

## Concluding Thoughts

We believe that the stories in this collection demonstrate that writing centers are very good at supporting students in environments with limited funding, but perhaps they are less prepared to support themselves. Individually, we do not always have the agency to determine budgets. Individually, we cannot often successfully argue for tenure lines, for more stability, or for better pay. Writing center administrators are also often powerless in the face of shifting reporting lines or institutional positioning. And though writing centers can assert their value in terms of continuing to teach writing through individualized peer support, without collective action, we will remain contingent in many of the ways described at length in this project, both individually and as a field.

But what if we treated ourselves as a collective? What if we spoke, wrote, and acted collectively? What if we worked together to enact the creation of good jobs? What if the profession worked to standardize expectations around salaries? What if we lobbied collectively and were more vocal, more outspoken, and more aggressive? What if we collaborated to anticipate and counter the latest fiscal “crises” and austerity measures? What if we took agency by collectively seizing power? What if we unlearned our internalized capitalist logics?

In “Invisible Work” Daniels (1987) wrote about the fundamental shift when women entered the paid labor market, changing both the home and communal spaces like churches. Institutions, then, are not simply maintained by this invisible work but are also drastically altered when communal, unpaid, and often overlooked work is withheld:

Changes in institutions bring to light not only the earlier work required for their maintenance but also the work implicated in creation of new institutional forms. If we examine changes closely, we can see what has been added or taken away in our society by the presence or absence of efforts that we have come to take for granted. We appreciate and want the efforts that make our institutions more workable though we wouldn't credit most of it as work. (412)

Withholding labor through strikes is one such strategy to bring unpaid and invisible work to the forefront of our discussions about our institutions. There are, however, more large-scale protests such as mass walkouts that bring attention to labor equity issues from a population standpoint rather than an industry-specific one. For example, in 2020 essential workers across the United States walked off their jobs to support Black lives (Treisman, 2020). The walkout was organized by 60 labor unions as well as social justice organizations. The 1975 Icelandic women's strike—organized by women from political parties as well as

Feminist organizations—urged women to walk out of their paid and unpaid (domestic) work to protest unequal pay and violence towards women. This protest put Iceland at the forefront of gender equity policy and rights (Hofverberg, 2022). Recently, in late October 2023, there was another walk-out of women and non-binary people in Iceland, still in protest of equal pay and sexual violence (“Why are women in ‘feminist paradise’ Iceland striking?” 2023).

Here, we see two very different kinds of labor organizing, but the Iceland walk-out explicitly addressed how invisible work—particularly in the domestic space—was necessary for the functioning of the country. When women walked out, they left their children, their cooking, their chores, all of which underpin the fabric of the paid economy and the work of men. Interestingly, the 1975 strike was known as the long Friday and the country ran out of sausages, because men chose a simple and fast meal to cook for their children. The walkout, then, caused mass shortages, work stoppages, and general disruption on a national scale; it also paved the way for gender equity policies and many contribute the strike to the election of Iceland’s first female Prime Minister five years later (Hofverberg, 2022). Imagine if every writing center participated in a national walkout in the United States. How many hundreds of thousands of students would fail to receive support? How many thousands of faculty would be denied professional development and support? Mass protest could help bring our invisible work, our emotional labor, our metalabor to the fore. It might, as other education workers have done through withholding grades while striking for better pay and workplace conditions, create a kind of painful but incredibly visible absence in the ecosystem of higher education. Imagine what a world without writing centers would be like for the institutions we serve.

Of course, in addition to direct action, we believe we need more research to inform, document, and support our collective efforts. More research on invisible work, emotional labor, job creep, and metalabor would be useful in making this often-unseen labor more visible and thus valued. If we were able to systematically name, for instance, how we use affect and emotion in our sessions and in our administration, we might be better equipped to train—and be compensated—for that work. We also wish to continue and encourage research on intersectionality, labor, and writing center work. We wonder, for example, how laborers experience disability and access fatigue (Konrad, 2021) and how this fatigue compounds with the other metalabors of administrative work. We wonder similar things about the emotional tax levied on BIPOC workers and how those workers encounter it in writing center spaces. We hope to see research by those who have taken radical labor steps: what are the results of those steps? What are the costs? What further opportunities have availed themselves? These are only a few of the areas of inquiry we imagine for anti-capitalist writing center futures.

We also hope future work will unpack our histories—particularly, how writing centers were formed and how they currently run. We see many models of writing centers that were created decades ago and under drastically different circumstances than workers in the managed university currently face. In examining our

histories, we might learn more about how decisions that were made in the past still shape our work currently, and whether or not these models are still sustainable or require similar or more (or somehow less) metalabor.

Finally, as many of the writing center directors who were there at the start of our modern iteration in the 1970s start to retire and—sadly—die, the field loses histories that would otherwise teach us more about our field's origins and the establishment of modern-day writing centers. We believe there have been significant changes in the gender, class, and race make-up of our field, yet in many ways we are currently an overwhelmingly white, female-identifying profession. If current trends in higher education apply to our field, we suspect that male-identifying workers perhaps move more easily into and out of more stable administration positions than their female and non-binary counterparts (Whitford, 2020). The gender dynamics of our field, then, must be interrogated more systemically. We are especially interested in how the profession—and its pipeline into tenure track and more stable positions—has changed over the past 60 years or so and how gender has played a role in that shift.

We still have so many questions about our collective future, the future of higher education, and the state of our workplaces. We also have a lot of dreams and wishes. Many of these are reflected in the stories in Act II and in the guidance in Act III—imagining a different way, a better way forward into the future. And while conversations around these topics often feel personal and risk further marginalizing already-marginalized members of our community, we assert that these conversations might empower those same members and give those who experience less precarity an opportunity to step into advocacy roles. Ultimately, these conversations might lead to our ability to flourish in this work. This is an unlearning process, made more meaningful by storying and, of course, by writing. The next step, however, is action; we are more powerful as a collective, when we act *together*.