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POLYLOG: ARE WRITING CENTER DIRECTORS WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS?

A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in co-operative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to views transcending the limitations of each.

Kenneth Burke,
“Rhetoric —Old and New”

INTRODUCTION: IN WHICH WE ASSUME SOME POSITIONS

As Composition Studies has grown as a discipline over the last quarter century, the field has wrestled with defining and naming disciplinary expertise and professional positions. At first glance, issues of naming may not appear worthy of debate, and so whether an individual writing center director identifies as a writing program administrator may seem of little disciplinary import. Yet, as we work at the institutional level on hiring as well as on promotion and tenure committees, and engage in disciplinary debates at the national level, we also implicitly work to determine who “really is” a compositionist, a rhetorician, and/or a writing program administrator. Ambiguity in these definitions can lead to elisions and, as Valerie Balester observed in her 1992 response to the “CCC Statement on Principles and Standards,” such omissions can be particularly troubling for the unnamed, for “[o]ne might argue that *writing centers* and *writing assistants* (or *tutors*) are implied . . . but, considering the history of writing centers and their longstanding battle to receive recognition within English, even within Composition Studies, implication is just not good enough” (167, emphasis original). Therefore, the seemingly trivial matter of naming raises questions of credentialing, working conditions, and professional authority.

Reflecting the field's concern with these issues, over the last two years, the authors of this essay have gathered at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the International Writing Center Association conference and the conference of the Council of Writing Program Administrators to discuss these matters in panels, workshops and roundtable sessions.¹ As former and current writing center directors (WCDs), our focus began with the complications of this particular administrative position within shifting disciplinary and institutional landscapes. However, as former and current writing teachers and as WPAs of other kinds of programs—including WAC, FYC, and some admixture of the three—we have come to see that our questions about the professionalization of writing center work are entangled more broadly with other kinds of WPA work. Indeed, we view our discussions as relevant to all teachers and students of writing, for the relations among these programs—writing centers, WAC programs, as well as those curricular-based programs in first-year and advanced writing—affect not only how we all teach writing to undergraduates but also affect how we help new teachers and administrators situate themselves in writing programs.

As Mark Waldo pointed out sixteen years ago in his answer to the question “What Should the Relationship between the Writing Center and Program Be?” the connections among an institution's writing programs have broad pedagogical ramifications for the ways its students understand writing. If, for example, the writing center remediates grammatical errors while the curricular-based writing programs emphasize writing as inquiry, then students are caught between conflicting visions of the writing process: the rhetorical process of the writing program and the mechanical process of the writing center. Likewise, if the authority and expertise of the writing center director draws on a body of knowledge distinct from that of the composition program director, pedagogical conflicts may emerge from the conflicting paradigms, hindering the efforts of writers and teachers in both settings.

Such issues of disciplinary naming are also immediately important to the individuals who inhabit these administrative positions. Often, naming is at the expense of the writing center director. Nearly twenty years ago, Gary A. Olson and Evelyn Ashton-Jones conducted a study and concluded that writing center directors were not viewed as a WPAs in the best sense of the term, because “freshman English directors” were likely to “view the writing center director . . . not as a teacher, scholar, or even a writing specialist” (20). More recently, in a 2001 study Valerie Balester and James C. McDonald found that “writing program directors generally have higher qualifications in rhetoric and composition than writing center directors” (63) and, overall, that their study evidence “strongly suggests that institutions tend to grant writing program directors more status than writing center directors, often significantly more” (70). The similarity between the Olson/Ashton-Jones and the Balester/McDonald studies underscores a longstanding problem in the professional definition of writing center directors: their status is inferior, relative to their composition program counterparts. Attention to the

administrative status of writing center directors thus not only draws the critical gaze to the pedagogical ramifications of positioning and credentialing writing center directors as WPAs, but also brings attention to the manner in which WCDs have long occupied lesser institutional roles.

While the directors of composition programs and writing centers may frequently find themselves in a binary where the former position is privileged over the latter, there nevertheless seems to be scholarly ambiguity concerning the precise relationships of these two roles, and whether writing center directors are, in fact, WPAs. A cursory survey of the scholarship in this area suggests that such is the case: Both the Olson/Ashton-Jones and Balester/McDonald studies refer to writing center directors as WPAs and, in the more recent “Writing Centers, Writing Programs and WPAs: Roles by Any Other Names?” (2002), Carol Peterson Haviland and Denise Stephenson describe the “WPA roles that writing center directors play” (377). A closer examination, however, reveals the ambiguities that plague both titles and, by extension, the general difficulties resulting from positioning the writing center director in relation to other WPAs. Olson and Ashton-Jones, for example, designate both the writing center director and the “freshman English director—those who on most campuses direct the overall writing program, or at least its largest component” as writing program administrators (19). Such an equivalency would seem to bode well for the status of the WCD, yet Olson and Ashton-Jones go on to suggest that, for their study participants, “administrator” was far from an encomium of equality. As they contend:

Because the role of center director varies from institution to institution, the respondents’ perceptions were not always unanimous; nevertheless, several clear patterns emerged in their responses. Overall, what we found is that freshman English directors are more likely to view the writing center director as simply an administrator. (20)

Here, the writing center director may be a WPA in the sense that she oversees the bureaucratic matters of a writing program, but this administrative work appears strictly instrumental, not involving the expertise of the “teacher,” “scholar,” or “writing specialist” (20). Thus, the writing program director may be a WPA, but the word “administrator” itself appears diminished by its association with the WCD.

Balester and McDonald similarly claim the term “WPA” for WCDs even while shifting the definitional ambiguity away from the general signifier “WPA” and onto one of its constituent parts. Here, as in the Olson/Ashton-Jones study, WPA is clearly the master term that encompasses writing center directors (WCDs) as well as other administrators, yet “writing program director”—the term that here names non-writing center WPAs—implies that writing centers are not programs, thus reestablishing an implied hierarchy: all directors of writing centers and composition programs may be writing program administrators, yet paradoxically only some of these so-called WPAs actually run writing programs. Here, then, we see replicated the unnamed yet distinct differentiation of a writing program (and, by extension, its administrator) and a writing center (and, by exten-

sion, its administrator) first in seen in Olson/Ashton-Jones. Such unstated fluidity in terminology makes it difficult to position the WCD in relation to other WPAs, for it commits the elision Balester critiques elsewhere. Accordingly, for purposes of this essay, we follow Olson and Ashton-Jones, Balester and McDonald, and Haviland and Stephenson by naming WCDs as WPAs and so ultimately answer the eponymous question of this polylog in the affirmative. However, we attempt to mitigate any slippage in terms by designating non-WCD WPAs as “directors of curricular-based programs,” thus defining WPAs not by distinguishing among definitions of “program” or “administrator,” but rather through the curricular location of the writing center and other writing programs.

During our conversations, represented below, we have considered, discussed, researched and debated the question that provides this essay’s title: “Are writing center directors WPAs?” and identified a spectrum of opinions on questions of administrative expertise. None of us fully commits to any single position on the spectrum (nor do we allege that any administrators cited below does so), yet we find that defining these positions helps us outline historical narratives, analyze disciplinary debates, and forecast the possibilities for our professional futures. Thus, we outline these positions broadly before moving to the individual voices of the polylog.

At one end of the disciplinary expertise spectrum is the model we name the “Universal Professional,” which defines WPAs by credentials clearly recognized in the academic universe, that is, Composition Ph.D.s with relevant coursework, experience and mentoring in administrative matters. Such a model assumes that WCDs and administrators of the curriculum-based writing programs are all WPAs and so would share considerable overlap in their theoretical training and experiential backgrounds—such as the “universal” professional knowledge certified by Ph.D. programs. However, each position would also require an additional subset of specialized knowledge about writing centers or other curriculum-based writing programs. Viewed from this perspective, extant histories of Composition Studies teach us that scholarly identity is the path to agency in the academy; the rise of composition as a field, after all, is marked by the rise of composition research. So too, this perspective describes the present state of writing center studies as one of disarray, where the lack of professional certifications for writing centers directors makes it difficult for specialists in this area to claim parity with other areas of academic expertise. In this model, the best future plan for the continued growth of writing center studies lies with the new generation of writing professionals who will move beyond lore by applying research methods to our experiential knowledge of writing centers and help us see the writing center through new lenses. Aligning with this view of the writing center professional is the perennial “Call to Research” described by Alice Gillam in her study of early essays about writing center research:

The strongest calls in rhetorical terms are those that urge writing center professionals to conduct research that will prove the

intellectual worth of writing center work in the eyes of others. In short, these early calls send the sometimes subtle, sometimes not so subtle, message that the research that counts most in our developing field is either that which contributes to larger domains of inquiry, specifically to composition studies, or that which resembles the scholarship in this field enough to garner respect. (6)

Such an approach, then, pushes for writing center administrators to professionalize by aligning their interests with teacher-scholars outside the center, most often those in Composition Studies. This model of the writing center director assumes the full academic panoply: a terminal degree, an active research agenda, and an engagement in a recognized academic field.

Sharing some the goals of the “Universal Professional,” is the model we term the “Local Professional,” which argues that individual context rather than the disciplinary standards of Composition Studies provides the best route to WPA preparation and success. Rather than investing their identities in the national scene, writing center directors should be local professionals. Such a model assumes that WCDs should understand the best practices circulating in the field, but more importantly, they should have the professional ability to understand their individual contexts. In “Solutions and Trade-Offs in Writing Center Administration,” Muriel Harris articulates such a position:

Writing center administration, a highly complex task as is, has an added complication in that so many new directors plunge in with an almost total lack of preparation. . . . [Experienced WCDs] share our knowledge, our experience and our handouts with newcomers, but we may inadvertently be passing along a message that we don’t intend to distribute—that there is a “right” way to structure a writing center. . . . Even the guidelines worked out every week by more experienced writing center administrators cannot be removed from a variety of contexts and compromises As long as we . . . keep in mind that there are no simple answers, we will remember to file away what we hear as we think about whether it will work for us in our centers. (155-56)

Here, WCD expertise is founded on practical experience, and attention to individual context is paramount. As opposed to the full faith in specialization seen in the previous paradigm, history viewed from this perspective teaches us that the most successful WPAs (including WCDs) of the previous generation grew organically out of their contexts, learned from firsthand experience, and weren’t incubated in a graduate program and then dropped into a writing center or writing program. This perspective also changes our understanding of history: the “Local Professional” stance assumes that any threat posed to disciplinary identity in writing center studies, for example, only impacts the national level where the tensions created by the centrifugal forces of professionalization competing with centrip-

etal forces of determined amateurism are made manifest. The WPA's best bet for a productive future lies in investing in her campus, not in chasing butterflies of disciplinary specialization, as in the Universal Professional model, or mulishly refusing to deal with institutional discourses.

Such so-called mulishness has its proponents, however, for at the other end of the spectrum from the "Universal Professional" model is the "Administrative Iconoclast" model. This position assumes that the primary value of all writing instruction is its attention to the individual—individual students, individual campuses, and individual writing centers. At its extreme, the performer of such a position rejects affiliation not just with other fields of writing studies but with its own institution's priorities. Whether such a critique focuses on writing center studies, such as Terrance Riley's polemic against its professionalization, or encompasses curricular-based programs, such as James Sledd's repeated censuring of the "Boss Compositionist," this position argues that writing program administrators are not only *not* part of Composition Studies, but that they shouldn't want to be—for such specialization is just another effete, pedigreed discourse that devalues the individualism at the foundation of ethical writing instruction. By extension, the ethical WPA (including the WCD) should avoid disciplinarity to resist the normalizing forces of the punishment-and-reward system of modern universities, where prestige—the badge of which is tenure—is most often attached to traditional notions of research and group instruction, not service and individualized instruction.

Unlike the definitional context provided by the institution in the "Local Professional" model, the notion of professionalization in the "Administrative Iconoclast" model is defined solely within the context of an individual administrator's work and focuses on how well she mentors teachers, peer tutors and student writers, not on her graduate degrees or whether she has read every issue of *Composition Studies*, *WPA* or *The Writing Center Journal*. From this perspective, history teaches us that disciplinary formation dilutes the transformative power and egalitarian sense of community seen in, for example, early CCCC conferences. Present disciplinary anxieties in writing center studies are therefore the results of hyper-professionalization and the attempt to turn away from a service orientation. Riley aptly summarizes this position when predicting "The Unpromising Future of Writing Centers":

Fall out of love with permanence; embrace transience. Stake your reputation on service rather than on publication. Acknowledge that directing a writing center does not involve the kind of difficulty for which advanced degree preparation is necessary. . . . If we want to offer an alternative to mass education, we must reject its mythology of expertise and permanence. Our energy at present derives from what we have left of happy amateurism. . . . If we find a way of publicly rejoicing in our impermanence, we may preserve

the energy and the purpose. If not, we certainly will become, like everyone else, introverted and disciplinary. (31-32)

Here, then, the future is grim, but our best hope is in the hands of those individuals who aren't going to focus on personal professional advancement either on the local campus or on the national scene.

We offer each of these admittedly reductive administrative models as a beginning, not an end, to the conversation; indeed, we see these positions not as a definitive summary of administrative approaches but as our means of entry into a complex set of issues. Like the voices in the polylog that follows, employing this multi-perspectival analysis allows us to bring competing discourses of professionalism into contact, a contact that might spur useful change. There are, of course, many finer points that might be placed on this roughly-hewn outline. In the individual analyses that follow, we reflect upon and critique this taxonomy to better understand what it means to position writing center directors as WPAs.

POLYLOG: IN WHICH WE STAKE OUR CLAIMS

GLAMOUR DAYS

Mary Wislocki, *Seton Hall University*

In 1990, Waldo asked the question, "What Should the Relationship Between the Writing Center and the Writing Program Be?" and considered two answers. First is the "commonplace" point of view held by English Departments that writing centers are "subservient" to writing programs (73). Of course, Waldo advocates for a second possibility, a vision in which both writing center and writing program are "equal and complementary," working together as a "powerful union" (73). Using his experience as a case in point, Waldo demonstrates that the work of a WCD can be similar enough to a curriculum-based WPA that the positions are essentially interchangeable. When Waldo leaves his center after successfully implementing its new and ambitious WAC mission, the resident WPA secures the job for himself. Waldo explains that his cross-curricular position garners a great deal of prestige and visibility for the center, and it is much more interesting than the curriculum-based position. But achieving equity and a relationship of "purposeful bonding" (75) between center and program are complex endeavors, and Waldo takes great care to discuss the necessary safeguards that must be in place, including the creation of tenure-track positions and the development of progressive writing center missions.

Sixteen years later, Waldo's achievements with his center and the writing program still impress. His analysis of the ill-conceived job descriptions for WCDs that require minimal expertise or training and centers that function as "grammar garages" (77) is still relevant and is a painful reminder of our slow progress. But I confess that I lack Waldo's enthusiasm at the prospect of writing center bonding

to writing program, director to director. Do WCDs believe the solution to their problems is to aspire to an identity as a WPA in a symbiotic relationship with another WPA? It seems to me that there are at least two good reasons why WCDs should be wary of aligning themselves too closely to curriculum-based administrative models: first, the fluidity of institutional configurations and, second, the divergent goals of writing centers and curriculum-based writing programs. While we can all learn from the example of Waldo's inspiring achievements directing a center, tracking the evolution of a center in relation to a writing program over a longer period will inevitably complicate his lessons and suggest new ones. The history of New York University's writing program and writing center is my own case in point.

NYU's Expository Writing Program (EWP) and writing center began operations in the fall of 1980; since then, the EWP has been restructured twice. The first WPA was hired from Yale as a full professor in the English department. By all accounts, she negotiated a cutting-edge, high-powered writing program that included a writing center. She hired two other administrators: Cy Knoblauch, the associate WPA, also on a tenure-track line in English, and Lil Brannon, the WCD, who was on a joint tenure-track line in English Education and English. A colleague recalled that Brannon's dual appointment was a "tricky, tricky position" and said that the WPA's first choice for WCD had "sort of chickened out" and declined the offer as a result (Pradl 6).²

At first, the EWP writing center exemplified the Universal Professional model. Although Brannon's dissertation was in literature, she had coursework and training in composition, which was thought to be the prudent thing to do in those days (2). Brannon said, "[The WPA] wanted someone to direct [the center] who had a vision . . . and [she] never got in my way" (7). Forging ahead, Brannon persuaded her colleagues that writing center consultants should be "exceptional teachers, those already demonstrating superior performance in the EWP" (Brannon, "Memo" n.p.) and she labored tirelessly to make the center into a "writing community" (Brannon, "Personal Interview" 7) that would work with faculty members as well as students from across the university. During these years, Brannon wrote grants, many articles, and a book; she and Stephen North founded and co-edited *The Writing Center Journal*. In addition, Brannon developed and directed the basic writing program for students who failed the writing proficiency exam. In Brannon's eyes, she had proved herself more than equal to the WPA. She wrote to the English Department Chair, "As I told you in our telephone conversation, I have always felt that I had more to do than the other two directors combined" ("Memo" n.p.).

But EWP relations with the English Department were difficult. By 1985, all three were gone. The WPA was the first to go. Brannon said, "I realized how fragile it was when [she] left NYU" (7). Brannon felt "embattled" (Brannon, "Personal Interview" 23), in part because the new English Department Chair pressured her "to get serious" and "to become the William Safire of NYU" (7).

She recalled that he wanted her “to get a little rubber stamp that [had] ‘awk’ and ‘frag’ and ‘spell’” on it and to teach faculty how to use it so that they could, in turn, teach students “how to get their grammar right” (7-8). She successfully resisted the effort to make the center into the “grammar garage” Waldo critiques and stayed until she won tenure. But Knoblauch was less fortunate. When Brannon and Knoblauch left, the English department reconsidered its commitments and decided that only the course-based administrative position would be tenure-track. As Brannon’s colleague explained to me, “Well, basically . . . the glamour days of both the University and the English Department having anything to do with composition were gone” (Pradl 13).

The glamour days gone, administering the curriculum-based programs became the responsibility of a series of English Department faculty. An interim WCD stayed briefly and this position began its drift toward the Local Professional model. Nevertheless, Barbara Danish, the next center director, was a stabilizing force during her ten-year career with the EWP. Danish had worked under Brannon in the writing center, and Brannon was an advisor on her dissertation. Like Brannon, Danish recruited the best writing teachers to be writing consultants. She directed a WAC initiative, and she restructured the basic writing program. Danish provided strong, collaborative leadership for the center and program, and most of the curricular administrators proved helpful.

Finally, in 1994, the EWP was taken out of the English department and a new course-based administrator was hired, a trained compositionist and a man of energy, vision, and experience. This WPA was given free reign to restaff the program and fire the other EWP directors, who now numbered four. He chose not to. The new WPA clearly learned from the culture of collaboration that he joined, and he valued the EWP’s fairly flat organization; nevertheless, he firmly took charge and stayed in charge. As might be expected, the WCD position continued to move further away from the Universal Professional Model.

After Danish left in 1997, I became the new WCD. I was still a graduate student at that time, and I did not understand that my position had been slowly devolving into a diminishing professional role. Actually, the feeling that I had worked my way up through the ranks to become the WCD was gratifying, to say the least. I had worked closely with Barbara in the center, in the basic writing program, and in the WAC initiative, and she was on my dissertation committee. I felt confident that I could do the job. But I slowly realized that my true position was to be a kind of assistant WPA in the development of a large and complex writing program. I administered and restructured the writing proficiency exam and directed the basic writing program but, as NYU became a more exclusive university for top students, these programs became a minor sideline. I gradually lost the authority both to recruit “the best teachers” as writing consultants and to determine the direction of consultant training: consistency across the program became an EWP administrative principle. I did what I could to continue developing the center. I provided online writing assistance for first-year students and piloted

a writing fellows program. Still, the mission of the center began to shift under the pressure to provide greater access to first-year writing students. The course-based administrator who headed up the EWP began to refer to the center as “ours” and the writing center increasingly became that appendage to the writing program that Waldo emphatically rejects.

While this brief history compresses and simplifies the complexities that affect the administrative interactions between the curriculum-based program and writing center, some conclusions seem unavoidable. The administrative planning that invested the first WCD with the authority of a fully-fledged WPA was never really secure: the English Department determined that two of the three EWP tenure-track lines should not support the writing program, but instead should revert to literature faculty. Despite the academic success of the first WCD, prevailing opinions about the comparative worth of writing center and the writing program favored the latter. Perhaps as a result, later WCDs were Local Professionals, credentialed through an up-through-the-ranks apprenticeship system. Twenty-five years later, the prestigious writing center culture that Brannon initiated had faded.

Admittedly, the administrators of the curriculum-based program didn't have an easy time over the years, but they continued to enjoy more institutional status, evidenced through a more secure tenure-track position. Interestingly, not every tenure-track WPA seemed inclined to push hard for curriculum-program goals in relation to the Local Professionals who ran the writing center. But when a more ambitious and professionalized curriculum-based WPA came on the scene, he clearly had the prerogative and authority to use the center in ways that would make the writing program more effective. This is not bad or wrong or surprising: all WPAs have a job to do. But for our purposes, this history confirms Waldo's argument that for WCDs to be fully-fledged WPAs with their own vision and goals for the center, their positions must equal the power and authority of curriculum-based administrators. The history of the EWP shows as well that all permutations of the WCD position were tricky, as its administrative powers waxed and waned.

There has to be a better way. We can't look to Waldo, who proposes just two roles for the center in relation to the writing program: appendage or symbiotic partner. A third possibility is suggested by the example of the early EWP itself, although it means that the glamour days of the writing program having anything to do with the writing center will be over. What if the center moved out of the writing program as the writing program had moved out of the English Department? And rather than promoting an idealized, symbiotic relationship between WCDs and the curriculum-based administrators, wouldn't it be more useful for WCDs to consider more carefully the implications of writing center directors as autonomous Local Professionals? These questions are worth asking if WCDs want the authority to develop progressive, cross-curricular missions for their centers and to form less-risky programmatic alliances

I was a Local Professional who took a few years to acclimate myself as I finished my dissertation in Composition and read the literature on writing centers.

As a result, it took me a while to realize my predicament. It seemed sensible to follow Joan Mullin's example of "trying to act like faculty (when at the time I wasn't)" (2), but this was understandably difficult with conjoined programs and a WPA primarily concerned with furthering the goals of his own program. I worry that other inexperienced Local Professionals suffer similar difficulties, beginning their careers with a limited institutional perspective and lacking the knowledge or the power to enact a vision for the center that could be supported by the larger institution. Balester and McDonald's research concludes that WCD professionalization has improved over a twenty-year period, although WCDs still lag behind WPAs: they are less likely to be in tenure-track positions, to be granted faculty status, or to be Composition specialists (77). In other words, there are many of us Local Professionals who take several years to grow into our positions. I believe that to increase the status of writing centers and WCDs, centers must be independent of writing programs, and that requires a fully professionalized WCD. Without the assurance of tenure-track lines, professionalization is the only way WCDs can continue without assuming a position of subordination.

"DEVIL'S BARGAIN"?: TENURING THE WCD AS WPA

Lauren Fitzgerald, *Yeshiva University*

As Mary Wislocki suggests, when the issue of professional equity for WCDs arises, the issue of tenure is usually not far behind, central as it has been to professional self-definition in the academy. Perhaps not surprisingly, WCDs have continued to be less likely than their curricular-based counterparts to hold tenure-track positions (Balester and McDonald 67). But what might be surprising is that not everyone in the writing center community agrees that this is a bad thing. Rebecca Jackson, Carrie Leverenz, and Joe Law sum up these conflicting opinions well: "Having tenure-track status may be a sign that writing center directors are professionalized, but if such status requires them to give their research agendas greater priority than the administration of their writing centers, they may be striking a devil's bargain" (135-36). This disagreement about where WCDs should stand in the academic hierarchy highlights a familiar tension between the ideals of disciplinary status (what we call at the beginning of this polylog the Universal Professional model) and the day-to-day realities of running a center that serves its staff and clientele successfully (the Local Professional and Administrative Iconoclast). Wislocki and Waldo, however, remind us that tensions surrounding WCDs and tenure-track status do not always exist in isolation as strictly an individual's choice between professional advancement and doing the job well. Institutional requirements and needs are, of course, relevant; however, the status of other writing program administrators, whether on campus or as members of the larger emerging disciplinary category of writing program administration deserve consideration, too.

Are WCDs WPAs? The tenurability of WCDs is one way to address this question. My own case answers the question in what are, for me, surprisingly

complicated ways. On the one hand, as a tenured WCD active in the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), an organization that—according to Jeanne Gunner—has become “synonymous with professional advancement” (317), I seem to embody an unqualified affirmation of this status. On the other, the “devil’s bargain” I had to strike to get to this position indicates that, as in Wislocki’s account, the institutional and professional status of the WCD is far from a settled matter. Through an arrangement that might be possible only in the kind of small institution where I work, the most important bargain I made, after I’d served for two years as a non-tenure-track WCD, converted my position to tenure-track. This conversion was contingent, however, on my agreeing to direct First-Year Composition (FYC) in addition to the writing center—along with fulfilling the regular expectations for scholarship, teaching, and service. In other words, the WCD position as it was then defined was not tenurable and, because it lacked the possibility of professional advancement in this limited sense, was not, to my mind, fully a WPA position.

The costs of this bargain were much as Jackson, Leverenz, and Law would have predicted. During my exhausting, infuriating, and exhilarating journey toward tenure, I found myself haunted by the same questions that Nancy Grimm describes en route to her becoming a tenured writing center scholar: “Was I driven by something that would be good for me rather than something that would benefit writing centers? Would my attention to personal tenure concerns compromise my attention to local concerns?” (21). At various points along the way, the answer to both seemed to be “Yes.” It wasn’t just that in my new role directing both the writing center and FYC I had twice as much administrative work to do (usually at the same busy times during the semester); it was also that the kinds of work each program demanded were very different. As FYC Director, I had to answer to multiple, often high-powered stakeholders (from my senior colleagues and chair to admissions officers and deans); consequently, I was very public and, as a result, needed to be systematic in my approach. By contrast, my role as WCD was relatively (as I came to see) autonomous and private, requiring a great deal of flexibility in order to address concerns of individual tutors and writers—much like writing centers themselves. Because of this difference, I came to understand Neal Lerner’s claim that WCDs often see “our writing centers as extensions of us, rather than institutional entities with security and status” (“Confessions” 38-9).

But with the pressure to publish mounting, something had to give, and, probably because of this personal connection, where I noticed this cost exacted most was in the writing center. (There were costs to FYC as well, but I wasn’t as concerned about them, or in any case don’t feel as compelled to confess them here.) As I researched and wrote more and more, I was in the center less and less, as both a previous Assistant Director and at least one tutor pointed out. As a result (at least indirectly), during the two years leading up to my tenure decision, the numbers of writers we served, sessions we held, and students who applied to

be tutors declined. Moreover, and despite the important differences between the two programs, I found myself trying to consolidate my administrative work by making the writing center systematic, too. For example, I replaced some face-to-face meetings with email and simply laid down (rather than negotiated) policies and procedures with the staff. I seemed to be reversing Lerner's personalized model, making the center more of an institutional entity than an extension of me. Nonetheless, it was hard not to take personally a long, angry email from an undergraduate tutor about how I was treating the staff "like robots" as a result of these administrative changes.

These were serious costs to the writing center, and though I don't want to underestimate their importance, I also don't want them to overshadow the benefits that resulted from my dual position and, specifically, from being on the tenure track. For one thing, some of the research I conducted to make my case for tenure broadened my understanding of what was happening in the center and improved my work there. In addition, though the blurring of the boundaries between the writing center and FYC could cause problems (as when it led colleagues to view the center as subservient to FYC), it also led to moments of realizing Waldo's "equal," "complementary," and "symbiotic" relationship between the two programs, especially when full-time and adjunct colleagues tutored and taught in both (73). Finally, with writing consolidated on our campus under my oversight, I gained the institutional power to argue for a full- (rather than part-) time Assistant Director for the center, more tutors, and better pay for adjunct faculty in both programs. To return to Grimm's questions, then, what is good for the WCD professionally can be good for writing centers—and for FYC.

I also don't want to underplay what this devil's bargain taught me about professionalism that I was not able to see as a non-tenure-track WCD. I had long participated on the WCenter listserv and presented at International Writing Centers Association conferences, and I continue to value the insights gained in these forums. But I needed advice from a group less ambivalent about the costs of professionalization and tenure because I knew that I could not afford to be. Becoming FYC Director led me to the CWPA, and that involvement helped me to reconceptualize professional advancement as what Gunner calls "a rhetorical and political matter involving multiple, often conflicting communities and requiring strategic mobilization of disciplinary and institutional power" (316)—which is to say, still a devil's bargain, but one with the devil of institutional power and rhetoric that I was coming to know. Consequently, I realized the conflicting demands of the various communities I dealt with weren't the result of the peculiarities of my dual position at my particular institution but represented business as usual for *all* WPAs. More concretely, I used the CWPA's arguments concerning the scholarly and disciplinary nature of much WPA work to revise my job description and to begin to negotiate the terms for my tenure decision. Most importantly for my professional advancement, I no longer viewed "research agendas" and "administration" in opposition, which helped me to argue successfully that some of my

administrative work as WCD was scholarly. It was only when I had to mount an argument for my own professionalism that I was able to understand these issues.

Are WCDs WPAs? The short answer, based on my own experience, is that they *can* be, but at a cost, sometimes to the Administrative Iconoclast definition of WCD as personalized, hands-on, and autonomous. For those of us who value this vision of writing center work, there is reason to be ambivalent about the WPA status, and I recognize that not every WCD would have made the choices that I did to get through the tenure process. I hope to make up for the costs accrued to my center during the next twenty years of service that I'll now be able to provide because of my long-term job security. Not surprisingly, however, stepping down from FYC has involved a nearly palpable loss of WPA muscle, tenure or no. Without authority over FTEs, section caps, and adjunct hires, for example, I no longer have the ears of the deans and chair in the way that I once did. In a sense, this loss of power merely plays out the zero-sum game of writing program administration. But I hope too that the lessons I've learned about professionalization will prepare me for other devil's bargains I will inevitably have to make.

SPEAKING SOFTLY

Lisa Lebduska, *Wheaton College* (MA)

At small liberal arts colleges, where every face recognizes every other face, and first names suffice to identify most individuals, decision-making often begins in hallways or over lunch or at the gym. Every voice is magnified, and, conversely, every silence is deepened. Power reverberates more intensely against small walls. But small-institution power, as Thomas Amorose notes, operates differently than large-institution power, and differs from authority and influence (94).³ Power, Amorose explains, involves wielding threats or making promises; it proves of “limited use” in small schools, where institutional memory is more durable, for people stay longer and the hierarchy is flatter (93-100). Authority, by contrast, is more symbolic but no less effective at a small school. According to Amorose, a small-school WPA is often seen as the embodiment of deeply held values—a shared belief in the importance of writing, for example, that the WPA signifies (99). Even more useful than authority is influence, which hinges on opportunities to persuade, rhetorical acts which center on *kairos* rather than on one's cultural status as keeper of the writing flame. Using Amorose's framework, in many instances the “Local Professional” model the introduction describes would seem to provide authority and influence to small-school WPAs. In instances in which major cultural shifts are at stake, however, I would suggest that WPAs cannot rely on their authority or their local professional knowledge alone, and that their ability to influence effectively depends heavily on their ability to connect the Universal Professional's specialist knowledge to local values.

My authority or “positional power” (Jones 3) as Director of College Writing emerged when the English department at Wheaton (student population approximately 1500), created my position, which was tenure-track and ranked at the

Associate Professor level so that I might avoid the difficult circumstance Charles Schuster describes in which the untenured WPA “makes every decision with one eye glancing toward her senior colleagues and the other toward the dean” (94). Supported by a Mellon grant, my colleagues also created three “staff” Writing Associate positions responsible for teaching First Year Writing, working with me to develop WAC initiatives, and tutoring students across the curriculum.

Since then, I have discovered that authority, conferred by my position as Director of College Writing and supported by localized professionalization (an English Ph.D. that included graduate level courses in Composition) succeeds when my positions align themselves with existing institutional traditions surrounding writing. Nevertheless, it is my specialized training that helps me to identify instances in which my efforts might challenge such traditions, and then I find myself relying far more on the kinds of professionalization associated with program planning and evaluation. Before my arrival, for example, our department had relied on a single individual to provide courses and tutorial support for ESL students and students with learning differences (LD). My own understanding of ESL and LD education allowed me to suggest that that work needed to be divided among several individuals, so that we were able to hire a Writing Associate who specialized in each area. And because these specialists did not need to be All Things Writing to all people, they in turn were able to bring their own forms of specialized knowledge to the community. Our ESL Associate introduced us to the concept of “Generation 1.5”— American students born into non-English speaking households whose writing had characteristics of non-native speakers. Because these students did not take the TESOL exam, they were not readily identified as needing non-native speaker support. Having an ESL specialist has allowed us to begin developing a means of identifying these students and sharing that knowledge with our colleagues.

At times, moments of influence extend beyond the writing program. As Dominic Delli Carpini notes, “the tenure-line job search,” from its job description through its interview process and hiring, provides small colleges with an opportunity to emphasize “the national status of composition as an intellectual discipline” (Carpini 8). The search is also, as Carpini observes, an opportunity to bring the work of the writing program to various constituencies across campus. Along with all of my English department colleagues, I participate in every departmental hire, reading vitae, attending presentations, and contributing to departmental interviews. This participation allows me to inquire about candidates’ writing pedagogy, their knowledge of and relationship to writing tutors, and their general perspectives on literacy. My colleagues, who have a longstanding commitment to teaching writing, are also likely to ask writing-related questions. In a sense, then, the hiring process serves as a significant ritual, affirming our shared commitment to writing in its most general sense. My contributions, which I tend to create from my localized knowledge about our students, writing at Wheaton, and composition in general, enhance my authority. And, though I do not have the

power to hire these tenure-track candidates single-handedly (nor would I want to do so), this “moral authority,” as Amorose suggests, with “its basis in deeply held, pre-existent beliefs, and its ongoing support by symbols may make it a better instrument than power for establishing the legitimacy of a position” (95). In other words, the threats and promises of power arenas would not fare well here.

A more difficult instance of influence, and one that demands professionalized knowledge, is arising as I work with colleagues across the curriculum to convert certain contingent teaching positions from “staff” to some sort of “faculty” designation. Writing Associates, who teach Basic, ESL, and First-Year Writing as well as tutor students from across the curriculum, are among the contingent faculty being considered for the conversion, which might include voting privileges on faculty legislation and eligibility for committee membership. The details of this “faculty” designation provoke complex discussions involving academic freedom and teaching. At the moment, these Writing Associates lack an officially-recognized institutional voice. They possess insight and share expertise in teaching and tutoring academic writing, and receive some professional development support to attend conferences, but they may not participate in official curricular discussions, nor may they serve on committees, which range from faculty governance to student development. They are also not permitted to apply for sabbaticals.

The conversations surrounding the conversion legislation for these Associates are teaching me that the disciplinary theory and research that contribute to WPA work are equally essential to local advocacy, and that local advocacy is itself a component of successful program administration. Tensions surrounding the Associates’ institutional status provide me with the moments of influence that Amorose identifies. As I contribute to the discussions shaping legislation that converts Writing Associates from “staff” to some form of “faculty” designation, I find myself traversing between local and professionalized knowledge, drawing on local knowledge to help me understand my message while tapping my professionalized knowledge to identify with my audience—colleagues unfamiliar with the teaching and tutoring of writing as an intellectual activity. The “local,” then, consists of the work of the Writing Associates, who teach writing and tutor students from across the curriculum. The “professional” knowledge entails an ability to interpret the work of the local so that it is recognized by colleagues outside of composition as a contribution worthy of “faculty” status.

Like Lauren Fitzgerald channeling her inner Grimm, I have my own “devil’s bargain.” In this instance, however, abandoning the local would also mean abandoning my own professional self-interest. Invoking professionalized knowledge in my call for the Associates’ conversion to “faculty” status may indeed jeopardize my upcoming tenure hearing in 2007—the advocacy has meant countless meetings, e-mails, and responses to proposed legislation, sometimes in opposition to senior faculty. At the same time, however, failing to advocate

for the Associates' conversion would imply a tacit acceptance of composition as something other than a scholarly discipline. Moreover, these conversations supply many of the "moments of influence" that Amorose delineates, junctures at which a dialogue can increase the communal understanding of the writing program's mission.

The opposition to the Associates' faculty conversion has included concerns over budget, fears of creating a two-tiered (research versus teaching) faculty, and objections that future administrations might begin replacing tenure lines with similar non-tenure-track positions. At one meeting, a colleague asked why positions that involved "telling students where semi-colons go" warranted faculty status. It was a genuine question, one that could not have been answered through sheer reliance on my moral authority. ("As the keeper of the writing flame, I forbid such questions.") Nor was it one that could have been answered by using influence based on localized knowledge alone, which might have appealed to the interlocutor's respect for teaching or might have invoked my institution's public commitment to Writing Across the Curriculum. It was a question that signified, as Fitzgerald puts it, "business as usual for all WPAs," one that demanded professionalized knowledge, but it was also one that required local understanding, a recognition of our small, liberal arts environment, where we tend to see such moments as opportunities to engage rather than challenges to battle.

My professionalization—graduate school training, conference and listserv participation, and research—provided me with the language and understanding to recognize my colleague's question. I could respond to him publicly about the history and nature of composition as a discipline and about tutoring as an intellectual activity. When he and I next meet for lunch, I will be certain to share composition research, tempering it perhaps with Fred Kemp's insights about the "limits of proof in writing instruction" (Kemp n.p.). Whether our program can offer a "heuristic for change" (Phelps 164) remains to be seen.

I realize, though, that as I prepare my tenure case and contributions to these discussions about conversion—my opportunities to wield influence rather than power—I need to marshal the best professional arguments possible. My professional identification as a WPA, acquired through WPA conferences and workshops, WPA listserv exchanges, and research including WPA-specific texts has helped me to understand this. This identification has also helped me to realize that to rest solely on my localized knowledge, the "authority" of my position as a writing icon, is to risk an unintentional silencing of significant composition praxis. Clearly, I have work to do.

WCD AS THE WPA: IS THE NEW BOSS SAME AS THE OLD BOSS?

Melissa Ianetta, *University of Delaware*

It's mid-October of my first year as Assistant Professor of English and Director of Writing at the University of Delaware. My Chair (a specialist in professional and technical writing) and I are arguing vigorously but good-naturedly about a change to the university's first year writing program:

He begins to ask, "But don't you think that a writing program should . . ."

"Not a writing program I run." I interrupt in a cheerfully autocratic tone.

He shoots back: "Well, aren't you just the 'Boss Compositionist?'"

"Well, just as long as we know who's 'Boss,'" I counter.

This brief incident is typical of my initiation as Director of Writing. Like the positions Fitzgerald and Lebduska describe, my administrative responsibilities include both writing classes and the writing center. However, unlike those other contributors to this essay who occupy dual roles at small colleges, I work at an R1 university where I administer not only the writing center and first-year writing but also writing-in-the-disciplines and the full portfolio of upper-level service writing classes. Thus, I am what James Sledd has unflatteringly termed a "Boss Compositionist": the single tenure-track Composition specialist hired by an English department to administer the writing programs, "admit[ted] . . . to the worshipful company of privileged researchers . . . to assign the actual teaching of writing" (275). Sledd's infamous censure of the complicity of such administrators in an exploitative system seems, at first glance, fundamentally antithetical to the service ethos foundational to much writing scholarship, particularly to those works central to writing center studies. However, having previously worked as a peer tutor, administered as a writing center director, and researched as scholar of writing center studies, I come to my Boss-ship with a strong awareness of the manner in which my current role both benefits from and clashes with my commitment to the writing center. Here, then, as a means of understanding more broadly the tensions and opportunities created by viewing the WCD as a WPA, I explore the ways in which my experience as a WCD both benefits and complicates my position as a Boss.

Most obviously, my orientation as a WCD makes me sensitive to writing center needs and better able to advocate for mutually beneficial changes for both the writing center and writing programs. I not only understand the pedagogical differences between conference-based and curricular-based writing instruction, for instance, but as "the writing person," I am able to speak for both the writing center and writing courses at the university level, granting both programs greater visibility and authority. Such confluence may not be the case when the Boss's background is not in the writing center, however. Joseph Harris, for example, in the best-known advocacy of the Boss, suggests its perils for the writing center

when he proposes addressing writing program staffing issues by “devis[ing] ways of helping students with sentence-level issues in writing through imaginative uses of peer tutors and writing center consultants” (62). To a non-WCD Boss, this plan may well appear an efficient use of expertise and resources. Yet, to an administrator trained in the writing center, Harris’s suggestions resonate strongly with those derogatory depictions of writing center as a sentence-level “grammar garage” (Waldo 170) that have dogged the discipline of writing center studies since its inception.

From this perspective, Harris simply replaces the writing instructor with the writing center at the bottom of the teaching hierarchy that he purports to dismantle. The administrator with experience as a WCD, however, can use firsthand knowledge to negotiate the competing demands and pedagogical differences of the writing center and the writing program. On the most concrete level, unlike an individual primarily trained in curricular-based writing programs, WCD as “Boss” means that both the center and the classroom are led by an individual who understands the similarities and disparities between the pedagogical means and goals of individual and group instruction. From a more abstract point of view, the administrator who is trained in the writing center has a strong background and ready identification with those individual students that curricular-based programs have the most difficulty reaching systematically, such as those struggling writers who often comprise much of a writing center’s clientele. Such an understanding, I think, is crucial for inter-program collaboration whether the director of the curricular-based writing programs is administering the center or simply collaborating and negotiating with the WCD.

While writing center expertise therefore benefits the administrator of the composition program, the reverse is also true: the writing center benefits from a WCD who understands fully and negotiates well with the competing and sometimes conflicting pedagogies and demands of the writing program. On the one hand, writing centers may pride themselves on their intimacy (which can lapse into insularity), folksy egalitarianism (which can descend into a stale amateurism), or celebration of iconoclastic individuality (which can degenerate into a willful blindness to shifting institutional forces). By contrast, as Fitzgerald describes in this essay, administrators of curricular-based writing programs wield the “WPA muscle” at the university level by exerting control over course caps, curricular requirements and the like. With this level of control comes an equivalent level of accountability and so individuals in these positions are disinclined to fall prey to the isolating forces that can beset the WCD. Those external constituencies interested in such issues as general education requirements, institutional literacy standards, and shifting budgetary allocations compel the administrator of a curricular-based program to work with stakeholders beyond their program’s confines and to articulate their goals and achievements. Although such curricular-based accountability mechanisms are tied to my work in the curricular-based program, this combination of university-level visibility and accountability can serve the writing

center equally well, allowing it to partner with other programs in pedagogically and fiscally beneficial relationships. Such, at any rate, has been my experience; my writing center has an advocate at any university-level meeting I attend, which has provided opportunities to expand our initiatives—and multiply the resources that support those initiatives.

Not that all is harmony between the writing center and the writing programs in the life of the Boss—or the life of the institution. Offsetting the advantages of the professionalization of the WCD—or the über-professionalization of the Boss Compositionist—are the drawbacks inherent to administrative work. In my daily existence as the omni-administrator of writing, for example, I am ironically aware of how these responsibilities draw me away from the very programs I administrate: the “triple threat” of my administrative assignments, graduate-level teaching responsibilities, and research expectation leaves scant time to teach service writing courses or tutor in the writing center. Rather, the structure of my position requires that my energies be focused at the broadest program- and university-levels, while it is the assistant directors who are locally connected to the individual programs in my portfolio. Such a position, then, can clash with those writing center philosophies that privilege the one-to-one relationship, leaving the WCD Boss feeling vaguely guilty of writing center treason. So too, anti-authoritarian pedagogies of writing center instruction fundamentally clash with the power dynamic of the Boss Compositionist, who must first recognize her authority—over budgets, programs, and individuals—to use this authority responsibly and effectively. What Edward M. White has argued about WPAs in general is, I think, even more true for the Boss Compositionist:

[T]he situation of most WPAs is more or less under siege, and we had better take stock of the power arrayed against us, the power we have to fight for our programs, or we will not be doing our jobs. If we really don't want to deal in power, then we had better step aside or we will be doing more harm than good. . . . Administrators, including WPAs, cannot afford the luxury of powerlessness. The only way to do the job of a WPA is to be aware of the power relationships we necessarily conduct, and to use the considerable power we have for the good of our program. (108, 113)

Clashing with White's comfortably authoritarian point of view, however, are those disciplinary discourses of writing center studies that censure institutional hegemonies and urge WCDs to maintain themselves and their centers at a safe distance from these corrupting power structures. In “War, Peace and Writing Center Administration,” for example, Steve Braye argues that centers are “beating against the institutional current” (Simpson 152) and wonders,

When the administration gives me a budget, does that free me to bring about more changes? Or does it weigh me down with institutional values I don't necessarily want to [become a

member of the institution] . . . it isn't because I see administration as the enemy. But I think institutions have a power of their own . . . no matter who is in certain administrative positions. (Simpson, Braye, and Boquet 153)

Even while provocative in their critique of institutional hierarchies, such arguments encourage an administrative squeamishness that will not serve well in situations where authority must be asserted or a strong negotiation position must be taken.

Despite such caveats, however, the possibilities of the Boss Compositionist/“Universal Professional” model remain: the clear lines of communication it enables between the writing center and the curricular programs, the collaborative opportunities it fosters both among and beyond the writing programs, and the opportunity it provides for the WPA to have the recognizable voice that Lebduska cites above. Perhaps, as in Fitzgerald's description of Yeshiva, the single-specialist program might be best employed as a developmental stage rather than as a goal unto itself or, perhaps, in other contexts, the costs of such a structure outweigh the benefits. And yet, while the administrative extreme will not serve all institutions' needs, the benefits associated with this position nevertheless argue the advantages for the writing center and the institution when the WCD is professionalized as a WPA.

THE TRAJECTORY OF CHANGE: GRADUATE PROGRAMS, PROFESSIONALIZATION, AND RESEARCH

Linda Bergmann, *Purdue University*

Through much of the past three decades, as Rhetoric and Composition emerged as a discipline and writing programs and writing centers were actively and consciously developing identities, it was possible for a person to self-identify as a WPA or WCD and build a program as it went along. We learned to do the work by following the lore disseminated on the WCenter and WPA-L lists, at conferences, and in books, and ultimately we started contributing to the increasing body of research in teaching writing. Because so many WPAs and WCDs came out of English (Literature) Departments, we tended to be untrained in and suspicious of quantitative research and used case studies and anecdotal evidence to support the things we learned. This progression describes my own career path: starting with a literature Ph.D., moving to teaching composition, then through a series of positions founding and directing WAC programs and writing centers. I learned how to be a WPA and WCD as I went along, and the knowledge I gathered from reading, listening to, and talking with others doing similar work helped me develop expertise as well as experience.

However, the situation of the Writing Center Director has changed in response to the proliferation of graduate programs in Rhetoric and Composition over the past three decades, programs established to distinguish Composition Studies from Literature Studies in English Departments. Since then, new Ph.D.s in Rhetoric and Composition are replacing the autodidacts who have retired or

moved into university administration. I would suggest that many changes in writing program administration take direction from these new faculty members who have, from the start of their graduate programs, been engaged with the theory, practice, and pedagogy of Rhetoric and Composition. Some of these directions may seem foreign and even threatening to those of us who learned writing program administration on the fly. However, would we be satisfied to hire “amateurs” to start the process of learning all over again, after fighting so hard for a respected place in writing research and instruction?

Even though senior faculty in Rhetoric and Composition warn graduate students about the dangers of taking administrative appointments before tenure, many such jobs are advertised each year. Moreover, many new Ph.D.s, having experienced the active and engaging work of writing program administration as students, are eager to take them. Given this reality, graduate programs have the responsibility not only to give students a solid grounding in Rhetoric and Composition theory and research, but also to consider how to prepare students for the work of directing writing centers and programs. As graduate programs have evolved over the years, then, writing program administration has become part of Rhetoric and Composition, and writing center administration a part of writing program administration (Jackson, Leverenz, and Law; Hesse). Notice that I use the term “part” rather than “sub-set,” which can too easily be read as subordinate or subservient to the larger field. It is, I think, a good thing to be a recognizable part of a discipline that has finally started to gain broader academic recognition. Writing Center Directors’ intellectual disputes with other sub-sets of Rhetoric and Composition are important ways of defining our specific place within that discipline, but in a larger context, we have more in common with Rhetoric and Composition than we have differences with it.

A graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition like the one at my large Midwestern research university strives to maintain a core curriculum in the history of rhetoric and theories of composition, while adjusting to students’ expressed interest in taking courses in academic administration. To emphasize what we see as the intellectual core of the field—the knowledge it has generated—we focus more on developing WPAs as researchers and theorists in the ways suggested by Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser, than on daily management and program administration. Like other WPAs, writing center directors need to understand the history and ideas behind their work as well as how to manage its daily tasks, and so graduate courses in writing center theory and practice teach the traditional scholarly concerns of history, research, and theory. This is why I teach a graduate seminar in Writing Center Theory and Practice. Students who take WCD positions after graduate school learn to do the bean counting, publicity generating, and other daily work by working in a writing center. Our course in writing center theory and practice helps future WCDs see writing centers as part of a larger process of teaching writing, and it also helps future WPAs understand and appreciate the research and practices of WCDs.

Because they are learning in school what earlier generations learned on the job, graduates of Rhetoric and Composition programs moving into WCD roles tend to consider themselves members of both the umbrella discipline of Rhetoric and Composition and its fields of Writing Program Administration and Writing Center Administration. Their approach to these fields differs from the thinking of writing center directors of the previous generation, who because they were fighting to create a body of knowledge specific to writing centers, emphasized the distinctiveness of writing center work from classroom composition teaching. In contrast, my graduate students see writing center work through the lens of Rhetoric and Composition. Although they may be attracted to the collaborative atmosphere and human caring of the writing center, they are reading its now-canonical literature critically and asking difficult questions about our ideas and practices, such as “do they work?” and “how do they work?” and “how do we know?”

Clearly, graduate students are not merely passive recipients of received knowledge, and in their critical reading I see potential for change in our concept of professionalization. They are asking how accepted ideas and practices can be tested by empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, with clear and repeatable methodologies and falsifiable hypotheses. Inspired by works like Cindy Johaneck’s *Composing Research*, they are questioning received lore and “what everyone has always believed,” and they are initiating research projects and writing dissertations that measure the results of tutoring, teaching, and administrative practices.

This questioning suggests that changing directions of writing center theory and practice are not only propelled by directors educated in rhetoric and composition programs, who think of themselves and expect to be thought of as professionals; the field is also moving toward asking questions that need to be addressed by empirical research. This turn may explain what we said in the introduction: that writing center research seems to be “in a state of disarray”—which I would prefer to think of as a “state of transition.” Part of that apparent disarray may come from a growing dissatisfaction, articulated by Barry Maid and others, with considering writing programs as part of the humanities, not of the social and applied sciences. For compositionists in general, this preference may come from visualizing writing as art rather than craft. Some writing center administrators may associate the humanities with the idea of offering a “humane” and caring refuge from the rest of the university. Therefore, we continue to use primarily research methods of the humanities rather than of the social sciences, and few directors of either composition programs or writing centers, even those with Ph.D.s in Rhetoric and Composition, have much training in empirical research design or statistical analysis. As David Russell noted at the session on Writing Program Research at the 2004 Watson Conference, we ignore relevant research, often quantitative, from disciplines like education and cognition—and do so at our peril. Russell and his fellow panelists at that session, Neal Lerner and Robert Schwegler, called for more and better empirical research, in writing centers and elsewhere—not just counting, but analyzing data. The trajectory of change, I

suggest, may be directed not only by friction between considering WCDs as caring amateurs or career-building professionals, but also by changes in and friction between research methodologies—and the issues of identity and ethos that come with such changes.

WCD OR WPA: BOTH/AND

Carol Peterson Haviland, *California State University, San Bernardino*

I gird myself for round fifteen—another go around with yet another dean who wants me to fit a vision of writing center director that collides with my vision. He, like several of his predecessors, argues that rather than remain an English professor with half of my time released to direct the writing center, I should become a full time member of his division, undergraduate studies.

As unappealing as I find his offer, I can see how it makes sense—at least from his perspective. As a full-time member in his division, he says, I would no longer feel the tug between two “homes,” I would be “freed” from teaching, I would feel little pressure to engage in scholarship, I would have much more time for administrative work, and I might in time make more money. Indeed, it is a choice he himself made a number of years ago. Also, he adds, such a move would make life better for him because the administrative lines would be tidier. He and I could work more closely together, and we wouldn’t have to juggle my time with the English department—in fact, as he shows me a newly-configured administrative chart, I can see the tidiness he has mentioned: the lines are straight, not dotted and circuitous; I am responsible to only one person and have only one title. All of this makes sense when viewed from one very common administrative lens—a lens that defines efficiency or “leanness” as organized with tight reporting lines and measures administrators’ importance and power by the sizes of their budgets and the number of people they govern.

But again I resist—as I have each time I have been invited to make this move. Although I can see the tidiness it might offer the dean and even how it might simplify my life, I continue to think that the tradeoff would be the wrong choice for me and for our writing center. I have increasingly come to recognize that my experiences—first at Montana State University and now at California State University, San Bernardino—as very fortunate, and probably owing more to gracious mentoring and good luck than to any intelligent planning on my part. On both campuses, well-integrated WC/FYC/WAC models have allowed the English Department’s several compositionists to contribute their several threads to weave a full cloth—or program. Of course, these weavers have encountered some snags and even some big holes as state economies and the ways that we, like many compositionists, are stretched far too thin as we teach, research, and manage multiple writing enterprises. But seeing ourselves as co-weavers has allowed us to add and redistribute responsibilities as our own lives as well as the lives of our campuses have shifted.

One of the reasons, however, that this administrative structure has been largely successful is that we have been able to establish all of the WPA roles as faculty positions, supported in ways that allow each WPA to remain active in teaching and research roles. Thus as regular faculty members who teach, mentor students, do research, and participate in department and university governance, we help create credibility for writing programs. A second reason for our success is that our two writing centers have developed alongside the other writing programs rather than as add-ons for dealing with writing crises. Thus in neither case did we have to shed the “place for bad writers” identity.

Of course, I cannot tell this tale of “fortunate adventures” without confessing that the cloth and its weavers that I have romanticized encounter the same kinds of peril that those clad in composition-clothes encounter on all campuses. We too have to weave pretty madly some days when our colleagues ask yet again what in the world compositionists do—and even more why we would want to do it. We too develop countless explanations of why writing is both complex and interesting and why directing writing programs might be different from assembling can openers, drawing on scholarship that defines WPA work as intellectual activity, such as the “Writing Program Administration as Intellectual Work” statement (Council). And here I want to urge writing center and WAC organizations both to develop their own parallel statements and to broaden the WPA statement to include their work. I also want to urge these organizations to support WCDs who are preparing for more academically-oriented positions, for clearly WCDs cannot expect equal WPA status simply by claiming it.

Even as I advocate these professionalizing moves, I want to foreground an emerging concern about professionalizing WPA, one that Jeanne Gunner emphasized at the 2005 WPA conference and Wendy Hesford elaborated in the May 2006 *PMLA*. Drawing on David Smit’s observation that composition has increasingly turned away from teaching to managing teaching, Hesford cites David Bartholomae’s reluctance to separate writing instruction from the intellectual moorings that academic departments can offer. Certainly, intellectual demise is not the foreordained fate awaiting composition programs that separate themselves from non-collegial English departments. Indeed many have flourished after such moves. However, their directors run the risk of becoming intellectually isolated and chiefly managerial if they do not create their own scholarly culture. It was this that I feared if I were to agree to an even more perilous move—positioning not the entire writing program outside of an academic department but the writing center alone, locating me in a setting where intellectual work was less prominent and isolating me from the department’s other writing programs and compositionists.

Thus, I remain convinced that at least on some campuses a “both/and” model is possible, a conviction Rebecca Moore Howard describes as she responds to a WPA-L post. When a new assistant professor described herself as not yet a WPA but maybe going that way, Howard articulated well the convergence of these roles:

Karen, if you're director of the Writing Studio, you're already a WPA! WPA work is not only being in charge of a "program," but also the often-separate jobs of TA training, directing the major (or minor) in writing, conducting WAC workshops, and so forth. Lots of people would categorize writing center administration, too, as a subset of WPA work (though many WC folks would protest that taxonomy). My department has fully a half dozen WPAs. One is in charge of the department (we're a freestanding writing program); another, the undergraduate curriculum; another, the part-time faculty; another, TA training; another, the writing center; another, the Ph.D. program (in composition and cultural rhetoric). You get the picture. (Howard n.p.)

Our taxonomy offers categories, which, like most categories, are more useful for discussion than for adoption. First, each of them hinges on a different and slippery definition of "professional," and second—and more important—they call for unacceptable either/or choices. Facing a choice among the three—being well-grounded in composition theory, situating oneself thoughtfully within local contexts, and valuing students as writers, I hope that WPAs of all writing programs—FYC, WAC, WID, writing centers and any other—would say "all three." This is neither idealistic nor evasive, for the three are inextricably linked. Caring about writers must be at the heart of what we do, and understanding local contexts is essential to creating strong programs, but planning writing programs intelligently and evaluating them usefully are much less difficult when programs are anchored in theory, when they have strong theoretical/disciplinary underpinnings.

For this reason, I continue to resist my deans' suggestions that I leave my English department home to join a generic less-academic division. And it is why I want to argue that all directors of FYC, of WAC, or of writing centers "are" or act as WPAs and should prepare for their professional lives by knowing the anchoring field of Composition Studies well. In addition, they should study local contexts both before they accept positions and while they occupy them, and of course they must care intensely about language and writers. Far from being "one of the three" or incompatible choices, these are inextricably "all three" choices.

CONCLUSIONS: IN WHICH WE RESIST CONCLUSION

Unlike a conference panel, a polylog in essay form might be expected to arrive at that "transcendent view" cited in Burke's epigraph to this essay or, at least, a (re)statement of the idea that drew the interlocutors together and from which the reader might hope to profit. This expectation is challenged by the experiential and institutional range represented in this essay; however, such diversity of experience threatens to dissolve into the merest relativism, what Jeanette Harris has termed the "'this-is-what-we-do-it-at-my-writing-center'" genre (663). And yet, some of the most illuminating moments of our writing process were precipitated by differing

opinions and experiences: the contrasts among Wislocki, Haviland and Ianetta's descriptions of hierarchy and its (dis)contents, for instance, or the difference in the experience of private school WPAs that Lebduska and Fitzgerald describe. Nevertheless, as we read across our narratives, commonalities emerge in both the viewpoints articulated and the strategies by which these views are backed. Although not tidily summative of a single viewpoint, these similarities, we believe, indicate solidarity among our differing perspectives of WCD as WPAs:

1. WCDs share a set of common texts with WPAs in and out of writing center studies.

Throughout this essay, we have interwoven germinal texts from writing center studies—such as the work of Nancy Grimm, Muriel Harris and Mark Waldo—with influential work from other areas of Composition Studies—such as the work of Jeanne Gunner, Joseph Harris, and Doug Hesse. Viewing WCDs as WPAs means holding them accountable for knowledge in both areas, challenging WCDs to broaden their horizons even while offering them the opportunity to grow in new ways and to build bridges between creating knowledge in writing center studies and in other areas.

2. Viewing WCDs as WPAs builds connections between local knowledge and the wider community of scholar-teachers in and out of writing centers.

Throughout our writing process, each of us was challenged to present our individual experience in a manner pertinent to compositionists in and outside writing centers. In a similar manner, we need to position our individual writing center experiences in both the collective knowledge represented by the field of writing center studies, as well as the broader field of composition. Such connections, we argue, give rise to new knowledge among the subfields of writing studies and create community among sometimes seemingly isolated individuals.

3. Scholarly expertise in program administration needs to be grounded by firsthand experience.

The “trajectory of change” that Linda Bergmann sees in the professionalization of WCDs over the last decades and in the future glimpsed through her graduate students also describes a trajectory of the essays that make up this polylog: each discussion is more optimistic than those that precede it, each paints a brighter picture of WCDs who are able to wield power or influence, head up multiple programs, grab the brass ring of tenure, resist the imposition of alternate visions for our work. It would

be too simple to account for this burgeoning optimism as an unreflective rallying around the Universal Professional model for WCDs. However, if Bergmann's prediction and this polylog's trajectory are correct and the Universal Professional does increasingly become the model for at least some writing centers, we hope that it does not become license to dismiss the local or the individual but rather to incorporate them in a richer view of writing centers.

4. Experience needs to be both informed by and renewed in the professional community of WPAs.

On small campuses, a single person may direct all writing programs as well as teach one or more courses. In other institutions, programs may be directed by staff with limited teaching or research responsibilities. At very large schools, particularly R-1 institutions, multiple directors may manage multiple programs along with carrying significant teaching and research responsibilities. Some of these larger programs will be directed by a single "Boss" compositionist, and others will be collaboratively directed by a group of program administrators. However, as we push for optimal conditions, we believe that directors of all writing programs should have solid grounding and ongoing affiliations with Composition Studies. We say this recognizing that some writing programs, including writing centers, can be, and in fact are, well-conceived and run by directors with other preparations. Nevertheless we believe that both these programs and the field itself will be the richer for this reciprocal engagement. So, we hope that however directors come to their positions, they will find an affiliation with Composition Studies desirable and useful and that they will find encouragement for this affiliation on their campuses and hospitable spaces such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Computers and Writing, and the Writing Across the Curriculum Conference as well as professional organizations such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Writing Center Association.

At one time, writing program administrators and writing center directors knew their places and usually stayed within them: most WPAs directed first-year writing programs, and most WCDs directed writing centers. Although they may have had interests in common—often they came from backgrounds in English studies, they were interested in writing and writer-to-writer relationships, and they regularly oversaw staffs of TAs and tutors—they rarely crossed paths and even more rarely exchanged ideas. Geography, institutional structures, and assumptions kept them in their places. But this is no longer the scene: the tidy spaces have become less clearly marked, and the familiar lines have blurred. The

name WPA has become increasingly complex as it encompasses multiple writing programs, housed in multiple contexts, and directed by differently situated staff. Seeing WCDs as one of several possible WPA positions, then, is a “both/and” situation, for individually and collectively teachers and students stand to gain when WCDs renew their local practices in their immediate contexts, with their colleagues in writing center studies, and within the broader community of Composition Studies.

NOTES

¹ In addition to the individuals represented here, participants in this conversation have included Rebecca Fraser and Jennifer Ritter. We would like to thank them for their contributions to our ongoing discussion and for the ways in which they continue to enrich our thinking.

² The transcripts of my oral history interviews with Gordon Pradl and Lil Brannon were prepared by the Writing Centers Research Project at the University of Louisville. Brannon’s 1984 memo, excerpted in this article, are part of WCRP archives, along with other materials from her years at NYU.

³ Amorose draws directly from David V. J. Bell’s *Power, Influence and Authority*.

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