

the WAC *Journal*

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Writing Across the Curriculum

The WAC Journal

Writing Across the Curriculum

Volume 18

September 2007

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Contents

The WAC Journal
Volume 18, September 2007

Enlivening WAC Programs Old and New JOAN MULLIN AND SUSAN SCHORN, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN	5
That's Just a Story: Academic Genres and Teaching Anecdotes in Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Projects MICHAEL CHARLTON, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA	19
Helping Thesis Writers to Think About Genre: What is Prescribed, What May Be Possible KATE CHANOCK, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA	31
Becoming Landscape Architects: A Postmodern Approach to WAC Sustainability REBECCA JACKSON AND DEBORAH MORTON, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY	43
INTERVIEW	
Terry Myers Zawacki: Creator of an Integrated Career CAROL RUTZ, CARLETON COLLEGE	59
REVIEWS	
A Host at the Parlor: a Review of <i>Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts</i> JACOB S. BLUMNER, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN—FLINT	69

A Review of <i>Write for Insight: Empowering Content Area Learning, Grades 6–12</i>	73
KATHLEEN DUDDEN ROWLANDS, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE	
Review of <i>Academic Writing Consulting and WAC: Methods and Models for Guiding Cross-Curricular Literacy Work</i>	79
LINDA S. BERGMANN, PURDUE UNIVERSITY	
Notes on Contributors	81

Enlivening WAC Programs Old and New

JOAN MULLIN AND SUSAN SCHORN
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

WITH THE CONTINUOUS GROWTH of WAC over time, new directors have a wealth of program models to adapt to their particular local setting (see examples in *Programs and Practices* by Farrell-Childers, Gere, and Young; *Programs That Work* by Fulwiler and Young; *WAC for the New Millennium* edited by McLeod, Miraglia, Soven, and Thaiss; and *Writing Across the Disciplines* by Young and Fulwiler). However, newer programs, as well as the established, may want to continually evaluate whether they have become like the walking dead: present, operating, but not quite “there.” Stagnation may result from new programs hitting a brick wall in their development; in mature programs, directors and faculty can get so used to their WAC program, or so sure that everyone else is doing their job, that the program becomes somewhat invisible or operates on auto-pilot. When successful WAC workshops, course development protocols, newsletters, and all other typical program elements are in place or have run their course, WAC directors and faculty often need to create other strategies to sustain or reinvigorate participation, interest, and engagement. The SWC requirement¹ at UT Austin, established in 1987, is a unique example of how a WAC initiative can be put on automatic and presumed to run effectively. While the unique structure of this particular institution may not directly match other school’s profiles, the results of its 20-year program are indicative of what happens in others when administrators cut support for WAC programs, when directors retire and are not replaced (or replaced with contingent faculty), or when a program continually expands and its center collapses. What is common to

¹ Substantial Writing Component (SWC) is UT’s name for writing intensive courses and WAC.

all these situations is that the program has repeated successful practices without accommodating the need for variation, without assessing changing disciplinary practices, or without challenging pedagogies that may have become too unreflective and automatic. This was the case at UT Austin.

The responsibility for offering WAC was decentralized, left to each college, and identified only as courses for which the required 16 pages and three assignments would “be an important component in determining the student’s course grade.” Revision was recommended, as was feedback. Not only did these minimal guidelines, originally meant to honor faculty and disciplinary autonomy, fail to sustain faculty over time, but they failed to produce any concerted efforts to measure the effectiveness of the WAC pedagogy that was employed. This resulted in a need for both self-examination of the program and its fault lines and for new strategies that would create a buzz about WAC. We needed—and we are suggesting that many programs we have reviewed need—a renewal of the institution’s WAC culture. Here we present an assortment of familiar WAC program elements—course design, faculty development, and assessment—and briefly outline how we used current institutional structures as a platform for redesigning, expanding, and revitalizing both SWC/WAC and faculty’s investment in it.²

Course Design

A major flaw in the SWC system was the relegating of course approval to staff. Faculty had filled out a brief checklist every year for the SWC course they planned to teach, and sent it to the College, where the course scheduler approved it, providing it met the very minimal criteria (page length, number of assignments, percent of grade from writing). There was a clear need to redirect the approval process through faculty, and for this purpose we turned to our newly-appointed faculty writing committee. While programs in other institutions may have a faculty committee approving WAC courses, our corrective had multiple, positive results: it raised awareness of effective WAC methodology, improved our working knowledge of what instructors were doing in their writing classes, and provided a database of approved courses. With the College faculty writing committee, we created an online submission and approval system that equated the process with peer review rather than “oversight,” a strategic move that both mimics the publication review processes with which faculty are familiar (and raises the “currency” of WAC), and demonstrates to faculty that their colleagues value teaching.

² Work described here pertains only to the College of Liberal Arts, UT’s largest college, comprised of 14,000 students and over 600 faculty.

The Web-based system is designed not only to collect information for online writing committee review, but to educate faculty about what an SWC course might include—to widen their repertoire and show them possibilities (see Appendix A for visuals of the main proposal sections). Instructors are given a choice of informal and formal writing assignment categories; for many, this may be the first time they've seen the term “informal writing” or been made to consider the levels of writing possible in their SWC class. They then proceed to describe formal writing assignments. Not only has this structure awakened faculty to the use and integration of informal and formal writing, but it compels them to consider their role, that of the TA, and that of students, in evaluating the writing assigned. Though the format seems to systematize courses, flexibility is built in to the process. Most fields allow text response, so instructors are free to choose, for example, how they will describe the length and frequency of their assignments (“Half a page, every week,” “Two five-page papers, submitted in the middle and at the end of the semester,” “Four hundred words, daily,” etc.).

Another benefit of the online system is that each writing committee member sees at least 10 percent of the submissions (over 700 the first year as the system transferred to the new format!). In the first round, the committee quickly came to realize the limits of our minimal requirements.³ As is true of editors in a peer review publication, faculty approval may be accompanied by course design suggestions operating on multiple levels (explicit and subtle): “Reviewers hope you will consider incorporating revision into your assignments so that students can benefit from your feedback.” In the rare event that a proposal does not meet the minimum requirements for an SWC, the instructor is emailed with suggestions about how the course might be altered. Thus, the system becomes another means of educating faculty.

Committee members have also used the data collected automatically by the new approval system to look at the types of writing being done from department to department; to compare the ratio of lower- to upper-division writing classes, and to examine questions about common—or uncommon—SWC practices (for example, where informal assignments are most often used). Writing committee members have not only learned more about WAC just by participating in the approval process, but they now have data (information familiar to faculty-researchers) to make policy decisions and resource recommendations. They have become our advocates in the College.

³ The committee is now working to strengthen those requirements and, as shall be briefly described later, this task has affected the new core curriculum requirements.

The SWC approval system perhaps best illustrates an essential fact that underlies our efforts at UT: if you ask people for information (or compel them to provide it), you should give it back to them in some familiar form that lets them see how it is useful or interesting. They will then be less inclined to resent your asking in the first place, more inclined to be curious about the relationship of their work to others', and more open to considering its implications—especially if it helps them make arguments for more resources.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Retreat

Another important profile-raising element for early WAC programs has been the annual retreat. Lean times for institutions have reduced the likelihood of this element generally, but we think it worth revisiting in the form of departmental retreats, curriculum or accreditation retreats, or even by using grant or one-time faculty development or assessment money to jump start or reinvigorate a program. We were fortunate to have two summer retreats, each with 21 faculty members.⁴ Participants *applied* with a brief statement about their writing classes, and were chosen in consultation with the dean and chairs; as with any academic reward that is valued (grants, fellowships, travel funds) faculty had to be selected for this honor.

Over three days, faculty learned basic WAC theory, re-worked their courses, and developed specific assignments and syllabi (see the schedule in Appendix B). For their valued work, faculty received a \$1,000 stipend and the opportunity to earn an additional \$500 over the course of the next academic year if they led a WAC workshop in their home department. While this may be sumptuous for some institutional budgets, stipends can always be adjusted to suit the context, and rewards can come in other forms if WAC directors are creative and work with their chairs and directors. The suggestion for the platformed stipend came from an associate dean, working with the writing committee, and the rewards have been worth the investment. Not only have faculty offered workshops in their departments and received credit on their service reports, but one of our largest units now has two annual, collaborative writing workshops that they run themselves. Retreat faculty have also established informal networks (including a WACulty listserve), and we hold an annual reunion lunch to

⁴ The three days were carefully planned at a high-end venue (an inn) near, but not on, campus (to discourage “running over to the office”), where faculty could be well fed and comfortable and have space outside during their thinking and working times.

exchange ideas, problems, and solutions. Finally, we use the retreat attendees as a talent pool from which we draw instructors for all faculty workshops and for the writing committee, and they get priority treatment when requesting a writing mentor for their SWC class.

Writing Mentors

We continue to offer the expected faculty development workshops on grading, plagiarism, and “grammar,” and take pains to balance these with more complex, less general topics that draw on our retreat attendees. However, our most successful faculty development strategy that has generated renewed interest in WAC is our writing mentors program.⁵ Beginning with five peer tutors in fall 2005, the program has now grown to 20 peer tutors attached to 22 SWC classes. Following writing center pedagogy, their primary function is to work with student writers, but mentors also have an impact on classroom pedagogy.

Before the semester begins, mentors and faculty sit down with us to discuss the syllabus and writing assignments for the class. In determining how the mentor will fit with the class, the instructor re-thinks the how and then he or she assigns writing. A mentor works with the assigned faculty member throughout the semester, attends every class, and conveys the instructor’s expectations to students while working with them, while also providing feedback from students to the instructor about each assignment. In this way, mentors build a rhetorical bridge on which both students and faculty can meet. Based on student questions, mentors might tactfully suggest changes to assignments that the instructor might not otherwise recognize are needed. Mentors, meanwhile, can model for students ways to meet disciplinary expectations outlined by the instructor. As an anonymous anthropology professor put it: Mentors “give [instructors] a vocabulary with which [they] can talk about writing to their students.” In this way, mentors model for instructors effective writing-specific feedback that helps students revise their papers and improve as writers.

The growth of the mentors program is an obvious indicator of its success. That growth has also been a challenge, as the buzz about mentors has exceeded our program’s ability to train and supervise a larger staff. Serious discussions are now underway across campus at UT Austin about the role mentors could play if more resources were devoted to them, about the most effective size for such a program at an enormous institution

⁵ Also known as “writing fellows” or “writing associates” at some schools, we chose to distance our in-class tutors from TA and other teacher-titles. “Mentors” also more closely describes these peer tutors’ unique roles, but names chosen should match WAC goals and institutional cultures.

like UT Austin, and about how writing mentors contribute to the mission and work of the Undergraduate Writing Center. Success breeds such “problems.”

ASSESSMENT

Course-Instructor Survey Questions

Assessment of the writing program at UT Austin had been limited to the usual general accreditation review and a one-time mandate from the University’s Board of Regents to “assess undergraduate writing.” This mandate was answered with a quantitative study of final papers in freshman composition classes. Assessment seemed to function only as a means to an end (accreditation, increased resources, faculty lines) or as a means to placate outside stakeholders. Our office initiated assessment efforts with two goals: first, to alert faculty to the fact that someone other than SACs and the state legislature was interested in the success of their efforts; second, to provide a broader and more focused picture of writing instruction that would inform all stakeholders’ subsequent decisions about writing instruction.

While course-instructor surveys are required, adding questions relevant to writing classes had been talked about but never implemented at UT Austin. This was an obvious place to begin assessment efforts, since the mechanism was already in place and accepted (if not always with open arms) by instructors. With the assistance of the Office of Measurement and Evaluation, our faculty writing committee created a seven-question supplemental form specifically for writing classes that Measurement and Evaluation would attach to the usual course evaluation forms for SWC classes. The committee’s involvement was very important, since we knew that peer-generated questions informed by multiple disciplinary perspectives would better serve the majority of practices across the College (see Appendix C). We then secured a directive from the dean that the form be used in all SWC classes. Remarkably, little grumbling resulted from this mandate.

With these seven questions, instructors now have individualized student feedback specific to each writing course they teach. This information allows them, if they wish, to adjust their teaching methods. It also *requires* them to think, at least once per semester, about critical elements of writing instruction, such as feedback, assignment design, and articulation of criteria. It is a simple way to teach or remind instructors in all disciplines about these important pedagogical components. Also, since teaching evaluations are used in merit, promotion, and tenure, these additional SWC questions gain stature—and flag the teaching of writing as valuable.

The evaluations are also being used as part of reflective classroom research, not a usual practice in an institution that highly values publications. For example, some faculty wondered whether they received lower evaluations because students simply did not want to write: lower evaluations can make faculty cut back on the writing they assign, or even cut back on teaching SWCs. Faculty can now see what elements of their SWC course, if any, led to student dissatisfaction. In a dual role, not only do these forms help faculty collect data on writing in their courses, but the writing committee can also measure ways to support SWC or change policies to reflect teaching realities.⁶

Combined with other assessment data, the Course-Instructor Survey responses can give hints about strengths and weaknesses at the programmatic level. Why, for example, might a department's SWC course evaluations indicate relatively high levels of student satisfaction, while an alumni survey (discussed below) shows that graduates from that department are *not* satisfied with their writing instruction? Data can not only direct departmental attention to SWC, but provide evidence for high-stakes departmental decisions: for teaching evaluations, curricular revision, and program review.

Alumni Survey

We wondered whether a 20-year-old SWC requirement was worth the investment: were our alumni prepared for the writing they did after they graduated from UT? An extensive online survey of college alumni produced valuable qualitative and quantitative information. As was made plain in a report to the upper administration, these findings, in aggregate, demonstrated that SWC, while fairly successful in the College, could be substantially improved in some very specific areas:

1. Alumni from virtually all majors wished they had done more writing in college.
2. Alumni from all fields also wished they had had more dedicated writing instruction.
3. Alumni wanted more and better feedback on their writing and felt somewhat cheated that they had not gotten it.
4. Many alumni found it hard to adjust to new audiences outside of college, and they cited conciseness as a particular challenge in their post-college writing.

We made further use of the alumni survey by flagging narrative responses that made positive mention of specific instructors. Each instructor who was still at UT received

⁶ The discovery of consistent lower ratings of informal writing, across disciplines and levels, caused more research on our part; an early indication is that faculty either are not connecting informal writing to high stakes assignments or that students are dismissing or not understanding the value of writing to learn activities.

a letter from our office quoting the positive comment or comments, explaining their context, and thanking them for the impact they had on an alumnus. Copies of these letters were also sent to the faculty members' chairs and the dean, advertising the fact that we were interested in success, and eager to praise, support, and reward it. In turn, we received many comments from faculty who were pleased to have received such recognition for their efforts. Not only was it the first time they were so recognized with a letter for their files, but the first time anyone connected the teaching of writing to something that faculty value highly: student success.

Departmental Status Reports

After identifying the five departments teaching the most SWC courses, the WAC office extracted alumni survey data for each major and combined this information with additional sources to paint a rich picture of writing in the department: Registrar's data were examined to determine average class sizes and ratio of lower- to upper-division writing courses in the major; course evaluation data was compiled; aggregate course-instructor survey data were included, allowing ratings for specific elements of writing courses in the college to be compared to ratings in other departments; information from the new course approval system was culled and charts were generated showing the types of writing reportedly taking place in classes. These data were presented in a carefully designed format. Rather than including conclusions from the dean, each section of the departmental reports ended with a series of questions generated by the data. These questions drew possible inferences from the data and directed attention to connections between teaching and outcomes. Thus, departments with high levels of alumni satisfaction could ask "What are we doing right, and how can we do more of it?" Departments with lower satisfaction ratings might ask "What are the successful programs doing that we aren't? What resources do they have that we might ask for? And is there something we don't know about the career paths of our graduates that is keeping us from giving the writing education that they need?" In each of these cases, the alumni SWC data provided information that could again be used for departmental high-stakes decisions: curriculum design, program review, resource requests, faculty development funding.

We discussed these tailored documents in meetings with the chairs, and sometimes other faculty responsible for curriculum, using the College report—and all the charts and graphs (with all general and departmental data aggregated)—as a reference. The reports have been met with enthusiasm, in part because it is the first time many departments have heard from their graduates about their writing experiences and because the data provided again serve departmental ends. Chairs are eager to see how their

programs measure against others (writing-intensive honors programs, for example, fared predictably well). Such comparisons can be useful especially if they are steered toward program evolution and curricular improvement, which is how our format works.

CONNECTING TO INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND PRIORITIES

UT recently completed a wide-ranging institutional review that concluded with a call for revamping the core curriculum. When the resulting Core Curriculum Committee sought advice on writing from the WAC office, we took the opportunity to share with them our alumni's concerns about the need for more writing in the undergraduate curriculum, the insufficient resources in writing classes, how this hampered their development as writers, and the extent to which these concerns colored alumni's overall assessment of their writing instruction at UT. As a result, writing received renewed and better-informed attention in the new core curriculum.

Under the old SWC system, students took two courses that carried the “-w” designation—awarded for meeting minimal criteria centered on page counts. Under the new core curriculum requirement, students will be required to take three courses with “writing flags.” The criteria for writing flags are much more WAC-inflected than those for SWC courses. Courses that carry the writing flag must:

- Require students to write regularly—several times during the semester—and to complete writing projects that are substantial. It is only through the practice of writing that students learn to improve their writing.
- Be structured around the principle that good writing requires rewriting. Students must receive meaningful feedback from the instructor (or teaching assistant) so they can improve successive drafts.
- Include writing assignments that constitute at least one-third of the final grade in the course. These assignments must be graded on writing quality as well as content.
- Provide an opportunity for students to read each other's work in order to offer constructive criticism. Careful reading and analysis of the writing of others is a valuable part of the learning process.⁷

The Core Curriculum Committee responded, as have chairs and faculty, to what is most valued at our institution: research, data that informs the research, and decisions that are made based on that data.

⁷ “Faculty Council final version of the amended motion to change the degree requirements for all undergraduates at UT Austin,” www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2006-2007/legislation/final_core_motion.html

All of the seemingly small initiatives listed here have likewise brought attention to and revitalized WAC because we have integrated our efforts into accepted structures within the current system, structures that are not only recognized but valued as part of faculty's professional reward system. For example, the online approval system is technologically advanced, can be done on professors' own time at home rather than in committee, and is similar to peer review. The retreat is a familiar venue, but one has to apply for it as if it were a grant or fellowship, and a faculty member then gets a monetary reward. It also explicitly values faculty time by paying instructors for course design and pedagogical development—honoring teaching is given more than lip-service. Mentors are student-tutors with acknowledged expertise in writing. Though they are reminiscent of TAs, they don't grade, teach class, or evaluate the instructor; instead, they become within the class a unique partner with both students and faculty, perhaps a visible sign of the serious role writing plays in an SWC course. Our assessment efforts have connected WAC with teaching evaluations, a valuable currency for merit, tenure, and promotion. In addition, faculty and administrators resonate to the "value-added" dimensions of writing once they see alumni feedback. Finally, our reports to departments give them the data they need not only for SACs, but also for an evaluation of their curriculum, as well as evidence for additional resources.

It is often the case that new program initiatives or veteran WAC directors attempt to start or enliven programs by creating new, unfamiliar elements or eye-catchers (e.g., in-house publications, speaker series, flashy Web sites). These inevitably lose their luster, especially as other new initiatives vie for faculty attention along with the day-to-day obligations: e.g., classes, research, annual reports, curriculum design, the mentoring of majors, and the ongoing incorporation of new technology into their lives. Choosing program elements that at least look familiar increases the likelihood that faculty will be receptive to them; making sure that those elements are advantageous to faculty work will also increase the likelihood of them being integrated into the academic cycle. Programs with deep roots buried under an existing culture may not be widely visible, but ultimately these roots are what sustain continued viability.

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- Young, Art, and Toby Fulwiler. *Writing Across the Disciplines: Research into Practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1986.

Online course proposal form

Page 1: Basic Proposal Information

Proposal Number **29**
 Instructor Name **Rubeus Hagrid**

Instructor Email *
 Instructor Phone *

Have you attended a Writing Across the Curriculum workshop or presentation? * Yes No
 Have you previously taught an SWC course before? * Yes No

Proposed Course Title *

Proposed Course * Number *
 Proposed Offering Semester *

To assess the writing component of your course, we need to collect information about both formal and informal writing assignments. You will be asked additional questions for each "kind" of assignment that you select from this listing:

Informal Writing Assignments (please check all that apply)

- Class Web forum or listserv, MOO, or MUD participation
- Freewriting, microthemes, comments, questions on readings, journals (online or one paper)
- Flowchart, storyboard, outline
- Peer Review
- Informal Writing: Other

Formal Writing Assignments (please check all that apply)

- Case Study
- Essays, analysis, argument (books, articles, film, video, web, or other texts)
- Group Project
- Lab Report
- Letter, memo, resume
- Poetry, narrative, fiction
- Position Paper, reaction paper
- Poster Presentation
- Research Paper
- Summary, abstract, literature, review, prospectus
- Take-home essay exam
- Web site or MOO space development
- Formal Writing: Other

Required fields are indicated with an asterisk (*)

Substantial Writing Component Proposal

Page 2: Formal Writing Assignments

Proposal Number: **29** for Rubeus Hagrid
 Course: **ANT 131 - Dragon Taming**

Please provide the following information about **Formal Writing Assignment(s)**:

Type of Writing:	Case Study
Frequency/Number of Assignments	<input type="text" value="5"/>
Length (words/pages)	<input type="text" value="200 words"/>
Number of Drafts	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Percent of Final Grade	<input type="text" value="20 %"/>
When does this assignment occur within the course structure?	<input type="text" value="before midterm"/>
Assessed by Instructor	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Assessed by TA	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Assessed by Peers	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No

Required fields are indicated with an asterisk (*)

Save and Review

Are you ready to save and review this request?
 You will have a chance to make changes before you print.

Formal Writing Assignments - Instructions

For each category (type of writing assignment), answer each question indicated.
 If you do not plan to have any writing assignments for a given category, then you must return to the Course Information page and uncheck the selected category.

APPENDIX B

College of Liberal Arts Writing Across the Curriculum Faculty Retreat Schedule

TUESDAY, MAY 23	WEDNESDAY, MAY 24	THURSDAY, MAY 25
8:30-9:00—Breakfast and discussion		
Writing to learn	What makes writing good?	Assessment rubrics
10:30—Break		
Writing and course objectives	Defining disciplinary writing	Formative assessment
Noon—Lunch		
Assignments and assumptions	Articulating and meeting expectations	Assessing ourselves
2:30—Break		
Writing in the major	Syllabus design	Feedback and exchange of course work
4:00—Dismissal		

Course objectives for faculty participants:

- to understand how writing
 - can be used as a tool for teaching/learning content
 - familiarizes students with the language of the discipline
 - improves through practice, feedback—and having opportunities for both
 - serves as an induction into disciplinary ways of thinking
- to understand how to design writing criteria that best suit course objectives
- to be able to apply formative and summative assessment in courses
- to leave on Friday with a plan for incorporating writing and its assessment into at least one SWC course.

APPENDIX C

Course-Instructor Survey Questions for SWC Courses

1. The non-graded, informal writing assignments were relevant to what I learned in this course.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
 - Not Applicable

2. The graded, formal writing assignments were relevant to what I learned in this course.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

3. My instructor provided expectations and criteria for grading in written form for each assignment.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

4. My instructor provided sufficient, useful comments about my writing.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

5. The writing assignments in this class helped me to understand the course material (e.g., Victorian literature, microbiology, government).
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

6. As a result of taking this class, I have improved my ability to organize what I write.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

7. As a result of taking this class, I can better express what I mean to the reader.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

That's Just a Story: Academic Genres and Teaching Anecdotes in Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Projects

MICHAEL CHARLTON
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

Introduction

IN RECENT YEARS, scholars in academic writing have extended the discussion of narrative and disciplinary norms into the analysis of instructional “lore” and the often dialogic spaces in which instructors share personal experiences and advice with fellow instructors (Schubert 9; North 23). We have recognized that these anecdotes in themselves assume certain generic forms and narrative expectations, which are in some degree informed by larger disciplinary norms, including such elements as standards for evidence and support (Trimmer x–xi).

Those in writing studies have generally accepted the research and teaching validity of personal narratives to a certain extent (Johanek 10; Bleich and Holdstein 4–5). According to Holmsten, “we accept and honor storytelling as a valid representation of classrooms and our lived experiences there” and even “establish our communities by sharing stories” (41). However, disciplinary standards in fields outside the humanities tend to resist the extensive use of personal narrative as a tool for pedagogical inquiry, often preferring more quantitative or empirical evidence for teaching claims and rejecting stories as hopelessly subjective while not recognizing their own use of narratives to contextualize data and figures (Bleich and Holdstein 2). The assumption that “research should be objective, controlled, and decontextualized; that the researcher should be distanced and

uninvolved” has governed most traditional inquiry into teaching and most educational research (Ray 175). Thus, there is a conflict about what constitutes legitimate evidence for teaching practices at the very heart of “lore” as a mode of inquiry.

In bringing together different academic departments and disciplines, often mingling such historically estranged fields as the humanities and the physical sciences, writing-across-the-curriculum meetings between instructors create an intriguing space in which differing disciplinary expectations for writing come directly into contact and conflict. This conflict over writing expectations, which include standards of evidence and disciplinary conventions, has long been recognized as an important issue in writing-across-the-curriculum scholarship (Russell 292–3; McLeod and Maimon 580). I will argue that there is also an unrecognized conflict over teacher “lore” that can be traced back to differing standards of evidence and disciplinary conventions. We must acknowledge this conflict and its sources in order to talk to each other about teaching writing across the disciplines.

A Story

Let me start with a story, which seems appropriate given the subject of this essay. As also befits the subject of this essay, I am not going to say whether or not this story is true. Take it as a potentially true story—somewhere between an illustration and an anecdote.

We have an English graduate student working as a research assistant at a large state university. This graduate student is currently part of a two-year collaborative project with a department in the same university. The goal of this project is to increase undergraduate writing skills in General Education classes by working with instructors in other departments and discussing how they construct, structure, and evaluate writing assignments in their own classrooms. This writing-across-the-curriculum project, while it includes some one-to-one sessions and critiques between the English RA and faculty members, centers on a series of large group workshops with around a dozen faculty members and graduate students gathered in a single classroom to work on writing-related topics. They look at assignment sheets, grading rubrics, student papers, syllabi, policy statements, and other hard, print traces of the department’s work with student writing. Inevitably, they also discuss their personal experiences in the classroom. What personal issues have they encountered with writing?

Imagine that this department is in the physical sciences—an area which, at least traditionally, is far removed from the humanities training of the RA but which often finds itself the focus of similar writing-across-the-curriculum/writing-in-the-disciplines projects. As the RA works with this department, he begins to notice certain

trends in the discussions. When these faculty members and graduate students want to make a point about student writing, they focus on certain types of evidences for their claims. This evidence tends to take a numerical form. They cite grades on papers and the downward trend of these grades across several semesters to argue that student writing is getting worse. They cite the university's statistics about the high SAT scores of the incoming freshmen to argue that students are "simply being lazy" when they do not follow certain conventions about research or mechanics. They cite surveys from the discipline, scores from student evaluations, grade percentages for students who received a writing center stamp as opposed to those who did not go to the writing center—all numbers meant to empirically support their claims about student writing and student motivation. Occasionally, they will point to an exact student paper and quote from it to make some point about how their students fail to engage the material.

Now imagine that our RA from the English Department wants to make a point about student writing based on his own experience in the classroom. He wants to stress that sometimes students fail to follow writing conventions for a particular discipline not because they ignore them or even that they have not been taught them but because they fail to understand the reasons for them.

Rather than coming at this point through statistics and scores, he tells an anecdote about a student from his technical writing classroom. This student was supposed to be writing a proposal in which she suggested a new kind of research in her field. Curiously, though, this student had failed to cite a single existing study that related to her topic or even studies that showed similar methodologies, though the need for this had been stressed on the assignment sheet and in classroom activities. Disappointed by the student for not following his instructions and so receiving a low grade, the RA called this student into his office to discuss her lack of external sources. He discovered that the student had left out these sources because she thought they undermined the "newness" of her proposal. If she stressed that other people had done similar research, was she not in danger of looking like a copycat or even a plagiarist? Finally understanding the problem, the RA explained to her that such research reviews were done precisely to show that you had done your homework and could convincingly demonstrate that your research differed from others in the field. Far from making you a copycat, it established you as a competent and concerned researcher. Someone without a research review would have been more suspicious in the eyes of a disciplinary insider.

To the RA, this story has demonstrated his point about students failing to follow writing conventions not out of laziness or due to inattention but because they have not been shown the practical reasons for such writing choices. He is quite pleased with

himself. And then a hand comes up in the back of the teaching workshop:

“Do studies show that this is a common problem?” the graduate student asks.

“I don’t know,” the RA says, “I’m offering a personal example.”

The graduate student persists. “How many students on average do you think this problem might affect in a semester?”

“I couldn’t say,” the RA replies. “This is one student I’ve encountered.”

Now the graduate student looks honestly confused. “But that’s just a story”.

Several heads nod in agreement to this. That is just a story. Maybe what you would expect from those humanities folks but not hard evidence.

The RA tries to carry on but at this point everything he says becomes automatically suspicious. If this is the type of proof he has to offer, how are we going to judge anything he tells us?

The workshop stumbles along.

Teaching “Lore”

For the sake of illustrating an issue, I may be exaggerating here. Certainly not all such discussions are so easily divided. Humanities scholars have been known to get empirical. We quote studies, cite statistics, and conduct surveys. Those in the physical sciences have been known to tell an anecdote and even to make a joke or two. Indeed, much of the educational research in the physical sciences over the past decade has centered on the role language and discourse play in learning and practicing scientific literacy, including the active investigation of differing modes of inquiry and standards of belief (Yore and Treagust 307–8). The movement to include humanities training and the “formulation of concepts such as narrative competence” has become a well-known trend among medical schools in particular (Strickland, Gambala, and Rodenhauer 264). I do not want to perpetuate an either/or stereotype in which one camp has gotten it completely right. Rather, I want to observe certain trends about how instructors and facilitators present their teaching lives for discussion in such writing-across-the-curriculum environments in order to suggest that we look for negotiations between the supposedly mutually exclusive approaches of empiricism and anecdote.

Such a negotiation is intimately related to the expanding but sometimes controversial area of composition and educational research known as teacher lore. According to Schubert’s definition, “teacher lore” is a vast and yet highly specific field of inquiry which focuses principally on autobiographical narratives from the classroom:

Teacher lore includes stories about and by teachers. It portrays and interprets ways in which teachers deliberate and reflect and it portrays

teachers in action. Teacher lore refers to knowledge, ideas, insights, feelings, and understandings of teachers as they reveal their guiding beliefs, share approaches, relate consequences of their teaching, offer aspects of their philosophy of teaching, and provide recommendations for educational policy makers. Teacher lore can be presented through teachers' own words, and through the interpretations provided by experienced teacher/researchers who interview and observe teachers. (9)

The concept of teacher lore as a central part of training and professionalization has gained increased acceptance (Johanek 14). A large part of becoming teachers is spent listening to, analyzing, and finally contributing to discussions of what actually goes on in the classroom and personal encounters with students and problems as opposed to the analysis of conceptual or abstract theories (North 22–24). According to Stephen North, such “lore” is characterized by “pragmatic logic” and “its structure is essentially experiential” as opposed to the more intentionally “rigorous”/scientific modes of inquiry available (23). The recognition that these informal stories and discussions are part of the teaching environment is a crucial one, as it places new emphasis on the interaction of teachers both within and across disciplines.

Yet lore has not been without critics and opponents in composition and educational research—many of whom have focused on an angle not dissimilar from “that’s just a story” by contrasting lore to more established modes of inquiry. Trimmer summarizes some of these misgivings in his introduction to an anthology about teaching lore, while also stressing the central attraction of lore:

We love to set the scene, quote the students, and reveal the trick we used to resolve the plot. We repeat these stories in the coffee room, embellish them in convention bars, and collect those that hit the mark or bring down the house. But while we treasure such stories for their wit, we do not trust them to convey knowledge. They are merely entertainment, comic relief in the high drama of academic discourse ... Most of our professional training has debunked teaching stories. They are not reliable. They are not verifiable. They are not statistically generalizable. We can use them as anecdotes, as introductions ... but this is simply a hook—a rhetorical device ... to attract our audience’s attention. (x–xi)

This is the central complaint: teaching lore is not empirical, is highly subjective, and thus cannot be used to support larger claims. It is entertaining but it is not useful. Other critics have been less sure of its relative benignity. Even North was critical of lore, contending that it is not “methodologically self-conscious” and strains for an unlimited

authority (54–5). Johanek has argued that the popularity of teacher lore and personal stories has virtually erased other means of research in the field and has caused a backlash against non-narrative research claims (11). While supporters of teacher lore such as Lewiecki-Wilson have seen it as a celebration of individual voices over an oppressive and alienating social system, Gray and Young have both contended that these individual stories are repressive and oppressive of anything that does not easily fit into the status quo or the constructed community of the story (99; 51–2; 300). According to Young, if your teaching story is too far outside of normal expectations for such stories, no one is going to listen to you. If this is true, can teaching lore be seen as such a positive practice?

Obviously, I do not have the time or space available to answer all of these objections. I point them out for two reasons. First, I want to demonstrate that objections to stories as a form of evidence are not limited to fields outside of the humanities, just as the use of stories as a tool for pedagogical inquiry is not limited to the humanities. Though the substance of these objections might be slightly different, their existence is not and rightly so. We should be concerned about what types of evidence influence how we act in the classroom no matter what field we are in. If we can question empiricism for its assumption that numbers and figures illustrate the totality of truth, we can certainly question narratives about their often implicit conclusions and morals. Second, I want to argue that, rather than being a stumbling block, this skepticism about stories might be seen as the central element of a positive negotiation between the humanities and the physical sciences in dialogic spaces like writing-across-the-curriculum projects. Rather than running from a confrontation about the worth of stories as evidence, we should embrace it. We should ask our colleagues what they mean when they dismiss something as “just a story” and perhaps we will wind up examining our own assumptions about their stories.

Lore Across the Disciplines

Our colleagues in the physical sciences certainly are telling us stories in return, though they might resist the traditionally pejorative connotations of that word. All of these facts and figures are being used, in essence, as empirical anecdotes to illustrate a point. If the stereotypical humanities story is a touchy-feely narrative of pedagogical exploration and success, the stereotypical scientific story is a cold, analytical statistic. Yet the use of these statistics in the writing-across-the-curriculum space makes them into mini-narratives. You tell me a story about human interaction to make your point and I will tell you a number. Each follows the disciplinary conventions we have been trained in.

Of course, these disciplinary conventions are adaptable. Indeed, many practitioners of the “narrative competence” movement within medical training have adapted this “pedagogy of discomfort,” this adoption of individual stories into the curriculum, precisely because they bring into question “consideration of how these attitudes and behaviors are enacted in the rituals, policies, attitudes, and protocols of medicine” (Wear and Aultman 1058). It is precisely through actively engaging stories that these practitioners are hoping to counter the perceived coldness or clinical detachment of medical students and encourage medical students to critique the larger social practices embodied in medicine (Wear and Aultman 1057). A perception that examining our stories may help us to better understand our own disciplines and practices is not limited to the humanities. Indeed, this growing trend from within the sciences is crucial to a negotiation between traditionally estranged disciplines.

Consider MacDonald’s continuum of disciplinary knowledge—a spectrum of disciplinary approaches that classifies each discipline according to how new disciplinary knowledge is created and accepted within it. On one end, we have the sciences, where “new knowledge is accepted on the basis of often quantifiable experimental proof” and this proof depends on hypothesis and experimentation. On the other end, we have the humanities, where “knowledge about a subject is accepted or rejected on the basis of how well argued a case is” (Coffin et al 47–8). Central to this conception of a disciplinary continuum is the idea that practitioners and specialists within a discipline become insiders who know how to use these types of knowledges in their writing. Also central to this conception is the idea that these learned knowledges are largely implicit—we do not think about how we have been trained into creating and expressing knowledge in certain ways and not others (Coffin et al 47–8). Much writing-across-the-curriculum scholarship has focused on the need for facilitators to make faculty aware of how learned but often invisible disciplinary conventions influence their approach to student writing and the teaching of student writing; if we are to improve writing in the disciplines, we have to explicitly examine how those disciplines evaluate writing by certain conventions and standards of evidence (Russell 292–3; McLeod and Maimon 580). I would argue that the implicit conventions surrounding teacher lore in various disciplines also need to be made explicit in order for such projects to work.

Teacher lore exists in other disciplines—it simply takes different forms and applies different standards of evidence. It may not be clear to the physical sciences graduate student why he insists on empirical data for such an anecdote but this insistence is grounded in his own professionalization. He expects the kind of knowledge and evidence that is accepted by the discipline and is suspicious of anything else. Just as

the humanities and social sciences practice different genres of writing, they practice different genres of teaching lore. As Jolliffe notes, “genres are not simply empty shells into which ‘contents’ can be poured willy-nilly. Instead, genres are psychological and social meaning-making templates that help writers understand rhetorical situations and that give shape to their intellectual work within them” (103). Learning and using genres is a large part of the process of joining a discipline. These are not hollow conventions but established standards for social and pedagogical interaction. It literally means learning to speak in the discipline in a way that the discipline validates.

If you cannot speak the language, you cannot make your point. You also need to recognize when you are not speaking the same language. WAC theorists such as Jones and Comprone have long stressed the necessity of learning disciplinary conventions for writing as a crucial part of the process of negotiating and rhetorically examining them (65). Yet very little WAC research has focused on the idea that dialogic spaces like inter-departmental workshops might involve spoken interaction using alien disciplinary conventions. It is implicitly assumed that while we might write differently, we all speak about teaching and writing in the same way. As Gallagher, Gray, and Stenberg have pointed out, this lack of serious discussion about how teaching stories differ may be the major gap in such research:

teacher narratives have rarely been placed in critical dialogue with one another. Instead, representations of teaching—much like teaching itself—tend to be treated as “private property,” the domain of a single teacher behind a closed door. Others may read teacher narratives for how they “resonate” with their own experiences, but rarely are those stories critically engaged. When teacher narratives are brought together at all, the prevailing principle of knowledge-making is accretion: each narrative simply adds to the knowledge created by others, rather than complicating or challenging it, as is typical in other forms of scholarship. (32–33)

We must recognize that teacher narratives do not all make the same point or approach making their points in the same way. Indeed, as Miller has suggested, one of the major benefits of teacher lore as a form of evidence is its contention that knowledge is “provisional” and that “shifting relationships and larger contexts” may affect how our stories are made and changed (14). It is a group of genres that explicitly recognizes that different contexts give rise to different stories. If we are going to use them purposefully in a dialogic space that stresses disciplinary differences and gaps, then pointing to those differences and gaps is not an unfortunate negative side effect but a crucial part of the process.

Returning the Question

I am not suggesting that we try to convince our colleagues in the physical sciences that our stories are true or generalizable in a traditional, empirical sense. Alternately, I am not suggesting that we try to convince them that the traditional, empirical sense is incorrect or oppressive. While either viewpoint may have validity, these are rather larger arguments than can be comfortably encompassed in a short paper focused on teaching and writing issues. Rather, I am going to borrow Spigelman's contention that the important test of teacher lore and teaching narratives is not necessarily established correctness but rather the story's usefulness for examining certain assumptions (81).

As I have tried to argue, it is the implicit disciplinary conventions and standards of evidence embodied in these different genres of teacher lore that must be examined. We are each telling stories. But how did we arrive at the specific story we are telling? How and why are these stories different? What do we each assume about our audience and our context when we begin to tell our versions of personal experiences? Rather than assuming that each side of the conversation is instantly dismissing the other, we should look at why we are dismissing the other. Hopefully, by doing so we will be able to negotiate some of the problems such stories encounter. According to Mortensen, "studying talk about writing allows for the discovery of unexpected openings among people, ideas, and discourse" and shows us "how these openings permit both the consensus and conflict that ... make and break the bonds of community" (124). By recognizing that our talk about writing has opened up a disciplinary conflict within our writing-across-the-curriculum projects, we can move toward a discussion of our talk itself that may prevent such a break.

Imagine a return to our possibly hypothetical workshop and our graduate student in the physical sciences telling our woebegone RA that his personal experience is "just a story."

What could our RA say in response? Perhaps he could reply with a simple question of his own:

"Maybe it is. But what exactly do you mean by 'just'?"

I do not know how our graduate student in the physical sciences will respond. He may be confused. He may dismiss the question as irrelevant. The important thing is to have asked the question, though maybe this question should be returned even closer to home. Why does our RA automatically turn to his own teaching experiences and narrate them at this point? Why does he adopt a mode of inquiry that he knows from previous encounters may alienate his audience or automatically shift the conversation into controversial areas?

Perhaps, rather than insisting on the correctness of his own storytelling or agonistically interrogating his counterpart, he should ask for the teaching stories of other people in the workshop. By encouraging the sharing of these stories, he can let other teaching lives be heard and find in them Mortensen's "unexpected openings" and a common ground rather than a battleground. After all, the responsibility for hearing and understanding the other side should not solely be the participants'. If we are telling stories to each other, we should ask ourselves what those stories sound like. We may find that these stories do not sound so different after all.

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Helping Thesis Writers to Think about Genre: What Is Prescribed, What May Be Possible

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Graduate students often feel anxious about whether their writing is as it should be—and if not, why not? (How should it be? And how can they tell, other than by pleasing or displeasing their supervisors?) At the same time, some wish to be more creative, but not to risk the success of their academic “audition.” This article discusses a WAC-like seminar that, drawing on genre studies, helps to mediate these concerns for graduate students in an Australian university. They are introduced to genre analysis and encouraged to find patterns of structure, style, or strategy in theses in their area. At the same time, they look at examples that suggest a range of possibilities for creativity. The seminar demonstrates how the “interpersonal” work of a thesis can be achieved both by adhering to convention and by diverging from it.

IF STUDENTS HAVE TO “invent the university” when they begin (Bartholomae, 1985), they must reinvent it if they progress to graduate study. They are not simply faced with a longer piece of writing for a familiar discipline; they are given much more scope for designing their project (and perhaps misshaping it), and the stakes are very high. While the project is an intellectual one, its social implications are never far from the student’s mind: a thesis is an audition, as well as a report of research. The writing will define the writer as a person worthy (or not) of membership in the discipline community. While the thesis must do what is expected of a piece of research, it should, if possible, do more. But what is expected, and what kind of “more” will be likely to go down well?

It is the supervisor's role to mediate this challenge, but a perspective from WAC can be a useful complement to a supervisor's advice. For one thing, students are often reluctant to confide their uncertainties to their supervisors. For another, the relationship can be rather claustrophobic, with a close focus on the minutiae of content; this, while important, can obscure some of the broader (and less well-defined) issues of structure and style that students are concerned about. Supervisors often find it easier to be precise about the research, which is their specialty, than about the rhetoric, which is not. WAC's focus on genre can help students to reframe "mistakes" they "don't know how to fix" as problems of fit with generic expectations that are, at least, knowable. At the same time, because disciplinary genres are also somewhat fluid, students can be encouraged to imagine choices that may not be apparent when they focus too closely on "what my supervisor wants." This article discusses a WAC-like forum in an Australian university, in which research students are introduced to an approach from genre studies that helps them to work out what is prescriptive in the expectations surrounding their thesis, but also what is possible.

The Thesis Afternoon

I call this forum "WAC-like" because, in Australia, there is no close equivalent to the WAC movement in North America. Writing is required in most disciplines, but rarely taught in any. There are, however, academic language and learning (ALL) advisers whom students can consult, and who offer classes on various aspects of writing.¹ My ALL position is located within a Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, whose students I work with at all levels from undergraduate through doctoral research. Each year, the graduate students' association at my university asks me to spend an afternoon with students in my area who want to learn what they can about "Writing Your Thesis: Humanities."

The session I offer does not aim to tell students how they should write their theses. It would be impossible to be prescriptive, or even descriptive, across the wide range of disciplines encompassed in my Faculty. These are simply too different, in too many ways, to attempt to characterise in an afternoon. (The literature on disciplinary differences is far too large to canvass here; just a few of many useful discussions include Bazerman, 1981; Giltrow, 2002; Herrington & Moran, 1992; Ivanic, 1998; Linton, Madigan, & Johnson, 1994; MacDonald, 1987; McCarthy, 1987). Nor does it seek to

¹ This function was, until recently, known by the acronym LAS (Language and Academic Skills). In 2006, a national Association for Academic Language and Learning was formed in Australia, whose discussions, resources, and refereed journal will soon be located at the Association's Web site.

describe “good writing” at a more general level; if there is such a thing—and I share Johns’ (1997, p. 34) scepticism in this regard—we must assume that research students have already shown that they can do it. What the session offers is a way of discerning the characteristics common to theses in their area, and a way of considering what makes creative variations work.

Patterns, Conventions, and Choices

Because students need the security of knowing what a thesis should look like, I suggest that they assemble several recent theses in their area and note their formats (front matter; sections; use of headings; referencing; appendices; etc.); their voices (First and/or third person? Balance and location of active and passive verbs? Author present or vacant? Lexically dense or more diffuse? Heavily nominalised, or more congruent?); and their strategies for presenting their material—on which this article will mainly focus. In alerting the students to common linguistic features of academic voice, I draw on systemic functional linguistics, especially Halliday (1985); on Booth, Colomb, and Williams (1995); and on Ivancic (1998, pp. 260–270). I alert them to some choices to be made in each of these areas, and some common patterns. In particular, I introduce them to Swales’ CARS (Creating A Research Space) model, which maps the typical introductory “moves” found in the discourse of research (Swales, 1990, p. 137 ff.). These are establishing a territory; identifying a research niche; and occupying that niche. I then tell them how to locate all the theses held in our library, in their area, to see what has been successful in recent years; and I tell them about the Australian Digital Thesis scheme (based on the work of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute), which makes theses from all over the country available online (<http://adt.caul.edu.au>). Selecting from this corpus, I suggest, they can see how and where (or even whether) Swales’ moves are enacted. They can also look at the structures and strategies that previous students have adopted.

I illustrate this sort of analysis with examples from politics, English, and anthropology. An MA student in politics, arguing that unregulated flows of migrants pose a security risk to countries both neighbouring their homeland and further away, moves geographically around the globe (Feeney, 2000). An MA student in English, arguing that Angela Carter’s fiction parallels developments in feminism, moves chronologically through both (Turner, 1994). A PhD student in anthropology, exploring the competition between Republicans and Islamists to produce a sense of cultural and political identification in the people of an urban neighbourhood of Istanbul, adopts a hybrid strategy combining literary vignettes of people and places with excursions into theory (Houston, 1999).

These examples are chosen because their commonalities and differences show both that the thesis is a conventional genre and that there is room for creativity within it. In their first few pages, all of these writers create a research space by indicating the context within which their question is a question; then, what kind of contribution their thesis will make, to what kind of discussion in their area; and towards the end of their introductory matter, they signpost how their argument is going to develop. At the same time, the second and third examples create a little excitement around the possibilities for “revoicing” the genre rather than simply “ventriloquating” it (here I draw on Ivanic [1998], who in turn draws on Bakhtin). This can be important for graduate students who feel that they are being put through their paces, and nothing more—like Rodriguez (1982) who felt, in graduate school, that he wrote nothing but sentences “that were overly cautious, timid, strained brittle under the heavy weight of footnotes and qualifications. . . . unable to dare a passionate statement. I felt drawn by professionalisms to the edge of sterility, capable of no more than pedantic, lifeless, unassailable prose” (p. 71). It would be irresponsible to encourage students in a romantic idea of individual voice, which may lead them to take risks they cannot afford. It is dispiriting, however, to treat the thesis like a glass slipper that the lumpy prose of ugly stepsisters must be trimmed to fit.

This is a problem of which genre theorists are aware, even if only to dismiss it as a problem—for, as Ivanic argues, genre theorists in fact share “a *distrust* of . . . facile . . . prescriptivism” (1998, p. 44). Swales (1990) acknowledged that a genre approach to writing risked being “associated with a disreputably formulaic way of constructing . . . particular texts . . . inimical to the enlightened and enlightening concept that language is ultimately a matter of *choice*” (p. 33). However, he offers his models not as templates but as examples that show features characteristic of a genre of academic writing which, if not explained, can remain opaque to students even while they strive to learn it. “Once you can show me that you both understand and can operate the standard (and safe) way,” he tells students, “you are free to carry on in another way if you like, especially if the other ways suit your individual intellectual character or your perceptions of your particular writing situation” (Swales, 1990, p. 12).

A Range of Examples

When I offer the “thesis writing” session, I have to acknowledge that it is not easy—either for students or for an observer like myself—to tell how much any example may owe to “individual intellectual character,” and how much to the “particular writing situation.” For example, in the politics thesis we examine, the presentation is straightforward and

the language plain and unadorned. The summary moves, in a single paragraph, from the context and problem—“Throughout East Asia, there is growing concern about the unregulated movement of people. The level of refugees and illegal migrant workers has increased significantly since the 1970s”—to the thesis statement: “It is the contention of this thesis that illegal migration and refugee movements in East Asia affect not only the security concerns of regional countries, but also the security environments of countries further afield such as the United States and Australia” (Feeney, 2000, p. 1).

The English thesis, by contrast, is rather gimmicky, but in ways that work. First of all, we encounter a striking photograph of Carter with much of her face in shadow, her eyes hidden by large, reflecting glasses, and her expression indecipherable. On the facing page, this is juxtaposed with an uncontextualised quotation from Nietzsche, which is not about Angela Carter, obviously, but contains a phrase the student wants to suggest is an apt description of her subject:

“The madly thoughtless shattering and dismantling of all foundations, their dissolution into a continual evolving that flows ceaselessly away, . . . let it cheer us by looking at it in the glittering magic mirror of a philosophical parodist in whose head the age has come to an ironical awareness of itself” (quoted in Turner, 1994, front matter).

Only after these unconventional “moves” does the writer present her conventional summary, followed by an introduction that gradually reveals the reasons for the quotation and the photograph. We see the point of the quotation when, in the summary, we read the thesis statement, that the “overall argument is that Carter is a self-conscious critic of the dominant ideology” (Turner, 1994, p. ii). Then, in her introduction, the student hopes to persuade us that Carter was enigmatic, and her fiction likewise: “The photograph of Angela Carter illustrates the indeterminacy of meaning that is an inherent feature of much of her work” (p. 2). She then quotes her subject seemingly endorsing this approach, as Carter says “I . . . leave the reader to construct her own fiction for herself from the elements of my fictions” (Carter, 1983, p. 69). Next, the student recruits support from the critical literature, quoting Catherine Belsey’s (1988, p. 91) view that “the position of the ‘author’ inscribed in the text, if it can be located at all, is seen as questioning or as literally contradictory”. By these means, the student has constructed a springboard for an interpretation that, she seems to feel, may be a little risky: “Given leave by Carter to make my own meanings in regard to her work” (p. 3), the student embarks upon her project, with the unreadable visage of Angela Carter seeming to say, at every turn, “Maybe she’s right and maybe she’s wrong—I’m not saying.”

This student has indulged herself in some creative ways of setting up her subject as a writer of elusive and indeterminate meaning. But is this because she is a creative student, or because English is a creative discipline, one that approves of “play”? The students know, as I do, that creative style is rarely welcomed in academic writing; they smile ruefully when I share with them a comment received by a student of James and McInnes (2002): “Writing is not a rapturous activity . . . When it comes to thesis writing you must resist being carried on a poetic swirl.”

Nonetheless, in the first few pages of the anthropology thesis, we find this “poetic swirl” sandwiched between a formal, theoretical summary and a first-person introduction to the project:

Prologue

Republic Day, 29 October 1994, Istanbul.

Flags filing into Taksim Square. Flags teeming on the flagpoles outside the 5-star hotels. Flags draped over the balconies of offices, flags promenading down the boulevards. Shaking the hands of children sitting on fathers’ shoulders, swishing over heads like snappy red butterflies. Abseiling down the face of the Ataturk Cultural Centre. Crawling out along the arm of the giant crane, swinging fearless as acrobats high over the unfinished hole of the Istanbul Metro. Flags pinning up the sky.

Slogans pasted up around the square.

“What happiness to be living in Ataturk’s Turkey.”

“Today think of Mustafa Kemal and the Republic.”

“Without ceasing we will protect Turkish independence and the Turkish Republic.”

“The Republic is the future.”

Music, popstars, celebrities, personalities! Pledges jazzing on the stage. “We love Ataturk and the Republic.” Banks of howling speakers, spotlights, cameras, cheers. Clapping hands, tapping toes . . . Fireworks, oohs, aahs, whistles, roars. Silence. The national anthem . . . Green laser light shoots across the dark of the Metro hole to play on the glass backdrop of the Marmara Hotel, “Independence or Death!”, and Ataturk’s famous silhouette trudging up the building, forever establishing the Republic . . . More fireworks!

And acrid smoke drifting over the nation, to be taken home with the children and thrown over the chair with the clothes to be worn all of the 30th of October.

This is highly unconventional and at the same time very effective, and suggests that English has no monopoly on creative writing. It is not because the writing is creative that it works well here, however, but because it is a creative way of carrying out the work of the thesis. We can feel Houston's pleasure in the writing, but when I share it with the students, I do not leave it there, but show them how the prologue is constructed to set up the writer's project, which involves tracing the ways in which republican modernists and traditional Islamists compete to inscribe public sites and activities with their versions of what it means to be Turkish. The prose of this prologue picks out the ways this effort is played out, literally, on the ground. The flags in Houston's description of Republic Day adorn not just any buildings, but sites of modernisation—five-star hotels, offices, boulevards, the Ataturk Cultural Centre, a giant crane, the Metro—the last of which is described as a work in progress, unfinished, (implicitly) like the nation-building project. With "Flags pinning up the sky," the writer seems to suggest that symbolism is the basis for the Republican "reality" of Turkey. The third paragraph foreshadows a later chapter that looks at the role of "carnival" in mobilizing identification. With Ataturk's "silhouette trudging up the building, forever establishing the Republic," the writer conveys the relentless effort involved in the creation of a nationalist identification, a theme that runs throughout the thesis. And the last brief paragraph suggests a foreboding about the effort of nation-building, which is consistent with Houston's conclusions in the thesis.

What Can Students Make of These Variations?

All of the writing, then, must further the purposes of the thesis—but if it does that, can a student feel confident that creative style will be welcomed by examiners? Students will be wise, I think, to consult their supervisors about this, for it will depend upon intellectual and methodological currents in the discipline, and even more locally. It would be misleading to represent disciplines as consistently permitting or discouraging a particular kind of practice, for disciplines do not speak with a single voice, nor from a unified mindset, as Elbow demonstrated in 1991, by delineating 10 different approaches within the discipline of English alone (see also Giltrow, 2002; Harris, 1989, p. 17; Ivanic, 1998, p. 283; Linton, Madigan & Johnson, 1994, p. 66).

Students will also be wise to show that they are not only creative writers but scholarly and analytical as well. It is probably important to Houston's success that he precedes his

“Prologue” with a summary that shows he can control the more conventional discourse of his discipline. This begins:

This thesis examines the Islamist political movement in Turkey, with special reference to its activities in Istanbul where I did my fieldwork from October 1994 to December 1996. The thesis identifies the particular characteristics of political Islam in the Turkish context. The movement’s situating of itself in opposition to the enforced civilizing project of the Turkish Republic is argued to be the key to understanding its politics (Houston, 1999, front matter).

Here, while Houston calls himself “I,” it is an inanimate subject, “the thesis,” that “examines” the movement and “identifies” its characteristics, while “the movement’s” highly abstract and metaphorical act of “situating itself in opposition” . . . “is argued” (an agentless passive) “to be the key” to the central mental activity of (who?) “understanding” its politics. Similarly, in his next paragraph, “discourse” is the grammatical subject acting on some highly nominalised objects:

Islamist discourse deconstructs the modernisation of the rump of the Ottoman Empire undertaken in the name of the universality of Western civilisation: it gleefully converges with other post-modern critiques in proclaiming the exhaustion of (Western?) modernity as a project of emancipation.

This is as abstract as the “Prologue” was concrete. Thus, the contrasting styles this writer fields enable me to show my students a range of possibilities, as well as restrictions, within what is often considered a quite sterile discourse.

“Interpersonal Work” in Impersonal Writing

In fact, I do not privilege either end of the spectrum in my sessions with graduate students, for it is important to recognise that an impersonal style is not doing any less “interpersonal work” (in the terminology of systemic functional linguistics) than a personal one. It just does it differently. The “author-vacated” essay identifies its writer, to others in the discourse community, as a person who shares (with some of them at least) the value of impersonal representation of knowledge. This may be a matter of tactics, as Ivanic’s (1998) description of a writer’s choices suggests: “by choosing another voice to ventriloquate, the writing is [showing] that s/he espouses the values, beliefs, and practices which are associated with that voice” (p. 216). Equally, it may be a matter of deeply-held values, for by writing impersonally, a student can show an appreciation of the shared goals of a discipline community. These are well described by Swales (1990), who says

a discourse community consists of a group of people who link up in order to pursue objectives that are prior to those of socialisation and solidarity, even if these latter should consequently occur . . . the communicative needs of the *goals* tend to predominate in the development and maintenance of its discursal characteristics (p. 24).

The goal of a discourse community is to make knowledge, even if the means toward that end is to make scholars. Students who are auditioning to be scholars do well to suggest, by their choice of language, that they know what scholarship is for.

This demonstration may be done via language, through structure, or by references to the work of others in the scholarly community—the “three categories of conventions” that Linton, Madigan and Johnson (1994) identify “in all academic genres” (pp. 66–71). Even something as pedestrian as headings in research reports, they point out, “signal not only the content or objective of each section, but the writer’s commitment to one of the fundamental values underlying the empirical disciplines: the importance of shared, replicated methodology” (p. 68). While the conventional order of headings may misrepresent the actual process of research, they show respect for its values.

More obvious, perhaps, is the interpersonal work achieved by referencing, though the intensely social activity that goes on between brackets is not always evident to students. I know of no better guide to this pullulating terrain than Janet Giltrow (2002), whose gaze has an effect rather like the greenish light that wildlife documentaries use to reveal nocturnal scuttling in the undergrowth. As the creatures caught in Giltrow’s beam are scholars, however, she treats them sociably, describing them as “guests” in the text—guests who may or may not know one another, who may be more or less “popular,” and more or less “difficult to entertain” (2002, chap. 3). Giltrow’s book is an invaluable companion for graduate students in need of a sense of what a discourse community is and does with one another’s texts.

Conclusion

As Ivanic (1998) maintains, “discourses and genres are always open to contestation and change, and in reality all samples of discourse are relatively heterogeneous, recombining generic and discursal resources creatively, rather than simply adhering to a template” (p. 283; see also Harris, 1989, p. 12). The blurred vision that results can be confusing for students, and make them understandably anxious about what their options may be; but a genre perspective from WAC opens up a space for talking about this, and looking at relevant examples. I have described how the session I offer each September attempts to mediate the constraints and opportunities surrounding thesis writing, and to show

students that the interpersonal work of a thesis can be achieved both by adhering to convention and by diverging from it. By conforming to conventions, students show that they are ready for membership of their professional community. By offering a defined and relevant problem, contextualising it within the scholarly literature, giving a transparent account of their method and reporting their data, they prioritise the furthering of knowledge rather than their own career. In addition, a third person, self-effacing style can demonstrate their respect for objectivity, but it is not their only option. They may choose to show more overtly who they are by choices of strategy that set them off from others, while still being consistent with the character of their discipline.

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Becoming Landscape Architects: A Postmodern Approach to WAC Sustainability

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REFLECTING ON PAPERS DELIVERED at the 2006 Writing Across the Curriculum conference, plenary speakers Alan Evison and Mary McMullen-Lightnote note three trends about WAC. The first, a positive development, is that WAC has gone multimodal by regularly addressing visual, voice, and virtual elements of writing and communication. Trends two and three paint a bleaker picture: WAC, Evison observes, is in the throes of “midlife crisis,” having gained or retained little momentum beyond a few interested (and staunchly dedicated) folks. Verbs such as “initiate” (Warnock; Marinara, Oetjen, Kitalong), “sustain” (Heckelman, Kusi-Mensah, Cain; Galin), “revitalize” (Palmquist), and “enliven” (Mullin and Schorn; Kranidis; Kellogg), along with phrases such as “keeping the movement going” (Mullin, Thaiss, Bridwell-Bowles, Zawacki), “staying afloat” (Smitherman), and “in need of a tune-up” (Traywick, Johnson, and Brown) suggest that WAC programs need action at stasis points.

WAC folks can easily find reasons to despair, but in this essay, we provide hope for moving beyond such stasis points. We discuss cases from very different institutions enacting different WAC models, each demonstrating how local, “just-in-time,” “at-the-point-of-need” tactics—in other words, emergent acts—become tools for opening gaps and fissures in seemingly impenetrable institutional situations. We take our cue from James Porter et al. who, in providing a method for institutional critique and change, remind us that “though institutions are certainly powerful, they are not monoliths; they are rhetorically constructed human designs ... and so are changeable. In other words, we made ’em, we can fix ’em. Institutions R Us” (611).

Ours is a decidedly postmodern stance: multiple perspectives, subjectivities, and realities as complex convergences of institutions, individuals, and cultures provide foundations for escaping potentially paralyzing grand narratives about WAC (see Martin and Holdstein in the pages of *Pedagogy*) that lead many to throw up their hands in the face of institutional constraints to say, “I give up” or “What can I do?” For us, postmodernism provides possibilities for change through individual actions: Individual actions, what Jean-François Lyotard might call “little narratives,” challenge the dominant discourses of WAC, inserting themselves into the fissures and gaps of the institutional story to counter, resist, and reconstitute it. Individual actions become “tactics,” as Michel de Certeau calls them, quotidian gestures that, in cumulative form at least, may have profound effects. Put another way, we see ostensibly insurmountable stasis points as interesting and as opportunities for changing perspectives and practices. Our tactics are small, local, often enacted “on the fly.” And, yet, in a postmodern world, this is precisely their appeal—they break through the “sediment of habit and tradition” (Czerniak 110), prying open the gaps that mark the surface of even the most forbidding terrain.

We use the language of landscape architecture very deliberately here. Landscape architects study and design for compatibility with the natural and built environment and with an eye toward the “functional and beautiful” (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Postmodern landscape architecture theory, in particular, emphasizes study and design from various angles, and thus offers a framework for re-seeing and re-shaping the environment. The idea of “re-seeing” is crucial, as any picture presented of WAC, particularly if it reveals seemingly negative circumstances, is necessarily impartial, incomplete. Pictures, or “pictorialism,” as Julia Czerniak explains it, “biases how a landscape appears” as it is simply a “retinal image” (110), an image left to individual (or disciplinary) interpretation. In reviewing the work of James Corner, landscape architect, and Alex MacLean, aerial photographer, Czerniak explains that by adding aerial photography to static pictures, landscape becomes more than a static image; aerial photography serves to show how landscape “works as a process” and as a “continuing activity and set of relations that change over time” (110). As Czerniak, Corner, and MacLean explain, the addition of aerial photography to landscapes reveals aspects “invisible from the ground” and reveals “the earth—the landscape—as a ‘system of interrelated ecologies’” (Czerniak 111). We consider this last idea particularly important for WAC because it challenges static pictures of an environment and, instead, presents landscapes as “a ‘complex network of material activity’ rather than ‘static and contemplative phenomenon’” (111). To these material

realities, we add social realities, a critical element of institutional landscapes. Any landscape serves variously as an “‘immense construction site,’ a ‘working quarry,’ a ‘metabolic scaffolding of material transformation,’ and an ‘infrastructure of pure productivity’” (Czerniak 110). Thinking and acting like landscape architects, WAC participants learn to recognize and respect components of institutional landscapes, while also working to forge new paths.

We turn now to two cases that, together, show that successes come from acting upon the “truth of a present or the presence of the present,” as Jacques Derrida says, a truth available or visible only at certain moments (from *Différance*). In other words, we work within the truths of the local, natural, built, social, economic, and other aspects of institutional environments. We deconstruct what many would see as stasis points in WAC landscapes in order to show how the same details that present the cases as negative can be shaped into opportunities and possibilities. Our first case demonstrates the value of this kind of postmodern thinking, illustrating how simple changes of perspective—an aerial view versus a grounded view, for example—change how we view the landscape. Our second case explicates specific tactics for change from within a paradigm of postmodern thinking. The two stories work together: broad stroke explanations can help show new perspectives, but readers stuck at a stasis point may need more specifics to transfer the solution to their own people, processes, and places. We argue that we must be present in emergent moments, present ourselves upon them, become individual agents of change, even if just for seconds at a time. We must see, be, and act, calling upon the active *différance* and using the present elements to shape our environment.

WAC as Landscape Architecture: (Re)Seeing Difficult Terrain

The following story illustrates ways in which top-down, largely conservative initiatives may be (re)seen and ultimately reconstituted at the level of actual practice. In the field and at strategic moments, WAC and writing specialists at State University re-imagined and remade institutional initiatives—extending, resisting, even subverting them. Before demonstrating this (re)seeing, however, Rebecca Jackson contextualizes the efforts that form the focus of this section in a brief history of WAC at this institution.

As is the case in many institutions, WAC at State University had a spotty history characterized by years of institutional support and intensity of faculty participation followed by years of benign neglect—times when you’d be hard pressed to find many faculty who knew what “WAC” stood for. At its height, roughly 1983–1990, WAC occupied a prominent place on campus: It began with a faculty initiative out of the College of

General Studies to invigorate writing and the teaching of writing across the disciplines. In 1984, the Department of English—which developed a WAC committee—brought in Art Young as a one-year visiting professor to guide and shape these initial efforts. Young was instrumental in developing a highly successful WAC workshop tradition that continued for many years after he left and was conducted by faculty from across the disciplines. Several WAC committee members in the English department co-authored an in-house book on WAC theories and practice. Originally funded by the College of General Studies, the book was distributed for many years to all university faculty members to support changes in their curricula. Momentum for WAC began to wane in the 1990s and was most likely the result of too little power, too little support, and too little integration, the three attributes Bill Condon argues are absolutely essential to WAC success on any campus.

Recently, however, the dean expressed renewed interest in WAC and made “writing” one key goal in the College of Liberal Arts’ strategic plan. While modest, the initiative followed well-known WAC faculty development models in its emphasis on improving students’ writing skills by teaching faculty across the College how to teach writing in their own classes. The dean—with support from the chair of English—asked interested faculty in rhetoric and composition to form an *ad hoc* committee to develop 20-minute presentations on key issues in Writing Across the Curriculum. Department chairs from across the disciplines were then asked to schedule at least two of these WAC presentations during regular faculty meetings.

Members of the *ad hoc* committee recognized the initiative as less than ideal, particularly in its form and execution. The 20-minute presentation framework meant that faculty across the disciplines would not receive any kind of substantive information about and support for their own WAC efforts, while the “mandatory” nature of the presentations precluded faculty “buy in.” Perhaps those on the *ad hoc* WAC committee were naïve, but they believed that meaningful change was possible, despite the presence of institutional constraints that would seem to discourage (if not prohibit) any kind of change at all. In fact, we argue here that through acts of (re)seeing presumably impassable terrain—strategic actions at the local level—Jackson and others involved in this renewed WAC program were able to enact the postmodern notion of multivocality and, in so doing, work to challenge institutional barriers.

As members of the *ad hoc* WAC committee, for example, WAC members used suggestions from disciplinary faculty but were free to decide the focuses of their presentations. They were strategic in making these decisions, choosing topics both integral to WAC theory and practice and able to challenge and reshape misconceptions,

particularly those about student writing and behavior. The “Plagiarism” presentation provides an excellent example. In a survey soliciting preferences for WAC presentations, Liberal Arts faculty expressed a (not surprising) preference for information about student plagiarism, particularly how to find and punish it. The presentation itself, however, was designed both to acknowledge and upset these expectations, to focus attention not on the often overzealous hunting down of plagiarists but on the ways in which faculty might inadvertently contribute to the problem. In this scenario, provocative examples and quotations from Rebecca Howard’s work on plagiarism reframed the discussion and advanced very different causes for a problem most instructors see as originating with students. The goal, here, was not to dismiss disciplinary faculty members’ concerns; rather, the goal was to help them (re)see the landscape and its topology, to provide them with alternative pathways.

Presentations on the writing center and on evaluating student writing—two additional WAC presentations—extended the kind of (re)seeing and reframing work begun in the “Plagiarism” presentation. As the faculty member who developed the “Evaluating Student Writing” presentation, Jackson tried to dispel faculty notions about increased workload—a common concern—as well as reshape attitudes about what constitutes “good” writing and about how students learn to write in the disciplines. She sought to change the focus of conversation from student deficiency to expanded notions of literacy and to teaching practices that might reflect these expanded notions. Clearly, these were very small gestures in an institution rife with what those of us in WAC would consider unenlightened attitudes about writing. But it was a start, a response to seemingly impossible institutional constraints that puts the ball back in the WAC folk’s court. They were, in Carl Herndl’s words, “tactical intervention[s] in the dominant culture” (467), opportunities to see differently and act accordingly.

In fact, these very WAC presentations created inroads that, in typical postmodern fashion, the WAC folks at State University could not have anticipated in the beginning. For instance, Jackson was later asked to conduct a WAC workshop during the College’s two-week long Multicultural Institute for selected faculty interested in transforming their courses. She saw this as an opportunity for action, a “small, tantalizing moment” (Knoblauch) in which to revise a relatively conservative, “safe” institutional WAC initiative. Faculty were asked to engage “standard” WAC issues—learning to write and writing to learn—but they were also prompted to ask a different kind of question, one Victor Villanueva proposes in a recent article on the politics of literacy across the curriculum: “How do we convey writing in a way that doesn’t alienate?” (166). Thus, in one institution at one particular moment in time, WAC advocates seized (hidden)

opportunities in a top-down initiative to (re)envision a more radical institutional stance, one that emphasized multiple literacies, multiple competencies, and reformed pedagogies.

Tools for WAC Landscape Architects: (Re)Mapping Difficult Terrain

Our first story demonstrates how to see gaps and fissures within sediments of habit and tradition not as fault lines, places where we might fall through the cracks, but as sites for excavation, discovery, (re)mapping, and building: We learn to see, (re)see, and reconstitute with a new presence in each moment given to us, regardless of its circumstance. Our second story demonstrates specific strategies for excavating gaps and fissures. In this way, we extend discussions of the value of postmodern thinking for WAC most recently represented at the eighth annual WAC conference. Here, participants showcased moves toward individual action and emergent strategies, discussing either multimodality made possible through technologies or—as we concern ourselves with, here—engaging affordances of postmodernism via constructivism, collaboration, consensus-building, and notions of both de-centering and multiplicity. Discussing collaboration, for example, Dilek Tokay emphasizes the importance of “effective dialogues” among stakeholders, while Chris A. Burnham, Michele Auzenne, and Ricardo Jaquez argue the value of “negotiation” for consensus building. To aptly capture the spirit of such shared visions and actions of WAC in a postmodern paradigm, Kristi Apostle, Shawn Apostle, and Moe Folk suggest the phrase “consensus across the curriculum.”

Hearing highlights and syntheses of success stories might provide hope, but not knowing how to see and what to do at stasis points can trigger skepticism, disbelief, and apathy—a kind of “pie in the sky” resignation that effectively shuts down active approaches to local problems. We understand this response and offer our second case as a partial solution. This story, like the first, illustrates de Certeau’s “tactics,” ways of moving *in situ* within a postmodern paradigm of change to construct successes. These successes can then emerge like Foucaultian frameworks of strategic agency for [historical] change.

Viewed rhetorically, adopting constructivist approaches means internalizing and enacting multiplicity as well as collaborative, consensus-building, and bottom-up thinking; it means designing institutions and programs rhetorically. Adopting constructivist approaches for purposes of moving beyond stasis points means sometimes making small, individual acts outside of an institution’s *topoi*—its commonplace tropes, acting on *kairos*—the right time—rather than tradition; it

means, among other things, finding “exigence” in what Bitzer would call the “rhetorical situation.” Put simply, moving beyond stasis points successfully means identifying the commonplace institutional tropes, finding the gaps and fissures, contextualizing them within exigencies for change, and acting at the opportune time to shape difference. As JoAnne Yates and Wanda Orlikowski observe, *kairos*, “as enacted,” arises “when socially situated rhetors choose and/or craft an opportune time to interact with a particular audience in a particular way within particular circumstances” (109). We argue that rather than follow well-worn paths, WAC practitioners can create *kairotic* moments, becoming landscape architects who (re)see, (re)map, and/or (re)maneuver the land, designing situations to make them possible and appropriate.

Michael Fullan’s work is particularly relevant here, as he recognizes the importance of committing to and managing change in what we refer to as landscapes, particularly in educational settings. His most recent work, a collaboration with Peter Hill and Carmel Crévola, *Breakthrough*, models large-scale educational reform based on assets and abilities already present in an environment and made possible by enacting, among other things, continuous feedback, change, collaboration, and communication. The model relies on balancing local action and global learning. This way of thinking, discussed elsewhere by Etienne C. Wenger, *et al.* and by Chris Argyris and David A. Schön, means that we not only recognize continuous change and its possibilities but that we also reflect and act.

Susan McLeod and Eric Miraglia summarize and frame Fullan’s work as appropriate for WAC and they identify WAC lessons for this new schema, a framework for use at an institutional level that they call the “postmodern paradigm for change.” Enactments of postmodern thinking, being, and acting in the world translate into several lessons, lessons we use to transform landscapes that pay homage to both the natural and built circumstances of their institutions. We repeat McLeod and Miraglia’s summary of the “postmodern paradigm for change,” here, and we explicate these lessons more specifically for WAC in later sections. The lessons, as brought to us by McLeod and Miraglia, sketch the foundation for positive constructions. Our use of their sketch helps demonstrate to other WAC directors how to use the sketch to transform these foundational principles into action and new landscapes.

Fullan’s “Postmodern Paradigm for Change” Summarized by McLeod and Miraglia for WAC

Lesson One: *You can’t mandate what matters* (the more complex the change the less you can force it)

- Lesson Two:** *Change is a journey not a blueprint* (change is nonlinear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement, and sometimes perverse)
- Lesson Three:** *Problems are our friends* (problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them; vision and strategic planning come later—premature visions and planning blind us to other possibilities)
- Lesson Four:** *Vision and strategic planning come later* (premature visions and planning blind us to other possibilities)
- Lesson Five:** *Individualism and collectivism must have equal power* (there are no one-sided solutions)
- Lesson Six:** *Neither centralization nor decentralization works alone* (both top-down and bottom-up are necessary)
- Lesson Seven:** *Connection with the wider environment is critical for success* (the best organizations learn externally as well as internally)
- Lesson Eight:** *Every person is a change agent* (change is too important to leave to the experts) (McLeod and Miraglia, 20)

Put simply, these lessons acknowledge that “linear theories of cause and effect” (20) are ineffective, unrealistic, or untenable in that they ignore local context and lived realities. In the next section, we demonstrate how these lessons work as tactics for transitioning from seeing to acting—for being landscape architects.

WAC as Landscape Architecture: Excavating Difficult Terrain

Unlike the situation in our first case, the institution in our second story commands national acclaim for their full-fledged WAC, WID, and writing-intensive courses. Given such solid success, readers might wonder “where’s the difficulty?” Deborah Morton’s story demonstrates what might happen when varied levels of support and multiple perspectives co-exist without consensus, and it shows how opportune maneuvers in small moments could be used to build shared meaning and to design and redesign our institutional landscapes. This second story is a typical “things gone wrong” tale wherein participants who take McLeod’s and Miraglia’s suggestion to learn to see through Fullan’s “postmodern paradigm of change” begin to transform their environments: WAC participants look for the cracks and crevices and use those as sites to begin excavating the same-old same-old attitudes and behaviors that prevent them from communicating with one another in order to establish goals for the WAC/WID experience. In this second story, the participants realize that if they do not re-imagine ways for working and communicating with others that they cannot even reach their

goals of offering this WAC/WID course, much less turn it into an opportunity worthy of the praise it receives by its description on paper and its imagined realities.

A new faculty member at Research University was assigned to teach a fledgling WID course that we'll call "Writing." Writing faculty greeted nearly 75 students from five sections of a discipline-specific course, which we'll call "Discipline"¹, who convened in a large lecture hall for one hour a week for three semesters in order to obtain upper-division writing credit. In other words, structurally at least, this was a WID course because one hour of the six-hour Discipline course was allotted to writing. In fact, the WID course earned internal and external bragging rights for Discipline precisely because writing experts taught writing within Discipline's courses. Unfortunately, in practice, the writing component remained disconnected from Discipline in physical and intellectual spaces. While students met the majority of their time in a collaborative workspace, they were asked to leave this space to attend the writing component. Leaving each of five Discipline sections and joining together for only one hour a week made it improbable that students or Writing faculty could connect writing to their ongoing disciplinary activities.

Internally, professors from both disciplines agreed with students who complained loudly or who dissented quietly: This "collaboration" wasn't working. Students did not like leaving their class space or time. Writing faculty did not like teaching 75 students from different sections at one time for one hour a week without being connected to Discipline sections. Numerous other disagreements surfaced. Discipline faculty did not like being asked to spend time meeting with Writing faculty when they occasionally requested more information about disciplinary projects so that they could connect the writing to that work: Writing faculty members assigned to the course, "are the experts," they argued, and they should not need to meet with others to "do their job." Complicating the matter further, students disliked their Writing grade averaging into their Discipline grade—it "ruined" their Discipline grade in their eyes. Writing faculty disliked Discipline professors communicating different messages about Writing to their respective sections: One professor substituted her own readings for Writing's, another told students not to read Writing's assignments at all, and a third created her own writing prompts and suggested Writing faculty and other writing instructors grade the responses.

Even though Discipline faculty disagreed about how to approach writing in the course, few participated when Writing faculty tried to pry open the terrain by calling

¹ In order to retain anonymity and afford readers to more easily imagine their own circumstances, we use "Discipline" as the course name.

meetings for input about the course and its re-design. In theory, it sounded like a fine idea to bring stakeholders together in space and time to negotiate a direction; in practice, however, even the suggestion undermined Discipline faculty's faith in Writing faculty. Rather than view this as an opportunity for faculty to collaborate and negotiate a shared vision and to set an agenda, Discipline's faculty saw the more feminist, organizational leadership approach to work as a picture of poor leadership and of indecisiveness on the part of Writing faculty. Consequently, rather than attend meetings for faculty, Discipline's faculty members began attending Writing portions of the classes, outwardly scrutinizing details during class and in front of students. Ed White might welcome the feature-length story as one more piece of evidence that WAC just doesn't work.

Resolution did not begin to emerge until Writing acknowledged the type of change in perspective offered from Jackson's story and the lessons offered by Fullan, nor did change begin until Writing maneuvered within ostensible stasis points. Rather than throw up hands in defeat, Writing (eventually) approached the problem strategically, at the point of need, relying on the postmodern paradigm of change to improve the situation. First, everyone had to face it: Writing faculty members ignored one of the lessons many WAC practitioners ignore in the "postmodern paradigm of change" because they set out "too soon with a vision and plan"—six times, in this case. The course had been taught differently each semester for three years. Each term began with an energetic, "We got it!" Yet, by the end, students rebelled, largely because of those spatial and intellectual disconnects but also because Writing grades "ruined" Discipline grades, a problem exacerbated by beliefs that they [students] "were not going to need to write much, anyway" and by their own faculty's interventions. While the strategy and vision should have emerged organically from the convergence of collaborations, these had instead been orchestrated by writing faculty who set the WID agenda and expected Discipline to simply show up. Each disconnect presented opportunities either to react or to understand and to (re)maneuver.

Writing recognized that resolving the situation meant finding shared meaning, but finding shared meaning meant getting faculty from both disciplines in a room together and, as readers might imagine, this was no small feat. First, everyone felt that it was too late for conversations. Both disciplines already perceived the "other" as the problem. Writing felt it most prudent to abandon the WID course all together, moving to sites where Writing faculty could excel rather than stagnate. Here is where a seemingly counterintuitive lesson in the postmodern paradigm for change emerged: In structured, autocratic environments, problems equal enemies that often stem from poor planning, inexact execution, or other incompetence; conversely, the postmodern paradigm for

change positions “problems as friends,” a perspective already familiar from Jackson’s story. We propose that even if friendship seems too unlikely, WAC folks can at least see problems as allies. Learning from and in the postmodern paradigm for change requires dispensing of universal ideals, notions that mistakes reveal ineptitude, and the anxiety of perfection. (Re)seeing the course would take identifying allies and friends as well as the fissures and gaps of problems. Understanding the problems meant analyzing rhetorically: actively listening, researching qualitatively, and analyzing environments as English faculty analyze texts. Writing faculty became rhetorical detectives who examined acts, scenes, agents, agency, and purposes (Burke) in order to find ways in through gaps and fissures and to use those to start conversations about negotiating for shared meaning about Discipline + Writing. This meant increasingly engaging in conversations when passing in the hallway, visiting office hours of other faculty, talking to students who stayed after class for their own purposes. Detective work often entails silence, too: resisting urges to tell people how writing should work and instead hearing about problems in all of their frustrating or ignorant or truthfully painful detail, and, of course, seeing from multiple views. At the moment Writing faculty felt most vulnerable and frustrated, they asked for feedback from everyone involved instead of defending themselves.

Thinking strategically, Writing eventually brought the writing coordinator and Discipline’s chair into the conversations, particularly from a problem-solving framework. To explain the situation from the perspective of the postmodern paradigm of change, Writing could mold the landscape, which, in this case, meant bringing unbiased people and decision-makers to the construction site. Discipline aired their concerns and placed blame, thus they felt heard and invested. Through the process, each person at the meeting came to identify what that individual could do to improve the situation. In the end, Discipline faculty could see where they may have contributed to the problems: 75 students in a separate room for a writing component could not excel, Discipline faculty could not assign their own work for the writing component, and Writing faculty would not serve as graders for Discipline’s course. Meeting facilitators used the faculty’s frustration with Writing, turned it into frustration with the course, and then used that to ask Discipline faculty what they might do differently to make the course better. In befriending problems, participants learned two other lessons in the postmodern paradigm for change: Writing faculty “tried to mandate what mattered” and they did not “afford individualism and collectivism equal power.” Fullan refers especially to problems of top-down directives to make something matter. Morton’s situation did not suffer from a top-down directive; Morton’s situation suffered from one discipline trying to mandate what mattered to another. Discipline faculty value

writing for both communicative and epistemic purposes. Some Discipline faculty even refer to their work as “building an argument.” In Morton’s situation, Writing faculty undermined what could have been a productive start because they began by directing Discipline rather than working to build consensus.

Do not be fooled. Creating one-sided solutions stems from acts of trying to mandate what matters, yes; it also happens by default, results from inaction, as in the writing component. In three years, all relevant Discipline faculty received invitations to meetings. Except for the last semester, only two of them, who were coordinators for their curriculum, came. This lack of participation resulted in writing faculty determining what mattered, but it did not work. Using decision makers in each department to get people at the meeting and beginning by pointing to problems on writing’s side got the attention of Discipline faculty. Asking them to identify what they could and would do to effect change got them invested. From this conversation a new course model emerged—one shared by faculty in both disciplines and all individuals in the room because each person could see themselves and their program in the solution.

The tactic, here, grown from the lessons already mentioned, involved making people first want to join the effort. As Morton’s case illustrates, sometimes getting people to listen means not being the expert in the room but being humble. This often means giving up disciplinary or institutional stardom, giving up the dream of being a goddess, as Haraway sees it, and instead dreaming of being part of a collective. Tactics come from shared versus traditional leadership practices, where people become heroes in their own territory so that everyone has room to excel in some way.

This story also highlights the importance of yet another lesson from the postmodern paradigm for change: The effort had to “centralize and decentralize, use top-down as well as bottom-up.” In a decentralized way, as we discuss earlier, Writing had to ask for and learn to hear the many voices from Discipline faculty and students. As in our first story, in a centralized and top-down way, Writing relied on the administrative people in the room to pull others together. Discipline faculty did not show up to other meetings, but when their chair and the writing coordinator called the meeting, Discipline faculty came. Faculty had too many other responsibilities going on to use their energy on something they neither respected nor prioritized in any way, thus the need to rely on this top-down impetus for getting them at the site. Moreover, the interdisciplinary group needed someone to establish boundaries and needed confidence in whoever set those boundaries. Until all participants could see themselves in solutions, though, the problems would remain, so they all had to meet together at the same time, to see Writing demonstrate that all had been heard and had been designed into a blueprint for change.

(Re)Seeing, (Re)Mapping, (Re)Maneuvering

Both cases also demonstrate another lesson of the postmodern paradigm for change: “change is a journey.” No matter how well you plan, the journey is nonlinear and uncertain. The tactic, here, is to let mission- or value-oriented moves direct action, strategizing in small increments. This relates to the lesson that “success stems from connecting to the wider environment.” In other words, we must keep local ends in mind according to circumstance but also as they have been negotiated and informed by the expertise and best practices of the disciplines and players involved. So, when Jackson talks of plagiarism, she begins with the dean’s directive to give the workshops and discipline’s suggestions for workshop topics, mediated by WAC faculty’s expertise in the discipline of writing and the experiences of pedagogy. Those connections to the wider environment create opportunities that when acted upon provide scaffolding for reaching new levels of understanding and negotiations.

In our second story, Discipline and Writing initially kept only the wider environment of each discipline in mind. Each needed tactics to negotiate differences in order for agreeable and viable solutions to emerge. The next iteration of Writing will be a client-based class where Discipline professors and their projects serve as clients for the Writing component. Students will write in their own discipline, simultaneously learning in both. Students will write to learn in order to think about solutions to their projects and to learn multiple ways of thinking and seeing more generally. The projects will serve as an impetus for writing, but writing instructors determine assignments based on goals and desired outcomes. It will be a learning-based rather than a checklist approach (genre, “check,” documentation style, “check,” thesis, “check” etc.)

We end with what we see as Fullan’s call to action: “Every person is a change agent.” As change agents in a postmodern paradigm this means learning new skills: negotiation versus communication, multivocality versus monologues, local decisions versus grand visions, audience-involved (Johnson) versus system-centered (as explained in Johnson User-Centered), and small opportunities versus authoritative directives. As change agents, we must continuously survey our local context, disciplinary values, personal and professional goals, institutional realities, consistently living and acting within dynamic connections and configurations that surround us and of which we are part. To return to a geographic metaphor, those of us dedicated to WAC sustainability must become landscape architects: We must learn to (re)see, (re)map, and (re)maneuver the landscape before us.

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INTERVIEW

Terry Myers Zawacki: Creator of an Integrated Career

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READERS OF *The WAC Journal* would agree, I wager, that it is no secret that WAC folks have a can-do attitude. Faced with problems, those who participate in and administer WAC programs pull together, think creatively, and find a way through. For those who have experience in more than one WAC setting, there is a recognition that migration from school to school and program to program tends to sharpen one's effectiveness. Patterns emerge, and one develops a keen sense of administrative savvy and methods of promoting strategic relationships to accomplish institutional, program, and personal goals.

Furthermore, the WAC professional is typically less concerned with credentials and status than with doing effective work with colleagues on behalf of students. By definition, WAC provides an interdisciplinary perspective that regards the whole curriculum, respects community, and seeks varied input on complex matters. Terry Myers Zawacki, my WAC interviewee for this issue, exemplifies the creative, energetic, effective outcomes of these professional attitudes. As you will see reflected in her own words, her WAC sensibilities have produced an exemplary result (not that she would ever characterize herself as exemplary, but still). I describe Terry as an interdisciplinary specialist—how is that for a paradox? Over time she has drawn deeply on varied experience in teaching, research, publication, administration, and service—to create a truly integrated career in what was first an administrative post and is now a tenurable faculty position.

With her longtime colleague Chris Thaiss, Terry co-authored *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*. Published in 2006, this important contribution to WAC scholarship reveals one of the most sophisticated discussions to date on what constitutes “standard” and “alternative” writing in the disciplines, for faculty as academic writers and for the undergraduate student writers they teach. Drawing upon results of research with faculty and students across disciplines, the authors describe teachers’ expectations for their student writers and students’ perceptions of these expectations. A final chapter discusses the implications of the research and makes recommendations for researchers, teachers, and program administrators across disciplines.

At George Mason University in Virginia, Terry directs the WAC program and the University Writing Center, and she co-chairs the University Writing Assessment Group. If her titles alone have you wiping your fevered brow, read on to learn from a woman who has assembled the most interesting and challenging components of an integrated professional life in the context of WAC.

CR: Can you tell me what led you to writing center and WAC work? Were you groomed in grad school? Did you, like so many of our colleagues, sort of fall into it? Did you have a particular specialty that you moved away from in order to pursue these areas? We need a story.

TMZ: Well, this could be a very long “falling into WAC” story, since I started out way back when in El Paso, Texas, leading a team of junior high teachers in completely revising our curriculum into cross-disciplinary, cross-grade-level learning communities. Fast forward to Long Island and New York Institute of Technology, where I taught general English courses and a few of the required discipline-focused writing courses, e.g. writing in communications. I also taught basic writing in one of the first networked classrooms—this by virtue of location, not my technical abilities. At that time, my colleague and English chair Michael Spitzer was working with Trent Batson and other computers-and-writing notables on the Exxon-funded ENFI (Electronic Networks for Interaction) project, so several of us at NY Tech were fortunate to be among the first to experiment with the technology.

I’d begun doctoral work in New York, but, when my husband’s career took us to Virginia, I started all over again—with my own academic career and grad school (an ed degree with a composition focus). I was first hired at Mason as an adjunct and assigned to be “mentored” by Chris Thaiss, whom I hadn’t yet met as he was then directing

an interdisciplinary program outside of English. When Laura Brady, a relatively new assistant prof, was asked to direct the comp program in Chris's absence, she agreed on the condition that she have a full-time assistant director, a position I then assumed. Even after Laura left Mason for a position at West Virginia University, she continued to be a wonderful friend and mentor. In fact, it was in large part due to her encouragement that I gained the confidence to submit the essay "Recomposing as a Woman—An Essay in Different Voices" to CCC; the essay appeared in the October 1992 and was recently anthologized in the 2003 *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. I should add that I've been a women's studies faculty member since the early 1990s.

When Chris Thaiss returned to the English department, directing comp and WAC, I remained as associate director of both programs. At the same time, I also began developing and directing the Linked Courses Program, which I wrote about in "Is It Still WAC? Writing within Interdisciplinary Learning Communities" for WAC for the New Millennium. By then, I felt like I was a WAC person through and through, even though I'd just begun to steep myself in the scholarship. In 1997, I was asked to take over direction of the writing center, an opportunity I relished as I wanted to re-position the center as a vital and necessary support for WID. So it seems like I've always been running or involved in running at least two WAC-focused programs at the same time. I still find it ironic that long after the formal adjunct-mentoring plan was defunct in the department, Chris became, informally, my most valued mentor and collaborator.

In 1998, when Chris became chair of English, I became WAC director and have been directing both that initiative and the writing center ever since. Demanding work, but now I find it hard to imagine not doing both, as each provides me with enormous insights into how best to manage the other. Similarly, when the mandate came for all state institutions to assess our students' writing competence, among five other competencies, I knew it was a WAC opportunity and that I had to be involved with shaping our response to the mandate.

CR: When job postings come out on professional listservs, many of our colleagues comment about rank, tenure status, compensation, and so on. When jobs with responsibilities for WAC, a writing center, and teaching come up, one can expect someone to scream that such a job can't be done. How do you respond?

TMZ: Since I'm doing the jobs, I know they can be done. But that doesn't mean I'm not overworked and underpaid for what I do. That said, I have a one-one teaching load and an assistant director for the writing center and, very recently, one for WAC as well.

Plus, the members of the cross-university WAC committee, a standing committee in the Senate, are helpful, informative, and a lot of fun to work with. As is the associate provost for institutional assessment—Karen Gentemann—who co-chairs with me the writing assessment group, comprised of more hard-working, cross-curricular folks. I feel very lucky to be able to work with such good colleagues and to have the kind of institutional support for writing that has become part of the culture at Mason. I should mention too the close working relationship I have with the director of our Center for Teaching Excellence; she is a huge WAC champion, organizing and sponsoring the faculty development workshop series I do every year. Sadly, she's leaving Mason for other opportunities; however, the interim director is another close colleague who has worked with me on several writing initiatives. These kinds of ties are, of course, not news to WAC folks, who generally find that people who care about teaching and teaching effectiveness are our strongest allies.

These ties are further forged through regular workshops and other gatherings. The teaching-with-writing series consists of three workshops—designing assignments, responding effectively and efficiently, and how to work with less able writers in the course. There's a heavy ESL emphasis in the latter given our highly diverse student population. I do these every fall; the CTE publicizes the workshops and pays for faculty lunches. From time to time, I also give workshops for specific departments, e.g. holistic scoring sessions designed to help faculty articulate expectations for student writing across courses or learn how to read and evaluate portfolios for accreditation purposes. We don't typically bring in speakers on teaching and/or teaching with writing, as we have so many good folks in our institution. At my recommendation, however, the institutional assessment office did bring in Bill Condon (Washington State University) to do a day-long workshop on assessing critical thinking, another of the competencies we are in the process of measuring.

In addition to CTE and the assessment office, I work with a good number of other administrative units. To give you a sense of the importance for WAC folks of developing strong relationships across campus, I'll describe a few here. The English Language Institute, for example, funds two ESL specialists assigned to the writing center; athletics supports a half-time TA/tutor; and the Office for Postgraduate Fellowships and Scholarships another. In collaboration with this office, the writing center developed a personal statement workshop, by far our most popular, and, I'm happy to say, several of our writing fellows and peer tutors have been among the elite student finalists competing for high profile fellowships. University Life has also been an ally; they have funded our IRB-approved WAC/writing center research project on the experiences of

non-native writers in the US academy. We plan to put the data we're gathering from our student informants on the WAC and writing center Web sites, and *University Life* is publishing it as part of a series of monographs on diversity at Mason. I'm also a faculty advisor for the student-run *GMU Review*, a publication showcasing student writing across disciplines. I could go on, but then, as you know all too well, so could any WAC director; it's what Barbara Walvoord means by that "dive in or die" attitude that must be hard wired into us even before we take the job and that is crucial to sustaining our programs (from "The Future of WAC").

CR: Somehow, you fit a very respectable assessment program into your work. How have you managed that? What have you learned about introducing assessment to a university that others might benefit from understanding in some detail?

TMZ: As I said in the question above, one way I manage this is to have the support of some very good people and to work closely with institutional assessment. The latter is a relationship that goes back to my days directing Linked Courses, when funding depended heavily on proving the program was helping the university to retain first-year students. Of course, WAC folks have known all along that the assessment office is one of our best institutional friends. Even before the state mandate came, Karen had helped me convene the writing assessment group; I wanted to find out what writing tasks faculty were typically assigning and what they thought of our students' ability to successfully complete those tasks. I also wanted to know to whom they turned for advice on teaching with writing and their impression of the effectiveness of the writing center in assisting their students. To that end, our newly-convened assessment group developed a survey we sent to all faculty. So we were well poised, in the midst of this effort, to devise a plan for responding to the state mandate, one that would focus assessment on WI courses in the majors and give us valuable information about WAC and WID. I've put a lot of information on Mason's WAC site (wac.gmu.edu) about our assessment program, and Chris and I have written about some of the things we've learned from this process in *Engaged Writers* and *Dynamic Disciplines*, so I won't go into that here.

One other thing I will say, though, in response to your question about introducing assessment to the university is that, while we've developed an assessment process to be implemented across the curriculum, I'm always open to alternatives if a plan suggested by a department will better serve their goals while giving us the information we each need. So, for example, our history department requires writing in all of their courses and most of their faculty are extremely conscientious in working with

student writers; however, being an independent group, they don't like state mandates, especially unfunded ones, and have resisted our assessment efforts. Instead of inviting me to lead an assessment workshop, as other departments do, their undergraduate committee asked me to help them in reading papers from their gateway course to establish benchmarks to be used for measuring students' progress as writers in the capstone course. They want the results to inform some curricular revision they think is needed. That made me—and the assessment office—very happy, as this is just the kind of feedback loop any worthwhile assessment program should be trying to accomplish. Our School of Management has developed a similar plan as they need data on student writing for their accreditation. I think John Bean and Mike Carter—and you, Carol—are the masters of this kind of “How can I help you achieve your goals?” approach. I'd love to be able to work much more broadly with faculty, as you all do, on the front-end process of defining learning and writing outcomes for courses and curriculum, another huge undertaking.

I mentioned earlier Barbara Walvoord's observation about WAC programs needing to “dive in or die” and that has been on my mind lately, as I try to balance all of the commitments I've made. And this relates to your second question: I think it's because we're willing—and uniquely qualified—to dive in that we WAC folks take on so much work, albeit valuable and fulfilling work. At the Clemson WAC conference Bill Condon led a session on sustaining WAC programs, and, when the importance of “diving in” came up, I remember someone saying that, for our own personal survival, we also had to learn when to say no. Right now I'm feeling proud of myself for resisting efforts to involve me in the critical thinking assessment, even though that's another natural WAC alliance. I doubt I'll be able to stay uninvolved for long, however, as we are launching a Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum initiative, modeled, as the provost says in his e-mail inviting faculty to participate, “on the success we have had with our highly touted Writing Across the Curriculum program.” I knew this was in the works, as a couple of administrative folks had asked for my input on the idea before it was proposed to the provost; I advised that, if they wanted to model CTAC on WAC, they needed to secure faculty buy-in from the outset, involving them in the planning and development process, which they have been doing with good results.

CR: On the WAC Clearinghouse site, you maintain an impressive list of Writing Fellows programs, including your own. As you learn about these programs, can you identify common characteristics? Common goals? Organizational structures? If you were to advise a school about starting such a program, where would you begin?

TMZ: I've just been writing about this topic in an article for a writing fellows-focused issue of *Across the Disciplines*, so my response might seem a little rehearsed. Let me begin with the last question in your list: Just as WAC programs—and assessment programs—are structured in response to local concerns and institutional ecologies, so too should be fellows programs. While anyone starting a program should certainly be aware of the goals and ideals articulated most notably by Tori Haring-Smith, they also need to be mindful of their own institution's educational mission and structures. I would say the programs on the Writing Fellows page of the Clearinghouse all echo Haring-Smith in their goals (to be agents of change in student and faculty attitudes and approaches to writing and teaching writing), but they are also remarkably diverse in their organizational structure, size, and curricular focus.

My program is quite small; in fact, the only reason I happen to be the Writing Fellows section editor is that I suggested to Mike Palmquist, when I was creating my program, that it would be very useful to have a central repository for advice and models. Mike endorsed the idea and then asked if I would be responsible for the section. Be careful what you wish for. I'm glad I took on the task, however, as I've learned a lot about other programs, which has enriched my own program and enabled me to develop materials for my site that other programs have found useful.

I don't think you can overestimate the importance of being attuned to one's own institutional culture in creating a program. My program, for example, is an outgrowth of the writing center's peer tutoring initiative. When I took over as director of the writing center, all of the tutors were MFA grad students on teaching assistantships; I wanted to give our undergrads this opportunity, as I knew that by recruiting strong undergrad writers across disciplines I could further WAC goals, enhance the expertise of our tutoring staff, and help these accomplished students achieve some of their own goals. I designed a tutoring course that would be given a college prefix (CAS 390) to signal its cross-disciplinary intent. When I presented the college council with a course proposal for a three-credit course, they turned me down, saying it wasn't sufficiently academic. I tried again with a proposal for a one-credit course repeatable up to three times. This model appealed to them as long as I set a high bar for acceptance into the course. Subsequently, some of our best tutors have been undergrads from courses outside of English Studies. As another benefit, the recruitment process itself allows me to educate faculty and administrators about the aims of both WAC and the writing center.

Once the peer tutoring course was up and running, I began working on a writing fellows initiative, with select peer tutors being given this opportunity. I decided that it

would make sense for the fellows initiative to be folded into the undergraduate research apprentice program run by the Center for Teaching Excellence, so I partnered with the director on a funding proposal for additional stipends earmarked specifically for writing fellows. This has been a good relationship; besides taking responsibility for administrative oversight, she's been helpful in identifying teachers who might really benefit from having a writing fellow, such as the non-native professor from Eastern Europe who was assigned to teach—and was eager to teach—a writing-intensive course in her discipline. One reason upper administration is so receptive to these kinds of initiatives comes back again to assessment: for example, NSSE (National Survey for Student Engagement) results cite students' experiences with writing across the curriculum as one of the reasons for our strong scores on the five benchmarks they measure—active and collaborative learning, student interactions with faculty members, supportive campus environment, level of academic challenge, and enriching educational experiences (<http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/NSSE/NSSE.html>). Similarly, the site-visit team from DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) also credited the WAC program with “creating and sustaining a focus on rigor and excellence across majors and courses.” (<http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/Other/2003/DEEP/DEEPFinalReport.pdf>)

CR: What am I not asking that you would like to talk about?

TMZ: Let's see. I guess what's been on my mind lately is the need to work more closely with our technology across the curriculum program, as teaching with new instructional technologies typically involves a lot of writing as well. I'm also exploring ways the writing center can be more responsive to students writing in these new spaces. And then there's the potential of electronic portfolios for assessing student writing and program effectiveness. Darren Cambridge, associate director of the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research and a Mason colleague, is a member of the writing assessment group, yet we've not really taken advantage of his expertise to figure out how to sell faculty on the benefits of e-portfolios for them and their students in tracking writing development.

But thinking about projects I have been doing, not just those I wish I could do, I was gratified to find out in interviews with undergrad coordinators and associate chairs in our new College of Science (split off from Arts and Sciences) that there's an awful lot of writing going on that is not being counted as writing. With the WAC assistant director, I'm creating profiles of writing in the majors, an idea I got from Vicki Tolar Burton at

Oregon State; we'll include writing to learn, informal writing, and formal writing and also a list of courses where writing is occurring. The associate dean of the College of Science has been very supportive of this mapping project, as he believes the information will be useful in making arguments to both internal and external audiences about the amount of writing currently being assigned, the need for smaller classes, and faculty development related to teaching with writing.

Speaking of mapping projects, Chris Thaiss and I continue to work together on a project mapping WAC/WID programs in the US, and, with Tiane Donahue, on mapping WID transnationally. Last July, I had the good fortune to spend a day with WAC colleagues at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenborg, Sweden—Magnus Gustafsson, Ann-Marie Eriksson, and Linda Bradley—learning about their writing program and, more generally, approaches to WID in Swedish institutions. In May, I'll meet with colleagues in Florence, Italy to talk about the impact of the Bologna Agreement on higher ed in Europe.

One of the things I most value about my WAC/WID work is the opportunity it gives me to get to know and interact with so many wonderful, like-minded colleagues at my own institution and at institutions across the country and, increasingly, across national borders, some of whom I've named here. When I reflect on what has been most important to me as a program builder and leader over the years, what first comes to mind are the many good friends I have made—mentors, models, and colleagues who make up the generous and supportive WAC community, a community that continues to nourish and enrich the work I do. The challenge to those of us with well-established programs is, I think, to make sure that our new WAC colleagues are welcomed into that community and feel the same sense of generosity and support as they grow their programs.

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REVIEW

A Host at the Parlor: a Review of
Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts

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Joseph Harris. *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*.
Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2006. 139 pages. \$19.95.

I IMAGINE MANY of the readers of *The WAC Journal* are familiar with the oft-quoted “unending conversation,” or what is often called the Burkean Parlor:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (110–111)

What is missing from Burke's description and what universities often fail to do is provide guidance for novice writers to enter the parlor conversation. To enter the conversation, one must speak what Richard Rorty termed “normal discourse,” and part of normal discourse entails following academic discourse conventions. Given

that text is the primary way that academics communicate, it is surprising that most writing textbooks fail to address some fairly typical rhetorical conventions of academic writing.

Certainly there are texts directed at future or novice scholars—there are enough handbooks to fill an aisle of bookshelves at Borders, ranging from Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* to Booth, Colomb, and Williams' *The Craft of Revision*. To varying degrees, all of the handbooks and rhetorics describe how to develop research questions, do research, create claims, and support the evidence; they all have fairly standard approaches and very practical advice. These books reify the research essay. Of course they describe how to use source material and to consider points of agreement and disagreement with literature, but none of them that I know really tackles the issue of making the kinds of rhetorical moves that academics make to participate in the parlor conversation.

In chapter two of *Rewriting*, Harris quotes Burke's unending conversation, and I couldn't help but imagine Harris serving as a guide or host for aspiring academics in ways that preceding textbooks have not. Harris does not intend his book to compete with books like *Craft*. Instead he sees it as a means to introduce readers to the kinds of moves academic writers make, primarily in relation to each other, thus his title *Rewriting*. Harris writes, "The reason I call this *rewriting* is to point to a generative paradox of academic work: like all writers, intellectuals need to say something new and say it well. But unlike many other writers, what intellectuals have to say is bound up inextricably with books we are reading . . . and the ideas of the people we are talking with" (2). This, then, strikes me as the heart of the book. The rest of Harris' text is built upon this philosophy.

The book contains five chapters, all but the last directed at the rhetorical moves academic writers make in the academic conversation: coming to terms, forwarding, countering, taking an approach, and revising. Each chapter describes how a writer may build upon what has come before, and even in the introduction we see Harris modeling what he advises by providing "Intertexts" or references in grey boxes that provide citation information and occasionally a short annotation from a work referenced within the text. These striking visual representations model what he advocates throughout the book, and they demonstrate an admirable breadth of knowledge as he draws on authors from Aristotle to Carol Gilligan to Aretha Franklin.

Harris' clear prose cuts through the complexity of discerning the subtle moves writers make. In chapter 1, "Coming to Terms," Harris suggests how readers might enter the parlor conversation by taking the works of predecessors and making them their

own. His advice ranges from defining a project based on another to suggestions for using quotations. For the latter, his description moves beyond a simple exhortation for supporting claims with evidence: “you can see quotations as *flashpoints* in a text, moments given a special intensity, made to stand for key concepts or issues” (22). Again, Harris sees the interplay of texts integral to the work of the academic.

The beginning of chapter 2 is where Harris draws on Burke and the parlor metaphor. It sets the stage nicely for the next two chapters, “Forwarding” and “Countering,” because they represent many of the most common rhetorical moves writers make. “In forwarding a text, you extend its uses; in countering a text, you note its *limits*” (38). From here, he details how one might forward an argument by “*illustrating, authorizing, borrowing, and extending*” (49)—all very positive acts, supportive of the texts from which ideas are drawn.

Countering, on the other hand, is the place at which an author pursues a disagreement. It serves to “open up new lines of inquiry” by “arguing the other side, uncovering values, and dissenting” (57). Harris artfully explains that the job of countering is not attacking an author, especially with ad hominem attacks. Instead, Harris writes, “Your job is not to correct the infelicities of a text but to respond to and rework the position it puts forward” (68). Ultimately, according to Harris, the purpose of countering is to construct one’s own position in response. Academic arguments aren’t for tearing down another author; instead they are for advancing knowledge through dialogue.

In both chapters 2 and 3, as with the entire book, Harris provides detailed examples for each component of forwarding and countering. Because the rhetorical strategies are not simple or easily self-contained, Harris’ examples often run for a page or more, but each is engaging and illustrative of the point. And because of their poignancy, Harris does not need to belabor the point. Harris also offers exercises he calls Projects. In many cases these are simply questions for consideration, but some also provide windows into any texts one reads by asking readers to record the rhetorical moves present in a text, including *Rewriting*.

In the final chapter on building an argument, entitled “Taking an Approach,” Harris describes how an author can carve a space for her ideas through acknowledging influences, turning an approach on itself, and reflexivity (79). This chapter does not describe how an author might advance an argument, rather it explains how to shape an approach to making one. Returning to the title of the book, *Rewriting*, Harris’ text helps writers see how academics are constantly rewriting the ideas of others to forward, counter, and build their own arguments through the acknowledgement of what has come before. Harris shows beautifully the interconnectivity of academic conversations.

“Revising,” the final chapter, was the least successful chapter for me of a very insightful book. In it, Harris explains that revision, not simply editing or proofreading, is key to successful writing. Though I emphatically agree with him, the chapter seemed more a sophisticated pep talk, not quite on par with the insightful examination of academic writing conventions that comprises the earlier chapters of the book. Midway through the chapter, Harris does provide some practical advice for writers, such as writing an abstract of one’s text or coding language with straight underlines to denote strengths or wavy underlines to mark questions. Though these techniques may be successful, they do not match the insight of the earlier work.

Harris includes an afterward in *Rewriting*: “Teaching Rewriting.” In this final section Harris encourages faculty to teach attentiveness and intention to writing, not only rewriting, “A good writing course teaches both a practice and a habit of mind—a way of doing things and a way of thinking about things” (125). For example, Harris suggests writing students should not only rewrite, but they should also explain the rhetorical decisions they have made in their writing, asking for a kind of attention to process as well as product.

On the back of the book, Tom Deans offers advance praise, claiming *Rewriting* “fills a gap between bulky readers/rhetorics and dutiful style handbooks,” but this book is more than that. Whereas most rhetorics and handbooks offer guidance on mechanical practices or abstract components of writing, Harris’ text serves as a host to Burke’s parlor, carefully introducing future academics to the rhetorical moves scholars make in relation to each other, thus warmly welcoming them into the conversation.

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REVIEW

*Review of Write for Insight: Empowering
Content Area Learning, Grades 6–12*

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William Strong. *Write for Insight: Empowering Content Area Learning, Grades 6–12*
Boston: Pearson (2006) \$28.99 (paperback) ISBN 0-205-4183-1

SECONDARY SCHOOLS OFTEN FOCUS on developing the writing facility of college-bound students while limiting “writing instruction” for less-academic students to isolated grammar tutelage. Writing-across-the-curriculum practices that are well-established on university campuses rarely filter down to secondary instruction in spite of efforts by National Writing Project sites and others. At this level, writing instruction is typically felt to be the sole responsibility of English teachers. Although universities expect arriving freshmen to be able to produce effective, discipline-specific academic writing, it rarely occurs to high school content teachers to take time from their subject curricula to teach students how to approach the demands of content-specific writing. However, The National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges reminds us that “writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many” (11). That is, knowing how to write well is a foundational ability for successful participation in society—college educated or not.

ACT’s recent *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work* similarly argues that the literacy skills required for professional post-secondary training are identical to those required for college success (iii). Developing the ability to write well is important for all high school students, not just the college

bound. And, particularly in light of the diverse populations arriving in high school, many with under-developed literacy skills, teaching students to write well is a task far beyond the capacity of a single department. Although composition specialists have long recognized that preparing students for the multiple writing tasks that will be woven throughout their personal and professional lives as adults should be the responsibility of all teachers, few outside English departments have shared that understanding.

Additionally, content area teachers are often ill-equipped to embed writing instruction into their curricula. Lacking explicit knowledge of composition theory or practice themselves, many are well-meaning but timid about offering even limited guidance to students working to master conventions of disciplinary-specific discourse. At best, they help students improve in the only way they know—by correcting mechanical and spelling errors. Indeed, until now, much of the instructional guidance in composition offered to content teachers (even if they knew how to access it) has seemed more accessible to English department colleagues or university professors than to themselves.

That has now changed. William Strong's new book, *Write for Insight: Empowering Content Area Learning, Grades 6–12* is easily the freshest, smartest, and most readable addition to the secondary Writing Across the Curriculum literature in recent years. Beautifully written and intellectually engaging, *Write for Insight's* 10 chapters lay out processes and procedures to guide content teachers interested in integrating writing into their curricula but unsure how to proceed. Strong speaks to readers in a comfortable, personal tone, coaching and encouraging teachers to integrate explicit writing instruction into their curricula. Without bludgeoning them with jargon, he provides accessible strategies, tools, and specific heuristics accessible to content areas as diverse as health and physical education, consumer and family studies, the fine arts, mathematics, science, social studies, English, and drama. Providing examples of specific writing tasks, Strong suggests students keep journals of their exercise regime, create a handbook for younger students on good nutrition, write song lyrics or a critique of a local art show, prepare story problems modeled after those in their text book (and then trade them with classmates), write imaginative accounts of a white blood cell moving through the circulatory system, or explain a historical event to someone from another planet.

Strong presents just enough theoretical background on writing's power to enhance learning and thinking to convince skeptical teachers of the pedagogical value of embedding writing into their already crammed curricula. And, he argues, teachers will

find integrating writing as a core pedagogy serves both their agendas and their students' needs. Effective teaching leads to enhanced learning.

Strong's voice is authoritative and experienced, and his presentation comfortable without being reductive. He is respectful of students and their teachers, yet critical of the fakery of the "paint by numbers" teaching operating in many classrooms and driving students to the disengaged game of "doing" school instead of mastering material. This book is for teachers interested in providing authentic instruction as well as for those unsure of what is meant by "good writing" or at a loss to frame engaging writing tasks. Addressing these multiple needs, Strong tells us that "this book focuses on increasing student motivation, enhancing long-term learning, and easing the workload shouldered by teachers across the middle school and high school grades. It's about working smarter, not harder" (1). These are aggressive promises, yet Strong makes good on each of them.

Strong's core claim is that the flow of words onto paper—thoughtfully attended to by the writer—provides insights. This is not a fresh idea for experienced users of writing as a classroom thinking/learning tool, but for many it is a radical revisioning. Strong uses aptly chosen personal narratives from his own writing life to demonstrate the power "emerging meanings" have to lead writers forward in their analytical thinking. For Strong, a key purpose for writing is to generate insights—"flashes of enlightenment or surprise, a sudden 'seeing from within'" (1)—and the learning and intellectual pleasure that such discoveries engender. Designed to be "a teacher education book with an attitude" (3), *Write for Insight* helps teachers reconnect students to authentic intellectual work. If developing students' abilities as critical thinkers and writers is at the core of our educational agenda, Strong contends writing instruction is the vehicle by which that agenda is most likely realized.

Obliquely addressing prescriptions that misrepresent the nature of academic discourse, Strong reclaims the intellectual power of personal knowledge recovered through narration. To write well in any discipline, he reminds us, we have to write from the inside out, writing from what we know. Because narrative often provides the most accessible route to personal information, Strong suggests beginning with literacy autobiographies, recounting difficulties and triumphs with an eye to experiential learning that positions students to move forward as expository and persuasive writers. This book warrants by example what it advocates for students. Sharing his own stories, Strong demonstrates their power to generate understanding and new perceptions. Then he demonstrates how those stories form the basis for the unmistakably academic exposition in the book itself. Additionally, he includes "Write for Insight" activities at

the end of each chapter that invite readers to apply each chapter's points to their own writing and their own teaching, while experiencing similar writing "insights."

In Chapter 2, Strong rethinks the nature of authentic writing (purposeful writing to communicate meaning to real audiences) and takes on the "hidden curriculum" of writing. Most school writing is done, he reminds us, "to tell the teacher what the teacher already knows, not to explore a topic or idea." He continues, "the central intellectual activity in school writing is to guess what the teacher wants, not to figure out what's worth saying or how to say it most effectively" (31). Strong provides concrete strategies for confronting and transforming this hidden curriculum in order to create writing opportunities for students that require authentic intellectual effort and produce authentic written communication.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 help teachers develop a repertoire of specific strategies for incorporating writing instruction, working with disparate student populations, and developing thinking skills. In Chapter 6, "Designing Assignments and Rubrics," Strong turns to what may be the thorniest issue in writing instruction: "What makes a good writing assignment?" He develops his answer via three essential criteria: 1) it engages students with a problem to solve, 2) it asks them to apply what they have learned recently in order to solve the problem, and 3) it specifies an audience for their response. Strong then offers 10 assignment design principles and an acronym (CRAFT= Context, Role, Audience, Format, Topic) to provide a targeted heuristic for designing effective assignments. Abundant assignment examples provide clear models that teachers can borrow or modify as needed.

Having offered basic tools for effective writing instruction, Strong's next chapters anticipate two areas of potential concern. Chapter 8 responds to a probable question from teachers convinced in theory, but uncertain in practice. "Okay," they might say. "I can see that integrating writing into my coursework has value. But *how* do I do this?" Distinguishing between coaching writers and judging writing, Strong presents a clear picture of effective writing classrooms, how teachers create them, and how they can support students working there.

In Chapter 9, Strong takes on the thorny issues surrounding research writing and offers several alternative (but still academic) modifications. Saturation Reports, I-Search Papers, and Multigenre Research Projects each offer frames for in-depth student exploration and reporting on specific topics in ways that focus on students developing subject mastery. In each, attention is paid to both the *processes* of exploring a topic and the presentation of material in genres that demonstrate mastery. In addition, recognizing the needs of teachers uncomfortable with abandoning traditional research

papers, Strong offers suggestions for integrating them into effective classroom practice as well. At the same time, he takes the opportunity to address issues of “fakery” and plagiarism that often arise with such projects.

The final chapter, “Writing as a Means to Meaning,” umbrellas and again foregrounds the book’s key argument: writing enables meaning creation for writers, even as it presents meanings for readers. That is, for writers, the act of writing is a powerful thinking, learning, and understanding *experience*. For classroom teachers in all disciplines, learning to hinge instructional practices on this pedagogical truth will enable students to make curricular content personally meaningful, accessible, and permanent. *Write for Insight* empowers teachers to do just that. By coupling concrete examples of teachers from many content areas experiencing insightful writing with content-specific, classroom-ready instructional models, Strong provides a valuable resource for individual teachers interested in developing student writing abilities or for professional development leaders seeking a single text that speaks persuasively to teachers from many disciplines.

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REVIEW

*Review of Academic Writing Consulting and
WAC: Methods and Models for Guiding
Cross-Curricular Literacy Work.*

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Jeffrey Jablonski. *Academic Writing Consulting and WAC:
Methods and Models for Guiding Cross-Curricular Literacy Work.*
Hampton Press, 2006. 217 pages.

AS SOON AS I SAW the title of Jeffrey Jablonski's *Academic Writing Consulting and Models for Guiding Cross-Curricular Literacy Work*, I expected it to make an important contribution to the practices of Writing Across the Curriculum—or the more current and more extensive term, “Cross-Curricular Literacy Work.” WAC workshops have been an important practice in the field for the past few decades, but the question of what happens after the workshop ends is less often discussed in publications. Chris Anson's *The WAC Casebook: Scenes for Faculty Reflection and Program Development* (2002) is full of cases of “after the workshop” problems and questions, and can be seen to exemplify the range of teacher-to-teacher consultations that do not work out as expected. Jablonski addresses these person-to-person contacts, which constitute a substantial portion of the time spent on developing WAC programs and initiatives.

I anticipated a much-needed guide to holding consultations with faculty across the curriculum, but this book offers much more. Jablonski analyzes four WAC consultants'

accounts of their experiences and practices using collaboration theory (drawn from learning theory) and consultation theory (drawn from management theory), and in so doing complicates the usual assumptions about collaboration as an individual skill or a happy chance. Moreover, he distinguishes between consulting and collaborating, a difference that is apt to be glossed over by those of us doing this work. He notes that most collaborations fail, in one way or another, as Anson's book of case studies suggests. Jablonski's use of ideas and research from fields that rhetoric and composition scholars usually ignore brings a much-needed frame with which to examine how cross-curricular teaching and learning about literacy may actually work in the institutions that try to foster it.

Jablonski is particularly adamant about the necessity of withdrawing both from the "missionary" approach to Writing Across the Curriculum projects (in which projects are evaluated only according to WAC agendas), and from the concept that our collaborations with faculty in other fields are non-hierarchical. Cross-curricular literacy work, he argues, involves negotiations among individuals, within a hierarchical university system, in which research, teaching, and service are differently valued and sometimes differently defined. His case studies illustrate how this work is negotiated in different institutional situations, and he uses them to examine the interplay of interpersonal relationships, institutional features, and intellectual interests that go into working relationships in cross-curricular literacy. It is not sufficient, he argues and I agree, merely to invent and develop consulting practices. We must understand the implications of what we do and how we do it. According to Jablonski, "the limitation of most WAC studies is that they conceive of interdisciplinary collaboration as a research *method*, but not an appropriate research *object*" (38). In this book, Jablonski not only argues that we should see this limitation, but also demonstrates how to overcome it.

Notes on Contributors

Joan Mullin, professor of rhetoric and writing at the University of Texas, leads the College of Liberal Arts WAC initiative. From 1987–2004 she initiated and directed the WAC program and Writing Center at the University of Toledo, and has published in writing center, WAC, and disciplinary journals across the curriculum. She is also collaborating on an examination of intellectual property and plagiarism across the disciplines, researching peer-to-peer teaching and classroom writing assessment, leading WAC workshops and serving as a WPA consultant evaluator.

Susan Schorn has been coordinator of the Writing Across the Curriculum Initiative at the University of Texas at Austin since 2001. Her work has appeared most recently in the NCTE collection *What is College Level Writing?*

Michael Charlton is a PhD candidate in rhetoric and composition at the University of Oklahoma, where he works as a research assistant in a Writing Across the Curriculum project, the General Education Assessment Team.

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Rebecca Jackson is an associate professor of English and director of the MA in Rhetoric and Composition program at Texas State University. Her previous work has appeared in

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