Timothy Peeples, Paula Rosinski, & Michael Strickland
Elon University

Chronos and Kairos, Strategies and Tactics: The Case of Constructing Elon University’s Professional Writing and Rhetoric Concentration

As faculty, writing program administrators, department chairs, and even deans and other academic administrative officers consider the possibility of developing undergraduate programs in professional writing, (something that has been on the rise for the past couple of decades), they are faced with a number of questions:

- Why would we have such a program?
- What kind of program would attract students within our student body?
- What kind of program best connects with our mission?
- What kind of program is attractive to future employers and responsive to the market? What resources—faculty, staff, physical space, networks, technology—are necessary?

These, and many more, are the sorts of questions we at Elon University also asked when we began revising our “writing concentration” in 1999.

Our revised program in Professional Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) became operational, so to speak, in the fall of 2000, when the revised curriculum was published in handbooks and when a small set of preexisting but rearticulated courses, and one or two new courses, began to be offered as an English major concentration in PWR. Four years down the road, we found ourselves revising our curriculum again for a variety of positive reasons: significant growth in course enrollments, the number of students choosing PWR as their “concentration” within the English major, administrative appreciation for our growing program, a doubling of the number of writing faculty, and a significant revision of the English major core. At this moment in our program’s history, we realized that we not only had enough distance on our past curricular revision process but also enough exigency related to the immediate curricular

Composition Studies, Volume 35, Number 1, Spring 2007
revision work to begin theorizing the construction of our programmatic identity and to gain from this intellectual work.¹

What follows develops a theory of—or better yet, theorizes—program identity development based on the related pairs of terms, chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic. We use these two sets of terms to frame the way we tell the story or the "case" of PWR's developing identity at Elon, and in doing so, we offer to the readers a framework for identity development that is portable across contexts. We argue that there are times when chronos dictates or (as we will later clarify) times when one might approach program development from the sense of chronological time. In these instances, one stands before time, and there is time to plan ahead. This sort of place-in-time, we argue, calls on a practice guided by strategy and strategic thinking. However, program development is not always a strategic process enacted within or approached from chronos. There is another sense of time that is crucial to the work of program development and the development of programmatic identity: kairos. Rather than standing before time, one now stands in time. This other position in time, or approach to time, calls on a practice guided by tactical, rather than strategic, action.

What we find most powerful about this framework is the way it emphasizes the rhetorical, productive, compositional nature of program development; we write and re-write our programs. As a heuristic framework, the combination of chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic helps with the ongoing inventional process of program development. Though we acknowledge that our readers, as rhetoricians, are already aware of their own situatedness, we propose that this heuristic framework gives us a way to move beyond situated awareness and toward applying rhetorical-analytical skills to our own efforts at program development. In a way, this claim parallels those made about the genre function. Not only do strategic or tactical action, as genres, actively shape discourse (Miller), but they also constitute social realities (Bawarshi 357), thereby suggesting that our efforts at program development would be well-served by deliberately selecting our courses of action. Finally, we consider this framework valuable because it opens a space to talk about kairos and tactic, typically ignored outside of informal conversation, as significant elements of program development.

**Chronos and Kairos: Perspectives on and Approaches to Time**

Most Westerners think about time as what the Greeks referred to as chronos and would be surprised by efforts to encourage alternate ways of thinking about time. But the ancient Greeks spoke of time in two ways. From one perspective, time is understood as linear and measurable, the sort of time
we measure with clocks and calendars. This sort of time is what the ancients would have defined as chronos. As John E. Smith explains, “In chronos we have the fundamental conception of time as measure, the quantity of duration, the length of periodicity” (4). Chronos defines time quantitatively, not qualitatively. It refers to the time that stretches out behind and before us and can be measured and marked. Visually, chronos is often symbolized by “flight or marching single-file” (Baumlin 155), as it marches on in linear, orderly fashion. It is the time that is often disconnected from or independent of human action; it is a force of nature that carries on irrespective of human action (155). When discussing administrative action and practice, chronos dominates. Five-year plans, personnel reviews, course offerings, matriculation and graduation, cycles of assessment, re-accreditation: all refer to time as quantifiable, measurable, and linear. Such time marks and measures administrative work, like the developing of curricular programs.

The ancient Greeks, however, had a second way of seeing and approaching time. Kairos, often referred to as “opportune time” or “right time,” and later linked to “right measure,” sees and approaches time in a qualitative fashion (Kinneavy; Sipiora; Crowley and Hawhee; Hawhee). Kairos “can indicate anything from a lengthy time to a brief, fleeting moment,” so it is distinct from chronos not in duration or quantity (Crowley and Hawhee 37). Rather, kairos is distinguished from chronos because it refers to a “quality” or “kind” of time. The qualities that define kairos are opportunity, appropriateness, significance, and advantage. Even though kairos should not be misunderstood in terms of quantity or duration, it is nevertheless often distinguished as a point, a window, or a moment. Phillip Sipiora defines kairos using Frank Ker-mode’s phrase “‘a point in time filled with significance’” (2). Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee define kairos as “a ‘window’ of time during which action is most advantageous” (37). Visually, kairos is often represented anthropomorphically as a god with a long forelock of hair and winged feet balancing precariously on a stick, or other such narrow object, while simultaneously balancing a set of scales in his hands. Unlike chronos, the single-file line of marchers stretching ahead predictably and unwavering, kairos is depicted by the forelock of hair one should seize at the opportune moment, the winged feet that represent the fleeting nature of time and situations, and the quality of balance needed to capture right time and right measure. Also unlike chronos, which dominates discussions about administrative work, kairos is rarely discussed in formal spaces. In the hallways, we might refer to this seized opportunity, or that missed moment, or windows of time. Yet, our experience developing the Professional Writing and Rhetoric concentration at Elon compels us to look more closely at this kind of time, as it seems to have significant impact on where we are, who we have become, and where we might go.
STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: SPACE AND MATERIAL PRACTICES

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau argues that material practices and ways of acting in and on the world differ depending on the space from which one acts, and, in doing so, distinguishes between strategies and tactics. Though we do not ascribe to the often absolute, polemic, and militaristic rhetoric de Certeau uses to make this distinction, it offers a powerful heuristic for thinking about institutional action, such as program development. Strategy, de Certeau argues, "postulates a place that can be delimited as its own" (36). It is a form of power, a way of acting that arises out of a set of power relationships defined by having a place. As a result of having a place delimited as one's own, one can act strategically, an action de Certeau describes as "a triumph of place over time," "independence with respect to the variability of circumstances," and "a mastery of places through sight," which refers both to sight over a defined space (such as a curriculum, student body, or set of faculty) as well as time (for example, hindsight and foresight) (36). As Paula Mathieu contends of de Certeau's conception of strategy, "[s]trategic thinking accounts for and relies on measurability and rationality" (16).

If strategy is the form of action one can take from defined—or what de Certeau refers to as "proper"—spaces, tactics are the forms action takes in undefined spaces. As de Certeau argues, "a tactic is calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (36-37). Tactical space "does not . . . have the options of planning general strategy and reviewing . . . [the] whole within a . . . visible, and objectifiable space" (37). Instead, tactical space or a tactic "takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them" (37). The primary advantage of tactical space and tactical action is mobility, but as de Certeau points out, it is "a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment" (37). Whereas strategies "privilege spatial relationships," tactics "gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation" (38).

Though de Certeau speaks of strategy and tactic as dependent on and developing out of discrete kinds of spaces, as if space determines action, these terms should also be understood as approaches to everyday practices, one might even say strategies, in the sense that they can be forms of conscious institutional action. We are led to this view of strategy and tactic from our experience illustrated in the reflections that follow; we see that there are times when we act tactically even though we are working both from and out of a strategic space. By seeing that it is possible to assume a tactical stance even when one has strategic space on or in which to stand, we become aware of
tactics as kinds of actions that can be enacted strategically. The same goes for strategy; though one holds no strategic position (e.g., does not yet have a formal program), one can create and act from a strategic position. This position on the nature of strategy and tactic echoes some of the recent literature on writing program administration and program development, literature that generally shares a view of writing programs as ongoing, dynamic, rhetorical “compositions” (Porter et al.; Hocks et al.; Grabill; and Peeples).

**Scenarios in the Development of PWR, or “The Case”**

We selected the two scenarios described below because they represent significant moments in the development of the Professional Writing and Rhetoric concentration at Elon University. The “Building a Faculty and Curricula” scenario is important because each new faculty hire’s areas of expertise greatly affected our program’s curriculum. From reflecting on this scenario, we learn that the shift from acting from a tactical position to acting from a strategic position is not only a result of time and place but is also a potential strategy in itself. We also learn from this scenario that we should be on the alert for the kairotic opportunities that careful tactical action opens. The “Building a Physical Space” scenario provides insight into how our program has been influenced by the physical spaces it occupies. Analyzing this scenario points out that layers of kairotic moments can contribute significantly to program identity and reminds us to value not only formalized places and discussions but also undefined spaces and informal conversations.

**Scenario 1: Building a Faculty and Curricula**

*Scene:* Tim, Michael and Paula are sitting at the campus café. As they caffeinate in preparation for their afternoon classes, they begin discussing how to define the upcoming PWR replacement position and soon realize that it is inextricably linked to the concentration’s history.

**First Hire:**

**Tim:** How are we going to define this replacement position?

**Paula:** How has the PWR concentration done this in the past? I know a bit about how we hired for the last TESOL position, but what about the position before that? And what about my position; how was that constructed?
Michael: Well, our ongoing hiring plans have always been designed with an eye towards curricular development. When Tim, Barbara and I met in 1999 to design the curriculum, we knew that we had to first design a minimalist curriculum that the English department faculty would actually accept. Even though the department unanimously approved the new concentration, it took one hell of a lot of work and a three-hour meeting to get the department to accept baby-steps. They weren’t going to approve anything close to what we would have mapped out in the ideal.

Tim: After the new curriculum was approved, we met to discuss hiring, and the fundamental question that we had to answer was, how are we going to grow this new curriculum from a concentration that consisted largely of repurposed old courses to what we would consider a respectable concentration? We saw a hole in our ability to offer courses in digital rhetoric, and we knew we needed and wanted more in this area, especially as the university was then considering the feasibility of an IT school. But we had to be careful not to design an undergraduate “Technical Communications” degree: the department, College of Arts and Sciences, Curriculum Committee, and School of Communications wouldn’t go for it; our student population wouldn’t embrace it; and it just wasn’t who we were as a faculty.

Michael: Here’s something that we can laugh about now. At first, the dean wanted Tim or me to take a course release and teach ourselves about the field of digital rhetoric, but with an exchange of uneasy glances and some fancy dancing, we quickly nixed that. Neither of us had the time or professional aspirations to do this. Plus, that wouldn’t help us grow the program. In addition to convincing the dean that one of us couldn’t simply “pick up” this need, we convinced him that a hire in digital rhetoric would open the English department’s technological horizons, something he was keen to do in a number of departments.

Tim: We would have never expected this when we developed this position, but one of the horizons created by this hire ended up being an extension of PWR “English” classes into a new minor. When the IT school idea was nixed, the focus went towards developing some “technology intensive” minors, and you [turning to Paula] became a key player in the Multimedia Authoring minor, which has brought us some interesting new students—I have two in my class this term—and interesting new linkages across campus.
Second Hire:

Michael: The second hire for the new PWR concentration was less about trying to move the concentration in a particular direction and more about grabbing a chance at a new line: the business school needed more business writing teachers and we were asked to help fill this need. At first we resisted their request because, again, they wanted Tim or me to “pick up” this need. But then we reconsidered this as a fruitful opportunity; we could craft a position that would cover two to three business writing courses per year and bring in a new person to help grow the PWR curriculum. With links to the Business School, we figured we also might draw in more students. So we crafted a business writing position and waited to see what else the candidates had to offer.

Tim: We searched for this hybrid business writing/PWR position for two years. In the first year, our candidate accepted another position for a lot more money, a fact that we seized upon. We researched figures on starting salaries and shared listserv emails about starting salaries with the dean to argue that we needed to offer more money to our job candidates.

Michael: In the second year of searching for this hybrid position, we connected the position a little less to business writing because the English department’s relationship with the business writing course was changing, which reduced the demand. What drew us to the candidate we eventually hired was her expertise in freshman composition and assessment. While she taught business writing courses, she also contributed assessment expertise to our EYC program. She also seemed likely to fulfill some of our earlier ideas about bringing advertising experience to the curriculum, since she had some work experience and connections in the entertainment industry.

Tim: The Business department eventually dissolved the link between English and business writing as they chose to staff all of their business communication classes with their own faculty. This left us with a faculty line all our own.

Third hire:

Paula: I was more involved with constructing the third line in PWR. I remember that we were brainstorming different possibilities, and one person was rather attached to a TESOL/linguistics position, although the rest of us were skeptical about whether there was such a need in our concentration, the
Some people argued for a very different kind of position: a history/theory of rhetoric position.

Tim: Right. But in the end, we decided on a TESOL position for a variety of reasons: it was important to one of our colleagues, we knew that the rest of the department would support it because the position didn’t sound too high-tech or too hard-core PWR, and it would provide job and travel opportunities for our students.

Michael: And we figured that while there may be no candidates who would fit perfectly, we would search for someone who had TESOL experience and was also grounded in rhetoric. Luckily for us, we found a real gem, a perfect fit.

Fourth hire:

Michael: So how should we define this new faculty line?

Tim: Here are some of the ways I’ve begun thinking about it: We have so much on our plates, what could someone new do? Or if one of us were to choose to drop something, what would we choose to drop and what sort of person would we need to fill that void? What weaknesses have our outside portfolio reviewers seen in our students that might be addressed through this hire? I’ve been thinking that we need some sort of outreach project-management person. Each of us has been heavily involved with service-learning, client projects, and internships, but we don’t have the time to develop these into ongoing larger projects, and we’re really not the right people for this work.

Paula: That’s a good point. We always meant for C.U.P.I.D. [the Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design] to act as a space for PWR students to work on real-world ongoing projects, but that hasn’t taken off because none of us has had the time or inclination. And what you’ve said highlights that we could really use a “point” person who organizes and keeps track of service-learning or client projects, so they don’t have to be limited to just a term.

Michael: What you two are suggesting would help us fulfill our PWR mission statement, which emphasizes the practice of rhetoric as a worldly art.

Paula: OK, the previous two hires in PWR were defined by looking at our curriculum and thinking about how we could fill gaps or grow the curriculum.
But for this next position, it looks like we’re talking a lot about our PWR mission statement and how a new hire could help us fulfill it better. This is actually a completely different way of approaching faculty hiring.

**Michael:** I think this has a lot to do with our new curriculum. Even though we can’t yet effectively cover our new curriculum, we have essentially created a complete curriculum, one that we are no longer focused on growing, like the old one.

**Reflection on Scenario 1: Building a Faculty and Curriculum**

Throughout this scenario, the curriculum is presented as a “proper place” from which we could act strategically to build a faculty, among other efforts. And we refer to the curriculum in chronological terms as something that stretches out before us, beyond any of us. But the scenario also shows the gaps that make that singular definition of the curriculum false. The PWR curriculum, as well as the faculty, has grown as much as a result of strategic planning and in chronological time as it has grown from tactical action and kairotic time.

As revealed in the first hire discussion, the original PWR curriculum was not the result of clean-slate, curricular design and strategic planning. In fact, because there was essentially no concentration, we were essentially placeless. To develop the original curriculum and begin a concentration in PWR, we had to be *bricoleurs*. We took existing courses from a “writing concentration” that existed only in name, some information about alumni and student interests, and declining numbers of English majors to create and argue for what we refer to as a minimalist concentration. Even when that concentration was in place in its first iteration, we had only a general sense of what courses would fill out the curriculum as we “grew” it. For instance, we imagined working with our first hire to develop some courses focused on digital rhetorics, and although we had general titles in our imaginations and in curricular sketches (such as “Writing for the Web”), the kairotic moments that were to come had as much influence on the courses that are now in our curriculum as any chronological visions. One of our now standard courses, “Writing, Rhetoric, and Interface Design,” was designed in response to a new interdisciplinary minor in Multimedia Authoring and took a shape that we could not have predicted as it went through re-articulation with a variety of other departments and our university-wide curriculum committee. “The curriculum” as a strategic, proper place has been as much of a fiction as a reality for programmatic planning and institutional action, for there are times when we perceive and present it (or *choose* to perceive and present it) as a proper
place in order to assume a strategic, chronological stance. In this way, the placelessness of the curriculum limited, but did not determine, institutional action. Looking back, we see that one can assume a strategic position and a chronological view *as strategy*, even though one may indeed be relatively placeless.

Though less obvious in our narrative, we see after reflection that we have also assumed placelessness as a tactical move even when we had the proper place of the curriculum from which to act strategically. In the case of our second hire—the business writing hire—we constructed an argument for a new line based on a need that had no stable, proper place. At that time, we could not argue that we had the students or courses in PWR to justify a new line, but in order to seize the opportunity for a new line, we located ourselves and the position in the liminal space between departments and schools. We did not pursue this new line strategically, in terms of the proper place of our curriculum or anything else, and we did not act within a chronology that stretched backwards and forwards in some clear way. We simply seized the opportunity and tactically built what arguments we could for a line that eventually—opportunistically—ended up dedicated completely to PWR.

In the previous case of the business writing hire, the opportunity arose and we seized it. Thus, we assumed a tactical stance because time dictated we do so. In a later phase of our curricular and programmatic development, we also assumed a tactical stance, one based on placelessness, but we did so very strategically. Our recent (2006) curriculum revisions were the result of an effort we began in 2004 to change the English major core, a very traditional literature core that ate up almost all of the credits in the major. Relative to the core and to an English department faculty dominated by literature specialists, PWR had little if any “place to stand” to change the English major core. The PWR curriculum wouldn’t be considered by colleagues a strategic place from which to argue for an English major change, and PWR faculty held little to no proper place within a core curriculum dominated by literature courses. Still, PWR needed more curricular space if it were to ever become a solid concentration. So, PWR faculty strategically gave up their one proper place—the PWR curriculum—as their site of action to tactically pursue a revision in the English major core. Rather than assume any one stable position, PWR faculty argued for changes from a wide variety of positions. A radically reduced English major core was adopted by the department, giving PWR (as well as the other concentrations) much more room to develop curricula. And as a result of this room to develop a more “proper place,” in terms of curricula, PWR has found itself arguing for new lines in different ways, as is reflected in the final part of the scenario.
For curricula and for building of new faculty lines, *chronos* and *kairos*, and strategy and tactic have been crucial to development. An ability to stand before time and act strategically has led to significant changes, but seizing opportune moments and acting tactically have also been crucial. Yet, both strategy and tactic are not merely outgrowths of place and time. A proper place, in terms of space and place, does not limit one to strategic action in chronological time; one can strategically assume a tactical stance within streams of kairotic time. At the same time, placelessness does not force one into dependence on tactics and kairotic time; one can construct a proper place, even if a partial fiction, from which to act and from which to view/approach time chronologically.

**Scenario 2: Building a Physical Space**

All PWR classes, a number of first-year writing, and a few other English classes are taught in a computer-networked space called C.U.P.I.D. (Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design). This networked space, one of only a handful at Elon not available as an open lab and reserved almost exclusively for a single department, has become identified with, and in some senses synonymous with, PWR’s identity. A chronological series of key “moments” below narrate the development of this space.

**First Moment:**

From: Tim Peeples  
Sent: April 21, 2000 11:26 AM  
To: Michael Strickland  
Subject: Five Year Plan ideas

Hey Michael—

I was thinking more about this five-year plan we need to create for PWR to include in the departmental five-year plan. We’ve talked about the need for a stable computer space for our students to do their work outside of class, one that would give them a place to commune and create a sense of identity (as we’ve seen happen at Clemson and Purdue), and maybe a big classroom (so I don’t have to keep finding an open lab whenever I want one for my class!) . . . though we both doubt we’d get the funds to get a nicely equipped computer classroom dedicated to us. Whatever we think might be possible, this might be an item to put in our five-year plan. What d’ya think?

Tim
Makes sense! Hell, we’re supposed to dream big, right? Our students will need such a space to get any solid work done on the sorts of projects we’re assigning and hoping to assign in future classes. Right now, only the Mac labs in communications offer the suite of software our students need, and they’re full-up with comm students.

You know I’m a Mac guy, and I know you’ve been both Mac and PC. Even though it pains me to say it, we should try to outfit this space with both so our students learn to work across platforms.

I’ll add it to our five-year planning notes.

M

Second Moment:

[Outside of Tim’s Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Center Director office in the library]

Tim: Hey, Michael. Thanks for dropping by. I wanted to have you look at something and get your feedback.

Michael: Sure. What is it?

Tim: This little study room next to my office. Space is so limited around here, and we keep banging our heads trying to figure out where we might put this DDL [Document Design Lab] we’ve been thinking about. Well, I sort of have control of this study room, and I’m thinking it might be big enough to outfit as the DDL.

Michael: It’s much smaller than I was imagining for the DDL, but it’s space. Yeah. I could imagine instead of this one table and table-top extending around the edge, and . . .
Tim: Yeah, that's the sort of thing I was imagining, too. A printer could go there . . .

Michael: . . . and a scanner there, plus a couple of dry erase boards. Sure.

Tim: And this is a pretty cool spot for it. This place out here where all the computers are is hopping at night, and our students would have their own little place right off of it, with a window onto all the action.

**Third Moment:**

Before the spring term of 2001, the English department chair convinced the dean and the IT folks (who were the recipients of a huge budget increase as part of a university-wide technology enhancement priority) to turn a tiered classroom into a dedicated English department laptop lab. A year later, Tim and the department chair were both on a building renovation committee and were pushing to move the laptop lab into a more appropriate space; the tiered classroom with bolted chairs made collaboration and any kind of movement very difficult. At one point in the process, Tim and the chair were invited to a meeting by the top IT people in another large tiered classroom in the building, where they led a brainstorming activity to discover what sort of space they might like to have. Though Tim and the chair figured they would be lucky to retain a dedicated laptop lab, just in a more effective space, they went ahead and let loose with blue-sky ideas and laughed about it afterwards.

**Fourth Moment:**

**Joe (director of computer classroom services):** [yelling across a quad] Tim. Wait up . . . I've got some pictures I want to show you and some ideas I want to talk with you about.

Tim: What's up, Joe?

Joe: We just got back from visiting a number of campuses around the country that have leading-edge computer classroom spaces. While we were away, Jim and Chris [the directors of Academic Computing and Information Technology, respectively] and I got to talking about the ideas you were talking about for your computer classroom. There are only a few people on campus who
would really do anything creative and get good use out of such a classroom, and we kept coming back to you, your writing classes, and the ideas you’ve been throwing around.

Tim: Really? That’s cool.

Joe: So, I wanted to show you some pictures of computer classrooms. I only have a couple here, but I could send you the others when I get back to my office, if you’d be interested.

Tim: You bet!

Joe: You know how you were talking about a collaborative table design with individual screens and then a big shared screen? Well, we saw this huge plasma screen approach being used at one place, but they only had one table with it. Do you think this sort of thing could work?

Tim: That would be awesome, Joe. You say you had other pictures?

Joe: Yeah. Let me get them to you, and we can talk about this some more.

Fifth Moment:

A year later, in the fall of 2003, one room in the newly renovated English building was abuzz with carpenters and technology folks fitting and re-fitting custom-sized tabletops, wires, and plasma stands. After the provost and dean walked by (rather by chance) one day and talked with Tim about this new classroom, the university president caught wind of it and saw it—as well as a new digital art lab and a new theater technology classroom—as an example of technological enhancements that also enhanced the engaged pedagogies the school emphasized and prided itself on. That fall, the dean asked Tim, as well as a few others on campus, to give a few mini-classes during weekend events to parents, campus leaders, and trustee members to show off such high-tech spaces and to illustrate what engaged learning feels like. In preparation for the first of these events, the president’s office called Tim and asked, “What is the name of the lab you’re teaching in? We don’t want to just call it ‘the English lab.’” “Well, we have started thinking of some names,” Tim stretched, “but I’d have to work on it a day or two to finalize that.” Two days later, a plaque was being put outside the door with the name “C.U.P.I.D.: Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design,” and a week after that,
the president spent ten minutes of a 25-minute speech to new parents talking about and showing pictures of C.U.P.I.D.

**Reflection on Scenario 3: Building a Physical Space**

In moments 1 and 2, Tim and Michael both approach program development from the sense of chronological time, and their plans and calls for action are guided by strategy. Because the PWR concentration has to write a five-year plan, they strategize that they are going to take advantage of this administrative "hoop" and ask for something they've only dreamt about up until now: a computer-classroom that will give PWR students a place to work on projects outside of class and a more cohesive sense of community and identity. While neither Tim nor Michael seems particularly conscious that they are working from a strategic position, their discussion is dominated by the opportunity to plan ahead: not only will they request this computer-classroom space, but they might as well ask for both Macs and PCs so that students learn to work across platforms. Tim later assumes a more intentionally strategic stance in moment 2 when he invites Michael over to his office in order to examine a possible space for a wished-for Document Design Lab.

In moments 3 and 4, the programmatic development of PWR veers off into a realm dominated by kairos. While the English department chair and Tim attend a meeting that was planned in advance, they both seize the opportunity of having the undivided attention of the IT people and "let loose with blue-sky ideas" that even they think are so outlandish that they laugh about it afterwards. While strategically the chair and Tim hoped to only have the laptop lab relocated to a more appropriate space, they found themselves taking a tactical stance in a very particular time: as long as they had the attention of IT, they asked for the moon.

While Tim may not have realized that he was taking advantage of kairotic moments in moments 3 and 4, this rhetorical heuristic helps us understand how his response to these "off the cuff" moments contributed to C.U.P.I.D.'s creation. What we learn from moment 4 is that even encounters that are yelled across the campus quad can become integral moments in writing program development. Having just returned from visiting technologically-enhanced classrooms across the country, Joe is excited to share with Tim that the PWR concentration has repeatedly been identified as a program that would take advantage of similar resources. Joe remembered Tim's previous comments about a collaborative table design with individual screens and one large screen, and offers the alternative of one huge plasma screen with one table. Again Tim assures Joe that he is interested in this alternative design and invites Joe to engage him in further discussions.
Finally, in moment 5, Tim works from spaces dominated almost entirely by *kairos* and tactic. This story recaps several moments that occur in informal spaces and that offered Tim fleeting “windows of time” in which to act: the provost and dean walk by as the new computer-classroom is actually being built and converse briefly with Tim; the president hears about this new technologically-enhanced classroom (possibly from the provost or dean), about how Tim will give a “mini-class” in this high-tech space to parents, campus leaders, and trustees and asks Tim if the space has a more interesting name other than “the English lab.” Although he probably was not aware of this at the time, Tim captures this fleeting time and situation by telling the president that, while alternative names have been “discussed” (a stretch at best), he’d need a few more days before a final decision could be made. This is a perfect example of how tactical space and tactical action offer mobility: by acting as if a formal name was already being discussed and could be finalized at any moment, Tim “seize[d] on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment” (de Certeau 37), and two days later, a plaque with the name “C.U.P.I.D.” is hung outside the classroom’s door and the president dedicates almost half of his speech to parents discussing this space.

But even though this scenario is dominated by kairos and tactic, there is at least one moment that took place in chronological time and in which Tim acted strategically: when Tim agreed to the dean’s request to teach a mini-class to publicize the computer-classroom’s capabilities. While he could not have known it at the time, this strategic action may have very well been integral for creating the fleeting kairotic moments Tim tactically acted on later in the scenario.

**CONCLUSION**

Being aware of time and timing can help guide us towards making more informed decisions about programmatic action, about whether we should act strategically or tactically in particular situations. For example, we are guided to remember that there are times dominated by *chronos* which provide us with the benefit of speaking/acting from formal and defined spaces or, in other words, from positions of power (for example, as concentration coordinator or program director) and which call upon practice guided by strategy and strategic thinking (such as five-year plans and assessment reports). Conversely, we are guided to remember not to underestimate the impact that kairotic moments and undefined spaces can have on program identity. Through this reflective process, we have come to see that important writing program developments have often taken place in moments requiring on-the-spot tactical action and decisions.

72 *Composition Studies*
Nevertheless, our reflective, theorizing process has reminded us that program development cannot be approached with an essentialized sense of time or action. Instead, those involved with composing writing programs should use this framework as a way to consider deliberately their place in time and, accordingly, make appropriate decisions about what kinds of action to take. Since programmatic design takes place in both chronological and kairotic time and requires both strategic and tactical action, and while certain situations may be dominated by a certain kind of time and action, there are many points of overlap and even contradiction. And sometimes, a given situation may fluctuate erratically between different kinds of time, which in turn requires a fluctuation between different kinds of action. In other words, though appropriate action should be responsive to the space and time of one’s context, action is not determined by space and time. Once we become aware of such points of overlap and variability, we become better equipped to understand our contexts and options, and thus to act strategically.

In writing program administration literature—in which we include the development and “administration” of writing minors, concentrations, majors, and advanced degree programs—it has become commonplace to point out that programs and their administration are locally situated, institutionally specific. As a result, recipes and rulebooks for program development mislead, at best. What then can be useful? From before the development of formal organizations like CCCC, WPA, ATTW, and CPTSG, one very clear answer to that question has been story-sharing. In fact, sharing stories about programs, classroom teaching ideas, and assignments led to the formation of several, if not all, of these formal organizations. Building a storehouse of knowledge, which includes stories or “cases,” is one powerful way to help agents more consciously develop their local, institution-specific programs. Although something akin to it was probably always already a part of the story-sharing process of program developers, administrators, and composition instructors, “theorizing” has been recognized as a crucial part of what can help us act in our local contexts. Theorizing can most simply be understood as the process of reflecting on and reflecting in action (Weiser and Rose). “Without theorizing,” Irwin Weiser and Shirley K. Rose argue, “there are only isolated practices and actions, only situations requiring action. Without theorizing,” they go on to say, “we lose the opportunity to understand our situations, our work, our actions as informed rather than random or idiosyncratic” (192).

In the context of these traditions that our discipline’s larger community of faculty, curricular designers, and administrators have found valuable to the institution-specific work of program development, we have shared some stories significant to our own program’s development. As stated earlier, we have used the terms chronos, kairos, strategy, and tactic to frame the way
we tell the story of PWR’s developing identity at Elon, and in so doing, we offer to the readers a framework for identity development that is portable across contexts. The scenarios, or stories, themselves have heuristic value as they are integrated into the work of thinking about/through new situations and different contexts. The chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic framework is a second and complementary kind of heuristic that also helps us think through and reflect on our work. Already, we have put into action both of these heuristics. More conscious, careful reflection on the stories of our own program development has helped us think through other issues that have arisen as we were writing this piece. And the chronos/kairos, strategy/tactic framework has already become part of our shared language, helping us make sense of current situations, plan future action, and guide current actions. We argue that chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic is a powerful heuristic framework not only because it reminds us that we write and re-write our programs, but also because it facilitates the recursive invention process of such program development.

NOTES

1 Our PWR program is now built around a common set of four concentration courses, but individualized through a set of three electives carefully selected by students in consultation with their PWR advisor. Additional flexibility is achieved through the pursuit of internships and an individually designed “cognate” (an area of specialization, possibly a minor) outside of the major. The aim is to give students the flexibility to construct an educational experience that matches their interests while also ensuring a firm disciplinary foundation.

Just as PWR students are active in developing their studies, they are regularly engaged in hands-on work that challenges them to actively learn, implement, and reflect on course content, both inside the classroom and out. Many programmatic features support this hands-on, active-learning approach:

• PWR courses are taught within C.U.P.I.D. (the Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design), a computer-classroom designed to place at one’s fingertips the tools of the trade, while also supporting hands-on, active, collaborative learning.

• PWR courses include active, creative, problem-solving assignments and projects ranging from simulated case studies to real-world client projects.

• In addition to traditional “classroom courses,” students are highly encouraged to include internships as part of their coursework.
• PWR students take, in addition to four English major core courses, the following:
  • English 215: Introduction to Professional Writing and Rhetoric
  • English 304: Understanding Rhetoric
  • English 397: Writing as Inquiry
  • English 497: Researching Writing: PWR Senior Seminar
  • Three English* electives (when appropriate and with advisor's approval, students may select electives from outside of the English Department)
    — one introductory (200-level) English* course
    — one advanced (300-level) English* course
    — one PWR advanced topics course (ENG 411, offered every fall) or a four semester hour PWR internship [double-concentration students are exempt from this third elective]

WORKS CITED
Baumlin, James S. “Ciceronian Decorum and the Temporalities of Renaissance Rhetoric.” Sipiora and Baumlin 138-64.


Smith, John E. “Time and Qualitative Time.” Sipiora and Baumlin 46-57.

Copyright of Composition Studies is the property of Composition Studies and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.