INTRODUCTION

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Online writing instruction (OWI) is professionally and pedagogically precarious.

This precarity occurs on many planes, all at once. As online writing educators, we find ourselves working with colleagues who hold various ranks and thus are valued differently by their institutions: graduate teaching assistants, staff, contingent and term-limited faculty, those on full-time fixed terms, and those who are tenured or tenure-track. We find ourselves moving across teaching different modalities. We find ourselves still questioning both the "what" and the "why" of teaching online writing courses, from the traditional thesis-driven essay in a word-processed document to the possibilities of multimodal composing, with text, image, audio, and more being combined in new genres and forms.

Prior to the pandemic, the proliferation of online learning had already exacerbated challenges that have vexed writing instructors and writing program administrators for years, if not decades. These challenges include broad concerns about K–12 educational inequity manifesting in postsecondary writing courses, placement testing and tracking of students, student persistence in online learning, and the need for teacher professionalization for online learning. Also, there are the very specific needs of those teaching writing courses online that are above and beyond the normal challenges of composition courses, which will be explained more throughout the collection. It is with these concerns in mind that we issued a call to our colleagues to share their online writing practices; we did so in an effort to recenter conversations about what it means to teach writing online, in this moment and in the future.

New kinds of precarity continue to arise, such as the widespread use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) writing platforms and how they will impact what we teach in writing courses. While AI is not explicitly taken up in this collection, the responses that we see in this moment—panic towards edtech solutions such as AI-related plagiarism—is not new. Instead of edtech platforms policing students, we offer a stance that anchors this collection: intentionally designed assignments and activities that center student learning in context, reflection,

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and engagement. We hope we've provided a heuristic for scholars to continue exploring teaching/learning in more responsive, thoughtful, and critical ways.

DEFINING TERMS

Before exploring the intersections of professional and pedagogical precarity in OWI, we want to define anchor terms for this collection. A number of scholars—many of whom we call colleagues and some of whom are even featured in this collection—have offered definitions of OWI. Yet, in an effort to clarify and condense these many ideas, we define OWI as: **A specialized field within writing studies in which educators adapt principles of effective writing instruction—such as modeling the writing process, composing across modes and media, and providing timely feedback—to meet students' needs in networked learning environments, both in real-time, synchronous, or any time/asynchronous formats.**

We also identify instructional practices taken up in four modalities. For clarity, we have asked the authors in this collection to note their primary modality and adaptations for other modalities amongst the four listed below:

- **In-Person, Real-Time Learning:** traditional class sessions at scheduled times, where some students may join in real-time session via "hyflex" video call, but a majority of students attend in-person.
- **Online, Real-Time Learning:** where all students are expected to join scheduled video calls during regular class sessions.
- **Online, Any Time Learning:** online learning with minimal or no real-time attendance or interaction, and most work is self-paced with scheduled deadlines.
- **Hybrid Learning:** the whole class fluctuates between scheduled, in-person meetings and various forms of online learning.

Of note, the CCCC OWI Standing Group released a (2021) "State of the Art of OWI" report that further expanded on five different online and hybrid learning modalities that includes elements of location as well as time. As another example, a report from a provost's office (privately shared with us from another institution), featured seven different modalities. Some institutions are being more particular about listing modalities in course catalogs, and some are not. This is to say teaching and learning modalities are yet another inconsistent, precarious reality in OWI that will continue to change.

Finally, as we consider the terminology in which we discuss our work, we want to make a clear distinction: we opt for the term **better practices** instead of "best practices." We explore our rationale for this choice—striving always to be

"better" in our teaching as compared to offering a single "best" practice—below.

BEST VS. BETTER PRACTICES

As we think about meaningful OWI practices—those that include consistent teacher presence, active communication, opportunities for exploring content in different ways, and authentic assessments—we know that there is no single set of "best practices." In fact, throughout educational scholarship, the very idea of "best practices" has been contested. Though captured in a blog entry and not a formal article, the highly regarded educational historian Larry Cuban describes concerns about the concept of "best practices" being transported from the medical field into education. He contends that policy makers are encouraged to adopt "best practices" for "classroom management, professional development, and school working conditions" that do not account for variations in students, schools, and communities, and that best practices "has become a buzzword across governmental, educational, and medical organizations" (2010, para. 2). We agree, noting that the rhetoric of naming something a "best" practice suppresses any need to question that practice or critically reflect upon it. Jory Brass (2014), speaking to the field of English Education—yet certainly in line with concerns about college writing instruction—argues that a series of neoliberal educational reforms that include phrases such as "best practices" and "evidence-based education" should be seen as threats to teachers' autonomy and professionalism; also it can signal a shift toward "networks of policy entrepreneurs, state governors, philanthropists, foundations, for-profit and non-profit vendors, and edu-businesses" (p. 126). In this sense, the phrase "best practices" can be a disguise for the reforms that will ultimately undermine practices that contribute to high-quality teaching and learning.

To further this point, in the introduction to a volume of articles from scholars working in international and comparative education entitled "Working with, against, and Despite Global 'Best Practices': Educational Conversations Around the Globe" (2015), Sarfaroz Niyozov and Paul Tarc critique the inherent generalizability of "best practices," stating that these practices may appear neutral, but do not properly consider diverse individuals and contexts nor teach educators how to adapt purportedly "best practices" to meet the unique needs of their students and courses. While Niyozov and Tarc are critiquing the concept of "best practices" in light of global education, their argument aligns with the fact that the many contextual factors in any given post-secondary composition classroom—whether in-person, real-time learning; hybrid; online, real-time learning; or online, any time learning—also matter a great deal. Julian Edge and Keith Richards (1998) similarly critique the "insidious" abstractness of the term "best practice" and

highlight its potential to contribute to inequitable power dynamics instead of forwarding "emergent praxis," self-reflection, and iterative processes of teacher development (pp. 572-573). Though a deeper dive into critical theory and contesting the idea of "best practices" could be had here, we summarize by simply stating that these scholars remind us that there is no single, set version of a "best practice" that works in any writing classroom at any given moment.

Furthermore, the pedagogical precarity of online writing instruction, in general, and online writing educators, as individuals, further destabilize the idea of a one-size-fits-all best approach to online teaching and learning. Put another way, a pedagogy that has been studied in one institutional context with a particular student population may fail to be equally effective in a vastly different teaching and learning context. Thus, online writing educators must adapt "best" practices to their local contexts. Yet, due to the genre and space limitations, position statements by professional organizations often fail to make explicit the educators' labor that is required when adapting broad principles to the unique institutional contexts and student populations. As a result, new online writing educators might try and struggle when implementing supposed "best" practices without consideration for their local contexts.

Instead of promoting "best" practices, then, for all the reasons noted above, we propose an approach to teaching and learning that seeks to do "better" with the teaching and learning practices that we use across modalities. In our spring 2021 call for proposals, we noted that as teachers "continue to extend and adapt their teaching practices in a post-pandemic world, we know that there are still no 'best' practices, yet we continue to get better." We invited co-authors—"an expert in online writing instruction specializing in the particular theoretical approach alongside a colleague teaching the approach for the first time"—to work together to create chapters that explored authentic practices anchored in research and expertise in OWI, and that were delivered across multiple institutional contexts.

Our vision for "better practices," then, enacts theories and ideas captured in national statements by professional organizations in writing studies like the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators (GSOLE), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). In particular, we asked our co-authoring teams to draw from the following professional resources:

- *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (2011)*[1]
- *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for*

1 Available at https://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sd/news_article/242845/_PARENT/layout_details/false

Online Writing Instruction (OWI) (2013)[2]
- *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* (2015)[3]
- *Online Literacy Instruction Principles and Tenets* (2019)[4]
- Also, many authors reference the Personal, Accessible, Responsive, Strategic framework, created by Jessie Borgman and Casey McArdle (2019).[5]

Thus, chapters in the collection explicitly link each OWI practice to specific statements and principles so that readers can see the connection between principle, theory, and practice demonstrated in-action in online and hybrid writing contexts. A matrix provided in the collection's appendix maps how each principle or framework is used in specific chapters.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS COLLECTION

We need to continue to develop representations of what online writing instruction looks like as it is enacted by OWI practitioners in their local contexts. The teaching strategies featured in this collection have been adapted from evidence-based "better practices" and delivered across learning modalities so that readers can understand how to adapt these strategies for their own instruction at the course level or their own OWI professional learning at the programmatic level.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Through our review of the literature and in the process of collaborating with the co-authors of this collection—as described in the section "The Process for Building *Better Practices*" below—we identified five sections. By necessity, this literature review is merely a snapshot, not a comprehensive review. These sections highlight the dual foci of this book: to articulate the professional and pedagogically precarious contexts in which we find ourselves working and, more importantly, to imagine "better practices" that can be shared as a way to rethink the work that we do.

These sections are:

- The Role of Professional Organizations in Effective OWI
- The Need to Professionalize OWI Educators
- Issues of Student Access and Equity in OWI

2 Available at https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/groups/cccc/owiprinciples.pdf

3 Available at https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting/summary

4 Available at https://gsole.org/oliresources/oliprinciples

5 Available at https://wac.colostate.edu/books/practice/pars/

- The Precarity in Educator Labor and Status in OWI
- And, as in nearly any collection that is now examining the state of teaching and learning in an endemic world, The Effects of Emergency Remote Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Before tracing the history of OWI, we take a moment to introduce the guiding statements we draw from by professional organizations on effective writing and online writing instruction.

The Role of Professional Organizations in Effective OWI

As a distinct field of study, OWI has its own established theories and practices. Namely, scholars have explored the pedagogical practices, processes, and activities shown to be effective for online learners in the context of college-level composition courses. Moreover, they emphasize the importance of intentional online course design, expertise in online learning, and adequate institutional support. They discourage efforts to move in-person writing instruction to online spaces without significant consideration for the affordances and limitations of the online learning environment. Professional organizations like CCCC and GSOLE have similarly articulated "best practices" in online writing instruction, including recommendations for supporting OWI programmatically and institutionally. This section will briefly discuss some key aspects of effective OWI, as described by these scholars.

Numerous position statements have been created to guide OWI, most notably CCCC's *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)* (2013). When it was released a decade ago, such a statement was greatly needed as previous national statements in writing studies—which did describe the "habits of mind" a postsecondary writer would need—lacked attention or provided minimal guidance related to online learning (e.g., CCCC *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing,* 2015; CWPA/NCTE/NWP *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing,* 2011). This 2013 CCCC's statement was based on a survey of those who self-identified as "online writing instructors"—in whatever capacity they defined that role—and then crafted by an expert panel to articulate 15 foundational principles and effective practices for OWI. Practices and principles range from instructional to administrative and institutional. Importantly, the CCCC statement situates the role of technologies as something that should enhance the learning in OWI courses, not serve as additional barriers. Principle 2, for instance, argues that the center of OWI is writing, not technology, and Principles 3 and 4 note the importance of designing instruction around the "unique features of the online instructional

environment," importing "onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies" only when they are appropriate to the context for the course.

With the founding of Global Society of Online Literacy Educators (GSOLE) in 2016, the work of OWI then broadened to include "literacy" and not just "writing." A few years later, GSOLE adapted and updated their founding principles in their *Online Literacy Instruction Principles and Tenets* (2019). The first principle identifies a commitment to accessibility and inclusion, which should be shared by administrators, educators, tutors, and students. The second principle extends arguments for instructors' professional learning to advocate for regular processes of professional development and course and program assessment. The third principle links recurring professional development to iterative processes of instructional design with opportunities to reflect on how instruction enacts "current effective practices." And the final principle promotes active conversations and research across the online literacy instruction community through webinars and an annual conference. Combined with opportunities found through CCCC and CWPA, GSOLE's regular professional development opportunities and research support grants offer online writing educators support from a professional organization devoted specifically to the field of OWI. To those ends, GSOLE has created a Basic OLI Certification, a series of OLI focused modules that provides participants with a foundation of theories, research, and practice in OWI (Cicchino et al., 2021). The certification modules are taught by OLI educators from across the globe, centering the idea that the most qualified people to train online literacy instructors are other practicing online literacy instructors from their discipline.

In 2020, 2021, and 2023 publications from Borgman and McArdle introduced their "Personal, Accessible, Responsive, Strategic," or PARS, approach to OWI. The first co-authored book (2020) outlines PARS as a practical framework for designing and evaluating online writing course design while the edited collection (2021) features online writing educators putting PARS into practice. The third book in the PARS series (2023) focuses on programmatic strategies for implementing online instruction.[6] Borgman and McArdle additionally created the Online Writing Instruction Community,[7] a website that shares OWI resources and hosts open access professional development through its OWI symposium. Of note, the PARS framework is grounded in the user's experience and critically examines usability across three layers: design, instruction, and administration

6 All three PARS books are available through the WAC Clearinghouse under the Practices and Possibilities series: https://wac.colostate.edu/books/practice/

7 Learn more about the Online Writing Instruction Community at https://www.owicommunity.org/

(Borgman & McArdle, 2020, 2021, and 2023). PARS is part of a larger OWI repository organized by Borgman and McArdle under the OWI Community banner.

Because professional statements and frameworks are meant to be a directional charge for writing programs and because they come from committees staffed by scholars who engage with and conduct research in effective writing instruction and use that research to inform their recommendations, we have asked authors in this collection to link their better practices to position statements and frameworks from writing studies created to guide writing instruction.

While position statements and professional organizations advising the delivery and administration of OWI exist, writing program administrators and individual educators have expressed difficulties in enacting such principles locally. Melvin Beavers (2021) noted that first-year composition programs have higher rates of contingent faculty, restricted budgets for faculty development, and increasing online offerings creating a scarcity in the resources and time needed to create and sustain meaningful OWI professional development. Writing from a technical and professional communication (TPC) perspective, Lisa Melançon's (2017) study of contingent, online TPC faculty found that these faculty often lack both access to adequate professional development and training as well as the autonomy to impact the instructional design and delivery of their online courses. Thus, we argue that our abilities to enact the practices recommended by the professional organizations above relies heavily on OWI educators' labor conditions and on institutional and programmatic attempts to offer sustained professional development specific to both online and writing contexts. To put a finer point on it, "best" practices require "best" resources and "best" working conditions, yet the multi-faceted precarity experienced by OWI educators and administrators is rarely acknowledged as a limitation to enacting such practices in real life.

The Need to Professionalize OWI Educators

Online and networked elements are commonplace fixtures in higher education with the analog classroom as a largely anachronistic concept. Digitally enhanced education using, at the very least, learning management systems (LMSs), word processors, and discussion forum software allow every kind of course to have online spaces for file sharing, communication, and dialogue. A few data points are relevant here:

- A 2017 study conducted by Educause found that nearly every institution has an LMS in place (Pomerantz & Brooks, 2017).

- A 2019 report by the National Center for Education Statistics identified that over 7.3 million students were enrolled in online education before the pandemic.
- The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reported that "Almost all public 4- and 2-year colleges (96 and 97 percent, respectively) offered" distance education courses and programs (Ruiz & Sun, 2021, para. 3).

Given this reality, Jason Snart explores the potential advantages of the online-enhanced classroom in *Hybrid Learning: The Perils and Promise of Blending Online and Face-to-Face Instruction in Higher Education* (2010), sharing practices for building virtual presence and bringing blogs, wikis, and social bookmarking into hybrid and on-campus courses. While these online and networked elements have become ubiquitous in higher education, educators have not always been prepared to use digital technologies to effectively achieve their learning goals.

The need to adequately support online writing educators has been a long-standing call to action in writing studies—a call that echoes the perpetually missing or underdeveloped support of education professionals that has led to the creation of professional organizations (like NCTE, CCCC, CWPA, and GSOLE, to name just a few). Two decades ago, Kristine L. Blair and Elizabeth A. Monske (2003) stated that institutions might be eager to create online courses but "often forget to create structures that help faculty in the process" of designing online courses and "fail to revise tenure, promotion, and merit documents . . . to account for increased instructor labor" (p. 447). Sadly, many of these challenges remain.

Still, we trace a formative moment in OWI educator preparation to Beth Hewett and Christa Ehmann's (2004) book, *Preparing Educators for Online Writing Instruction: Principles and Processes*. Hewett and Ehmann justify OWI as a theoretically distinct field within writing studies and argue that educators need to be properly trained to teach writing online, whether those are either "online, real-time" or "online, any time" learning environments. Since the publication of Hewett and Ehmann's book, experienced OWI scholars and educators have provided writing studies with theoretical and practical guidance related to teaching writing online. Scott Warnock's (2009) *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why* defines and describes online writing pedagogy for new-to-online writing educators. Warnock includes such on-the-ground practices as communicating with students, organizing online learning content and introducing students to this organizational structure, and fostering student-centered conversations around writing and learning. Warnock advises online writing educators against adopting too many technologies, reinforcing the importance of clarity, usability, and ease

as students encounter the course and its assignments. Building on this emerging set of ideas, Hewett and DePew's (2015) edited collection *Foundational Practices of Online Writing Instruction* echoes many of these recommendations. Chapters are written by experts in the field, including many members of the CCCC Committee for Effective Practices in OWI. Hewett and DePew offer a primer in OWI and guidance for OWI pedagogy, administration, and practice.

The longstanding need to professionalize OWI educators is represented in both 2011 (Hewett et al.) and 2021 State of the Art of OWI reports (CCCC Online Writing Instruction Standing Group, 2021), completed by the CCCC Standing Group for Best Practice in OWI. Researchers note that professional development is a persistent problem with 29 percent of the 235 respondents in 2021 noting they were offered mandatory online faculty development, a decrease from the reported 48 percent in 2011. Surprisingly, this situation did not improve much as shocking details from the 2021 report include the following: 27 percent of respondents received no online-specific training and 59 percent of respondents who did receive online-specific training were not compensated (p. 9). Percentages across the 2021 and 2011 reports showed a decrease in the role subject area experts played in course development processes (decreasing from 81% in 2011 to 77% in 2021) (2021, p. 27). One possible reason researchers identify for this decrease in disciplinary experts is the outsourcing of course design to non-discipline-specific instructional designers (p. 10). While limited in the number of respondents, these data suggest OWI professionalization is not just a persistent need but a significant area where we are moving further away from meaningful, discipline-specific OWI professional development.

Student Access and Equity in OWI

While online learning once generated enthusiasm for its potential to increase access to education, it has also encountered criticism due to student attrition and issues of access. A large-scale (2007) study by Lin Y. Muilenburg and Zane L. Berge identified eight barriers to online learning and retention, with some barriers addressing cost and access to the hardware necessary to engage with online learning and others complicating notions of "access" (which had previously been limited to the hardware, software, and internet connectivity) to include a broader definition of access that includes the academic and technical skills needed for students to be able to self-monitor their learning in online courses. June Griffin and Deborah Minter (2013) note that, because online writing courses lack the shared in-person classroom discussion that frequently reviews and reinforces important course criteria in in-person learning, OWI courses equate to higher "literacy loads" for students. Put another way, because so much of

the interpersonal communication that happens in in-person, real-time learning occurs online through course announcements, emails, discussion boards, and other written formats, students need to spend much more time reading. As the section below will go on to explain, OWI scholars have theorized pedagogical approaches that attend to student engagement, support, and retention, arguing that online learning can be just as effective as in-person learning when properly designed and supported. Others have considered how equity-driven pedagogies developed for in-person writing instruction can be critically adapted for the online learning environment, such as Angela Laflen and Mikenna Sims' (2021) chapter on ungrading in OWI. Further, critiques of access and equity are not limited to online learning modalities and often reflect larger systemic inequities impacting higher education more broadly.

An important step for inclusion in online learning is accessible course design. We are continuing to learn about universal design for learning and other teaching strategies that can lower barriers for disabled students in OWI. In his chapter "Physical and Learning Disabilities in OWI," Sushil Oswal (2015) writes that LMSs, which are the main learning environments for many OWI courses, have not been developed to be usable or accessible for students and educators with disabilities, putting even more pressure of OWI teachers to "become aware of their students' needs as learners and to begin to address the access problems of an LMS that fails the students" (p. 266). While it could be argued that the technology companies themselves are building more accessibility features into their LMSs, the fact remains that, lacking institutional policies and professional development in accessible instructional design, it remains difficult for educators to do this additional (and, most often, uncompensated) work alone even when they are interested and willing to do so. Cynthia Pengilly offers one approach for the individual assessment of accessibility and usability in course content in her (2021) chapter "Confronting Ableist Texts: Teaching Usability and Accessibility in the Online Technical Writing Classroom." Pengilly takes usability, a common framework taught in technical writing, and applies it to course design and content to both model and explicitly instruct OWI students to be accessible creators of text. While Pengilly offers an important pathway for OWI educators to individually practice their commitments to accessibility, an inability to act at the program and course level forces even more onus onto overworked educators and disabled students to self-identify, advocate, and request additional rushed retrofitting to OWI materials.

Finally, we recognize that as a field, we are learning, too. As we continue to strive to make writing studies more inclusive for all students, we cannot forget that marginalization based on sexuality, gender, disability, race, and culture intersects with issues of online learning. Online learning is not acontextual or

devoid of the larger social issues that affect students' health, wellbeing, and access. In moving towards finding solutions for OWI, intersectional inclusivity must be centered. Further, we must question the technologies that support OWI. Technologies, including academic ones, are typically built by a small number of White engineers and built within capitalist structures, which have shaped the systems we exist in (Noble, 2018). Safiya Umoja Noble's argument about algorithmic systems and critical questions we might ask of them are especially important when considering LMS design and virtual conferencing platforms: who creates these systems, by whom are they intended to be used, how are they intended to be used, and in what ways do those imagined expectations conflict with the lived experiences of the students learning in online writing courses?

Precarious Labor and Status in OWI

Staffed largely by non-tenure track (NTT) and contingent faculty, online writing courses have historically relied on the labor of under-supported educators with inconsistent preparation in writing studies and online learning. During a given semester, online writing educators might teach multiple course preparations, or "preps," across multiple institutions, navigating complex ecologies of institutional bureaucracies without the security of long-term employment, let alone tenure (Murray, 2019). Many times, these instructors are not the ones who have chosen the curriculum, nor designed the online experience. The challenges of teaching online can be immense, even for instructors with the opportunity for continuing appointments or, for an even more fortunate few, the promise of tenure. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a 2017 Educause survey of 13,541 faculty found that only 9 percent of respondents preferred to work in an online environment (p. 25). Working from 2016 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Darrin S. Murray (2019) estimates there are nearly one million contingent faculty with no available data for how many of those contingent faculty teach online courses.

OWI educators include a diverse array of professionals who hold vastly different positions in their institutional communities. For instance, take NTT colleagues who might have once been described as "freeway fliers," and who now remotely teach online for several institutions; while they have access to professional development specialists, they likely cannot attend most formal on-campus real-time training and rely on a network of supervisors and peers for professional development and course design. Another example is a visiting assistant professor who is on an annual contract with a writing program where the online course curriculum is set with limited opportunities to make adjustments in learning technologies and weekly activities. Still another example is a full-time, NTT

professor given a teaching assignment and learning outcomes, but no additional curriculum guidelines or materials. They must design their course to their best ability using resources for online learning on campus. The OWI community encompasses all of these individuals and more with limited access and support for professional development that fits their situation and needs. In living these professionally precarious lives as a new generation of online writing instructors, the experiences of these NTT and contingent writing faculty are underrepresented in writing studies literature—even though they serve a significant number of students each year.

The professional precarity we identify is not specific to online educational labor and extends to contract workers in all fields; still, online educators can be most impacted by inequitable working conditions related to their rank or status, teaching load, class size, and student level. Because they may not live locally to where they work, OWI educators are more likely to experience isolation and restricted access to community resources generally provided to support teaching and learning (e.g., access to Centers for Teaching and Learning). They are further limited in their teaching autonomy by master syllabi, required assignments, and course shells, which they may or may not have had a voice in designing. Finally, they are often tasked with navigating multiple modalities within the same course prep. Yet, despite their footing as practitioners in the OWI community, they may not have the time and support to conduct research, publish, and access professional organizations in writing studies or OWI.

The professional conditions for online writing educators directly relate to the labor and time needed to develop technology-based pedagogies and online instruction. Griffin and Minter (2012) write that instructors need "high-quality training" in "technological tools" and "in the teaching of writing in digital spaces" (p. 151.)—an argument that has been made by a number of professional organizations, like the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), CCCC, and GSOLE. In their principles statement, GSOLE describes effective OWI professional development as including compensation for local, discipline-specific training in addition to being supported to join OWI professional organizations, participate in OWI instructor networks, attend conferences, and engage in research and publication related to OWI (2019). Designing such professional development can be challenging, particularly for departments that lack experts in online writing instruction. To mitigate the under-preparation and lack of support of online writing educators, writing program administrators and institutional stakeholders must fight for online writing educator professionalization: adequate compensation, appropriate rank and status, access to professional development resources, and the ability to engage with a professional community of other online writing educators.

The Effects of Emergency Remote Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to this professional insecurity, online writing courses are also pedagogically precarious. While classrooms are always subject to everchanging social, political, and cultural contexts, higher education and its relation to online learning has never been as unstable (Hall et al., 2020; Murgatroyd, 2021). In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic drove 1.37 billion students and 60 million educators to emergency remote instruction (UNESCO, 2020). Without much support or preparation, every writing educator in the United States became a de facto online writing educator though, in contrast to well-designed online learning, this condition has been described in many ways, including the term "emergency remote teaching" (Hodges et al., 2020). A previously existing need to professionalize online writing educators (CCCC, 2013; GSOLE, 2019; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004) quickly became a crisis. Despite the existence of a decades-old field of online writing instruction (for a full history, see Kentnor, 2015), many institutions sought immediate, short-term solutions, investing in LMS support, platforms that could host online real-time learning (e.g., Zoom), and online surveillance testing technologies, all without sufficiently preparing educators to consider how to leverage the affordances of online learning to effectively teach within their disciplines. Put another way, although professionalization in OWI has been an ongoing conversation in scholarship for over two decades, the pandemic led to an unprecedented number of educators needing explicit support and guidance in online instruction that was discipline-specific to writing studies.

Charles Hodges and colleagues (2020) note that misinterpreting emergency online education with well-prepared online education thus perpetuated unsupported assumptions that online learning was of lower quality than face-to-face learning. In fact, as they go on to stipulate, the qualities of effective online learning as articulated by online instructional designers were largely absent in the rush to remote: namely the careful design, planning, and delivery of course content that was tailored to fit the online learning environment. Without support, many new-to-online educators struggled to recreate—or, more importantly, reimagine—their practices from face-to-face writing classrooms in online spaces. For writing teachers, especially, the lack of discipline-specific support led to frustration as they tried to move their pedagogical practices to, in some cases, online real-time learning and, in other cases, online any time learning environments with minimal adaptation.

Since the pandemic, emergency remote learning has given rise to new online and hybrid modalities, like "hyflex" learning (Beatty, 2019), and educators have been forced to translate their courses across these multiple modalities—sometimes even transforming course materials from face-to-face to online to hybrid

and then back to online, all within a given semester. Some taught in completely online any time contexts, with institutions disallowing real-time meetings so that online learning happened at a time that worked for students' individual schedules and lives. Others went hybrid, teaching on campus some days and online others so that social distancing and other safety precautions could be maintained. Moreover, the introduction of video conferencing tools means that "dual delivery," "concurrent," or "hybrid flexible" formats also became a part of new expectations for teaching writing to both the "roomies" and the "Zoomies" at the same time. These modal shifts were not consistent as new variants pushed institutions temporarily online again with little advance notice to educators (Gluckman, 2021; Jaschik, 2021). Despite the longstanding need to increase professional and instructional support for online writing educators, the precarity of online writing instruction and online writing educators persisted and heightened with the COVID-19 pandemic and continued into the endemic era.

Instructional modes that heighten educator labor continue to flourish in the endemic era, creating a new landscape of learning modalities. As mentioned above, while this collection identifies four learning modalities, the pandemic has caused an explosion of learning modes to proliferate without consistency across the field in how we use the terminology for these different learning modalities. For example, the Center for Distributed Learning website at the University of Central Florida identifies five modalities with courses offered across two fully online modalities (**web-based** and **video**), two partially online modalities: **mixed mode,** which is defined as a blended format where "in-person classroom activities are more than 20% of the instructional time," and **limited attendance,** which is defined as a blended format where "in-person classroom activities may use up to 20% of the instructional time" (n.d.). Finally, of course, the traditional **in-person** learning modality remains an option. These modalities offer students flexibility and personalization. A Division of Digital Learning offers professional development, coursework on online learning, as well as personnel and web resources for designing an online course. This non-discipline-specific infrastructure does not take up pedagogies specific to writing or literacy instruction.

Despite the decades long history in OWI and the possibilities that were afforded during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is still a problem that we face in the present moment. Now more than ever before, we need to explicitly name what we do in online and hybrid writing instruction. Moreover, we need to examine—and expand a vision for—how we prepare educators to enter these literacy learning environments. Even with a field of scholarship related to online writing instruction, our current context demands closer attention to the kinds of pedagogies that can improve student writing, no matter the course modality, all with a greater focus on how we prepare and professionalize online writing educators.

With this set of concerns about modalities—as well as the other five themes identified in the literature review—the work that went into building this collection was designed to meet this moment. More than simply issuing a call for proposals, the entire process of planning for, supporting authors during the process of, and reflecting upon our "better practices" for OWI has been an interactive, sustained effort, one of which we, Amy and Troy, are humbled to have been given the opportunity to lead and describe in more detail in the section below.

THE PROCESS FOR BUILDING *BETTER PRACTICES*

This collection shares discipline-specific practices from online writing educators from diverse institutional contexts. Contributors hold a range of professional ranks, including full, tenured professors and program administrators, tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, contingent faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and staff administrative positions. Chapters have been designed so that readers can reflect on and apply practices in their contexts with advice from authors on moving practices across learning modalities. TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching)[8] assignment directions are provided in each chapter (Winklemes, et al, 2016). The TILT framework, created by Mary-Ann Winkelmes and the Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education project out of University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2009–2010, has been publicly supported by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), and the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) because it helps teachers better emphasize the purpose, context, and criteria for an assignment as they communicate that assignment with students.

More than just meeting a call for proposals with a general focus, these chapters on better practices provide resources for professional learning and graduate education and capture this unique moment in the field of composition's history. Specifically, the work of building this collection had three goals:

1. to bring together diverse online writing educators to make their teaching practices more explicit,
2. to feature a set of replicable "better" practices that show ideas articulated by professional organizations in national statements in-action,
3. to validate online teacher-scholars and make their intellectual contributions to writing studies more visible.

And, while similar goals might be described for any edited collection, our process for arriving at this final publication took a very different approach.

8 Learn more about the TILT framework for assignment design at https://tilthighered.com/

In the spring of 2021, Amy and Troy were collaborating as instructor-mentors in a GSOLE certification course, a course that engages new-to-online writing educators of all ranks in acquiring foundational knowledge of OWI research and practice. They noted how difficult it was to distill explicit practices from OWI research, which often discussed the theory or data collected from a practice at the 30,000-foot level. Participants in the course wanted to know more about what practices looked like on the ground so that as they moved these evidence-based practices into their courses, they knew how to deliver them.

For instance, when using alternative forms of assessment with students, we wondered: how did online educators initially explain the new assessment structure to students who were learning online any time, how did they adjust the LMS gradebook so that students were not receiving inaccurate representations of their standing in the course, and finally when and how did they intervene with students who were at risk of failing the course? While participants could easily read about and agree with the importance of a given practice, they were less sure how exactly to move that practice into their local contexts. These concerns echoed many of the needs Amy and Troy heard in faculty development workshops and meetings of writing program administration. What was needed was more pedagogical scholarship that delved into the nitty-gritty details of OWI—what the day-to-day work of teaching writing online looked like.

To develop such a collection, we knew that dialogue and engagement in a community of practice would be necessary. More than just submitting a chapter proposal and then going off to compose a draft, we wanted to intentionally design learning experiences during the second year of pandemic teaching (2021-22) that could, in and of itself, serve as a kind of professional learning and mentorship.

To that end, as part of their initial proposal process, contributors invited to attend community of practice meetings throughout the Fall 2021 semester. Across eight weeks, we as editors held two optional synchronous meetings, on Monday and Tuesday afternoons. Meetings were recorded and shared in a Google Drive folder with contributors who could not attend live. A shared document also summarized notes and important takeaways from each meeting. The series of meetings subsequently walked contributors through parts of the chapter layout document and placed them in breakout rooms where they could share drafted or outlined initial attempts of each section or could simply talk through their prewriting ideas with other contributors. During the final week, contributors exchanged full chapter drafts and discussed feedback. They had additional opportunities to participate in an asynchronous peer review process, which offered more flexible timing during the month of December.

The community of practice conversations were quite generative in that contributors were sharing ideas and offering feedback to one another at a level that

is unconventional for an edited collection in writing studies. As a result, chapters reflect the cohesiveness of our shared conversations. As authors provided feedback to others through breakout room conversations, a series of serendipitous connections, lesson strategies, and, of course, "better practices" emerged. As one co-author from the collection shared with us when submitting their draft chapter, "This has been the most collaborative work I've ever undertaken, and I believe it is significantly better because of it. Our project changed pretty dramatically over the course of the last few months, and we're pleased with the product—we hope you both will be as well!" Another said, "The equity, inclusion and transparency of the process that you set up for us definitely stands out to me."

In sum, the community of practice that was developed over the entire fall semester was crucial, as the collaborations between chapter co-authors were then extended through deliberative dialogue amongst all who could attend. For instance, two of our contributors, Ingrid Bowman and Briana Westmacott, write about their experience in their (2022) article, "Empowering Teachers to Write: An Innovative Online Framework for a Community of Practice." Bowman and Westmacott described the process as "appealing and motivating" because it "enabled individuals at all career stages to feel included and equally valued" (2022, p. 191). We agree and note that as co-editors we equally felt enriched by the community of practice experience and feel more connected to a new community of online and hybrid educators.

As noted above, each chapter is co-authored by two online writing educators: one experienced with the practice being explained throughout the chapter; the other reflecting on their experience implementing the practice for the first time. The clear line that is drawn from theory to practice in each chapter helps readers grasp the hidden pedagogical knowledge that is often unarticulated in more traditional journal articles and chapters, including the teachers' lived experiences in enacting the practice, their rationale for why they use the practice, and the exact materials they use to deliver the practice in their local contexts. Aside from sharing materials that readers will need to recreate the teaching practice, the authors collectively reflect on the practice's merits and limitations, connect the practice to theory and research, and offer advice for adapting the practice under different teaching contexts (higher teaching loads, different learning modalities, etc.). By featuring a range of "better practices," this collection offers online writing educators and writing program administrators who professionalize and support online writing educators a number of theoretically grounded, student-centered practices from teacher-scholars in online writing.

Although chapters are designed to be accessible to both new-to-online and new teachers, veteran online teachers can also review chapters to learn new strategies for OWI. In offering chapters detailing a range of approaches to OWI, readers will:

- Gain a sense of which approaches and practices are possible in online and hybrid writing classrooms with those possibilities representing innovative theoretical trends in writing studies scholarship and position statements;
- Access sets of materials that can be immediately adapted for local contexts, giving them a starting place to enact better practices in OWI; and
- Acquire a set of sample materials that can be shared with online writing instructors in their program as professional development and used to develop programmatic curricular resources.

THEMES THROUGHOUT THE COLLECTION

Six themes offer readers an approach to engaging with these chapters: exploring a particular topic in OWI by identifying chapters tagged with particular themes in their abstracts. These themes emerged in our conversations with co-authors throughout the fall and from our reading of their drafts. It is no surprise, then, that these themes include a number of topics that we have already noted above related to the history of OWI and existing pedagogies:

- **Theme 1:** Chapters tagged as "**Better Practices" in Accessibility and Inclusivity** demonstrate how educators can meet technical standards for accessibility while also, and perhaps more importantly, offering instructional scaffolding that builds welcoming online communities for diverse students. Moreover, contributors help students become mindful of accessibility standards and inclusive practices as they create their writing.
- **Theme 2:** Chapters tagged as "**Better Practices" in Multimodal Learning** offer a range of composing practices that build on the rich history of multimodality in composition. Chapters include practices exploring social media, audio and video composing, and data storytelling, all the while encouraging students to produce texts for wider audiences and, in some cases, use multimodal compositions to promote social justice.
- **Theme 3:** Chapters tagged as "**Better Practices" in Motion Across Teaching and Learning Modalities** discuss how they have designed practices that can move across different modalities and explain how the affordances of different modalities can be leveraged to provide more options for students and educators.
- **Theme 4:** Chapters tagged as "**Better Practices" Adapted from Classic Composition Strategies** return us to our pedagogical roots, taking traditional pedagogical activities from writing classrooms and

adapting them to meet the unique needs of online learning. Practices examine annotation, discussion, peer response, and revision. These adaptations remind us that, when intentionally designed to leverage the affordances of online and hybrid learning, our pedagogical values can transfer.

- **Theme 5:** Chapters tagged as "**Better Practices" in Assessment** include insights on trends related to rethinking evaluation, a theme that has been pushed further in the past few years with approaches like ungrading, labor-based contracts, and alternative forms of assessment. Contributors in these chapters examine how these unique assessment opportunities can play out in online instruction.
- **Theme 6:** Chapters tagged as "**Better Practices" in Professional Learning for Online Teachers** turn the focus from students to our colleagues and look at ways in which we can better prepare online teachers. Contributors share professional development related to creating teacher presence, communicating with students, scaffolding online instruction, and embracing alternative assessments in the context of collegial dialogue.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD BETTER PRACTICES IN OWI

As a collection, *Better Practices* is a response to the persisting precarity of OWI and the need to more explicitly name what we do in online writing courses. These concerns are articulated by the voices of OWI practitioners from a variety of teaching contexts, all of whom were building mentoring relationships along the way. By offering explicit conversations and pedagogical materials about teaching online writing well, we hope to assist faculty and administrators in implementing "better" practices in their courses and programs that intentionally enact theoretically informed practices from CCCC, GSOLE, PARS, and NCTE. Chapters clearly identify the primary modality(ies) associated with each practice while offering suggestions for adapting these practices across modalities. The TILT framework for assignment design offers clear and explicit moves instructors want their students to make and details a step-by-step guide for implementing the practice.

As we close this introduction and move into the collection itself, we pause for a moment to appreciate an anecdote from one of our authors in the final stages of revision. As Ana Contreas, a co-author with Troy, was putting the final revisions on the TILT section of her chapter—and thinking about how she would use the assignment in the current semester that she was about to begin teaching—she lamented, "You made me think more about every move in this

one lesson than I had thought about in almost all of my lessons last semester!" Far from seeing this as a criticism, we are heartened by this revelation, and heard echoes of this refrain from other authors.

Teaching and learning online, in general and for writing teachers in particular, continues to create new spaces for us to talk about both what we do as well as why we do it. Through our community of practice meetings, consistent feedback from knowledgeable peers, and a clear focus on making our teaching practices explicit, we (both Amy and Troy, as well as all the authors in the collection) can take comfort in the fact that—while it is a difficult task to articulate what we do as teachers and exactly why we do it—the results in these chapters shows that a reflective, intentional approach can lead to better teaching in OWI, across modalities, time frames, and institutional expectations.

Rather than rest in the precarious situations in which we often find ourselves, we invite you to move toward "better practices" in your teaching of OWI, learning with and from 43 of your colleagues in the chapters ahead.

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