

Crossing Divides: Engaging Extracurricular Writing Practices in Graduate Education and Professionalization

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Abstract: This collaborative chapter describes how we find that participation in strategic extracurricular writing experiences—experiences beyond those that formal, course-based graduate inquiry provide—benefit students and faculty in meaningful ways through contextualized and critically self-aware social practice. The chapter provides eight different perspectives on extra-curricular writing experiences from both students and mentors and argues that these create and facilitate social spaces and interactions that contribute significantly to graduate education.

Keywords: Extracurricular Writing, Graduate Education, Identity, Enculturation, Reflection

In graduate education, professional practices circulate as embedded, implied, and mystifying 'lore'. . . [and] students attempt to glean professional expectations from peers and professors in patchworked ways—piecing together through time a sense of how to “do” reading, writing, collaborating, and professionalizing.

- Carr, Rule, & Taylor, 2013

Academics come to inhabit professional identities through a series of attempts to know the unknown, as Carr, Rule, and Taylor (2013) reveal in their richly situated study of graduate student literacy. The forging of professional identities happens not only through formal, course-based graduate inquiry, but also through participation in strategic extracurricular writing experiences such as collaborative research and publication opportunities (such as this chapter), which benefit students and faculty in meaningful ways as contextualized and critically self-aware social practice. As the larger collection demonstrates, much consideration has been given to traditional means of educating and professionalizing graduate students. While the chapters in the preceding sections focus on coursework and pedagogy for graduate student writing, this chapter delves into the formative social interactions that occur in and around the graduate curriculum, extracurricularly, through writing and collaboration among graduate students and faculty, as they are shaping and being shaped by the discipline.

Through a series of reflections from six former graduate students and two graduate faculty, we demonstrate how academics grow and change by building bridges across spaces traditionally regarded as separate and binary: student and teacher, classroom practices and professional scholarship, being and doing. These bridges, whether disciplinary, institutional, or personal are forged through socially constructed curricular and extracurricular writing experiences and play central roles in the development of graduate and faculty professional identities. The chapter embodies this bridge-building through the practice of an extracurricular writing experience as a socially situated act in both its impulse toward collaborative writing and revision and presenting readers with a cohesive reflection on the topic by retaining the multivocality that arises from a collection of unique graduate and faculty perspectives. This tension between thematic cohesion and multivocality is common to any vibrant field and its professionalizing practices. Traversing this tension fruitfully is at the heart of disciplinary enculturation: on the one hand, new members model their professional practices after disciplinary conventions while seeking, on the other, to bring something of themselves, something novel, to their participation. Casanave (2008, 2016) notes the importance of sharing stories of

“invisible struggles” in this process as a way to alter the literacy practices of the academic community. With this in mind, the contributors here share their struggles with professionalizing, such as the performance anxiety associated with writing for publication along with the demands of occupying the dual roles of student and teacher, and the ways scholarship on graduate writing has addressed these struggles and enabled students to grow into their disciplinary identities.

This chapter presents reflections that arise out of three distinct vantage points: the deeply emotional links between writing and identity, writing that enhances the development of key elements of professional academic life, and faculty-sponsored extracurricular writing opportunities. Each reflection is founded on the idea that we build bridges to our disciplinary communities through social interaction that often (and increasingly) arises from extracurricular writing, and these practices enable us to reach our greater potential. The first three student reflections reveal deeply personal anxieties and experiences that often spur developing academics to begin the process of forging links to their academic communities through extracurricular writing. Megan Adams gives voice to the novice writer’s deep desire for writing-related mentorship that supports early, tentative steps toward professional growth. April Conway reflects on the ways in which her extracurricular work as a poet informs an emerging disciplinary identity by stimulating creative thinking and writerly aesthetic. Pauline Baird shares how writing to learn with knowledgeable others enables her to cross into an unfamiliar, overwhelming expanse of disciplinary content, arguing that writing engenders mastery which then gives rise to professional identity. The next three reflections in the chapter explore ways in which specific extracurricular writing experiences enhance professional development in teaching, creating scholarship, and sustaining opportunities for deep thinking. Martha Schaffer explores written exchanges that inform graduate teachers’ professional development, enabling graduate students (and their undergraduate pupils) toward fuller potentiality. Estee Beck describes the richness of extracurricular mentorship in the production of scholarly work, and suggests these opportunities are critical in the face of pressures to publish. Laural Adams considers the value of deep disciplinary engagement, arguing that students and their mentors must use extracurricular writing experiences to develop new scholars’ thinking and to maintain their fields’ vitality.

In the final reflections, two graduate educators and mentors describe how extracurricular projects—collaborative writing and multimodal writing—benefit not just students, but themselves and the institutions in which they serve. Lee Nickoson offers collaboration between teacher and student as a mode that enables each to work across such identities towards the other. Kris Blair describes how an online publication, *Computers and Composition Online*, enables her students to develop aptitudes outside the space of the classroom. The social nature of these projects opens up terrain for exploration and growth that is unavailable to students and faculty working in isolation or constrained by traditional student-teacher roles. In closing,

we hope that readers find the following provocations extend conversations on, and possibilities for, extracurricular writing experiences in their own academic lives.

Learning to Jump: Overcoming Anxiety in Graduate Student Writing through Extracurricular Mentoring (Megan Adams)

As I moved from a career in broadcast journalism to graduate school, I became increasingly tense about my writing. I was shifting genres as I crossed fields. This meant that while I felt like an expert in audio-visual composing, I was a novice in composing for academic audiences. The shift from expert to novice filled me with anxiety. Although support within the classroom, feedback from coursework, and reflective readings helped me become more aware of “imposter syndrome,” and provided methods for improving my writing, the readings and discussions were not enough to dispel my self-doubt. Had it not been for the relationships built and strengthened outside the classroom with faculty mentors, I would not have been able to find my voice as an academic. The social interactions I experienced, along with the extracurricular support I received, allowed me to move past anxieties and grow as a writer in the discipline.

As I reflect on the experience, I am reminded of a moment from my childhood. When I was eight years old, my family and I hiked on an island in the middle of a lake, surrounded by steep rock cliffs. Somehow, I broke away from my family, climbed to the top of a cliff, yelled, “Watch me,” and, without hesitation, jumped. Years later, writing for academic audiences felt similar: there is a feeling of wanting to be noticed, of forcing oneself to have no fear, and in the end, blindly jumping.

In their 2011 article, “Toward Graduate-Level Writing Instruction,” Laura Micciche and Allison Carr, reported similar feelings of uncertainty among graduate students whose writerly identities are still being composed. Micciche describes a graduate course where she explores graduate students’ highly emotional experiences of learning to write: “When I taught. . . this course for the first time, two accomplished well-respected graduate students in our program wept when asked to introduce themselves and narrate their writing processes to the class” (p. 479). Although these experiences point to the value of classroom experiences to help students “leap from the cliff,” in my experience, it is the relationships I have formed with faculty members and colleagues that have helped me overcome fears of failure that paralyzed my ability to write. I am not alone in such feelings; recent efforts to make the literacy practices of graduate students more visible (Carr, Rule, & Taylor, 2013) indicate that the ability to enter into scholarly conversations still eludes many graduate students. Overcoming this sense of paralysis requires openness and a willingness to fail. Students need more spaces where it is okay to be wrong, to

explore, to share, and ultimately, to fail in order to become better writers, an observation also made by Michelle LaFrance and Steven Corbett in Chapter 12 of this collection, “Discourse Community Fail! Negotiating Choices in Success/Failure and Graduate-Level Writing Development.”

These spaces can only be cultivated by faculty members who are sensitive to the fears that may prevent graduate students from speaking or writing, thus stalling, or even foreclosing altogether on student opportunities for rich learning experiences. While the classrooms I entered at Bowling Green State University provided some of these opportunities, the most profound and formative conversations occurred in alternative spaces. One of the most significant ways I learned to overcome my own self-doubt occurred through discussions with faculty that my anxieties were not uncommon. I recall a conversation with Kris Blair during her office hours in the first semester of my Ph.D. program, in which she detailed her own struggles with imposter syndrome at each step of the process, but how, by focusing on one project at a time, she made it through. There were many moments throughout my tenure as a graduate student where I would hear Kris’ voice in my head, and the knowledge that a successful scholar had similar fears helped me to forge on in my studies.

Without voices of encouragement and constructive criticism, I wonder how long I would have continued to agonize in front of a computer screen thinking that nothing I could say was worthy of reading. I wonder how long I would have stood on the edge of the cliff, peering over but too fearful to jump, too fearful to risk falling flat. In order to bridge the divide between my identity as an expert in one field and my status as a novice in another, I had to make a proverbial “leap of faith.” I had to reach out to my mentors and, thankfully, they reached back. As Carr so eloquently notes, “To become better writers, we must become more careful, more deliberate, and daring writers” (Micciche & Carr, 2011, p. 484). This means conquering the inner voice telling us we have nothing to say and could not possibly say it well if we did. With help though, over time, these leaps of faith in ourselves grow more graceful, and more regular. Then it is our turn to reach out to the next novice.

Writing as an Extracurricular Space for Language, Creativity, and the Social (April Conway)

When I began a Ph.D. program in rhetoric and composition after completing an MFA in poetry, I recognized that I was about to embark on a path that hinged on my strengths in academic prose, a genre I had only dabbled with since earning my BA. In my new academic life, I would leave behind, as poet Louise Glück (1994) wrote, “those poems that seemed so small on the page, but that swelled in my mind” (p. 4) for essays that would stretch out across pages, forsake lyrical tones, and leave behind imaginative realms—or so I believed. After all, I assumed, writing

poetry is not done in the curricular spaces in my new discipline, nor did I see that it might inform my development. Yet, like rhetoric and composition, poetry is a socially structured discourse that belongs to a specialized community. Poets have been writing to and with each other for as far back as the craft goes. We build bridges with each other through language. In a very real sense, I collaborate with the contemporary poets with whom I share my work, those whose published work I devour, and those whose work stretches back through time and space. Rhetoric and composition, my new field, is also inherently social through and by language. As Gwendolyn D. Pough (2011) put it, however one identifies as a writer, “We all *do* language” (p. 302). It is precisely this assertion that has empowered me to be, as Pough said, “*undisciplined*,” particularly as I write *across* disciplines. In other words, I learned that it is my attention to and training in language that allows me to write across disciplines.

Writing itself is in essence an extracurricular space, one not confined to the classroom in which students explore their burgeoning relationships to new fields and new communities. I share my experiences moving from creative writing to rhetoric and composition to demonstrate that students who are learning to write for new disciplines must be encouraged to attend to the social nature of writing as well as to the level of language with care and passion, because it is in this way that creative thinking and artful communication in academic discourse emerge. In this way, new members build bridges with disciplinary communities while also retaining their unique aptitudes and identities, and by extension, their capacities to contribute creatively.

The histories of poetry and rhetoric and composition have been explored before and accounts often highlight overlaps in their linguistic, social, and creative emphases. Douglas Hesse (2010) pointed to the “rhetorical force” found in belles-lettres, and noted they “carry information and ideas” while demonstrating aesthetic prowess (p. 48). Indeed, when I draw upon the training I received in studying poetry, including an understanding of the precision of word choice, the impact of structure, the musicality of language, and the power of metaphor, my writing in my new discipline becomes richer.

Furthermore, I can relish in the pleasure of the “process of language itself” (Said as cited in Smith, 1999, B9) to explore ideas through writing. With digital compositions, I use my ear for the sonic elements of language to explore aural modes (Halbritter, 2004; Yancey, 2004). For example, in a computer-mediated writing class taught by Kris, I created a technology autobiography in a video format and chose to “narrate” the video through music. As a result, spoken language was communicated through the moods represented in each featured song. (I should note here that, like the extracurricular relationships with mentors that Megan writes about, I felt comfortable exploring this sonic form of communication in part due to my extracurricular relationship with Kris. This is because, as editor of

Computers and Composition Online, Kris worked with me as I published a book review for the journal).

Finally, as I am steeped in a new discipline, the creative expression I learned to develop as I worked in an earlier discipline can be turned towards mastery in my new field, especially in adopting and working with its foundational theories. Physicist David Bohm is noted for resisting narrow disciplinary specializations and synthesizing the thinking from disparate fields, such as physics, biology, and philosophy, in order to arrive at profound insights. He believed that creativity is at the root of theorizing (1998). Poet Richard Siken (2013) observed, “. . . poetry is the language of the imagination,” and language and imagination is key to all academic disciplines, since through language imagination allows a writer-scholar to explore and develop new theories in and across fields. My background in poetry, then, provides a foundation for me to struggle with and to unlock the creative processes necessary to advance ideas I am beginning to shape, and it is foundational for enabling me to write myself into my new community. As graduate students, each of us arrives at the edge of our fields with our own disciplinary histories from which we might draw creative energies, theoretical perspectives, and unique relationships to language and writing.

Our pasts serve as extracurricular writing spaces and the ground from which—through care and passion—we bridge into new communities. This socio-historic backdrop accompanies us even while we draw on contemporaries, on emerging and experienced writers in our new disciplines, creating webs of relationships in which we write, thus highlighting the social nature of all writing.

Graduate Knowledge-Building with a “Write to Learn” Approach (Pauline Baird)

Early in my graduate studies, I encountered a wall: while I knew a lot about Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), I knew little about the field I was drawn to—rhetoric and composition. I stood at the intersections of two fields, TESOL and rhetoric and composition, wondering not only how to become knowledgeable about the latter discipline, its methodologies and paradigms, but also about how to amass enough knowledge quickly to cross-pollinate these two disciplines for my own research interests. I thought conducting independent classroom research would help me learn more about both fields. What I did not expect was that my extracurricular writing (experiences) relationships would reorient my research of writing practices and perspectives on what writing in the discipline looks like.

When I think of the “burgeoning relationships” formed in extracurricular writing endeavors, as April notes in the previous reflection, I think of relationships in which knowledgeable others—colleagues and editors—in extracurricular

communities challenge graduate writers' knowledge about writing. Here is a story: In the years after earning my TESOL MA, while teaching in Japan, colleagues and conference submission editors became part of my extracurricular writing network. I recall a more experienced colleague challenging my fledgling attempts at conducting research on how ESL learners compose by asserting, "But you are not doing 'real' research." In her view, I did not have charts and numbers to warrant my claim to "real" research. She was not alone in this view, for in an attempt to publish an article on my research, an anonymous peer reviewer said of the paper, "This thing must never see the light of day!" These experiences not only highlighted my lack of requisite knowledge of disciplinary research methodologies, but also, they triggered deep self-doubt—a feeling not alien to the more than ten Ph.D. professors I have interviewed on their own publishing experiences. I think of Micciche and Carr (2011), who have noted similarly that graduate students and scholars alike experience apprehension, personal shame, inadequacy, emptiness followed by terror, and even feel as if they "sweat blood" over their writing (p. 486). Clearly, the angst of solitary writing attends each generation of novice writers often throughout their careers, but *kairotic* moments also attend those who persevere. This perseverance is often fostered in extracurricular spaces through the act of writing and conversations about writing.

Here is another story: After submitting an article for publication, a reviewer asked me to reconsider changing the word "traumatized" to "apprehensive" when I described my writing anxieties, arguing that I would project an image of myself to posterity that I might regret later. I deferred to him and changed the word, not because I believed he was right, but because I recognized his act as care for me, someone he only knew through writing. The mentoring and collaborative spirit in this exchange happened outside the classroom through the medium of writing, and it happens often enough that we must regard extracurricular writing as fundamentally social, even at its most solitary. It is in these spaces that we build bridges to our new communities and locate our writing selves within or alongside others.

For example, I recall my recognition of the deep significance of audience when I shared some notes on an assignment I had written in my local Guyanese dialect. I defied the usual conventions. The reader, a fellow graduate student, seemed puzzled and asked, "Who is your audience?" I said, "Me," and in that instant, the idea of "owning one's voice" became important. My choice to speak in the vernacular helped me build a sense of my own ethos, my confidence in the ability to claim expertise and make an argument. Unbeknownst to me, I had been practicing the "write to learn" process. For me, writing to learn is an extracurricular practice that continues to link me with the disciplinary community, even when I am my only audience. The write to learn approach has the potential to foster writers' knowledge of complicated textual content and unfamiliar disciplinary ground, and even one's sense of self emerging and growing in a new disciplinary context.

When we write to learn, we write for ourselves, and the language we use becomes a “tool for discovering, for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding” (Fulwiler & Young 1982/2000, p. x). Richard Gebhardt (1977) advised aspiring teachers to include the write to learn approach in their repertoire of “productive methodologies to help students . . . write” (p. 137). Gebhardt promoted the write to learn process in his courses for would-be composition teachers *by writing*, by having them use writing to master the content.

I continue to engage this practice on my own outside the classroom. For example, in a log I keep of my conversations with professors and scholars, it has become clear to me that most have learned to write *by writing*. In essence, even the most experienced writers write to learn. And whether they write alone or write collaboratively, they engage the insights of peers (Olsen & Raffeld, 1987; Reeves, 1997). But the write to learn approach simply cannot be made regularly available to students through coursework and seminars. Graduate students must be encouraged to use the practice extracurricularly, and though it seems solitary, paradoxically, write to learn bridges the individual to the discipline through deeply personal disciplinary knowledge-making.

Extracurricular Writing in Graduate Teaching Mentorships (Martha Wilson Schaffer)

While Megan, April, and Pauline describe their use of extracurricular writing as a way of attending to their personal experiences of coming to a discipline as new graduate students, my reflection considers how extracurricular writing can help graduate students resolve the tensions of their dual roles as student and teacher. Jessica Restaino’s (2012) *First Semester* sheds light on the conflicted space occupied by graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) as she follows four graduate student composition teachers struggling with process theory, day-to-day classroom practices, student resistance, and grading—the “struggle to survive” as Restaino describes it (p. 22). Not only does Restaino (2012) reveal the intellectual, emotional, and professional tensions inherent in this “middle ground,” she emphasizes the peril of not acknowledging these tensions. Her argument is for a GTA experience that is both pedagogically and academically rich through programs and professors working “to nurture students’ and teachers’ collective potential for making change by giving them a space for experimentation. . . that makes change likely and possible” (p. 104). Having been a graduate student who mentored new GTAs, I can attest to the value of using extracurricular writing to experiment not only with the practicalities of teaching, but also the affective experience of teaching. In other words, extracurricular writing can help graduate students across the disciplines respond to the intellectual and emotional challenges of being teacher and student simultaneously.

Our institution provided bi-weekly, semester-long courses to new GTAs who will be teaching first-year composition (FYC), but we also arranged for new GTAs to have individual weekly meetings with an experienced peer mentor. While the course and the meetings provided GTAs with practical classroom activities, theories of writing instruction, and sample essay prompts and syllabi, there was simply not enough time for affective matters such as working through frustrations with students, balancing teaching and coursework, or handling feelings of vulnerability in the classroom. Discussions between GTAs and mentors must be supplemented by writing that originates beyond the curricular context, often circulating in the heart of the night or the middle of the weekend when lessons are prepped and papers are graded.

For example, email exchanges between me and my mentees constituted rich extracurricular writing experiences, particularly as new GTAs strove to provide composition students written feedback on their essays, feedback that struck the delicate balance between critique and encouragement. It is a particularly personal, and yet deeply social, element of teaching (and writing), and GTAs struggle with their own emotional and intellectual reactions to student ideas and expressions as well as with the impact that their own words have on students. GTAs wrote to me: Am I being too harsh? Am I being too easy? It is a good paper, but it was late; what should I tell the student? I know what she is trying to say, but she just isn't getting there; how do I help her? Am I saying too much or too little to my students? And I wrote back with suggestions for revision, questions to provoke further reflection, and my own words of encouragement. These private written exchanges were about more than the practicalities of providing useful feedback; they were about interaffectivity.

Megan Watkins (2009, 2010) defines interaffectivity as “a process of mutual recognition realized as affective transactions that at one and the same time can cultivate the desire to learn and the desire to teach” (2010, p. 271). This mutual recognition occurs as social interaction between students and teachers (or between GTAs and their mentors) and enriches the process of teaching and learning. In order to help give rise to this form of relating, the GTAs and I relied on extracurricular writing spaces. The GTAs also used similar spaces with their own students toward the same ends. Engaging in this interaffectivity was a powerful experience for me, the GTAs, and the students, all of us drawing strength and energy from these mutual exchanges of ideas, inspirations, and intentions. Sharing feelings and thoughts through extracurricular writing enables GTAs to “try things on”: to experiment with affects (their own and those of their students), forge relationships with other novice teachers and scholars, and explore social practices that shape us as we struggle with our roles in new academic communities. Through this form of extracurricular writing, it is possible for GTAs to experience graduate school as a “bloom-space” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), fragrant and stimulating, from which they are gathering the affective energies to be writers, scholars, teachers, and the deeply personal desire to contribute to the discipline, to society, and to each other.

The Role of Extracurricular Mentorship in Transforming Graduate Students' Seminar Papers to Publications (Estee Beck)

The vibrant space of extracurricular writing experiences provides graduate students with opportunities to learn how to write for and with disciplines—to enter into the unique contours of the discourse and register and respond to the fluctuations of scholarship and research. In turn, this gives students the opportunity to sample what it means to have a productive scholarly life. Additionally, teachers and scholars in English studies have explored how to mentor graduate students into disciplinary conversations responsibly (see Olsen & Taylor, 1997). These discussions focus on practical advice for all members entering into their professions, but also examine the role of graduate student publishing (Lauer, 1997) and the role of scholarship to teaching (Boyer, 1990). Mentorship plays a strong role for graduate students learning how to enter such conversations. Thus, I offer my journey of engaging with extracurricular scholarship, which led to the acceptance of a journal article, but only through mentoring relationships was I able to keep moving in the face of rejection.

As a graduate student, I have felt both uncertain about publishing my work in professional venues and enthused as I enjoy the messiness of the writing process. I have been fortunate to receive mentorship from faculty at my home institution through formal coursework, informal mentoring, and advice from peer colleagues. These mentoring relationships have allowed me to engage in extracurricular scholarship and projects; however, like countless other graduate students, I struggle with anxieties about publication, recognizing that entering scholarly discourse is a recursive process of trial and error.

I have come to see conversations about writing involve not only demystifying publishing practices, but also deeply reflecting upon the values, habits, and persistence that writers carry with them into writing spaces. For example, early in my doctoral coursework, I wrote a seminar paper exploring the ethical considerations in using student real-life identities in class blogs and wikis. Then in another course on publication—a curricular space for learning how and where to publish—I had the opportunity to revise this paper. As my ideas developed, so did a persistent sense of imposter syndrome that lurked at the edge of my thoughts: I wasn't a writer. I wasn't a scholar. What could I possibly have to contribute? I went to my professor with these doubts, and she assured me that the feelings were common, that I should push them aside, and challenge myself—prove I could participate in scholarly discussions. Like Megan, I took a leap of faith, and I submitted my work to a journal.

A few months later, I received a rejection letter with reviewer feedback. I felt disappointed—in *myself*, for sending a manuscript that I could now see needed

more research, better organization. Despite the self-criticism that the rejection engendered in me, the submission process yielded two encouraging events. First, the reviewers were generous with their feedback. One had taken care to point out places where I could refine the argument and had suggested additional sources. The other had attended and responded to the overall organization of the article. After my initial disappointment in myself, I revisited their comments and saw them for what they were: mentoring. Their feedback was an act of generosity extended to a fledgling member of the field. I felt encouraged.

The second event that enabled me to move forward with the project occurred when my professor offered to reread the work with the reviewers' feedback in mind. The course had ended, but she made herself available outside its bounds, and helped me reflect on their advice and devise a revision plan based on it. The words of unfamiliar reviewers, of experienced members of the discipline I hoped to join, made more sense when they were restated—"translated"—by a mentor with whom I am familiar into a language with which I am familiar. From this feedback, I completed a deep revision of the manuscript—the kind of deep revision William Germano (2013) discusses in *From Dissertation to Book*.

I submitted the work again, and after a revise and resubmit, and additional revisions on my part, the peer-reviewed journal accepted it. Through mentorship, I entered an extracurricular space, scholarly publishing, and crossed divides from seminar paper to journal article, from *student writer* to *writer*.

This personal example illustrates not only the importance of persistence, but also the range of mentor-related practices that take place in a disciplinary community. Once I experienced this community as fundamentally supportive, it gave me the strength to persist with my writing. My faculty mentor was a lynchpin in that process, helping me situate feedback from experienced reviewers, helping me learn their language. Her mentorship helped me see the reviewers as mentors and sustained me through the writing process. Without knowing it, these people formed a support network for me and helped me gain confidence in my abilities to write for scholarly audiences.

However, while scholarly publishing was a place for me to build a bridge into the academic community, publishing in graduate school is not necessarily right for all students. In a special issue of the profession in *College Composition and Communication*, Doug Hesse (2013) reflects on the changing nature of scholarly expectations for newly-minted Ph.D.s as compared to those when he entered the profession in the 1980s, and he questions the sustainability of such expectations. Instead, we must recognize the complexities associated with these new demands and foster mentorship in extracurricular spaces, such as in interactions between students and established colleagues. Such mentorship amounts to a generosity of spirit that keeps disciplines thriving despite ever-mounting pressures to publish.

Extracurricular Spaces for Deep Disciplinary Engagement in Graduate Education (Laural Adams)

Graduate students yearn to be part of the “conversation,” whether that means interacting with a community of peers writing and presenting at conferences to work through a discipline’s difficult issues or contributing with other symbolic acts, such as teaching, to make an impact. Disciplines constantly evolve, and as they change, so too do the methods by which new members come to know them. Curricula reify approaches which serve as bridges between new members and their disciplinary communities, and graduate educators assess and modify these approaches in response to the shifting needs of new students in shifting educational contexts. Eventually, the discipline’s new members participate with more experienced members to instantiate their discipline through its communities, infusing them with vitality and innovation. As Martha points out earlier, disciplines offer new members a wide variety of modes of participation (e.g., teacher-researcher, researcher, teacher, administrator, adjunct). However, every discipline needs some part of its body dedicated to deeply engage the discipline’s conversations in order to advance its scholarly questions and concerns.

In today’s academy, taking on disciplinary questions and concerns through scholarship is a role that increasingly goes to a privileged few with the luxury of time and energy to consider them. Graduate programs are increasingly pressed to demonstrate sufficient “completion rates,” and to retool programs so that students who might not find jobs in the academy can find them elsewhere. Across the disciplines, curricular spaces that had traditionally engendered deep immersion are modified to make room for other emergent aptitudes and literacies. For example, as Kris points out in a later section in this chapter, digital literacy is critical for graduate students, whether they aspire to work in the academy or forge their professional identities elsewhere. Ultimately, shrinking opportunities for a range of new members to deeply engage their discipline’s scholarship limits its potential for growth and creativity. Unfortunately, to make matters worse, graduate students are inclined to forgo deep immersion in the face of pressures to publish *before* graduating in order to compete for increasingly limited academic positions. Those who feel they must secure several quick publications can find it difficult to spend time deliberating on core ideas or fundamental debates. For me, the pressure to finish my program with a lengthy CV left me anxious that I might have to forgo the deep disciplinary engagement that had traditionally been found by those who came before me and, through their engagement, made my discipline such fertile ground.

I was to discover, however, that deep disciplinary immersion need not occur in curricular spaces. For example, students in my program devised a forum to regularly inquire about common interests among us and to organize extracurricular

study groups to explore them. For me, writing book chapters has been the extracurricular experience that has offered the greatest opportunities for deep disciplinary engagement. However, these were not simple projects that I could publish quickly. They were interdisciplinary, a key component in stimulating the deep immersion I was seeking and also responding to the contemporary university's call for relevancy by spanning disciplines. These projects required that I learn in whole new terrains and make links across disparate bodies of scholarship. For example, in one chapter, I linked Herman and Chomsky's (2008/1988) "propaganda model" to activity theory (Engeström, 1987), arguing that together these lenses could explain the "green" discourse now so prevalent on university websites. In another chapter, I argued that my field's response to open educational resources should be informed by a "deep ecology" perspective where all stakeholders recognize and foster mutual interests, and most importantly, do not exploit those to whom access to education is so critical. These projects provided me with opportunities to explore not just the issues in my own field, but to experiment with "interdisciplinarity." Later, I would fuse an interest in cognitive psychology research on mental models (Johnson-Laird, 1983) with the notion of writing ecologies (Cooper, 1986) for my dissertation.

Through these projects, I have developed the ability to creatively link ideas across fields, enter new discourse communities, navigate my way to their foundational resources, and address questions in my own field by looking beyond it. And what a delight to experience the mentoring relationship that book editors have with their junior contributors! From these projects, I have forged lasting professional ties and endorsements beyond the scope of my dissertation committee or my program's faculty on the value of my academic contributions. Book chapters, often regarded as the ugly stepchild among the possible publishing venues, require intense focus, the courage to explore unfamiliar ground, and the patience to wait for a book's publication, even while one's peers celebrate the rapid turn-around of publications in other forms.

Retaining spaces for deep disciplinary engagement has not come without other costs, as well. For example, I have yet to produce scholarship for the multimodal outlets where some of my field's most innovative work is emerging, such as *Computers and Composition Online* and *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, despite my love of their encompassing spirit and innovative approaches to sharing—even enacting—knowledge. But the deep engagement I had with the book chapters has nonetheless inched me toward my version of "a contributing member" of the field. The climate in higher education increasingly pressures graduate students through curricular structures to forgo deep engagement and favor marketability and job placement, but students who want to cultivate deep immersion can through extracurricular opportunities such as these. Taking responsibility for one's own professional enculturation by exploring extracurricular spaces requires independence, curiosity, courage, and stamina, because as a graduate student, you worry you may

not fit the mold set forth by your programs' design. This can be discomfiting when the ultimate aim is to be part of the community that gave you your start, took you under its wing. Yet, disciplinary communities, and most of their members, recognize the importance of divergence in fostering innovation and growth. Moreover, academics do most of their "disciplinary work" outside of curricular spaces, so it makes sense that professors encourage their students to view these spaces as integral to their development, and when such development feels personal, this is the kind of deep engagement that produces deep personal identity and the sense of standing in relation to a community. These spaces for personal and professional growth are often constituted by writing, whether a student is commenting on a scholar's recent blog post or composing a book chapter. When we are deeply engaged, these spaces are personal spaces, and they link us to our communities. Graduate students should be encouraged to forge such spaces and also to build bridges to others out of them because identity, both professional and personal, is ultimately communal.

Working in the Spaces Between: Engaging the Extracurricular (Lee Nickoson)

Carr et al. (2013) forward digital literacy narratives as a method for graduate students to engage similarly critical self- and group reflections. Reflections such as these, they go on to argue, ready students to consider their place in a complex disciplinary ecology. The preceding six narratives perform the transformative reflection Carr and her co-authors describe, and, as Laural's narrative persuasively argues, readiness and self-advocacy brought each to purposeful action through engagement in extracurricular collaborative writing projects. Beyond the formal space of the graduate seminar, participation with and reflections on extracurricular writing establish students as makers. These spaces—the spaces between coursework and visible, required/expected sites of academic performance and assessment of those student-based performances—have become powerful points of reflection and connection for me as well as for the students. I learn most about graduate students as new(er) members of my own field. Such learning opportunities invariably bring me to (re)consider my own position in the discipline. When faculty and graduate student scholars elect to write alongside one another, we expand our knowledge *about* and place(s) *in* this ecology. We learn (about) ourselves when we write with each other; we write (with) each other in part to learn who we are and who, as writers, researchers, teachers, and even tenured faculty members of the discipline, we might (still) want to become.

Like many of my program faculty colleagues, I often collaborate with graduate students outside the classroom. These collaborations, which can take the form of articles, book chapters, or conference presentations, seem to grow organically from conversations—engaged, curious exchanges—that may originate in a seminar

classroom, in a crowded hotel hallway during a busy conference, or in the department mailroom. In these extracurricular spaces, I have opportunities to learn about my graduate student colleagues' intellectual wonderings, and these conversations result in collaborations with them.

Because the projects arise organically, they enable me to interact with students in less structured ways than the graduate seminar affords. Collaborations with students introduce me to new scholarly conversations, methods, genres, and modes of delivering writing scholarship. The process keeps me energized and curious in ways that writing on my own, or even with other faculty, simply does not. Extracurricular student-faculty collaboration also allows spaces for deepened, often sustained professional relationships with co-authors or co-presenters. Collaborative scholarship introduces occasions and purposes for graduate students and faculty to work—and to work *differently*—together.

Of course, such collaborations also present very real demands on each participant. The greatest demands I experience revolve around issues of time, labor, and collaborator resistance. The first two are not likely to surprise any academic, faculty, or graduate student. As faculty, I must manage multiple professional responsibilities, some of which are visible to my graduate-student collaborators—such as classroom teaching. However, committee work, advising, and developing my own scholarly projects are less visible, and students may need help understanding my time constraints, just as I may need to understand theirs. Also, collaborations require significantly more time than solo efforts. Planning, drafting, reading, revising, revising yet again with one or more collaborators is messy. Lastly, I must consider how my participation in any collaborative writing project will be perceived by institutional merit and promotion committees, which may or may not recognize their value.

Student-faculty collaborations are most productive when each author brings their full skillset to the table. Collaboration asks students and faculty alike to develop working relationships that value and, in fact, rely on all collaborators as active contributors to achieving the end goals of any multi-authored project. Often, however, I find I must respect graduate student colleagues' seeming reluctance to, or even their active resistance to assuming a position of authority or the role of scholarly expert in our collaborations. I constructively challenge my colleagues' reluctance. It is this tension, which arises from displacing the power dynamics of the more formal, traditional student/teacher relationship, I find to be simultaneously the most limiting and most rewarding aspect of graduate student-faculty collaborations. In contrast to hierarchical collaboration, this collaboration is rewarding and fruitful when each person feels they can openly assume the position of engaged, curious collaborator: co-researcher, co-author, co-learner. This "dialogic collaboration," as Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford (1990) described it, is "loosely structured," and collaborators engage "multiple and shifting roles as the project progresses" (p. 275). Despite the fact that students have not yet completed their formal enculturation, they have

insights that contribute to disciplinary conversations, thus helping to shape the field.

Kris Fleckenstein, Clay Spinuzzi, Carole Clark Papper, and Rebecca Rickly (2008) argue that researchers and their “active involvement in and contribution to a research ecosystem” contribute to the construction of the very ecologies they aim to study (p. 395). Student and faculty collaborations, too, share in this ecology formation. When successful, student-faculty collaborations also allow the faculty collaborator opportunities to experience disciplinary conversations, and indeed the discipline itself, (once again) anew.

Extracurricular Multimodal Composing (Kris Blair)

Even as various fields refigure their definitions of writing and literacy from the alphabetic to the multimodal, my longstanding concern is that graduate students’ literate practices are too frequently overlooked in these discussions, based on the false presumption that they already possess sufficient confidence and expertise (Carr et al., 2013) to compose in digital spaces. As a result, another presumption is that integrating multimodal composing in the classroom is an undergraduate, rather than a graduate, goal. Yet without the opportunity to develop online professional identities, and to do so in extracurricular ways that extend beyond the classroom, graduate students are doomed to privilege the very alphabetic literacies and academic borders with their future students that many scholarly conversations, including this one, attempt to subvert.

One example of such extracurricular opportunity is through *Computers and Composition Online*, a fully online, multimodal journal that I have edited since 2002. Once it moved to Bowling Green State University, the journal was largely run by graduate student editors, with whom I collaborated to secure submissions and then shepherded them through the digital composing process toward eventual online publication. That a number of my co-authors find the Carr, Rule, and Taylor webtext a meaningful touchstone in discussing the anxieties graduate students face in developing disciplinary literacies is significant to me in that the piece appears in *Computers and Composition Online* as both a rhetorical and multimodal example of “unlocking creative processes,” something April contends in her earlier narrative.

Indeed, as I have learned during my time as editor, involving graduate students in the online editorial process has the potential to foster scholarly publication models that encourage new voices in new media and foster a form of graduate writing that is both extracurricular and collaborative. For our team of student editors, this occurs in several ways:

1. **Design.** Very often authors, including more established voices, have limited experience in digital composing. Thus, our section editors have served not only as consultants but also as mentors and co-designers, in some cases

receiving design and author credit as they oversee development of submissions that include the use of web-authoring, digital imaging, video, and audio-editing tools. This role ultimately enables that particular contributor to undertake future projects in ways that are more socially aware of the highly collaborative nature of the digital composing process and that also impact the future digital collaboration of the section editors as well. In my own digital collaborations with Estee and alumna Mariana Grohowski, for instance, we often worked side by side in a computer lab, late into the evening or over a holiday break, each playing varying, but always co-equal roles with code, design, and image/text editing.

2. **Networking.** As an editor, I have encouraged graduate students, even as they work with online authors, to view these conversations as networking opportunities, perhaps enabling future collaborations and fostering an emerging professional reputation and identity for our students as digital scholars. For example, section editors and other students have interviewed leading scholars such as Kathleen Blake Yancey, Chris Anson, and Cynthia Selfe & H. Lewis Ulman about the role of new media and multimodality on the teaching of writing. These connections have in several instances fostered invitations to participate in professional development forums and editorial partnerships, such as Ohio State University's annual Digital Media and Composition Institute and the separate Computers and Composition Digital Press.
3. **Authoring.** For both graduate student editors and other students in our graduate program, there are ample opportunities to experiment with digital composing, often leading to shorter multimodal publications such as book or software reviews that appear in the journal. Frequently, our Reviews Editor works with fellow students as a coach, helping them to improve the design, accessibility, and navigability of these early submissions. These initial experimentations with remediating a traditional academic genre can lead to larger projects as well, allowing students to circulate their scholarship more widely. Moreover, I am delighted not only that April, Estee, and Megan have published such reviews in the journal, but also that as a result of these extracurricular publishing processes, the relationship I have with these women and other former graduate students has evolved from mentor-mentee to co-equal members of a community of digital writing scholars.
4. **Mentoring.** Although I have focused upon the mentoring that occurs within a specific extracurricular, digital writing space, another important type of mentoring occurs through the role graduate students play in fostering digital composing among their own colleagues and students once they leave BGSU. For me, such efforts represent a form of sustainability, as these new faculty engage in the same digital composing processes and social practices

that lead to submissions to *Computers and Composition Online* and other online journals, including *Enculturation* and *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. Notably, the digital collaborations I have since engaged in with both Megan and Estee in particular have involved reciprocal mentoring in which they contribute as much to my growth as a digital scholar as I have to theirs during our shared time at BGSU. As much as digital literacy specialists advocate multimodality across the undergraduate writing curriculum, that goal is dependent on multimodality across the graduate curriculum not only in classrooms but also in other extracurricular, professional development spaces. A forum such as *Computers and Composition Online* has played a substantial role in fostering that goal. For Kathleen Fitzpatrick, “Writing and publishing in networked environments might require a fundamental change not just in the tools with which we work, or in the ways we interact with our tools, but in our sense of ourselves as we do that work” (2011, p. 55). Sustaining academic relevance across the disciplines, and my relevance as a graduate educator and journal editor, depends on this shift in professional self to view the multimodal literacy acquisition of graduate students as a social process of extracurricular mentoring and modeling. Inevitably, this process helps, as Estee powerfully notes, move graduate students from “*student writer to writer*” and shapes their critical self-awareness of technology’s impact both on their emerging faculty identities and on the literate identities of the undergraduate students they serve.

Conclusion

Each of us has reflected upon what it means to cross divides between curricular and extracurricular spaces. At best, the liminal space within which graduate students operate allows a sense of becoming—a fostering of growth and development as writers, scholars, and teachers. Here, extracurricular support and mentorship enables graduate students to bridge the space that separates them from their burgeoning identities as writers in new disciplines. Graduate students need opportunities to be composers through reciprocal mentoring models that translate to what they will do as future faculty. While extracurricular writing need not be collaborative, we argue it is always social. We also find (for example in the writing of this chapter) that a collaborative model between graduate students and faculty enables us to celebrate our own metamorphoses as we learn about and participate in the rich writerly lives of both our lesser and more experienced colleagues. Ultimately, by taking advantage of extracurricular writing experiences, graduate students and faculty alike learn together to cross the material, social, and cultural constraints of writing that shape academic life.

In her book *Women Writing the Academy* (1993), Gesa Kirsch contends that much of academic writing “reflects male forms/norms of discourse because it is based on notions of competition and winning, and it privileges formal, reasoned arguments” (p. 19). Kirsch relies specifically on the observations of Cynthia Caywood and Gillian Overing (1987), who noted that the academy values the expository over the exploratory, the argumentative over the autobiographical, and the impersonal over the subjective, and thus called for “attention to the social, cultural, and political dimensions that shape writing and academic life” (p. 126). The perspectives shared in our chapter and throughout this collection reflect that call to “pay attention” (Selfe, 1999) to the material and ideological conditions that enable and constrain our identities as writers across genres, modalities, and disciplinary contexts.

Clearly, we are not alone. Kirsch’s initial work, along with those we have cited throughout this chapter, particularly Carr et al. (2013) as well as Micciche and Carr (2011), foreground the need for graduate programs to more consistently mentor their students, a process that requires engaging them beyond the confines of the classroom. But how and where can we provide extracurricular space and time for students, and their faculty, to experiment with authorial voice and to understand the ways in which those voices can transform what it means to compose? As we discovered through our writing process on this chapter, it is important to understand collaborative composing as an affective enterprise in which graduate students, professors, teachers, and scholars can reciprocally impact one another in ways that promote the potential of each participant to *become*. Enabling collaboration has the potential to disrupt the hierarchy among these participants to better equalize identities, perspectives, and voices, and to sustain disciplines that need the creative input that their members can generate under the right conditions. To that end, mentors and graduate program administrators should help students recognize the disciplinary and larger academic environments, which lie beyond the classroom, so that they can more proactively craft and reflect upon their own identities in ways that balance scholarship, teaching, and service, and allow them to assume formative roles in their fields.

Graduate students and their mentors should embrace shifts in literate practice, from the creative to the expository to the multimodal, that will in turn shape the future of the discipline and its professionalization practices. Embracing change often requires students and faculty to participate beyond the classroom, where curricula struggle to keep pace with the changes occurring in the disciplines. It requires faculty to nudge their graduate students into the places where disciplines are actually constructed and instantiated, and these tend to be extracurricular writing spaces. As the adage suggests, the only constant is change, both inside and outside the academy. Indeed, John Trimbur (1993) wrote in his foreword to Kirsch’s book, “higher learning is not just about disciplining its practitioners . . . but that the practitioners themselves . . . can seize the academic tools of production for their own ends” (p. xi). Our ends have been, as Trimbur described it, “to make academic work

into socially useful knowledge” (p. xi). For us, that use value extends beyond this chapter and into our current and future roles as colleagues and mentors committed to providing and calling for extracurricular spaces that enable sustained reflection among diverse voices about the challenges of developing writerly lives that cross curricular and extracurricular divides.

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