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Redirecting the Winds of Change:
Transformative Possibilities in Cross-Curricular Literacy Projects

At it's core, Writing Across the Curriculum is about change--change in how students and teachers understand writing, teaching, and learning; change in curriculum; change in pedagogy; change in institutional structures and ideologies that devalue writing; change in funding and assessment procedures, and so on. Because the *idea* of change is at the center of WAC scholarship and practice, those of us involved in cross-curricular literacy work must attend carefully to specific visions for change and their consequences. Failing to articulate and critically reflect on our expectations for change can lead to conflicting objectives as well as miscommunication about roles and responsibilities for writing specialists and disciplinary content experts involved in WAC/WID efforts. Drawing on the sophisticated notion of pedagogy forwarded in Composition Studies, I propose a pedagogical view of change that sponsors collaborative

inquiry and reflection as necessary components of meaningful change. [This view resonates with the Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC) models Pamela Flash and her colleagues have described here at the conference as well as other departmentally localized models Chris Anson outlined in his keynote address.] I then offer a heuristic tool to help participants in cross-curricular literacy efforts embrace change as a pedagogical activity.

When it comes to "change" the following questions are at the heart of WAC/WID initiatives (slide 2): *When is change needed? Who or what should change as a result of Cross-Curricular Literacy (CCL) efforts? How should change be initiated and worked toward? Who should decide the purpose(s) of change and evaluate the outcomes?* Over time, those involved in the WAC movement have answered these questions differently according to historical, social, political, and institutional contexts. Our answers shape and are shaped by relationships among writing specialists and disciplinary content experts involved in WAC work (Slide 3). This table traces approaches to cross-curricular relationships over time, and highlights views of change inherent in each relationship.

During early stages of the movement, "missionary" approaches to cross-curricular literacy (or CCL) work focused on changing disciplinary faculty through conversion experiences during WAC workshops. In response, stage-two scholars including David Russell and Charles Bazerman encouraged an anthropological approach in which writing specialists conducted disciplinary rhetoric research. Too often findings are used EITHER to better persuade disciplinary colleagues to adopt WAC strategies OR to better accommodate disciplinary needs by changing our approaches to teaching and writing. In an attempt to "mediat[e] between the binary of 'missionary' and 'accommodationist,'" methods Donna LeCourt promots a third, critical, stage of WAC in which writing specialists are transformative intellectuals who either convert disciplinary faculty to critical pedagogy (re-inscribing missionary relationships) or avoid missionary models by working only with faculty who already embrace critical aims (limiting the reach of WAC efforts)

Several assumptions about change underlie these traditional, often limited, relationships (Slide 4). First, as WAC veteran Toby Fulwiler points

out, WAC calls for large scale changes in the role of language in learning, relationships between students and teachers in the classroom, interactions among faculty across disciplines, and the nature of the academy itself ("Quiet" 179). Such revolutionary goals can lead to conflicts with disciplinary faculty who want to improve student writing without radically altering their core perceptions of the academic world. Second, as when pursue what Susan McLeod calls "educational revolution at the university level," writing specialists can end up embracing change that moves in one direction only—we convert disciplinary faculty, or change our goals and practices to accommodate them. Third, we often assume meaningful change must be visible and measureable—statistically higher writing grades, radical revision of disciplinary writing curriculum, dramatic faculty transformation and the like. Moreover, common relationships frame change as a result of the application of writing knowledge in disciplinary contexts. Lastly, traditional approaches to WAC can generalize change as improved student writing without consciously articulating or negotiating just what that objective entails.

We can see how these assumptions emerge from and shape relationships between writing specialists and faculty in other disciplines. In order to revise potentially unproductive views of change we need a different way to understand relationships between writing specialists and disciplinary content experts, one that fleshes out and sponsors more productive forms of change. (Slide 5)

In what follows, I explore pedagogy as a way to reconceptualize WAC/WID relationships and the change they inspire. I draw on Chris Gallagher and others in Composition Studies who understand pedagogy as "the reflexive inquiry that teachers and learners undertake together" (Gallagher xvi). Unlike traditional views of pedagogy as transmitted by teachers to students in classrooms, pedagogy, for Gallagher, is what happens anytime learners (of all kinds) participate in "shared knowledge building" (xvi). Pedagogy is the process and product of creative, collaborative interaction among participants who are simultaneously teachers and learners. Importantly for the purposes of this paper,

pedagogical relationships inspire more productive approaches to change. (Click to add first bullet.)

First, *pedagogy values and sponsors small-scale, incremental change* that takes place through interaction among teacher-learners, subject matter, and context. As opposed to traditional approaches that seek revolutionary systemic change through radical individual conversion, pedagogical change embraces Donna Qualley's notion of reflexivity, a process that happens recursively, in degrees. Sweeping faculty up in a wave of dramatic conversion can prevent them from fully processing and understanding the changes they make. Conversely, reflexive thinking invites faculty to linger in new ideas so change can happen slowly and purposefully.

Second, (click to add second bullet) *pedagogical change is multidirectional.* In *Writing/Teaching: Essays Toward a Rhetoric of Pedagogy*, Paul Kameen foregrounds the teacher's side of what he calls the "transformative equation of pedagogy," urging teachers to recognize how we learn and change as a result of pedagogical engagement (32). I go a step further and

suggest that teachers and learners alternate between or even simultaneously occupy both sides of the equation, undergoing changing even as we change others through interaction.

Third, (click to add third bullet) *pedagogical change isn't always concrete or measurable*. It may not even feel or look like change at all. For example, experienced writing consultant George Kalamaras urges WAC/WID participants to "value potential change, rooted in the interplay of apparent contradictions, as a generative chaos" (10). Change doesn't have to manifest itself as full conversion or consensus. We might learn to appreciate difficult conversations that happen when writing specialists and disciplinary content experts disagree or experience conflicting values. In other words, there is promise in what Kalamaras calls the "tenuousness" of change (10) if we determine to recognize and embrace it.

Fourth, (click to add fourth bullet) *pedagogical change results from collaborative creation of new knowledge*. Because learning is at the heart of pedagogy, change happens when teacher-learners create new knowledge

together. Grounded in reflexivity, pedagogical change in Qualley's words "attempt[s] to move beyond the bounds of…current understanding by making repeated, dialogic excursions into the realm of the other, and then spiraling back once again to confront [one's] own provisional insights" (6). That is, meaningful change doesn't happen because writing specialists apply our knowledge in a disciplinary context or provide techniques for transmitting disciplinary content. It happens when all participants understand our knowledge and experiences differently as a result of interactions with one another and revise our responses to future situations based on new insights.

Finally, (click to add final bullet) *pedagogical change is collaboratively defined and interrogated.* In order to realize the change I've described here, participants in WAC/WID initiatives can't pursue vague notions of "change-for-the-better" in the form of "improved student writing." We must work together to articulate our visions for change and examine where those visions come from. Pedagogical relationships put the very notion of change on the table for exploration and interrogation.

Given this view of pedagogical change I offer a heuristic tool for facilitating pedagogical change in WAC/WID contexts. The heuristic takes the form of a question matrix designed to sponsor the reflection and inquiry necessary for meaningful change. (Slide 6) Here is a graphic representation of how the matrix functions to support pedagogical change as writing specialists and disciplinary content experts collaborate on cross-curricular literacy projects.

I'll use a hypothetical CCL project (which is a composite of actual experience and imagined possibilities) to illustrate the heuristic's potential to scaffold pedagogical change. Suppose I am a graduate student in composition and rhetoric invited by the Chair of the Biology Department, Professor Glenn, to develop a writing component for a first-year honors seminar for nonmajors and to co-direct the course with him. How might the heuristic guide Professor Glenn and I to interact pedagogically and embrace change reflexively?

To begin, the heuristic is organized according to key moments in the trajectory of our project—represented by the three main spirals or loops

(point to slide 6). For each moment, the matrix provides questions grouped according to three cornerstones of pedagogical activity—participants, subject matter and context—represented by the pinwheels embedded in each spiral. Participant questions invite Professor Glenn and I to consider our personal/professional circumstances and identity characteristics. How will the fact that I am a young female graduate student working with an established, male, tenured department chair, influence our relationship and how we pursue change? Will Professor Glenn's responsibility to care for his ailing mother affect the role he is able to play in our project?

Subject matter questions deal with the project itself, the work at the heart of the collaboration. In my hypothetical case, subject matter questions would prompt Professor Glenn and I to consider what we know about writing, biology, and their integration in the context of our honors seminar. We could reflect on our expectations for the project and anticipate how they might shift over time. Lastly, context questions concentrate on contextual forces—institutional structures, dominant discourses, departmental or programmatic relationships, etc.— that shape

interpersonal interactions. Professor Glenn and I might ponder what difference it makes that our work is not sponsored by an official WAC program on campus or how his choice to work with me instead of participating in a new WID initiative headed by a tenured faculty member in composition and rhetoric might shape our project. In short, we consider how contextual circumstances contribute to our perceptions and pursuit of change.

Specific questions in each of these areas--participants, subject matter, and context—are designed according to key moments in the project. For instance, before the project begins, questions in the self-inventory category (spiral 1 in slide 6) establish a foundation for reflexivity and future negotiation of expertise. They lead Professor Glenn and I to unearth hidden assumptions and anticipate future ramifications of initial conditions. Following our initial self-inventory, we would explore collaborative inquiry questions (spiral 2 in slide 6) throughout our semester long project as a way to actively negotiate expertise and engage in cooperative knowledge production. We might ask "What are we learning

about each other as our project evolves?" and "How can we work within and against constraints such as lack of official administrative support?" Ideally, these questions would allow us to take stock of progress toward our goals, track evolving beliefs, and evaluate the overall development of our relationship. Collaborative Inquiry questions are important because they encourage metacognitive awareness during the project when (ideally) participants can still alter processes, behaviors, or expectations.

At the end of the semester, Professor Glenn and I would explore the final set of questions (represented in the third spiral on slide 6). Inspired in part by Anne Beaufort's questions "to facilitate positive transfer of learning," this group of questions asks us to articulate how we've learned (individually and collectively) from our interdisciplinary collaboration (182). They emphasize the importance of knowledge production (rather than translation or application) as an outcome of pedagogical activity. By asking questions such as "What new knowledge have we gained and how does it relate to what we thought we knew about writing, biology, and/or the act of collaborating across disciplines?" Professor Glenn and I not only

come to understand the integration of writing and disciplinary content more deeply, but also generate important insights about processes of interdisciplinary work.

While the heuristic recognizes the importance of inquiry and reflection during key moments, it is designed to function recursively not just chronologically. Professor Glenn and I planned our project in advance, so we were able to move through each moment, but participants can enter the process at any time. If Professor Glenn had asked me on Monday to visit his Tuesday class one time to talk about writing, we might not have had a chance to take self-inventories or explore collaborative inquiry questions, but we could certainly reflect carefully on our experience and how it should inform future projects. Sometimes not all project participants will be willing or able to engage in the reflective process of pedagogical change. Therefore, the questions are designed so that writing specialists or disciplinary content experts can explore them alone or together. Finally, the circle in the center (point to slide 6) indicates how action both informs and is informed by reflection in each moment.

Importantly, the spirals within the trajectory of a single CCL project are part of a larger series of spirals reaching off into the past and future. Embedded spirals indicate the simultaneous act of looking back and moving forward during each moment, throughout a particular project, and across projects over time. In this way the heuristic embodies the recursive motion of pedagogical activity where learning, reflection, and change are ongoing, integrated processes.

As we've seen, change is at the heart of WAC theory and praxis. As Chris Anson reminded us during his talk yesterday, all involved in WAC work are agents of change. Approaching cross-curricular collaborations as pedagogical activity can help us foreground the complexity and possibility of meaningful change.

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