

## PROLOGUE

Being right can stop all the momentum of a very interesting idea.

*Robert Rauschenberg (qtd. in Kimmelman 26)*

We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Only in this manner are we resolved to write.

*Deleuze (xxi)*

## MEMORANDUM

Date: October 20  
To: Dr. Beth Boquet  
From: PC  
Subject: Noise from the Writing Center

Since the Writing Center is located in the main Faculty Office Building, I would expect you and your staff to act with appropriate courtesy. I think it is inappropriate and discourteous to make such a racket as I heard coming from the Writing Center this evening. Even after I politely asked if the door could be closed, I again was interrupted by loud noises periodically coming from the Writing Center. When I politely mentioned this to James McMahon, who was working there, he acted as if I was somehow in the wrong to ask for quiet. Further, at no time did anyone apologize for making such a racket.

Faculty have an expectation that they can work in their offices with peace and quiet. The faculty office building is not an appropriate place for parties. I am deeply disappointed that you and your staff fail to recognize this, and would treat the

faculty with such disrespect as I encountered this evening. I hope that you will speak to James in particular, and that you will do something about this problem to prevent its recurrence in the future.

#### MEMORANDUM

Date: October 21  
To: Dr. PC  
From: Beth Boquet  
Subject: Noise in the Writing Center

I would like to take this opportunity to clear up what appear to be misunderstandings raised in your memo dated October 20.

1. The first stems from the assumption that the event to which you are referring was a party. It was in fact a writing center staff meeting, one aspect of the ongoing training that undergraduate peer tutors receive as part of their work in the Writing Center. It was attended by a total of seven people—five students and two faculty members. During Sunday night's hour-long meeting, we discussed successes and problems that tutors have encountered so far this semester, set up a system for staff communication (including a VAX Notes conference), and finalized a proposal that the tutors are submitting to the Northeast Writing Centers Association conference. I hope that from this partial list of the business conducted at Sunday's hour-long meeting, you can agree that it was not primarily a social gathering, but one where students were engaged in interesting academic work.

2. It is certainly arguable that Donnarumma Hall is, as you term it, the "main Faculty Office Building." As you are surely aware, office space and classroom space are shared in every building on this campus. I am well aware of the need to respect the working space of all members of the campus community, and I am frankly surprised that you would suggest otherwise. I would say, however, that this expectation must also extend to faculty's awareness that campus buildings, with the

possible exception of the library, are common spaces designed for intellectual engagement. This activity takes many forms, from individuals working in solitude to groups problem-solving collectively. I might also add that the deafening silence in most of our classroom buildings is a condition which I view to be a problem. The recent recommendations of the Dehne group [a campus marketing group who recommended, among other things, more visible collaborative student work spaces] support this conclusion.

3. This seems to be an issue primarily because the meeting was held on a Sunday, when we might expect there to be little activity in any of the buildings. I wonder if the same objections would have arisen had the meeting occurred at some other time. And I find it ironic that one of my primary considerations when scheduling these meetings is to select times that would prove least disruptive, say, for example, to Paul Lakeland [then-director of the Honors Program], who shares this office space with me, and to his students.

4. It also appears to be a problem that staff members, particularly James McMahon, were not appropriately deferential to you. I obviously cannot speak for James, nor will I presume to know what sort of exchange took place. I would like to point out that, in my opinion, a more appropriate channel might have been to speak to me directly. I am more than a bit confused as to why such an apparently simple matter has turned into this formal exchange.

I close by stating the obvious: Space on this campus is a huge problem. Ideally, the Writing Center would not be situated where it is. It is a space where people gather to talk and to share ideas. Ideally, faculty offices would be set apart from the main traffic of the building, as they are places where people often need privacy and solitude. This ideal is not our case. I and my staff will try to be more considerate in the future by closing the door. I expect that you will do the same by shutting yours. If this does not solve the problem, please let me know.