

16 Models of Professional Writing / Technical Writing Administration: Reflections of a Serial Administrator at Syracuse University

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Over a thirty-year career at Syracuse University, I have been involved in setting up programs in Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) more than once, and I have also had some involvement in helping lay the groundwork for two other programs. The contexts for these various experiences differed greatly, and in all cases local circumstances and negotiation of immediate local and surrounding campus cultures had a lot to do with the outcome of such efforts. My reflections in the pages that follow attempt to explain through example the complex ways that programs are based on human networks, not on theory and scholarship alone. I try to provide a sense of the decisions I made as I determined how best to function within the different institutional settings.

The programs I've helped develop and worked within illustrate two major frameworks. The first involves developing a PTW program within an institutional culture whose leadership structure encourages the separation and independence of program/course leaders. The individual responsibilities of such leaders are segregated (in my case, separate program leaders in technical writing, composition, and English as a Second Language). The intellectual, pedagogical and curricular agendas are developed independently, and they affect one another only tangentially. The second major framework is one in which the various strands of writing—composition/rhetoric and technical writing, for instance—are intertwined. The responsibility for leadership of each program is more distributed, less hierarchal. While neither of these approaches is inherent in a particular department structure, the first is more common in English departments, where no strong tradition exists of collaboration in scholarship, teaching, or administration. And though the second framework is more common to independent writing programs, my experience makes clear that writing program leaders can assume power in multiple ways, involving totally different degrees of collaboration with and involvement of others. Both frameworks provide opportunities and both involve difficulties.

My goal here is not to recommend one over the other, since such advice would be superfluous (faculty do not generally get to choose the history and context of their workplace). Instead, I wish to describe the experiences and concerns that arose in each situation. At the cusp of retirement, I hope this analysis is useful for those who are interested either in the recent history of our discipline's development, or for those who are facing the challenges of constructing or managing programs in similar institutional situations.

MODEL # I: SEPARATE DOMAINS, AND RETOOLING FOR PTW

I began my academic work in technical writing as a three-quarter-time assistant professor in English, soon to be hired on to the tenure track in 1979. A new Dean had become concerned that large undergraduate writing courses were being led by part-time faculty. In the case of PTW, he saw that these courses were becoming popular with different constituencies on campus, and the demand was growing beyond my ability to teach them all. Rather than ask a part-time faculty member, even one with a PhD, to train and mentor other PTW teachers and to teach graduate courses, he approved a national search for a single tenure-track faculty position.

My hiring for this position was not automatic. I had no scholarly record in technical writing, nor did I have a degree in the field.¹ That was a quite common situation for technical-writing faculty in those days, since there were few opportunities to get academic training. I don't think I was the search committee's first choice; the main competition was someone with a little more relevant scholarly preparation than I had. But to my pleasure, I did get the position. As the hiring committee requested, I soon developed an introductory graduate course required for those graduate-student and part-time teachers we were assigning to teach the 400-level technical-writing course. Because the 400-level course kept growing especially quickly, not all of the potential teachers could take the graduate-level training course in time; for these individuals, I recommended summer institutes for teachers offered on campuses such as nearby RPI, and obtained funding to support their attendance.

Quite soon, I was supervising and mentoring twelve PTW teachers, a small sub-community in an English department that was otherwise devoted mostly to the study of literature, to the teaching and practice of creative writing, and increasingly to the study of continental theory. The content of that early technical-writing course was quite common to the field, introducing students to various types of technical documents: instructions, reports, proposals, memos,

etc. Teachers— mostly part-time faculty but also graduate students—had freedom to develop their own syllabi, course activities, and assignments as long as they addressed the required formal elements. From this kernel, the technical-writing teachers began to grow into a community. I soon took advantage of our successes to benefit these teachers. Since the Engineering and Management colleges were willing to pay much more than did Arts and Sciences to hire our teachers for their summer and subsidiary programs, I was able to successfully negotiate salary increases for the part-time technical-writing instructors. As a result, the technical-writing course was able to attract very strong, flexible teachers. I held a small number of group meetings, but since my own teaching load involved three courses one semester, and two the next, in a department with heavy research expectations, and since I needed to retool for technical-writing scholarship, I had to step back and concentrate on my own publication output, leaving the talented teachers to do what they did best. Because I had been on fellowship for all but two quarters of my graduate study, I was in fact more of a neophyte teacher than the high-quality part-timers I was supervising. Their expertise in teaching technical writing developed organically, as they shared syllabi and assignments. We continued to see steadily increasing demand for the 400-level PTW course, as well as increased stature on campus.

Soon I was able to establish a technical-writing advanced workshop at the undergraduate level and a related one at the graduate level; these workshops were designed for English majors, MA students, and doctoral students who might want to consider technical writing as a career. Before long, graduate students from other disciplines—all facing grim academic job markets—discovered the value of the advanced workshops. I made contacts with local industries and nonprofits to solicit projects and set up co-op positions, and a fair number of technical writers and editors began to emerge from Syracuse's English Department. Though we had no undergraduate major, graduate certificate, or graduate degree, by 1985 the PTW program at Syracuse was making a significant impact in producing technical writers.

Much of this discussion has been dominated by the first person singular. As a new faculty member, I was committed to developing my own scholarship as well as to sustaining the quality of our growing program. There was little time for collaboration. Although a composition faculty member was hired simultaneously with me to lead an advanced-composition undergraduate course and to teach graduate courses in composition, the administrative structure in the English Department tended to favor segregation of the writing programs. We crossed paths infrequently. He too was busy, arriving with three years of tenure credit – non-negotiable then. Our responsibilities were separate, and while we socialized in the first two years, he quickly faced a tenure crunch. With no senior

faculty having scholarly interest or expertise in either of our fields, we received no feedback on scholarship or program leadership, no mentorship, and no advice. There was no publication such as *Design Discourse* to help us at the time. It was clear that our colleagues were attempting to determine what kinds of entities we really were, and if we were suitable as members of an elite English Department. The first department feedback we received occurred after the third-year review in my case, and at the end of the second year in my colleague's case.

In fact, an English as a Second Language (ESL) junior faculty member was hired in the same year as were my composition colleague and I. She did have two senior ESL faculty in the department, though by this period, neither of these were active in scholarly publication. She was not hired to lead the ESL program, though I presume there were expectations that she would invigorate it. Given that the ESL program leadership predated the new hires in technical-writing and composition, it's hardly surprising that the ESL program remained entirely independent from the two others, with no interaction among those in charge.

The Syracuse University English Department by the late seventies was already heavily invested in continental theory, having been influenced by the 1966 Dartmouth conference and its aftermath.² All new "literature" faculty positions were offered to scholars with interests and expertise in theory, even if their areas of research were located within traditional literary periods. And there were many such hires, to replace the dependence on part-time faculty for upper-division teaching in literature courses. The Dean who authorized such hiring could not have anticipated how deeply these new positions would change the face of the department. As new theoretical and philosophical orientations were articulated, traditionalist literature faculty were marginalized. It was a period of deep discord and difficulty. Yet both groups—the traditional literary scholars and the now-dominant theoretical scholars—seemed only to have a faint curiosity about what the composition and technical-writing hires were doing, with not enough investment or information to either support or confront us directly at first.

As graduate students and part-time faculty signed on to take graduate courses in composition or technical writing, discovering new approaches to teaching writing, they became extremely dissatisfied with the Freshman English curriculum they were teaching; it had been designed in the sixties and was led by a faculty member in romantic literature.³ The two-semester course had been designed according to the best educational principles of the sixties, but was quite out of date, reductive, and ossified by the late sixties. The administrator of freshman composition did not follow the scholarship in writing studies and had no interest in changing the first-year courses to incorporate new theories and prac-

tices. But change was in the air. Other faculty in the English Department began to hear that graduate students were excited and stimulated by our graduate-level course offerings and by the curricula we developed for advanced composition and technical writing. Discourse in the English department was permeated by sophisticated new literary and cultural theories; a serious desire grew among the most powerful people in the department to change the way writing was taught at our college and to challenge the simplistic freshman English curriculum.

It is a bitter irony that as departmental attention turned to the development of undergraduate writing, my well-informed peer in composition was denied tenure. Some six months before his tenure decision he learned that his publications were not appropriate—not sufficiently scholarly, rigorous, or theoretically informed. No one had reviewed his scholarship or other work at the end of his first year (or mine), despite the fact that he had such tenure-clock time pressure. Once receiving the information, he quite understandably immediately began to immerse himself in developing two strong historical articles. As you might imagine, he was unwilling to rock any boats regarding the deplorable Freshman English situation. Many of the strong English faculty were deeply unhappy with the first-year courses and in turn disappointed in my colleague's unwillingness to challenge the issue. Institutional forces for change ultimately contributed to forcing him out of the department altogether.

On the other hand, I did not have the immediate tenure pressure, though I did have to completely retool for my new scholarly area and for my graduate and undergraduate teaching. As the child of life-long activists, I have never been good at keeping my mouth shut when I see a serious problem. Being willing to speak up, to attend meetings and participate in the push for change at the first-year level, I soon found myself elected to the department's Executive Committee, appointed to chair the Curriculum Committee, and then asked to become Director of Undergraduate Studies. In all roles, I had to take some tough positions and confront some problematic senior faculty—including the Director of Freshman English. These risks seemed to help establish my role in the department, boosting a somewhat shaky scholarly record to gain recommendations for tenure. Subsequently, as part of the department's Executive Committee, I helped develop materials for a proposal to the Dean to conduct an outside review of the Freshman English program. It took some uncomfortable years until the Dean initiated such a review, largely influenced by graduate students going public to local and campus media with their dissatisfaction. By then, I had chaired a search committee—still as a junior faculty member—to hire a strong, courageous new faculty member in composition who gave every signal of being able to hold her own in this contentious environment, and even more so of taking a leadership role to bring change. She fulfilled these expectations beautifully.

It is important to note, however, that even with the new hire, technical writing and the advanced composition courses/programs remained entirely separate, independent operations. Though both the new advanced-composition director and I, in different venues, actively addressed and explained developments in pedagogy and curriculum in our fields and made clear the deficiencies of the first-year writing courses, our efforts were separate. There was no collaboration; the model wherein faculty members operated independently held firm.

When the Dean finally approved an outside review, it included both of our programs as well as the first-year program—largely for political reasons. The review was conducted through the Writing Program Administration organization. The technical-writing program received praise, as did the advanced-composition course. A separate regular review of the English Department curriculum offered similar praise of the advanced-composition and technical-writing programs. We each had to prepare packages of materials for the reviewers, which we did independently. This isolated model of program development and leadership did lead to innovative and lively programs in technical writing and advanced composition, but at a price. The SU colleagues that I could discuss technical-writing pedagogy and curricular ideas with were part-time faculty teaching the courses, as well as graduate students. As a technical-writing faculty leader and particularly as a scholar, I remained isolated.

The outside review supported the need for change in the first-year composition program, and heavily criticized the English Department for the scant financial and other support it had made available for the teaching of writing. In response, an interdisciplinary committee, under the intellectual leadership of my composition colleague, recommended that a four-year developmentally staged set of writing courses be established, with the hiring of additional faculty in writing studies and the development of an accompanying graduate program. The English Department and college faculty supported the idea. Soon a search was established for a director of this newly envisioned Writing Program, and a director was hired to begin in fall 1986. Though the original plans involved the new Writing Program staying in the English Department, with a separate budget, in fact the new Writing Program began as an independent curricular entity with its own budget. Faculty lines were still in English, but within a few years, 60% of each faculty line was moved from English to Writing, setting up a wholly new set of tensions and opportunities for those of us associated with the Writing Program.

The ESL program did not leave English with the Writing Program. The ESL faculty member hired with me did not receive tenure, and it would have been tricky and difficult for the Writing Program to bring over the senior faculty in ESL whose curriculum was considered out of date. The English Department

itself was not eager to keep this program, which was not a good fit with the now theoretically inclined English curriculum. Not long after the Writing Program became curricularly and budgetarily separate from English, ESL moved into the Department of Languages and Literatures, where it remains.

**MODEL #2: SETTING UP A MORE COMMUNAL
PROGRAM IN A SEPARATE WRITING UNIT, AND
RETOOLING FOR RHETORIC**

In 1986, after having successfully established a thriving service program in technical writing, with graduate courses and undergraduate/graduate advanced technical-writing workshops, I was once again participating in getting a new program started—not a technical-writing program, though the technical-writing service course was understood to be an upper-division 400-level component within the developmental series of four writing courses. The advanced composition course, at the 300-level, constituted the other upper-division course in the sequence. Three faculty members—the new director, my composition colleague, and I—wound up as the sole faculty in this new program, still at first technically having to teach under the old first-year course descriptions and structures, but trying out new demonstration versions of a freshman and sophomore course, designed and implemented under the leadership of the composition colleague. In the planned four-year sequence, the two three-credit parts of the first-year writing program would become a new first-year course and a newly developed sophomore course. Since virtually every student at SU had been required to take six credits of writing at the first-year level, development of the new approach to the first-year course had to be given primary attention by the three faculty members at first, while the successful advanced composition course and technical-writing course were left alone for a while. Technical writing was once again—or still—on the margins, but invigorated by the close association with the lower-division courses.

This was somewhat of a collaborative experience, with limits. The new director had been hired to develop the new courses and to create the curriculum. While she did build a sequence of courses, as the review committee suggested, she moved independently, consulting her colleagues individually but not including them in the final synthesis yielding the resulting course proposals.⁴ Higher-level campus officials supported this process, though it proved somewhat frustrating to faculty, including new faculty, a few of whom were hired in the first few years before the new courses were institutionalized. The new course descriptions were very general, and groups of part-time faculty met in retreats with selected

tenure-track faculty to create a variety of full versions of the first and second year courses, in order to provide a range of concrete examples and models. Besides the retreats, a prominent practice of this new Writing Program involved creating small discussion groups of part-time and graduate-student teachers, led by experienced instructors, who would meet weekly to talk over pedagogy and theory, as well as actual teaching experiences. The first and second year courses began to take fuller shape through these experiences. In addition, during some years a discussion group involving technical-writing teachers formed organically. As one of the four courses now designated as a writing studio, the technical-writing course remained popular.

In the new Writing Program environment, however, no single faculty member was attached to any one course; the courses belonged to the program, and anyone who succeeded at teaching the lower-division level could be assigned to teach the upper-division courses. People could teach technical writing with no background in technical writing or without any required graduate course as preparation. This had some obvious risks, of course. At the same time, it served to keep things fresh, as new groups of technical-writing teachers—often part-time faculty—would be assigned each semester. There would be little chance of courses ossifying in such a model, as had happened with the old first-year writing courses in English.

The demands of the new model were heavy, however. I found myself part of a small faculty that for many years carried the responsibility to administer and lead the program (I was one of two tenured faculty for the first year of the Writing Program). The amount of committee and administrative work was astounding. Notably, I was deeply involved in developing a composition curriculum and pedagogy though I was not a compositionist; this was not my area of strength or my interest. However, that's where I was required to devote enormous amounts of time and energy.⁵ Inevitable conflicts developed among faculty about approaches to pedagogy and curriculum for some of the courses, often surrounding the issue of culture critique in relation to the teaching of writing, and more generally surrounding allegiances in power issues. For a number of years, the "collaborative" model was in many ways less collaborative than I and many faculty wished regarding curricular and program design decisions; and while the responsibilities were distributed, they were also much more concentrated on the shoulders of a few tenured faculty than was comfortable for a number of the faculty, and than was healthy for the scholarly careers of those with the heavy leadership-support responsibilities. I was among the latter group.

Several changes affected PTW in this collaborative model in the first few years. With so few faculty to carry out the immense needs of the program, regrettably at some point the elective technical-writing courses could no longer

be sustained. At one end of the spectrum, the first two undergraduate courses were developing their identities, which took a great deal of time and energy. Simultaneously, the mission to develop a doctoral program gained force. Both of these initiatives were exciting developments and both were demanding. It soon became clear to me that at both undergraduate and graduate levels, knowledge of rhetoric would be central to my contributions as a responsible member of the faculty community. The small size of the planned doctoral program simply could not maintain a track or even a required course in technical writing, and in fact no doctoral course in technical writing has been offered since the doctoral program began in 1997. I would need to get involved in a second major scholarly retooling experience. Thus I slowly abandoned my plans to continue publishing actively in technical writing and took up rhetoric as a pedagogical and scholarly subject.⁶ Technical writing was no longer as valuable to me or to the unit in this new collaborative setting, though I still kept up as much as possible with the technical-communication scholarship and published a co-edited book in the field as recently as 2005.⁷ I have led and continue to lead qualifying examinations in technical communication, with two doctoral students at different stages specializing in technical communication. Despite the interest of a small group of PhD students, the field of technical communication has been viewed with disdain by many colleagues here—mostly activists for social justice who regarded the teaching of technical communication as preparing students to succeed and conform to the flawed corporate world. To say the least, technical communication was not highly valued, though this is now changing. In any case, my second retooling placed me in closer alignment with the interests of the doctoral program, as well as the needs of the undergraduate program, since the second studio until recent years was an introduction to rhetorical concepts.

The technical-writing service course was renamed Professional Writing, and its student population is now dominated by management students, focused on writing for the workplace. The engineering students are now in a minority, though we have an additional follow-up course for engineers that connects to a senior electrical and computer engineering design lab. We have also been asked to create special linked courses for Bioengineering and Chemical Engineering. And we have recently been approached to create a Business Writing course at the master's level for the School of Management. With my upcoming two years of research leave and then retirement, we would have no full-time faculty to take charge of these new developments. Thus I am most pleased that at the department's request, the current Dean has authorized a search for a faculty member with expertise in technical communication, to take place in 2008-09.

Without doubt, the design and functioning of the Writing Program at SU has from the start depended on leadership abilities of the part-time faculty,

and in more recent years of advanced doctoral students assigned to administrative internships or other leadership roles. Full-time faculty are in the minority. We had three at the beginning of the Writing Program and now number eleven (two are half time with another department). The success of the Writing Program from the start depended on including the part-time faculty as partners in inventing and fleshing out courses from the deliberately brief and nonspecific course descriptions. The part-time faculty were involved in teaching the technical-writing course, whether they had technical-writing background or not; they were involved in teaching the other three studio courses, and in helping mentor other teachers. They functioned like advanced graduate students of the Writing Program in early years, and as a group they were quite concerned about loss of stature and access to faculty when the PhD program came on board.

As a result, a number of the early technical-writing courses followed textbooks to teach standard forms. Yet these same teachers would never have accepted such a formulaic approach in their composition courses. I had to swallow this, and hope that native pedagogical talent would come to the fore once the unfamiliarity of technical writing passed for these teachers. As an administrator since the mid-eighties—a period of twenty years—with just a few scattered years as a regular faculty member, facing faculty conflicts involving power and influence on curricular directions, facing serious medical issues with children, parents, and other elderly relatives for whom I was responsible, and in one period facing my own serious illness, I made a deliberate choice to just do my own teaching and not do battle on the curricular control of the technical-writing course, after one attempt at such leadership early on raised some ugly conflict-based behaviors. So technical writing—now professional writing—at SU has pretty well grown organically and collaboratively, with no particular leadership. Assignments and units that I developed were taken up by some of the part-time faculty and graduate students, but my focus involved intensive use of technology for writing early on, and this was not portable to many of the teachers. There is great variability among sections.

In 2000, a new director decided that the lower-division writing courses needed strong faculty leadership in the development of curriculum and pedagogy. As a result, there has been since 2000 a position entitled Director of Undergraduate Studies; though the title implies leadership of the upper-division technical-writing courses, the position has mainly focused on the lower division. The first director had no background in technical or professional writing, and no interest in teaching this course, nor does the recently appointed second faculty director. Only three other current faculty besides me have taught the course—one does so frequently, one will not do so voluntarily again, and one does so rarely but willingly. Some doctoral students have developed brilliant versions of

the course, using it to show their abilities at course design and implementation at the upper-division level.

Yet there is not much in-house discussion about the PTW curriculum. Discussions of professional-writing pedagogy tend to be diluted amid the program-wide intensive ongoing reflection on the teaching of writing at the lower levels. This reflective discussion does feed back into a wide variety of upper-level courses such as Civic Writing, Studies in Creative Nonfiction, Style, Advanced Editing, Research and Writing, and Digital Writing, as well as Professional Writing. The strong activist bent in the department faculty has led to a small but strong strand of the Professional Writing course focused on service-learning, particularly involving community agencies. The intellectual energy of the department spent to make the lower-division writing courses more relevant, edgy, and theoretical also has helped create content-oriented courses on clusters of issues such as writing, rhetoric, and identity; writing, rhetoric, and information technology; composition, rhetoric, and literacy; as well as a course on the politics of language and writing. The future in writing is bright at this institution: a minor has been in place for three years, now involving about 45-50 students from across the campus. A proposal for a major in Writing and Rhetoric has been approved to begin in the fall of 2008, with over fifty majors signed up as of the early summer of 2009. The major includes a number of courses in PTW, as seen below, but only the large upper-division service course (Professional Writing) is offered regularly.

Since the advent of the doctoral program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric, the tenure-track faculty have been able to, and have by now all chosen to, locate their faculty lines 100% in the Writing Program. Most of these faculty hires have been at the junior level, though a small number were brought in as tenured associate professors. As of the summer of 2008, only the original Director has full professor status, though plans are afoot for that to change in 2008-09. Yet it's clear that the heavy leadership responsibilities carried by the senior tenure-track faculty have substantially slowed their progress toward the second promotion. Especially since the faculty has grown some, we have taken considerable care not to load the junior faculty with leadership responsibilities that could impede their chances of being tenured. As the unit has evolved, we have in fact become more of a traditional department in relation to the participation of faculty. We now have a rotation of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, with leadership responsibilities for the required lower-division courses. We are fortunate to have a contingent of three former part-time faculty who serve in full-time Assistant Director or Coordinator positions. One works directly with new teaching assistants, supported by a group of 'master' teachers – chosen from the part-time and advanced doc-

toral-student cadres. One has primary responsibility for teacher-development programs that serve the part-time faculty and the teaching assistants, in collaboration with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. A third has primary responsibility for supporting the teachers and the program more generally in initiatives involving technology. The Writing Program Director and the Director of Undergraduate Studies meet regularly with these individuals, along with the Writing Center Coordinator, to discuss ideas and projects. Any changes in curriculum are brought before the full-time faculty, though they may originate with and be first vetted through the Directors, the Assistant Director, and the Coordinators. Committees including representation of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, relevant professional staff, and relevant doctoral students meet to develop proposals, which are brought to the full-time faculty at various stages. Except for the inclusion of part-time faculty—who have been paid to serve on committees—and professional staff, the current formulation does not differ considerably from that in many English departments. In some ways, the situation involves more collaborative participation than in the early days of the Writing Program; in other ways, collaborative activity has decreased.

MODEL #3: BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE PTW CERTIFICATE PROGRAM AND CROSS-CURRICULAR EFFORTS

What follows is probably best described as a cautionary tale. My third experience in program building for technical communication at Syracuse University resulted in an interesting curriculum, but in the end, no audience or funding for the courses and thus no implementation. This initiative began five years ago with our university's extension division, which came to us proposing that we together create a curriculum, to be delivered by the Writing Program, for an online Certificate in Technical Writing. It was meant for engineers or technical folks in industry who were assigned to handle the writing of technical documentation, as companies downsized their technical writing staffs. The faculty and administrative staff agreed to participate, and a set of four courses was developed. Four people in the Writing Program were paid to each flesh out a course to be taught at least twice each by these individuals. Funds were transferred to the department that would help us prepare part-time faculty to teach the courses. The set of courses is both attractive and suitable for the situation identified: Advanced Technical Documentation; Writing in Design and Development Environments; Information Architecture and Technical Documentation; and Technical Writing for a Global Audience. All four courses sailed through the relevant curriculum committees; they're all on the books, but have

never been taught. All four were proposed collaboratively and approved for online teaching in the extension division as well as for implementation as face-to-face on-campus courses. However, the individual from the extension division who initiated the project went on medical leave, and then upon his return, the extension unit faced severe budgetary constraints—a familiar, if discouraging, story. The extension division never got to the point of proposing a certificate upon completion of the four courses. And they haven't been able to pay for offering the courses online to extension students.

Other problems affect our ability to offer the courses to campus students. As a program, we are short of willing and qualified teachers for these certificate courses, especially since at the same time, faculty across campus would like to see increasing numbers of PTW courses “linked” to their departments. We are being asked more and more to become involved in cross-curricular work in PTW. We have done so thus far using part-time faculty, but the current size and backgrounds of the part-time faculty cadre cannot sustain significant growth in the area of PTW. Teaching linked courses in PTW tends to be a politically and pedagogically challenging position, and we are confronted with the difficulty of finding part-time faculty with the myriad qualifications to make this work. [See also essays in this volume by both Anne Parker and Brian Ballentine on writing and engineering programs—editor]. We were well aware from the earliest discussions of the certificate program and of the cross-curricular requests that we would likely have to hire both tenure-track faculty and carefully selected part-time faculty to participate in teaching these courses. My experience as an administrator at Syracuse University has shown that it's best here to proceed entrepreneurially in situations such as these, which involves getting something started with little funding, showing success by attracting student interest or requests from faculty in other departments, and gaining new funds or faculty positions as a result. These certificate technical-writing courses and the requested cross-curricular linked courses may indeed take on some new life, especially with the projected hire of a new faculty member in technical communication next year. Yet as much as the Writing Program officially wants to work more closely with units across the campus in expanding and enhancing writing offerings and attention to writing, reality mediates in the availability of both personnel and funds. The difficulty arises all the more when the initiatives arise from outside the Writing Program, rather than from within.

DISCUSSION OF MODELS 1, 2, AND 3

So far, I've discussed three different program-building initiatives, situated in or across very different department cultures, and handled in different

ways. In the first instance, I eventually designed a curriculum that I was proposing to focus on cultural issues, seeing technical communication as embedded in professional cultures, with their associated values and practices, and in workplace cultures and subcultures—at times clashing. I proposed that the course would help students develop their ability to understand cultures and conduct rhetorical analysis as a way to become rhetorically flexible. Some of my suggestions were woven into the fabric of the PTW course description in the early days of the Writing Program, and into the curriculum of individual sections of the course. Some others were discarded as the Writing Program priorities and contexts changed.

The one unsuccessful model (#3) illustrates the difficulty of undertaking a collaboration with outside entities, when there is no strong stakeholder among the faculty with leadership responsibilities for the effort. Since 1991, the Writing Program has not been able to secure funding or faculty positions to initiate and sustain cross-curricular efforts. Before 1991, we had a faculty line but no significant funding. The availability of funding and a faculty position would not have saved the certificate project in itself, but it would have put it on stronger footing. As Director and Chair of the department during that period, I had too much on my plate already, as did the rest of the faculty. The certificate project was no one's priority among the faculty, though one part-time faculty member took great initiative in making it happen to the extent that it did.

Of the two successful experiences in program development, the collaborative program model offered the greatest learning opportunities and growth for me (and others), though it was the riskier of the two approaches, the most vulnerable, and at times the most troubled. The standard English department model, with individuals taking responsibility, perhaps in turn, and shaping curriculum and mentoring teachers, is the easiest model to implement, the most coherent and the most conducive for course consistency, but also the least rich and varied. However, it's especially difficult to sustain a growing, thriving curriculum over the long term if one person is in charge for a long period—say as the sole technical-writing faculty member. In order to create the stimulating environment that alternating faculty leadership can provide for large multi-section service technical-writing and professional-writing courses, there would need to be more than one faculty member with technical-writing expertise or interest in the department. In small departments, that is often not possible. Even if such leadership exists, the department chair or program director must be willing to turn the course over to different leadership, and doing so is not always desirable or easy.

At Syracuse, we have also seen that the diffuse model of collaborative responsibility for curriculum—under administrative supervision, of course—

can lead to some stagnation overall. This has occurred at times in the large lower-division courses as well as in the professional-writing course, though certainly not with every teacher. In the last seven years, there has been strong and clear faculty leadership of the two lower-division required writing courses, driven by the creation of a position entitled Director of Undergraduate Studies, which carries responsibility for the lower-division curriculum and for the work involved in supervising and training the new TA's who teach the lower-division courses. Appointing a highly talented scholar/teacher to this position led to changes in both the lower-division learning goals and the structures created to implement the new goals. The new curriculum developed for the inexperienced TA's—including assignments, readings, and day-to-day activities—was even taken up by very experienced part-time faculty across the program, making the course overall more uniform, more rigorous, more challenging, and more engaging for students. But no structure has been created, or will be created in any near future, for leadership of the professional-writing service course, which is well regarded across campus and well subscribed. As mentioned, the few faculty with interests in teaching this course have been involved in administrative roles with little time available for additional responsibilities. In each case, the curriculum they developed for their own teaching was not readily transferable, being grounded in special interests, expertise, and skills. Though the department has in the past shown little interest in hiring in technical communication or in Professional Writing, areas outside of the doctoral program's focus, that has now changed with my announced retirement. However, since the new faculty hire will be at the assistant-professor level, it's likely that the professional-writing courses will continue under the collaborative responsibility model, with all its benefits and faults, for some time.

MODEL #4: DEVELOPING A TECHNICAL WRITING PROGRAM IN A SCIENCE ENVIRONMENT

My career in PTW did not all take place “in-house.” I have also been peripherally involved in the development of a technical-writing program next door to the Syracuse University campus, at the State University of New York campus of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF). A long-standing financial agreement between the two campuses allows ESF students to take courses at Syracuse University, with costs escalating as usage increases beyond a certain point. Beginning in the late 1970's, our technical-writing course was both immediately popular and increasingly required by different departments at ESF. By the late 1980's, ESF found it could no longer support such an expense, determining

that it would be less expensive to hire a technical-writing specialist to their own faculty and create their own program.

Yet they were cautious, for before sending students to Syracuse University, they had tried such a hire. That attempt was not a success. They discovered how difficult it was to choose, evaluate, mentor, or support a faculty member in writing, given that their faculty are primarily scientists or landscape architects. So in the late eighties, I was consulted by the ESF Vice President to help them lay the groundwork for hiring and mentoring such a faculty member. Soon, a talented part-time faculty member from Syracuse University's Writing Program, one who had already taught technical writing to ESF students, was hired into a tenure-track position at ESF. I was asked to serve on his annual mentorship/assessment committees while he was untenured, and then on his tenure committee. He was authorized to hire part-time faculty to help him, since one individual couldn't handle all the teaching. Many of those hired also taught writing at SU, and at least one has since been hired full-time at SUNY ESF. Four still keep a hand in teaching at SU. A Writing Center has been developed at ESF for its students, and a range of courses have been developed beyond the initial introductory course in technical writing. Though my work at ESF has been behind the scenes, I have been able to watch the PTW program there become a unique teaching community, with its own traditions and practices.

The new ESF faculty member began with a very different model than that implemented at Syracuse University. He had developed an innovative, challenging technical-writing curriculum for his own teaching, focused on ethical and social issues involved in scientific and technical fields, especially those related to environmental studies. In this ESF model, other teachers hired to teach technical writing were asked to follow his basic curricular structure, with his help and mentorship, though with some degree of freedom. Some of the teachers who taught at both campuses, but were left to develop their own curricular designs at SU to fulfill Writing Program learning goals, commented on the difference, noting the excitement of the experience at ESF and on the amount they learned from a brilliant curricular thinker and implementer about teaching technical communication. Two senior Writing Program part-time teachers clearly favored that model over being left to their own devices at Syracuse University for teaching professional and technical writing. And the ESF faculty—all in science or landscape architecture fields—expected a higher degree of consistency in course content than is normally the case in English departments or writing programs. The local setting here helped lead to some of the particular approaches in the development of this highly successful and growing program, though others depended on the leadership proclivities of the faculty member hired. The first faculty member hired in technical writing has remained the Director since the

early 1990's, and his curricular vision and practices govern the offerings involving seven separate courses, three or four of which focus on literature related to nature and the environment.

Interestingly, the tenure-track faculty in technical writing at ESF are not expected to publish in technical writing or composition, though they are expected to attend and contribute to relevant conferences. They are rewarded for publishing poetry, children's literature, and creative writing more generally.

CONCLUSION

Each of the models I've experienced and observed in the development of Technical/Professional Writing at Syracuse University and ESF has been highly adapted to its environment, arising from particular circumstances, values, and approaches in its local culture. All have involved service courses rather than PTW degree programs. As the SU Writing Program begins its major, it also anticipates expansion of the demand for technical and professional communication offerings. In addition, the proposed major requires an internship. When I had been teaching technical writing at Syracuse University, before I became graduate director and then chair, I made the effort to line up and supervise internships and co-op positions in technical writing. This was always done on top of my load, as is frequently the case for faculty in technical writing. Now as the Writing Program envisions the expanded number of students required to do internships in writing—perhaps in community settings or in technical or business settings—the faculty are beginning to consider ways to handle the internship load that doesn't add to the already heavy demands on faculty.

My experience in a separate Writing Program with a wide range of administrative and leadership roles outside of technical writing suggests to me that being embedded in a larger writing unit can bring collaborative advantages, while also adding numerous responsibilities out of one's own scholarly or teaching areas. In my second scholarly retooling, I am now happily engaged in scholarship on ancient Egyptian rhetoric, an extension of my early work on ancient technical and medical texts. This has taken me somewhat away from my focus on technical writing publication, but has also made me a better fit with the cultural-rhetoric focus of our PhD program and department generally. The periodic scholarly retoolings I have undergone have been simultaneously unsettling and labor-intensive, but also energizing and exciting. They have without doubt slowed my progress in promotion to full professor. I would expect that most new faculty in PTW, especially those in a collaborative environment such as I found myself, would have to remain open to the possibility of retooling from

time to time. My sense is that a collaborative model provides less independence and focus, yet offers broader experiences and multiple rewards for those who are willing to engage with it. At times, I envied colleagues elsewhere who had the luxury of focusing solely on publication and teaching in professional and technical writing. All told, however, I feel gratified for the risky, changing, collaborative environment here and all that it has entailed.

I would be remiss, though, if I did not emphasize finally that collaborative program leadership, especially involving fields of composition and PTW, can occur within English Departments and can be absent in independent Writing Programs, depending on the leaders themselves, on the particular faculty within the units, and on the department and campus cultures. There is no inherent one-to-one correspondence with the type of location. And a collaborative environment does not mean that collaboration occurs across the board. Here at Syracuse, collaboration occurred in certain aspects and areas, and not in others, and the specifics all changed with differing circumstances and different leaders. Collaboration in administering a writing program is of necessity a nuanced activity, affected by an array of constituent factors.

NOTES

¹ The PhD was in twentieth century British Literature; I came to SU with three years of experience as a technical writer at Caltech, as well as experience in science writing for a non-specialist audience and in writing for industry as a consultant.

² See Joseph Harris, "After Dartmouth: Growth and Conflict in English," *College English*, October 1991, 631-646.

³ This individual claimed to have a letter from a prior Chancellor of SU making him Director of Freshman English for life. While no one could locate a copy of such a letter in any university files, the college was understandably unwilling to remove this individual from his position, fearing legal action.

⁴ There were of course reasons for this approach. For instance, during the same period, a new Chair was hired in the English Department, having made very clear his curricular vision for the department, which sought to develop a more theoretically based curriculum. He wanted to work collaboratively with faculty to develop a concrete curricular proposal, hopefully enacting his vision. He met for two years with theorists in the department, who would not agree to implement the ideas of the individual they had hired to lead the department. The proposal that resulted from the years of meetings was not one that any one of the individuals would have favored as the most desirable approach, but it was all the

group could agree to. The process was quite ugly and nasty, and the Director of the Writing Program was determined to avoid such difficulties. Yet the approach taken brought substantial anger and resentment among faculty, having a quite negative effect on the life of the Writing Program.

⁵ The administrative responsibilities in the new Writing Program did bring some course release, but unfortunately the time involved in building a collaborative new program in a highly contentious environment at SU did not come anywhere near compensating for the time and energy required. Many key groups on campus attacked the premises of the Writing Program, preferring the old Freshman English focus on grammar, on the Baker-essay five-paragraph-theme model, and on new-critical approaches to reading literature as the basis for teaching writing. The Writing Program's situation was precarious for many years. Though the technical-writing courses were never under attack, my administrative responsibilities involved the entire Writing Program venture.

⁶ For instance, my work in cultural rhetoric gave rise to a collection entitled *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks*, co-edited with Roberta Binkley, SUNY Press, 2004.

⁷ *Technical Communication and the World Wide Web*, co-edited with Michael Day, Erlbaum Pub., 2005.