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"Stealth WAC": The Graduate Writing TA Program

CAMERON BUSHNELL AND AUSTIN GORMAN

The title of our essay comes courtesy of University of Toronto colleague, W. Brock MacDonald speaking at the 2018 International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference.[1] It seems to describe perfectly, and elegantly, the way that we think of the Graduate Writing Teaching Assistant (GWTA) Program discussed in this essay: the GWTA program permits a stealthy reintroduction of strategies and practices associated with a previous generation's programs for writing across the curriculum and writing in the discipline on our campus—importantly by recognizing a sometimes neglected university population already involved in teaching writing, graduate teaching assistants.

Let us say immediately that we are not at all opposed to the traditional method of building support for WAC and WID programs through faculty workshops. In fact, we look forward to a time when they might play a larger part in ongoing training and discussion about writing (and oral presentation) pedagogy. However, at our research-striving campus—where R1 status has just been achieved and "research very high" status is being sought in part through an expansion of doctoral programs—the timing is, shall we say, not ripe for a direct intervention with faculty on the subject of teaching, writing, and speaking pedagogies.

Additionally, to avoid any confusion that may arise from our title, which might seem to suggest that graduate students have been excluded from writing fellows and WAC programs, we note that "stealth WAC" refers to a particular kind of intervention that concerns both graduate students themselves and the program. On one hand, "stealth WAC" points to GTA's work in contexts such as training other TAs in the disciplines and in spearheading efforts to introduce WAC and WID concepts to faculty. Indeed, as a search of writing fellows programs on the *WAC Clearinghouse* shows, graduate students are already involved in cross-discipline writing instruction with their peers at many institutions of higher education. Thus, we acknowledge the important work that has already been done to include graduate students in WAC and WID programs, but also suggest that our program allows for efforts such as syllabi modification and informal writing that can alter writing outcomes even for disciplines with established curricula, thus representing a "stealthy" approach from our

1. MacDonald, W. Brock and Andrea Williams. "Connecting Writing and Disciplinary Knowledge: Teacher Formation in a WAC Program." Co-Presenters at IWAC Conference, June 3–6, 2018.

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graduate student collaborators. On the other hand, but related, disciplinary TAs are often responsible for courses that require them to be involved with undergraduate student writing, but this contribution to their programs is often unacknowledged. TA supervisors may emphasize disciplinary content and gloss over TA writing responsibilities. Our program recognizes that there is writing instruction happening under the radar and capitalizes on an under-recognized resource, seeking to shape and support it, thus expanding WAC on campus.

Our particular program working with graduate teaching assistants offers a robust strategy for re-igniting conversations about WAC and WID. Austin Gorman, director of the campus writing center and myself, director of the Pearce Center for Professional Communication, piloted a program aimed at GTAs who assisted us in expanding efforts on campus to address writing as a necessary and urgent area of academic competence for undergraduate and graduate student populations. The Graduate Writing Teaching Assistant (GWTA) program, as we have called it, offered, in the pilot year, a cohort of nine GTAs, an opportunity to focus on writing as a process critical to: (1) student learning—in comprehending and in demonstrating understanding of content, (2) undergraduate workplace readiness—in explaining and using concepts and practices beyond the classroom, and (3) graduate student scholarship—in expressing clearly (in writing and in oral presentation) sophisticated concepts for a wide variety of audiences encountered in journals, conferences, and dissertation defenses. Although the program aimed primarily to increase and improve undergraduate writing in courses taught by graduate students, we always thought that graduate student writing would progress with increased attention on writing as process.

Our first group of GWTAs came recommended by their departmental faculty. To be accepted into the program, graduate students had to have teaching responsibilities in a lab or a classroom. Our interest was in identifying graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who were committed to teaching and whose supervisors were supportive of their dedicating time to the improvement of writing instruction in their classrooms. We sought GTAs, as Austin notes in his section, because they, as a population, are pivotal—both literally and metaphorically. By definition, they have responsibilities to: (1) the undergraduates they teach, (2) the faculty for whom they are working as assistants, and (3) each other, as peers. Their multivalent perspective is shaped by their need to mediate among competing interests and demands. These three points comprise a GWTA's network, which is critical to the success of the GWTA program; Cameron elaborates them further below. In the section immediately following, Austin writes about the theoretical and practical considerations that have informed our venture into graduate teaching education. We conclude, as we have begun, with a joint reflection, ending with plans for the future iterations of this program.

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Theoretical and Practical Considerations

Austin Gorman

Since its inception in the mid-1970s, WAC programs have struggled with the perennial question of faculty engagement; in particular, how to alter faculty misconceptions about writing (see: Fulwiler, Gorman, and Gorman, "Changing"); overcoming the "resistance" of recalcitrant colleagues in other disciplines (see: Swilky, "Reconsidering"; Swanson-Owens, "Identifying"); or, in the words of WAC pioneers Toby Fulwiler and Art Young in their polemical "Enemies of Writing Across the Curriculum," combatting the "entrenched attitudes that undermine the goals for writing across the curriculum" (292). In Fulwiler and Young's "Enemies," the antagonism between WAC directors and their putative cross-disciplinary collaborators rises to a fever pitch: "many faculty," they assert, "are apathetic, others insecure, even hostile, to any program that offers to assist them with their teaching" (293). While this sentiment may seem unnecessarily bellicose, the early innovators of WAC programs nonetheless identify the greatest obstacle standing in the way of the success of any WAC/WID/CCL initiative: namely, how to find university stakeholders with a desire to advance writing outcomes in their classrooms.

Approaches to WAC that focus mainly on administrative features of the program may fail to address the problem of how to secure a broad-based faculty "buy-in." Theorists of WAC collaboration, such as Barbara Walvoord, advise WAC to stay on the "faculty side" because "considerable faculty autonomy is likely to remain strong" (288). More recent approaches to the foundational question of faculty participation in WAC have emphasized disciplinary differences in writing as pedagogically productive and how we, as academically professionalized teachers of writing, should become more open to the "problems" of grammar that potential stakeholders from other disciplines want to see "fixed" in their undergraduate students' writing (see: Katherine Schaefer "Emphasizing"; Daniel Cole "Earth"). My own experience as the director of a writing center and writing fellows program at an R1 public college of more than twenty thousand students certainly confirms how important it is to listen to the concerns of faculty from other disciplines regarding their objectives in improving student writing. How rigidly one applies the canonical advice of Stephen North of attending to "process" over "product"—or, how one diplomatically explains to a professor in the STEM field that the primary duty of writing fellows is not to simply fix "bad" grammar, but rather to apply a holistic approach to teaching writing—involves matters of pedagogical theory, personal style, and, most importantly perhaps, the anatomy of one's educational institution. On this latter point, a large R1 university, which frequently caters to the sciences, will need to develop a WAC program that is more accommodating to those in other disciplines than would a smaller liberal arts college.

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(We venture that many will find that this "goes without saying," but, like so many basic facts that determine the success or failure of any WAC program, it probably isn't said emphatically enough.)

While cross-disciplinary faculty involvement remains the eternal bugbear of the WAC mission, there has been a dearth of scholarly work on what faculty involvement is and how it might mesh with the best practices developed by WAC. As Heather Falconer rightly points out, in reference to "Statement of WAC Principles and Practices" (2014) by the International Network of WAC programs and CCCC Executive Committee, merely affirming that "writing in disciplines (WID) is most effectively guided by those with experience in that discipline" does not explain what "experience" and "expertise look like in practice" (123). Taking a slightly different tack, we might ask two questions: (1) what disciplinary experience and expertise is important for the collaborative project and goals of WAC? and (2) how can WAC administrators leverage this expertise in order to affect change across disciplinary thresholds?

Put a slightly different way, and taking a step back from macro-level concerns regarding WAC-program design, methodology, and assessment, we suggest the first question above might prompt the first decision: *where* and *who* are our stakeholders. Jeffrey Jablonski argues that "the limitation of most WAC studies is that they conceive of interdisciplinary collaboration as a research *method*, but not as an appropriate research *object*" (38; italics original). Taking collaboration seriously as an "object" of research, rather than as simply a part of one's "research methodology," draws us toward an inquiry into how to cultivate the appropriate institutional stakeholders as the first, and most important, determinant in the success (or failure) of any WAC program.

The faculty workshop of the original WAC programs codified our current notion of the relevant university stakeholders. Earmarking courses as "writing-intensive" and training faculty in writing pedagogy while capitalizing on their disciplinary expertise can appear outdated now because of the outsized role played by graduate teaching assistants in grading and assessing student writing. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 1988 to 2016 graduate teaching assistants have risen much faster proportionally than the total number of graduate students. While it is difficult to offer definitive numbers with regard to how much writing assessment is done by graduate teaching assistants, much anecdotal evidence suggests that tenured and tenure-track faculty, particularly in the sciences, have offloaded the grading of written assignments to graduate students. This is certainly true of my own university where TAs in a number of high-profile disciplines are responsible for grading the majority of written assignments that undergraduates do within their respective majors.

In essence, the cross-curricular pollination that Chris Anson describes between tenured faculty in other disciplines and English graduate students has been replaced by an increasingly hermetic form of writing instruction in which (in the best-case

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scenario), the director of undergraduate studies trains TAs in undergraduate writing assessment in the genres appropriate to their particular discipline. While the quality of the training in writing assessment that TAs receive varies widely by institution and discipline, Falconer shows—in her case study of undergraduate biology courses—that "innovative approaches [to writing] *are* taking place" in the sciences (135). The question she leaves readers with is precisely what place the programs and literature of WAC/WID, with our unique pedagogies, might claim within these already robust fields of "innovative" disciplinary writing.

This brings us to our second question: How can WAC programs leverage disciplinary expertise to improve writing outcomes across a broad constituency of undergraduate and graduate writers at the university? Falconer indirectly points to the problem (i.e., faculty stakeholders will likely be reluctant to incorporate our pedagogies), but, like most WAC researchers, understands collaboration as a methodological problem (how can we "persuade" faculty stakeholders to want to incorporate our pedagogies), rather than a legitimate object of inquiry in its own right. To admit the simple truth that the majority of faculty in other disciplines view writing as someone else's problem to solve and will develop their own pedagogical approaches, which may be "innovative," but will also, oftentimes, exclude particular kinds of writing—low-stakes informal writing for example—that advance the acquisition of habits critical to the writing-to-learn model of pedagogy.

This points toward the innovation of Clemson's GWTA (Graduate Writing Teaching Assistants) initiative in leveraging the significant disciplinary expertise of nine graduate student TAs—four from mechanical engineering, three from PRTM (Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management), and two from English, to build sustaining relationships with the faculty in charge of training graduate TAs. In particular, we sought graduate students with both an interest in improving their own writing, which led us to include a significant number of international graduate students, and those with significant support from their discipline for advancing writing pedagogy.[2] In terms of WAC-program success, working primarily with graduate students, rather than faculty, has had numerous advantages. First and foremost, it capitalizes on the current reality of instruction at many large universities: increased numbers of graduate teaching assistants are responsible for undergraduate student work. This shift in

2. For the pilot year of our program we sought recommendations from program administrators in mechanical engineering, PRTM and English to identify graduate students for our program. We hope to move to an application process in future years. Additionally, we worked entirely with doctoral students—not out a particular strategic objective—but simply because the recommended students happened to be in doctoral programs in ME, PRTM and English. It might behoove us, in future iterations of this course, to work with more MA students, although at our institution, much of the teaching (save in some programs like English) is performed by doctoral candidates.

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workplace structure has also indelibly changed how universities *assess* undergraduate work—namely, and for our purposes, the written work of undergrads—by giving graduate students a larger role in the evaluation and grading of this work. Simply put, if graduate students in mechanical engineering at our institution, which is an important and well-funded major in the School of Engineering, are charged with the grading of undergraduate lab reports, it makes little sense to hold WAC workshops for ME professors at this particular juncture.[3]

In addition to the prosaic point that WAC administrators should work with those *actually* responsible for the evaluation and teaching of writing within the disciplines, graduate students make for desirable collaborators because of their unique status in the university. As Irene Ward and Merry Perry contend, graduate students often "walk a tightrope between several subject positions: student, teacher, and scholar" (119). For Ward and Perry, faculty needs to be cognizant of how the multiple metaphorical hats graduate students are asked to wear can lead to a dizzying and alienating academic experience. As an instructor and administrator four years removed from a PhD program, I certainly have empathy for graduate students—particularly when it comes to the paltry stipends they receive—but the multiplicity of the roles graduate students endure is a benefit, rather than liability, when it comes to WAC. (We must insist, lest there be any confusion, that any graduate student expending time to take a WAC course and/or work as a WID ambassador should receive an additional stipend. Our graduate student collaborators received $1,500 in additional monies in the form of a professional development fund, which could be used for books, conference expenses, and other items related to their education.) The sundry professional identities that graduate programs require of their students make them particularly adept in transferring and translating their disciplinary expertise into different institutional contexts of the university.

It is the multiplicity of the professional roles that graduate students play—scholar, teacher, student, colleague—that enables them to so successfully understand other disciplinary codes. The reason, for instance, that the graduate colleagues in our program were able to apply the teaching of templates to their own pedagogical toolbox—unlike, as Faculty X explained to me, who'd be reluctant to introduce templates because they "didn't want to spoon feed their students"—was precisely because they were open to reframing their writing instruction. It was not the case that we required them to follow our pedagogical methods, but rather that graduate students are more open, given their position in the academy, to incorporating and employing cross-disciplinary techniques

3. Again, we do not want to dismiss the faculty workshop model entirely, but merely point to some of its limitations, particularly at our university at the present time. As it will be shown below, faculty participation was a critical element of our program outside the conventional faculty workshop model.

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The Graduate Writing TA Program & Structure

Cameron Bushnell

Over the period of a one-year pilot program, we found that disciplinary graduate teaching assistants were excellent candidates for WAC instruction. As mentioned above, the GWTAs are at the center of a three-pronged network of undergraduates, faculty, and peers. The GWTA program was designed to maximize the GTAs medial positioning, structured around three main goals: (1) improving undergraduate writing through syllabi modifications that better prepared undergraduates for advanced coursework, capstones, and the workforce; (2) improving graduate writing and teaching in the disciplines through focus on writing as a process of learning, which had the added benefit of increasing consistency in teaching among fellow disciplinary TAs; and (3) assisting faculty by increasing departmental reputations in producing more accomplished writers among undergraduate and graduate populations.

The Overall GWTA Program Structure

The impetus for our program arose from an inheritance. Our university had been the site of a nationally recognized writing across the curriculum program, started by Art Young, an early proponent and initiator of the idea in the 1970s. Other scholars who have gone on to achieve great renown in the field complemented his work. After a period of low activity in the mid '00s, my predecessor began rebuilding a program through what had become two highly successful undergraduate intern programs in professional communication and in the writing center. Last year, Austin and I saw an opportunity to re-introduce WAC to our university through our large, teaching-active population of graduate teaching assistants.

The GWTA pilot program extended two semesters and revolved around a one-credit seminar each semester. The first semester involved instruction in theories and principles grounding writing, whether across the curriculum, in the disciplines, or in writing centers. It also required students to modify existing syllabi for the labs and courses the GWTAs taught to include more, and different kinds, of writing (specifically low-stakes writing and revision). The second semester involved practical application of those theories not only in their classrooms, but also in other venues; two major assignments focused on providing one-on-one "guest" writing instruction to peers seeking assistance at the university writing center and on preparing and delivering a "writing bootcamp" for the graduate school's professional development program. Evaluation of the pilot will be further discussed below.

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Improving Undergraduate Writing

The GWTA program addressed the first, and main, goal of increasing and improving undergraduate experience with writing in the initial realization of graduate students as a great, untapped resource on campus. Disciplinary graduate students, in particular, are already deeply involved in writing, teaching, and, even, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the process of teaching writing. Although we take for granted that English Department TAs teach writing, it is also true in other departments. The irony of GTAs ready involvement in teaching rests in a mistaken assumption by many faculty and administrators, who think that because TAs were accepted into competitive doctoral programs they also know how to write, teach, and even teach writing. Many GTAs find it embarrassing, if not impossible, to bring up the error given, in part, that much of the work that TAs do is critical, but nearly invisible, on campus.

Tanya K. Rodrigue argues in "The (In)Visible World of Teaching Assistants in the Disciplines" that TAs in doctoral programs, though assigned teaching responsibilities as part of their funding package, are often encouraged to prioritize research over teaching. Therefore, coupled with the fact that historically writing has often been considered less important than content in the disciplines, "the most challenging obstacles WAC administrators face are faculty resistance [. . .], and faculty disinterest" (2);[4] granting graduate students time to become better teachers is rarely a priority in graduate programs.[5] Rodrigue makes the case, however, that TAs are, despite the lack of recognition for it, already contributing to the teaching of writing by virtue of their multiple engagements with students. The work TAs do influences, directly and indirectly, undergraduate writing: from grading essays, discussing writing assignments, leading discussions, supervising laboratory and study sessions, and other interactions with students, graduate TAs already interact with students in ways that "relate to writing instruction."[6] This is the case, even though, as Rodrigue makes clear in her title (above), this contribution is not often noticed.

The GWTA program opened with a series of readings and discussions on WAC/WID principles and practices as encapsulated by the overarching goals of writing to learn and writing-to-demonstrate learning. The first half of the semester focused on tools that could be used directly with students—lessons in informal writing, grammar, organization, argument, revising, templates. At the crux of the first semester stood the Rubrics Assignment, which I will return to shortly. To conclude the first

4. Quote comes from the abstract.

5. Anecdotally, we often hear that various disciplines are aware of the importance of writing but are just not interested in taking on the task themselves. This potentially points to an opportunity for graduate TAs to fill a necessary but neglected, role.

6. Rodrigue, 2; cites: Strenski, Ellen. "Writing Across the Curriculum at Research Universities." N*ew Directions for Teaching and Learning*, vol. 36, 1988, pp. 31–41.

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semester, we discussed strategies more applicable to their own writing—summaries, literature reviews, introductions, conclusions, and visual tools.

The Rubrics Assignment (a general description of all the assignments from the first semester is included in Appendix 1) was planned as the marker of before and after in the semester plans and tasked our students to modify and explain each element of the rubric to be used in grading their undergraduate essays or lab reports. All our GWTAs were teaching courses that had existing, department-designed rubrics that had to be followed. Modifications to the rubrics were to accommodate additional writing, including informal writing and revision, both of which were nearly unrepresented in existing syllabi.[7] The GWTAs were asked to collect two papers prior to the Rubrics Assignment—one informal and one formal essay. These student papers were to demonstrate the existing, ground-level writing capabilities of their undergraduates. After the Rubrics Assignment, (and after they had presented several lessons on writing as an adjunct to the disciplinary subject matter and had emphasized writing by including it in the rubric), the GWTAs were asked to collect two additional papers, again one informal, one formal. The difference between these groups of essays—the before and after sets—was assessed at the end of the year (more on assessment below).

Improving Graduate Writing

Interestingly, one of the main obstacles to writing instruction for TAs (i.e., institutional priority for publishing [over teaching and writing]) motivated the GWTA program and provided means to achieve our second objective: improving graduate writing through the study of writing as a process. In other words, most TAs are not only frequently more engaged with undergraduates than the supervising faculty—interacting more frequently in discussions and conferences and reading more papers—but also they are thoroughly involved in learning to write well themselves. The multivalence of graduate student existence, to return to a much earlier point, lends itself to employing many pedagogical strategies and methods, for a multitude of purposes, simultaneously.

In short, the GWTA program capitalized on this doubled effort toward good writing. Taking as a starting point the WAC principle that writing is integral to learning and demonstrating learning, we designed the GWTA program to be a site where GTAs could become better writers by learning more effective ways to teach writing. A recent study confirmed the value of writing to improve teaching, and we suggest also the teaching of writing. Judith Hiller, working with UK university science

7. The exception, unsurprisingly, was for the Accelerated Composition classes taught by English MA students. Because the working practices for these freshmen English courses was different from other disciplinary classes, we have decided in the second pilot to omit English department participants.

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teachers-in-training, included in her education course a requirement for self-generated explanatory narratives of key concepts in conjunction with lesson planning. This relatively easy step greatly improved the teachers' ability to communicate crucial scientific concepts to their students. As Hiller states, "a process of writing narrative explanations of scientific phenomena [. . .] as part of a preservice teacher education course" revealed that "having coherent internal accounts to explain phenomena" was crucial to the new teachers' ability to transform subject knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge. In a mutually reinforcing strategy, writing for teaching purposes helped teachers grasp content through the effort to condense and synthesize concepts and resulted in more effective teaching practice. By logical extension, we suggest the act of writing narratives not only bolsters pedagogical content, but also improves facility with writing.

To this end, at various points throughout the first semester of our program, the GWTAs wrote one-page narratives that reflected both on the concepts in class and on how they had applied these concepts to their own writing (and writing instruction) in their particular subject areas. In the words of one student, and to their surprise, these narratives were immensely useful: actually "writing down what I was trying to explain in . . . like concept [sic] from engineering—helped me better understand my own thoughts . . . I think I could explain these ideas to students better too." Additionally, GWTAs commented at the end of the first semester, in final reflection essays, and in one-on-one exit interviews that their own writing improved as they thought about writing as a process and learned strategies for teaching writing. For example, several in the cohort noted that they benefited from learning about the writing genres and style conventions required in other disciplines. Others noted that in preparing for classroom low-stakes assignments, for introducing templates, and for one-on-one assistance to other graduate students, they learned strategies they could apply to their own work. And in a true vote of confidence in the GWTA program, one student suggested expansions to it, including offering a three-credit seminar and providing more opportunities to exchange their own writing for peer review.

Assisting Faculty

Finally, the GWTA program benefited from faculty support as the GWTA program proved valuable to faculty. We had the direct encouragement of faculty from all three departments that formed the first cohort—English, Mechanical Engineering, and PRTM—as evidenced by their recommendations of participants. Beyond this initial point, however, we were able to identify three distinct areas in which the GWTA program benefited faculty: (1) faculty participation in the seminar, (2) peer mentoring, and (3) dissertation preparation.

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One of the faculty members sponsoring graduate students was so enthused about the GWTA program that she decided to attend the fall seminar in which we discussed writing pedagogy and practice. Our program helped her continue her own parallel, departmental initiative set on improving the quality of writing and communication skills of her graduate students. Although I wondered about the dynamics of having a faculty auditor in the pilot program, all concerns were banished in the first session. This faculty member was a great asset to the class, sometimes asking more penetrating questions during the seminar because of her long experience teaching and sometimes answering questions from a different disciplinary view, in this case social science, than either of us could provide (both Austin and I have disciplinary backgrounds in English).

A second faculty member, who manages all the teaching assistant schedules for his department, held regular TA meetings, during which he invited the GWTAs from his department to share with their TA colleagues points that would assist them in adding writing components to their lesson plans. Peer mentorship meant that the GWTA program benefited supervising faculty by having a trickle-down effect among TAs not in the program. Because the Pearce Center provided professional development funds for each of the participants, the cohort was relatively small; therefore, the peer sharing was especially valuable in reaching a larger population of GTAs than we could support directly.

Finally, a third faculty member who had no students in the first GWTA cohort was particularly gratified in having GWTA one-on-one support for a second-language doctoral candidate finishing his dissertation. As part of the second-semester practical applications, we assigned our GWTAs to work with their graduate students in one-to-one writing center format. The faculty member was so pleased with the interaction on behalf of her doctoral student that she offered remuneration to the GWTA and the program from her departmental budget.

Reflecting on the First Year; Looking to the Second

At the end of the first year, we realize that seizing the opportunity to increase the level of teaching preparedness among graduate students also recognizes the structural reality of higher education in which GTAs will be supplementing a growing contingent workforce.[8] Working with this neglected, but pivotal, group of graduate teaching assistants provides the university an attractive resource for teaching writing

8. Rodrigue cites numbers from a June 2009 report from the US Department of Education, published by the American Federation of Teachers: "contingent labor, including TAs, has increased over the past ten years, while tenured and tenure-track faculty positions have plummeted" (5; qtd. in Rodrigue 2). A 2014 AAUP Annual Report gives more details about this trend; from 1976–2011, part-time faculty increased 286%; full-time, non-tenure track faculty increased 259%, and full time tenured and tenure-track faculty increased 23% (qtd. in

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for several, large and small, reasons. First, nationwide, graduate teaching assistants are key figures in university labs, teaching the majority of undergraduate courses.[9] Secondly, these teaching roles include not only work as graders or assistants, but also teachers of record, potentially influencing the quality of undergraduate education and the university reputation. Thirdly, even in a time of uncertainty for foreign students,[10] when according the Migration Policy Institute, "rising cost of U.S. higher education, student visa delays and denials, and an environment increasingly marked by rhetoric and policies that make life more difficult for immigrants,"[11] our university has continued to consistently attract well over two hundred new international graduate students per year for the past ten years. A program like GWTA can potentially benefit second-language teachers by helping them improve their competency in English and by focusing on teaching writing.

As shown in Figure 1, the first pilot year proved successful. Undergraduates improved in writing skills, as measured across five factors, including purpose, organization, analysis, research support, and design on both formal and informal assignments. The chart measures the improvement of undergraduate writing from papers collected after the Writing Design Assignment (see: Appendix) was implemented. While Graduate Student 1, 3, 6 and 7 showed consistent (even remarkable) improvement across our five factors, the dip in quality for Graduate Students 2 and 5 stands out as well. (It should be noted that our analysis was performed with the assistance of two PhD candidates from Rhetoric and Composition. We collated our assessment data and had a statistical margin of difference in evaluations of less than .05). The lack of improvement in G2 and G5 was mostly on the informal writing assignments, which leads us to conclude that cross-disciplinary biases about the usefulness of informal writing may have been a factor. We are examining ways to address this going forward. Overall, however, from our undergraduate papers (we had adequate data from six GWTAs) five of the seven showed improvements from 4–13% across all factors.

Champlin and Knoedler 2). Also see: pages 5–6 on the increased role of graduate students as instructors.

9. Gardner and Jones note: "Undergraduate teaching at research universities often rests solidly on the backs of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who teach large portions of the introductory curriculum" (31)..

10. The Migration Policy Institute reports: "the U.S. share of globally mobile students dropped from 28 percent in 2001 to 24 percent in 2017, while the overall number of international students more than doubled in the same period. In school year (SY) 2016–17, international enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities increased 3 percent from the prior year, the slowest growth rate since 2009–10. A total of 291,000 new international students enrolled at U.S. institutions in SY 2016–17, about 10,000 fewer than in SY 2015–16." (See Zong and Batalova.).

11. Ibid.

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Figure 1.

Given the benefits of the GWTA for GTA populations on campus, we plan a second pilot. For the second year, we are seeking to increase the number of departments that participate. We hope to include graduate students from two or three of the following programs: biology, business, educational leadership, and industrial engineering. To broaden our reach, we are seeking funding from the campus diversity office and from the departments themselves. Diversity participants would assist us in broadening the range of writing concerns to include more in-depth conversations on audience awareness and expectations. We also plan to deepen our involvement with the graduate school, not only preparing oral presentations for delivery within the graduate professional development program, but also establishing an archive of taped presentations, further developing the peer mentor program we began this year. Finally, we seek institutional recognition of the GWTA program by increasing the interaction with classrooms beyond those that the GWTAs manage, by establishing a web page, and by seeking publicity for GWTA program activities.

Our broader mission to reinvigorate our university's WAC program will only be attained if faculty from other disciplines take notice of our achievements in improving student writing at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The dire note rung in the first pages of this essay regarding recent faculty disinterest in WAC initiatives should not be taken to mean that faculty needs to be withdrawn from WAC, but rather that we might imagine new ways of engaging and encouraging faculty to participate in our programs by proxy. A "stealth WAC" program, in other words, does not mean—at least in the way we borrow the phrase—an invisible WAC program. What we hope is that, in shining a light on the "invisible" world of TAs in the disciplines, and making graduate students the centerpiece of our program, university departments will have a greater appreciation for their students as communicative experts in their discipline.

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Anticipating the argument that utilizing graduate students in this capacity will only further their exploitation and liminal status, we submit the following: graduate students are already tasked with the bulk of teaching in many disciplines across our university. Not acknowledging this fact will only further alienate students, particularly international students, by failing to offer them proper pedagogical training. Anecdotally, we know of many graduate students who, thrust into the classroom during their first year of graduate school, are frankly terrified by the prospect of teaching. Our program aims to lessen graduate student apprehension, offer them additional monies to supplement their stipends, and improve their own research writing in the process.

Our second pilot year will build on the momentum we have already established. As mentioned above; our GTAs are already assisting faculty in designing and implementing undergraduate writing curriculum. The expansion of this program will mean that graduate students will play an outsized administrative role in their disciplines and receive greater recognition as teaching assistants. The benefits of our initiative for undergraduate students and WAC seem self-evident to us at this point. We look forward to letting our programs evolve and adapt to encourage the culture we are working to create: a reciprocal give-and-take between WAC programs and GTAs that builds support for writing from a not-quite-so-invisible middle.

Note

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Appendix: Assignments from the GWTA Course

Writing Assignment Design (WAD)

This paper has three components: 1) identify an assignment of focus for this "design" project; this can be an assignment already scheduled in the syllabus (lab report, essay, project) 2) develop a rubric that adheres to your particular disciplinary conventions, while acknowledging the broader goals of improving undergraduate student writing that we have discussed on in class, and 3) explain how and why you've chosen to focus on these particular aspects of writing and how you expect your students to achieve mastery within the context of your rubric. For example, you may have a "Conclusion" section in your rubric worth 10% of student's total grade on this assignment. But, more importantly, how will you explain what a section that works as a conclusion is supposed to accomplish? Will you offer examples? Will you suggest certain templates? Why do you think these will be successful? 25 Points (25% of Final Grade)

Presentations

Over the course of the final two class periods, we will ask you to show how you implemented your Writing Assignment (see above) and discuss the results. What were your students struggling with in their writing initially? What did you want them to accomplish? How did your rubric address these particular struggles? What were the results? Where did you see the greatest improvement? In what areas do they continue to need improvement. The presentations will take the form of 5-10 minute Powerpoint presentation. 20 Points (20% of Final Grade)

Analysis

In lieu of a final, due during finals week and using two sets of collected papers from your undergraduate students (one early, one in response to the WAD, above), identify 3-4 students from each class that exemplify progress in their writing over the term. Compare their two papers, noting 1) what changed from paper 1 to paper 2, 2) why, in your estimation, are these changes significant, and 3) what is your conclusion about your WAC/WID efforts from this representative sampling. 15 points (15% of Final Grade)

Evaluation

At the end of the semester, write a 2-page evaluation of what you learned from the course. Furthermore, discuss how you have applied the writing concepts and lessons

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to your own respective courses. This paper should be written in narrative form. 10 points (10% of Final Grade)

The chart below shows one possibility for arranging your data.

Student A	Paper 1 Analysis	Paper 2 Analysis	Significance
Student B			
Student C			
Conclusion (This conclusion should be an analytical reflection on the results demonstrated by your student papers and your thoughts on the effectiveness of the WAC/WID teaching methods.)			