly every student, and *their* students filed complaint after complaint. Moira witnessed some of these students showing up in tears at the campus writing center, questioning whether they could ever meet their instructors' apparently impossible demands. Such teachers were, of course, the extremes; yet so great was the psychological impact of their methods that for other faculty, administrators, and even students, they came to stand as "typical" English teachers. In fact, most instructors held more reasonable expectations and strove to give students their best efforts. Yet if any teachers—good or bad, devoted or indifferent—had questions or wanted institutional feedback about their syllabi, assignments, policies, or practices, they could get it only from the Storrs office. Few, however, ever asked.

In one sense, this was fortunate; as Stephanie Roach (Assistant Director of Freshman English at Storrs, 1997-2003), attests, the UConn Freshman English Program, with its hundreds of instructors teaching thousands of students on the regional and main campuses as well as over fifty Cooperative Program high schools across the state, proved too unwieldy for just one Director (with little course release) and one graduate Assistant Director to effectively administer. But the silence that grew between Storrs and the regional campuses signaled a serious problem: too many instructors worked without any pedagogical support or sense of connection with the Storrs office. Simply put, Storrs failed in its responsibility to articulate and negotiate the principles and practices of the program with the sites engaged in its work. Stephanie found herself confronting two nagging questions: "Could an office as small as ours responsibly administer a program so large?" and "Was I the right person to advise from the 'outside' those inside each and every location?" Our spatially sprawling program needed stronger communication to ensure its integrity.

Thus, as coordinators, we strove to communicate the values of the Storrs writing program to the regional campus instructors and to help them make curricular changes sensitive to the needs of the regional student bodies but at the same time more uniform with the teaching at other UConn campuses. Moira, initiating this effort, did not view this process as an aggressive or dramatic one. Although she did want to enforce certain policies that she believed could only improve the instructional environment (such as forbidding over-enrollment), Moira did not want to force everyone at Waterbury to teach in the same way or to teach in the same way that faculty at Storrs were teaching (of course, the ways in which Freshman English courses are taught in a program as large as the one at Storrs vary enormously). Moira collected sample syllabi and assignments which she placed in files for instructors to consult, got the Writing Center up and running (serving as the sole Writing Center tutor as well), reminded instructors of important academic dates, and met with Tom Rec-

chio, Director of the UConn Freshman English program, and the other regional composition coordinators on a monthly basis to discuss issues facing the regional campuses.

During the two successive years we spent at the regional campuses, the entire UConn Freshman English program was undergoing a dramatic transition involving new course descriptions, different credit requirements, and an increased effort on the part of Tom Recchio and the Storrs Freshman English office to connect the various sites where composition instruction took place across the UConn campuses. Our efforts constituted early contributions to a larger and continuing process of programmatic changes to UConn Freshman English; now, after experiencing mental and physical distance from our original experience, we perceive just how great an impact those changes had upon the sites of composition in which they worked. Although in what follows we touch on ways we saw these changes affecting some of the faculty, staff, and students throughout UConn's campuses, we, of necessity, focus specifically on our own experiences, philosophies, and perspectives as writing program administrators involved in such changes. We certainly hope that, in opening up an examination of the nature of the relationships between the regional and main campuses at one university, we encourage others holding different positions in other institutions to add their voices to further enhance, and likely complicate, the discussion.

Navigating Programmatic Geographies, Material and Imagined

In 1989, when Tom Recchio became Director of Freshman English (FE), he initiated the first real discussion of how academic work, and specifically composition work, was accomplished across all UConn campuses. Over the years that would follow, the number of graduate students and full-time faculty working within the administration of the FE program would increase significantly, as would the exploration of the relationships among the various sites and spaces in which the work—administrative and teaching—of the program is performed. When, beginning in 2001, Tom instituted significant curricular changes to the FE program, the relationships of these sites suddenly became highlighted for everyone involved.

Prior to the curricular changes, freshmen at UConn took a sequence of two 3-credit courses, the first of which (English 105) focused on writing in response to demanding, interdisciplinary non-fiction and the second of which (English 109) focused on writing in response to so-called "imaginative" literature. The program maintained a clearly articulated philosophy, but instructors enjoyed great freedom in selecting texts and designing assignments to meet the program goals. While courses at the regional campuses were taught almost exclusively by adjunct instructors, courses at the main campus were taught primarily by Graduate Teaching Assistants. For many years Tom had felt that the TA teaching load was untenable.

The university defined a full TA assignment as twenty hours of work per week, and most departments met this requirement by placing graduate students in large lecture courses as graders and recitation leaders. However, the English department (with very few writing faculty) expected its TAs to meet the full instructional responsibilities for two sections of twenty students each, every semester. English TAs who wanted to be responsible instructors and students found it difficult to balance the demands of good writing instruction with their advisors' demands to privilege research over teaching.

While the TA workload raised questions about the effectiveness of the writing program at Storrs, Tom was assessing the effectiveness of the two-course curriculum itself. Teachers seemed to be spending many hours grading, yet the curriculum did not seem to be advancing the work of writing in the way that Tom desired. On every campus, ENG 109 had evolved into an "Introduction to Literature" course with less attention to writing instruction. Also, the link between 105 and 109 started to become less apparent; patterns of course registration revealed students deferring 109, not taking the second course until later in their academic careers, long past its intended utility as an introductory writing course. To address these issues, Tom determined that UConn needed to redesign the curriculum to increase both the quality and quantity of instruction in the FE courses. He designed two four-credit courses, each capped at 20 students and incorporating one hour of conference time per week; students could choose either English 110 (with non-fiction readings) or English 111 (with readings from literature) thus beginning their college careers with a single intensive Writing Seminar designed to prepare them for the writing assignments they would face over the next four years. Although the required FE credits would now be reduced by two (from the two-course, six credit sequence to one four-credit course), students in the new, workshop-like courses would get, through an emphasis on individual and group conferencing during each paper cycle, more individualized attention and thus a more intensive writing experience. Instructors still selected specific readings and designed their own assignments, but the new philosophy of the curriculum signaled a significant shift in both the concept and practice of strong writing instruction in the FE program.

The new courses emphasized complexity and rigor in thinking and writing. According to the course descriptions, students first and foremost must attain the "ability to write critical essays that demonstrate a thoughtful engagement with complex readings of some length that reflect points of view on material new for the students" (Recchio, "English"). Sequenced writing assignments "encourage extended and sustained inquiry" while revision moves students from "open-ended exploration to clarity of point of view and sustained complex coherence." Concentrated interaction with instructors and other students encourages a connection with real readers, and helps students come to a more nuanced and thorough

understanding of the nature and meaning of writing. The 110 textbook preferred by the Storrs FE office and required for first-semester graduate instructors exemplifies the pedagogy: *Ways of Reading*, Bartholomae and Petrosky's challenging anthology, offers highly complex, often theoretic, academic readings.

The intensity of the new curriculum allowed Tom to advocate successfully for mandatory reductions in TA teaching load at Storrs. At the same time, implementing the new

"reified a parallel sense of intellectual distance, of "otherness" from the main campus"

curriculum on all campuses necessitated a serious reconsideration of staffing and instructional practices throughout the program. As a result, the differing needs of the regional campuses became sharply visible to main campus. In their efforts to strengthen the composition program at UConn, those working within the program confronted, as those there now still negotiate,

the differing student bodies and instructional environments on the regional and main campuses, and more significantly, the psychological distance that had grown up between Storrs and the other sites.

These spatial issues which both propelled and inhibited the evolution of the Freshman English program on the regional campuses are, to employ composition theorist Nedra Reynolds' terms, "material"—the geographical distances separating the campuses and the work spaces allocated to WPAs, as well as "imagined"—the perceived power relations of WPAs and faculty, and the "intellectual hierarchy" University policies create in the student body (13). Interestingly, Reynolds' assertion that "[c]omposition needs to develop ways to study space differently that might close the gap between imagined geographies and material conditions for writing, between the spaces and practices" echoes criticisms made nearly fifty years earlier (30), in the first study of the post-World War II boom in the founding of regional campuses, and their relationships to main campuses. In a 1952 article tellingly titled, "Stepchild of the College Campus," Clayton M. Schindler determined that, despite the fact that at regional campuses "commendable academic work is being done" while maintaining "a sound, low-cost way of minimizing economic barriers to the attainment of higher education," considerable gaps existed which undermined "the legitimacy of the claim . . . that these divisions are 'integral parts of their entire college or university organizations'" (192). Though he obviously does not use Reynolds' terminology, Schindler's analysis demonstrated that the geographical distance from main to regional campus reified a parallel sense of intellectual distance, of "otherness" from the main campus. He called for changes "to combat the indif-

ference of the [main] campus administrative and instructional staff to the program of the [regional] division" and, more importantly, "to correct the opinion of the [main] campus administrative and instructional staffs that the [regional] work is inferior" (194). Even when surveys demonstrated that regional campus students who moved to the main campus "equaled or surpassed their contemporaries who started at the parent institution . . . the proper administrative authorities ignored the results of these surveys, they did not utilize them effectively in informing their staffs, or the staff members themselves chose to ignore the evidence" (194). Finally, employing a striking image of simultaneous closure of both the "material" and "imaginary" gaps, Schindler optimistically "hope[s] that time and conscious effort will bring these 'stepchildren' into the bosom of the family" (228).

In the half-century after this article appeared, the University of Connecticut as an institution seems to have done little to fulfill Schindler's hope prior to Tom Recchio's arrival. The overall University policies and goals directly and indirectly created an imaginary space inhabited by students and some faculty which reinforced the "otherness" of regional campus academics, including composition, thus complicating the initial efforts of the Freshman English program to bridge both the material and imagined spaces of the six campuses.

Imagined Geographies: Confronting Hierarchies

A significant hierarchy we confronted during the transitional moment from ENG 105 and 109 to ENG 110/111 was the assumption that the regional campuses and their students were academically inferior to the main campus. For, despite claims that "University standards for admission and student achievement are uniform for all campuses" (Undergraduate Catalog 2004-5), admissions data from the Office of Institutional Research reveal that at least half of the first-year students admitted to regional campuses have been deemed unqualified for admission to the main campus at Storrs and, instead, were accepted to a regional campus to which they never directly applied.¹ These statistics reveal an "unofficial" admissions practice in direct contradiction to the University's stated policy, a fact which regional campus fresh-

1. The ratio of applications to admissions at regional campuses is 195%. To illustrate: in the years 2000-3, 3,702 students applied directly to the regional campuses, while 7,247 students were offered admission—the additional admissions supplied by students who had originally applied to Storrs. Even assuming that every student who applied directly to the regional campuses was accepted (certainly not the case), fully half of each entering freshman class consists of students "rejected" from Storrs and "sent down" to a regional. SAT scores for Storrs-admits are 13% higher than those of regional admits, and mean class-rankings are 24% higher (SAT: Storrs 1149, Regionals 1015; Class Ranks: Storrs 78, regionals 63). Most disturbingly, 6-year graduation rates are 68% higher for Storrs-admits than for regional-admits (the 1999 six-year graduation rate was 72% for Storrs-admits and 42% for regional admits; the average is 69% vs. 41% over the past five years). All data is cited from the University of Connecticut's Office of Institutional Research reports, freely available on the UConn website (www.uconn.edu).

men quickly discern. For example, Karen's students in her Basic Writing classes at Waterbury spoke quite openly of having been "rejected" by the Storrs campus and "sent down" to Waterbury instead. For some of her students, this process reinforced a sense that they lacked academic ability, while others took it as a challenge to prove that Storrs had made a mistake. And sadly, showing how far this idea of inferiority had permeated regional campus identity, the students also believed that because Karen had taught for many years at Storrs before coming to Waterbury, they were taking a "real" class with her, something that made them both proud (thus annoying their friends in other Basic Writing sections) and nervous.

Many regional campus faculty have internalized a similar sense of their students as "less than," and the cover of the University's publicly-stated policy over its private admissions practice makes this problematic mental space difficult to eradicate. In fact, no one seems to know in what way, precisely, the regional campus students were found wanting, as current graduate co-assistant director of the Freshman English program Becky Caouette demonstrates in her attempt to define the problem: "Sometimes students who apply to Storrs are sent to regional campuses for the first two years. Whatever the reason for this—it might be test scores—regional campuses oftentimes are considered the place where less intelligent UConn students go." Her fellow co-assistant director, Frank Napolitano concurs, citing the phrasing commonly used by both Storrs and regional campus students: "many students on the regional campuses are said to have 'flunked out' of the Storrs campus."

This results in a troubling belief among faculty that the courses they teach must be made less rigorous for the regional campus student body. Certainly the Storrs curriculum can succeed with regional campus students, even if some are, in fact, less prepared as readers and writers (compared to their Storrs counterparts) to undertake college writing instruction. Regional students can learn to read texts as complex as those endorsed by Storrs and respond to assignments that encourage them first to respond thoughtfully to the readings and later to construct coherent, thesis-driven academic essays on topics related to the readings. But we did not often find such instruction on the regional campuses. Moira discovered that some of the Waterbury instructors (not all, we should note) felt that their student population couldn't handle the rigors of the Storrs FE pedagogy. Moira disagreed—she didn't want Waterbury students to receive a watered-down FE experience. Ironically, those faculty who offer less demanding courses, and thus strengthen this demeaning perception of regional campuses, do so with the best intentions of helping their students feel better about themselves and their academic abilities. They want their students to succeed in composition courses, and so, we found that many instructors assigned readings and essay topics that they felt sure their students could handle successfully. Although we agree that confidence building can be important for some student writ-

ers, we believe students' confidence can still be built by challenging them to succeed with complex reading and writing assignments.

Interestingly, the classroom spaces of the regional campuses often exacerbate the "less-than" bias. While the Storrs campus boasts many new buildings and high-tech classrooms, spatial signals of "serious" learning, the regional campuses can feel like (and some, in fact, once were) high schools. Further, the very "regionalness" of regional campuses ensures that every student takes classes with numerous former high school classmates. Taking classes with one's high school buddies may help to create community within the classroom, but it can also help reinforce the imagined notion that attending a regional campus is less like attending college than it is like extending high school—what we might term the "13th grade" stereotype. Unsurprisingly, when physical environments seem not to have undergone significant change, it can be hard for students to make or maintain the intellectual change necessary for college-level work. Coupled with the University-created and faculty-perpetuated "less than" image, these factors militate strongly against one lone program's attempts to move its curriculum from "other" to "another."

Despite, or rather, because of, this negative image, we did, and do stand behind the Freshman English program's efforts to offer all UConn freshmen the guidance and challenge to succeed with their writing. We believe that our daily practices in the classroom can account for that underpreparation (as opposed to instituting fundamental pedagogical differences). Certain elements fundamental to the FE program—an emphasis on revision, student-centered classrooms, one-on-one conferences about student papers, just to name a few—we hoped to see incorporated into every FE class at Waterbury. We believe that regional campus students can and should be exposed to a similarly challenging writing pedagogy to which main campus students are exposed. Regional students may in fact be less prepared, but faculty who learn to reject the negative image can help them meet the challenge.

Imagined Geographies: Support versus Surveillance

For virtually their entire existence, UConn's regional campuses operated as separate fiefdoms, maintaining loose ties with the main campus at Storrs but propagating their own methods and identities. The Freshman English program is the first academic entity to undertake a serious and sustained effort toward curricular consistency across all campuses. But what one person sees as reinforcement another sees as imperialism. We felt that our roles were ones of reinforcement, but we knew that our presence on the regional campuses, and our attempts to enforce certain policies (such as the enrollment cap or the need for instructor/student conferencing) might be viewed as imperialist. Becky Caouette points out that "for years, these faculty and regional FE programs functioned without administrative

support from knowledgeable composition coordinators, and so the presence of someone from the 'central' campus suddenly showing up rocked a few boats, I think." The regional campus, its administrators and faculty, had become accustomed to acting autonomously; and thus a new WPA, installed by the powers that be at Storrs, often was viewed with some suspicion as a foreigner imbued with a strange authority.

The adjunct instructional staff understood this new presence of full-time WPAs at regional campuses as both support and surveillance. The regional WPA was forced to establish a seemingly conflicted "mental space" in which to convey her desire to respect the unique identities and needs of the particular regional campus, while simultaneously ensuring the coherence of the FE program to curricular goals; to assure instructors of their value, while simultaneously establishing her authority over their continued employment. Stephanie Roach, assistant to the director during this period of change, notes that "the program office was finding ways to do more responsibly what we wanted to do all along: support all teachers and students working in the program. But this gesture of solidarity and real commitment to local conditions was read by some as a regime change, simply a new and meddlesome administrative layer."

Stephanie's phrase "regime change" is particularly apt, as Karen at one point found herself labeled a "jack-booted Nazi" by the friend (a faculty member in a department other than English) of a long-term instructor who, after two years of intensive professional development support, remained unwilling or unable to adapt her composition course to the new curriculum and was removed from the FE faculty. Yet others, including non-English faculty teaching Writing Intensive courses, regularly sought her advice. Moira experienced this often frustrating duality as well. Some instructors viewed her as a means of support for their teaching. Upon her arrival at Waterbury, these instructors expressed their desire for more assistance with and feedback for their assignments, policies, and teaching practices. They willingly shared syllabi with Moira and even invited her to observe their classes. Others viewed her as a new and unfamiliar boss, and expressed apprehension about Moira's role.

The administration, however, seemed to feel differently. Early on, Moira sat down with the Waterbury registrar to discuss FE policies not in place there, particularly the requirement that instructors not over-enroll students into their courses. Such a policy, the WPAs felt, supported the instructors, allowing them to say no to students, to keep class sizes small, and thus be able to respond appropriately to each individual student's writing. The new curriculum, we also felt, might be even more vulnerable to problems caused by over-enrollment; students needed intense, individualized attention in their single semester of composition since they could not count on a second semester to continue their writing instruction. When Moira raised this issue, she referred to the "Freshman English Program" and its policies. The

registrar replied that she had never heard UConn-Waterbury's FE courses referred to as part of a program, and that she had never heard of the over-enrollment policy. Yet she was very pleased by the use of the term "program" to include the composition work being done at Waterbury, and she seemed grateful for both the policies and the authorities who would enforce them. Both of us found that the regional campus administrators felt the presence of a representative from Storrs to be useful and supportive. Still, many instructors bristled at the thought of Storrs imposing a rule, no matter how much to their ultimate benefit, from the top down. There was, as yet, no shared "mental space" in which faculty and WPA might meet, no sense of a unified Freshman English "program" concerned with the welfare of all its constituents, students, faculty, and administrators alike.

Constructing such a mental space among the regional campus faculty, administration, and WPAs requires both time and trust. "When walking into a new place, you don't know them, they don't know you, and in a new position where there is no history for what you are asked to do (and more especially if you are temporary without the chance of building a history), where does the trust come from?" asks Stephanie. "Navigating this kind of space, coming in from the outside isn't impossible, but it isn't easy." One solution which evolved on the UConn regional campuses is the appointment of a campus-specific "Composition Coordinator," typically a member of the adjunct faculty who possesses "institutional memory" to assist the (tenured or tenure-track) Tri-Campus Freshman English Coordinator. In a sense, the Composition Coordinators occupy a unique position which allows them to engage in what Howard Tinberg calls "border talk." Tinberg, in discussing the new language needed by community college educators to validate the scholarship of teaching and learning, uses the concept of border talk to mean "a language that has currency across the divides between disciplines and institutions" (xi). Although regional campuses of large state institutions function differently than community colleges, successful border talk nevertheless can bridge the divides between the different populations (of both instructors and students) within the same institution but located in different geographical locations. At UConn, the Composition Coordinators also teach a course or two and/or work in the writing center and so they perceive both the goals of the program as articulated by Storrs *as well as* the immediate goals of the student population they serve; in Tinberg's terms, they serve as "translators" at UConn's "borders." For example, one student at Waterbury found himself failing his FE class and told Karen that this proved his suspicion that really he wasn't "college material." However, after working in the Writing Center with Sam Robinson, the Composition Coordinator at the time, the student finally confided that following family tradition he had attended the local technical high school and thus felt at a disadvantage compared to the other students. Sam talked with him about the average Waterbury student's background and preparation, and helped the stu-

dent develop the confidence to retake the FE course successfully the following semester. Sam, in his position as a kind of border translator, understands both the Waterbury student population characteristics *and* the very real demands of the larger UConn FE program. In this particular case, his ability to “translate” for the student helped this particular student rethink his initial perception of himself as different and therefore inadequate.

Ultimately, the WPA must construct, maintain, and invite regional campus faculty to meet in the “mental space” of a unified Freshman English program. WPA work consists mostly of forming relationships—with student and teachers as well as other administrators and campuses—and helping others form working relationships with colleagues, students, administrators and so on. The presence of regional WPAs facilitates the formation of relationships that unify a program. The FE and Composition Coordinators generate two-way communication—the regional WPAs bring communication from Storrs to their location but also, importantly, provide the main campus with ideas, response, and critique from the regional campuses. This critical feedback ensures that local concerns are addressed beyond the regional campus, strengthening the program as a whole. In turn, a stronger program means better support and advocacy for local conditions. Stephanie argues that “one responsibility of regional WPAs is helping to educate their local populations about the positive returns that come from cooperation,” and we would emphasize the importance of such a responsibility in order for regional campus WPAs to create a mental space in which connections amongst all the campuses are evident to all and perceived as symmetric, useful, positive. Perhaps because we ourselves worked so hard to achieve this, we agree with Tom Recchio in seeing a Freshman English program which “develops policies that respond to the specific needs of the student population on each campus. [What makes this work is] the quality of the personal relationships of everyone involved. There seems to me to be trust and openness.”

Material Spaces: Compression

Just as the mental spaces of a program and its material spaces such as classrooms affect the performance of composition work, the physical spaces from which composition programs are administered affect the function of the administration and can, potentially, affect the work of composition as well. When Stephanie first became the FE Assistant Director in 1997, the program inhabited an 8-foot-square faculty office; her predecessor even shared this tiny space with two other graduate students. So the small space designated as the Freshman English office wasn't even wholly dedicated to Freshman English. Stephanie began, then, to increase the imagined geography of the office, in part by arguing that the FE office needed to be perceived as a public space that would invite composition instructors to enter, and not as a private office that might discourage access. Tom Recchio agreed; the two other graduate

students moved out, and a couple of years later, when the English Department moved to a newly-renovated building, the FE Program settled into an office nearly three times the size of the original.

Stephanie also articulates an existing sense of metaphorical distance between the administrative office, such as it was, and the physically distant classrooms where FE classes took place. She says that when she began her work in the late 1990s, "the program didn't seem to be located anywhere." As with most large, rurally located universities, buildings housing classrooms appropriate for FE activities could be quite distant from the English Department. This meant that the "program," such as it was, fragmented into individual courses and didn't appear to be connected to a larger program.

Significantly, when faced with the problem of administering a composition program with virtually no physical spatial presence, Stephanie worked hard to create and publicize an identifiable center—a "Freshman English Office." She felt this to be important because "if a teacher doesn't understand the curriculum, has nowhere to turn with questions, feels outside the system enough to subvert its principles, then students are not learning at the level the university desires." As a graduate student and composition instructor during this period, what Moira felt reaffirms Stephanie's hypothesis. Although she wouldn't say she felt "outside" the system—and certainly not enough so that she would subvert its principles—after she completed the required teaching course for new graduate assistants, she felt entirely on her own. To her the UConn FE pedagogy seemed fixed rather than evolving; once Tom had communicated the principles, TAs would simply move on to deploy them without additional reflection on or revision of the pedagogy. Of course, in reality, that pedagogy did evolve—Moira tried different textbooks (moving away from and later back to the department's preferred text, *Ways of Reading*) and different classroom methods, but she did so largely independently, without the sense of a community in which teaching ideas and activities could be tested or critiqued. Although a spatial center was not all that she craved during these years, it seems interesting to note that when Stephanie began developing and publicizing the FE office as a public space, a stronger and more active community of teachers emerged even just within the Storrs campus. Brown bag workshops and teaching discussions started up, and suddenly people at all levels of graduate status started to share their teaching endeavors on a regular basis. A program office that could be considered the center of the operation emerged, and a community began to build around it.

Yet, once such a center has been established, recognized, and populated, it is possible to question the necessity of its powerful centrality for the entire UConn system. A typical metaphor, used in the corporate as well as academic worlds, for the relationship between "headquarters" and other offices describes the human body: for UConn, Storrs would function

as the "heart" supporting its regional "limbs." But centering Storrs presents problems. Storrs sits not at the geographic center of the UConn system, but rather in the northeastern corner of the state, not far from Hartford and Avery Point but a substantial distance from Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury. Although metaphorically and administratively, Storrs is "central" to the program, focusing on its centrality inhibits discussions of regional differences or the possibility of regional autonomy. For example, Becky admits that while Storrs benefits from greater "manpower and resources," she finds herself "beginning to resist the idea that a series of regional campuses must have a 'heart.'" Stephanie, too, wishes to avoid "an exclusively Storrs-centric view." In the past, because of a concentration of material and human resources in Storrs, UConn FE admittedly exhibited a Storrs identity. Thus, more space devoted to FE offices on the regional campuses will, in our opinions, enhance the decentralizing of the program, change the way in which composition work gets done, and thereby shape and make visible a *university* identity for Freshman English.

The first regional campus FE office was created at Waterbury in 2003 (interestingly, of a size smaller than the original 8x8 office at Storrs). Moira, as Waterbury Freshman English Coordinator, and after her Karen, as Tri-Campus Coordinator (based in Waterbury), both strove to develop this office into an active space in which the administration of the program as well as much of its theory, conversation, and practice could happen. In any organization the type and location of office space signifies status, so regional WPAs without offices, with shared offices, or with offices located far away from other faculty or staff can be seen as unimportant; further, the spatial erasure or distancing can undermine their effectiveness by impeding access to faculty, staff, and students. Becky says that she would "like to see each campus not necessarily have a Storrs-like FE office, but something useful in terms of resources—a range of textbooks to browse, a collection of colleague's assignments, syllabi, and sample student papers." Such resources make it possible to "adapt courses to meet the needs of different campuses and staff while still maintaining the same level of standards and expectations." The office space itself, as well as the resources collected within it, can help the regional campus programs address the differing needs of their diverse populations in ways consonant with the pedagogy and practices of the FE program as a whole. Syllabi files, for example, can provide instructors with examples of *both* Storrs syllabi and those created by their fellow regional campus instructors.

Material Spaces: Sprawl

Prior to the recent changes in the administration of the program on the regional campuses, geographical distances seemed to present nearly insurmountable obstacles. For one, the geographical distances between the six campuses functioned to prevent administrators from

traveling among the campuses and communicating. For example, while the Hartford campus lies just over 30 miles from Storrs, the Waterbury campus is nearly 60 miles away, and the Stamford campus over 100 miles distant from the main campus. The geographical challenges have, in the past, been exacerbated by a lack of financial support for travel among the regional campuses. Tom Recchio notes that until recently, “there have been almost no resources to pursue regional campus initiatives (for the first ten years of my job my discretionary budget was \$0.00!).” As a result, the regional campuses largely operated on their own; in Stephanie’s words, “Some locations came to lead an existence so separate from the program office [at Storrs] that ties between the two were almost imperceptible. . . . in our various spaces we were all simply operating in what seemed like comfortable silence.”

Through the implementation of the curricular and administrative changes, Storrs exerted a central authority: the changes emanated from Storrs, Tom as the director worked at Storrs, and even the regional campus coordinators arrived fresh from Storrs. A co-director of the FE program, Sarah Winter was also hired at and located in Storrs in 2002. Yet Becky, like most of the WPAs involved at the time, expresses reluctance about perpetuating “a stigma that the Storrs campus is elitist.” While imposing overall programmatic change, the main campus WPAs came to reconsider their authority and to see a need for altering the Storrs-centric identity of the program.

Becky served as a regional campus facilitator during the transition to the new, one-course, four-credit FE requirement. This experience revealed to her that, as our prior examples have illustrated, many of the faculty at the regional campuses sometimes resentfully (and accurately) perceive the Storrs office to be the “dictator and the regional campuses must follow orders.” Although this type of relationship is, to use another spatial metaphor, far from the truth, the belief in its existence must emphatically be countered by FE administrators. To that end, Becky traveled to the regional campuses, spoke with the faculty, and generally made herself “available to answer questions, discuss logistics, and incorporate regional campus suggestions into the FE evolving policies.” FE administrators from Storrs working on regional campuses begin to understand the situation of the regional faculty and the regional sites in which they work. As a result, those graduates who served as regional WPAs express reluctance to elevate Storrs above the other campuses.

Interestingly, the early practice of employing graduate students as WPAs on the regional campuses may have (despite the best intentions of the Storrs office) exacerbated the problems in the inter-campus relations, and, rather than helping to decentralize Storrs, might actually have served to *recentralize* Storrs. TAs may appear to be young and inexperienced, especially to regional campus adjuncts teaching at their campus for perhaps ten or even twenty years: “One of the biggest issues is resentment, for lack of a better word from some of

the more experienced members of the regional campuses," notes Becky, "when a new WPA, originally and often a TA [from Storrs], gets plunked down in the middle of their campus and is suddenly 'in charge' of the composition program." Why do this, then? Why install TAs as WPAs at the regional campuses when doing so will likely cause resentment? The answers speak to the marginalization of composition within the academy and within English departments. Full-time English Department faculty members, already marginalized by their regional campus status, can be reluctant to sink further in the hierarchy by taking on composition, even in an administrative role.

"providing the means
to 'de-other' the
regional campus
composition programs"

Typically, English faculty at the UConn regional campuses do not teach composition as part of their regular teaching load, are not generally trained as compositionists, and thus would not make likely WPA candidates. Additionally, the FE Director could fairly easily assign a TA to a regional campus, without having to request a new faculty line or adjunct salary. Working within a system frequently reluctant to allocate faculty and/or financial resources to composition work, Tom initialized the process of connecting the regional campus programs using the resources already at his disposal.

But these recentralizing Storrs-incursions ultimately proved necessary in providing the means to "de-other" the regional campus composition programs, and to eventually garner additional resources. As Stephanie characterizes it, the FE program "did the right thing (changing the curriculum) for, initially, the wrong reasons (considering benefits to TAs but not other instructors) and with the wrong communication style (top down). Yet, thanks to the advocacy of the regional WPAs, a new, more effective model for FE program operations ultimately resulted." The regional WPAs who work in the spaces of the regional campuses with the regional faculty, visibly and powerfully connect their work to the main campus. Tom Recchio asserts that while "the presence of transitional WPAs where there have been none before creates anxieties among adjunct faculty, generates resistance in some cases, and presents challenges to the administrative status quo" those WPAs who moved from Storrs to "the UConn regional campuses have been profoundly successful in their work as evidenced by the substantial commitment of resources that have followed in their wake." This substantial commitment of resources has included, notably, the creation of a full-time tenure-track position of Tri-Campus FE Coordinator, a compositionist who administrates the FE programs at the Hartford, Torrington, and Waterbury campuses. A full-time member of the English faculty at Torrington took on the position of Director of FE at UConn's Stamford campus. These full-time, tenure-track or tenured faculty

members possess more real (and perceived) authority than we ever possessed, and thus these appointments help balance the administrative centrality of Storrs.

Other Becoming Another

The imagined geographies and material spaces in which the University of Connecticut Freshman English program exists may contain obstacles, but also contain the means for lessening those obstacles in the quest to move from “other” to “another.” One way to reframe the relationship among the main and regional campuses is to think in terms of “coherence”—not the literal meaning of sticking together, but the idea of congruence and consistency. Before she left Connecticut for the University of Michigan, Flint, in 2003, Stephanie saw serious strides being made toward “coherence rather than carbon copies” on the regional campuses and realized that “reaching absolute coherence . . . is far less important than the work we all do to get somewhere together.” Phrases such as “carbon copies” and “absolute coherence” seem to echo the kind of time-space compression of which theorist Nedra Reynolds is skeptical; Stephanie is skeptical as well, and so she foregrounds the metaphor of the journey, or movement between spaces—the “work we all do to get somewhere together”—over the metaphors that would describe the destination, or ideal space. Becky echoes Stephanie’s conviction, pointing out that “now we have voices that let us know what the concerns are at the regional campuses” and that this confluence of voices now comprises the UConn FE program. This results not in an identical program at each site, but rather in a mutual learning process, and a contact zone in which various voices can be expressed, validated, and responded to.

Yet, working at regional campuses created in us an understanding of the ways in which “otherness” can be more deeply, and persistently, felt in those geographically distant spaces. From their inherently privileged positions on the main campus, Storrs FE administrators can hold different perceptions about what elements constitute a coherent program, as well as when such a program has been attained, than will those who spend their time in the other spaces. The differences in the make-up of the instructorate at the main campus and regionals also perpetuate this sense of otherness. At the main campus, graduate teaching assistants, who participate in an intensive, week-long training in UConn’s specific FE curriculum and goals prior to entering the classroom, as well as in a weekly seminar during the first semester of teaching, teach nearly all of the composition courses. At the regional campuses, however, composition courses rest in the hands of adjuncts with widely varying backgrounds and experience, whose education about the curriculum and goals of the UConn FE program has not been nearly as complete or systematic. Efforts to alleviate this disparity, in the form of workshops held at the regional campuses, are welcomed by many of the adjunct instructors, and such responses encourage the FE administration. Becky comments that “the

excitement I see in both Storrs and regional campus instructors when we do workshops, and the questions they ask, lead me to believe they are more in need of support, collegiality, and the chance to talk things out and the encouragement to try new things than anything else."

The Sites of UConn Freshman English

Foucault asserts that "we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." As we suggest at the beginning of this article, the previous neglect of the regional campus Freshman English instruction at UConn might have led to a perception that UConn Freshman English was reducible to one site or that the main campus Freshman English program could be superimposed on the other sites. Like Foucault's "heterotopia," a kind of "counter-site" in which other sites "are simultaneously represented [and] contested" regional campuses may both represent and contest the university as it functions on the main campus. The changes in UConn's program, curricular and administrative, have inspired a discussion (to which we intend this article to contribute) about how UConn's regional campuses both represent and contest the main campus's Freshman English program.

Viewing the UConn Freshman English program as a set of sites defined by their interrelationships highlights the practical and theoretical issues confronted by the various campuses. The practical issues involve work conditions such as salary, benefits, and instructor time investment. Tom Recchio expresses a keen awareness that "different work conditions" encountered by Storrs and regional campus FE instructors perpetuate the "otherness" of regional campus composition work: "At Storrs, TAs are required to work 20 hours per week for their full TA appointment [which] includes full tuition waiver, medical insurance, and a salary of between \$16,000 and \$20,000 per academic year to teach one section of twenty students per semester" while adjuncts earn only "around \$4,500 per course with no benefits." Adjuncts, then, must teach at least two courses per semester to earn a salary comparable to what graduate students earn for teaching only one, thus "WPAs cannot expect from adjuncts the same time commitment that TAs at Storrs are able to make." Realistic about the interaction of material conditions and pedagogical goals as UConn strives for a more coherent FE program, Tom asserts that "the next step in improving composition instruction on the regional campuses, then, concerns improving the work conditions of adjunct instructors." The UConn Department of English is moving in that direction, supporting union efforts for long term contracts and increased pay, and offering stipends to adjuncts who participate in faculty development workshops. The very fact that working conditions are evolving and being discussed demonstrates that a dialogue about UConn FE now includes all of the sites at which UConn FE work gets done. Policies in development must now account for both the unique needs and shared goals of multiple sites.

Despite the material challenges, spatial distance need not result in radical pedagogi-

cal difference. It is possible to create coherence, but the task involves a great deal of long-term vision as well as small steps toward that vision. Sometimes, as with UConn's installation of TAs as WPAs at the regional campuses, these steps may recentralize the main campus before a long-term vision of decentralization (if desirable) can be achieved. Such a project must also involve creating a sense of community among the instructors who teach within university writing programs. These programs need to undertake an honest assessment of their overall culture, imagined and material, and the nature of the relationships among the campuses. They need to decide whether they would like their freshman composition program to become an integrated whole, or whether they would prefer separate, targeted composition programs at each campus. Regardless of the outcome of such a decision, WPAs must be mindful of two primary concerns. Tom Recchio succinctly defines these as, "Communication, communication, communication in a program defined clearly in relation to principled goals and teaching practices, and resources, resources, resources targeted in flexible ways from campus to campus to support that work."

UConn's process of transitioning its regional campus Freshman English programs from "other" to "another" has illuminated the conflicts between and within the university's material spaces and imagined geographies. These conflicts, rooted in the origins of the regional campus system and virtually unchallenged for decades, will not be resolved by the work of compositionists or English departments alone. However, the process of curricular change in the FE program has made us more cognizant of the power that both material spaces and imagined geographies exert over those who work within them. We have learned to heed Nedra Reynolds' admonition to "attend to neglected places, in their material rather than their imaginary forms" (30), to learn not to elide, but rather to value distance and difference wherever we accomplish the important work of composition.

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Karen Cajka is assistant professor of English and Women's Studies at East Tennessee State University, where she also supervises Secondary English Education students and teaches the writing pedagogy course for new Teaching Assistants. Her primary area of research, British women's educational writing, has recently expanded to include women who were active in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



Moira E. Casey earned her PhD from the University of Connecticut in 2003. She is now an assistant professor at Miami University Middletown, where she teaches composition, British literature, and women's studies. She has published articles in *Colby Quarterly* and *Teaching English* at the Two-Year College, and she is currently working on a book about Irish lesbian fiction.



Stephanie Roach is the Director of First Year Writing at the University of Michigan-Flint where she recently won the Dr. Lois Matz Rosen Junior Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award. She is an active member of the Council of Writing Program Administrators who often presents at national and regional conferences on WPA issues. Her work has appeared in *FORUM* and can be seen in the forthcoming edited collection *Promise and Perils of Writing Program Administration*.