From Page to Program: A Study of Stakeholders in Multimodal First-Year Composition Curriculum and Program Design

Rebecca Petitti

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2

Part of the Rhetoric and Composition Commons

Recommended Citation

Petitti, Rebecca, "From Page to Program: A Study of Stakeholders in Multimodal First-Year Composition Curriculum and Program Design" (2020). Doctoral Dissertations. 1922.
https://doi.org/10.7275/17225305 https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1922

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
From Page to Program: A Study of Stakeholders in Multimodal First-Year Composition Curriculum and Program Design

A Dissertation Presented

by

REBECCA L. PETITTI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2020

English
DEDICATION

To Spencer:
Thank you for your everlasting encouragement and continued belief in me. I could not have done this without your love and support.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my wonderful chair and mentor, Rebecca Dingo. Our UMass journeys started at the same time, and I cannot imagine getting through this program without your support, encouragement, and mentoring. Thank you for listening to my goals and helping me achieve them, all while supporting my love of stress-baking.

To David Fleming: I remember meeting you during my post-acceptance visit to UMass, and it was your Fall 2015 Rhetorics of Place class that helped me make the decision to attend UMass. I am grateful for your mentorship throughout coursework, always pushing me to think more deeply and become a more critical thinker and writer.

To Claire Hamilton: I cannot imagine my future career and choices without your guidance and support (like telling me to go to POD!). Working with you on the General Education Council is truly one of my fondest memories from UMass. I have learned so much from you about how to foster relationships and get things done. Thank you for honesty, always, and your support. I look forward to continuing working with you as I begin my own career in educational development.

To the CompRhet Faculty not on my committee, I could not have done this without all of your support and guidance. Whether getting feedback in coursework, at CompShare, or all of the informal advising you all do regularly, thank you so much. I am so proud to be coming out of this program and feel so fortunate to have worked with all of you. And to my fellow UMass CompRhet Grad Students – thank you all so, so much. From in-class discussions that helped shape my thinking, your feedback during peer review projects, and all of the “informal” opportunities in between. I am who I am as a teacher and scholar because of my interactions and engagements with all of you.
To the Writing Program Staff: thank you all for your continued support and cheerleading. I’m so grateful to know that I have you all cheering me on when things get hard. I have enjoyed working with you all and learning from you throughout my time here. I will miss all of the informal chats whether in the Du Bois hallways or by the copier.

To the OAPA office, you all have introduced me to completely new fields of work and I have learned SO much collaborating with you all. I am so thankful for the tremendous opportunity I was given to have been a part of this office for three years. I cannot imagine a better place to have spent more than half of my UMass career. I will miss the excitement and projects, and of course, our monthly party time with OIR!

Speaking of OAPA, Sarah Stetson. Girl, I will miss working right next to you; from sharing our beautiful Windows screen savers, bullying each other to take actual lunch breaks, or just being able to vent about our worries. No office environment will ever be as dear to me. Please do expect regular texts asking about the date (September 2009, man!) or random pictures of cats and, of course, Windows Screen Saver photos. You have made my UMass experience so memorable, and I will miss you so much.

I cannot forget all of those not at UMass who are the reason I’m here. Sarah Payne – you helped me push my way through my MA at Northeastern. I really don’t think I could have stuck through that without your friendship. I’m so lucky to have you (and Ian, and of course, Esme!) in my life. Gio and Jake: you two also saw me through some of the hardest times during my first year at Northeastern and beyond. I love our random Facebook messages, which always come at the right time, when I’m at my most stressed, and never fail to put a smile on my face.
Susan! You have truly seen me through it ALL. From Bridgewater to Northeastern, to now. I am so lucky to have a friend like you, who I can be my truest self with and who is always there. Our shared love of musical theater and long talks to 3am have really gotten me through these past…10 years?! I look forward to having even more time for shows and movies with you. And I cannot forget to thank your entire family, who is always there to listen, to care, and to cheer me on. Your kitchen stools are always the place to let my worries go and move forward.

Mom and Dad: you’ve always wanted what’s best for me and have supported whatever makes me happy. You instilled a love of reading in me early on (Dr. Seuss, big blue book!) and here I am now, finishing my PhD in English. Thank you both for your love and support. You are my sunshines.

And last, but certainly NOT least, Spencer and my cats. (Spencer, I told you they were getting a shout out!) I could not possibly have persisted or finished this without the purrs and cuddles from my two favorite kitties, Rusty and Margaret. And Spencer: I don’t even have the words (and I’ve clearly written a lot of words!) to thank you for everything. From cooking me new foods to ruining your YouTube suggestions with my KPop Dance videos, you always know exactly what I need to keep going. Every time I thought about quitting or said I couldn’t do this, it was you who kept pushing me and supporting me. I may have done the work, but this dissertation would not exist without you. I am so lucky to have a partner as supportive, encouraging, and PATIENT as you. From high school to here, there is nobody I’d rather share my journey with. And nobody who I can thank more for this.
ABSTRACT

FROM PAGE TO PROGRAM: A STUDY OF STAKEHOLDERS IN MULTIMODAL FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM DESIGN

MAY 2020

REBECCA L. PETITTI, B.A., BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
M.A., NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Rebecca Dingo

Much of the writing we do today, whether for class, work, or personal engagement, relies on some form of media. Whether a computer to draft assignments, or smartphones to post on social media, technology has solidified its presence within our everyday writing experiences. Over the past two decades, as media has asserted its role in spaces outside of the classroom, its intersection with education, and composition classrooms specifically, has become more pronounced. These intersections have required that writing scholars, teachers, and writing program administrators (WPAs) remain attentive to the changing shape and modalities of composition. Responses to this include a wealth of research on the impact of changing composing technologies, as well as shared Outcomes Statements and position papers that offer guidelines for how administrators and teachers might incorporate multimodality into their writing curricula and classrooms. While these statements offer the language of objectives and outcomes, what they don’t support is the practical reality of making multimodality happen. What is a WPA to do?

My dissertation is a qualitative study of first-year composition curriculum and writing program design at five public research universities that argues for targeted engagement with key stakeholders to develop inclusive, multimodal curricula. My
findings suggest that there are three primary stakeholders that WPAs must engage to enact multimodal curricula: undergraduate students, first-year composition teachers, institutional administrators. I present a model for engaging with each level of stakeholder that is adaptable across institutional contexts based on my findings. This model illustrates how WPAs might embrace multimodal curricula to support writing instruction for the twenty-first century across various stakeholder levels. I analyze the factors that enable or inhibit multimodal curricular design, and argue for WPAs to consider how remediation assignments better position students for multimodal transfer; to assess if and how their training programs intentionally reflect their programmatic curricular goals; and lastly, to mobilize their institutional mission statements to access resources and support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. WHAT’S A WPA TO DO?: AN INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers in Composition: Literature Review</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access: Physical and Abstract</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Instruction and Multimodal Literacy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching Students in the First Year</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s a WPA to Do?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic Research and Adaptability of the Model</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Outlines</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. METHODS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situating the Researcher</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Selection</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Research Universities</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Recruitment</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYC Curricula Across the Programs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMass</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UConn</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded Theory Framework</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Corpus Collection</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Coding: Initial Coding</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mobilizing Missions .............................................................................................................. 119
FSU and Making the Most of Tech .............................................................................. 119
Miami’s Use of Innovative Initiatives ........................................................................ 120
UConn, GEOC, and Cross-Campus Networking .................................................... 123

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 125

6. MOVING FROM PAGE TO PROGRAM: CONCLUSION AND
IMPLICATIONS ............................................................................................................ 130

Some Unfounded Hypotheses ....................................................................................... 132
UConn and the Steelcase Active Learning Classroom Grant .................................. 133
Ohio State’s Digital Flagship Initiative ......................................................................... 134

Moving Forward .............................................................................................................. 137

APPENDICES

A. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL .................................................................. 141
B. CONSENT FORM ..................................................................................................... 142
C. DEDOOSE .................................................................................................................. 145
D. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .......................................................................................... 146
E. R CODE FOR CHAPTER 5 DATA ........................................................................... 147
F. R PROGRAMMING “STOP WORDS” ....................................................................... 148
G. INSTITUTIONAL MISSION STATEMENTS .............................................................. 150
H. WORD CLOUDS (NOT USED IN CH. 5) ................................................................. 152
I. UCONN WAT TIMELINE INFOGRAPHIC ............................................................... 154
J. UCONN ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM MODEL ........................................... 160

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................ 161
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1: Case Study Institutions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2: Textual Corpus Materials (by Institution)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3: Dedoose Descriptor Data (by Institution)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4: Initial Coding Schema</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5: Focused Coding Schema (Additions)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1: Sample Remediation-style Assignments</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1: Teacher Training Programs (By Institution)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1: Institutional Strategic Plan Data</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1: Stakeholder Model representing thematic relationships</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1: Example of UConn’s multimodal program communication</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1: FSU Strategic Plan Word Cloud</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2: UConn Strategic Plan Word Cloud</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3: Coding Patterns + Co-Occurrences from Strategic Plans</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4: Commonality Cloud of the 40 most frequently shared terms across 5 strategic plans</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
WHAT’S A WPA TO DO?: AN INTRODUCTION

Create podcasts based on your previous research essays using Audacity software. Write a post in a public forum about a specific topic of interest (one student received over 100+ comments!). Create a satirical research project modeled after John Oliver’s “How is This Still a Thing?” segment on HBO’s Last Week Tonight using video editing software.

The opening lines above illustrate some of the innovative, multimodal projects that are assigned in a First-Year Composition (FYC) course. These assignments challenge students to conceptualize writing beyond the classroom setting, and to consider the important role that technology plays in 21st century composition. They challenge students to compose for “real” audiences, and in modes that reflect the different kinds of writing they will do in their professional and personal lives beyond FYC. Yet, despite the increasing ubiquity of digital technologies in and outside of the classroom, from laptops and smartphones, to wearable “smart” devices, consensus about the allowance for these devices in the college classroom is hard to find.

As I detail further below, popular opinion pieces decrying the use of technology in the classroom cycle through publications every couple of months. And yet, despite their cyclical presence, these arguments lamenting the loss of pen and paper never really offer anything all that new. The same studies are re-cited, the same concerns are replayed, and the same defenses are called into action. Writing this dissertation, the most recent article I could find on this topic was published as an Inside HigherEd Opinion piece in November 2019. What was presented as a truce to laptop bans, an instructor grappling with both sides of the argument and working to reach an understanding, was ultimately just another general “ban”; the “truce” of this piece was that students could use laptops in class only if they could either: a) present an accommodation or b) make a compelling argument (one-on-one during the instructor’s office hours) about their need for a laptop. Unsurprisingly, zero
students argued for using laptops in class (Nowak). Additionally, the comments on this particular article offered no shortage of agreement with laptop bans, often pointing to the unfairness of laptops in class, citing faculty’s inability to compete with the internet and its many distractions. While this piece was presented as a compromise, it remains yet another version of the recycled arguments made for banning technology in all its forms in college classrooms.

Two years earlier, in November 2017, Susan Dynarski published “Laptops are Great. But Not During a Lecture or a Meeting” in The New York Times. Her claim, that “The research is unequivocal: Laptops distract from learning, both for users and for those around them,” reinforces her classroom ban on electronics, which was met with support and criticism across the Internet (1). On Twitter, hundreds of members of the academic community took up arguments both in opposition to and in favor of Dynarski’s piece. Beth McMurtie’s “Should Laptops Be Banned in Class? An Op-Ed Fires up the Debate,” published in The Chronicle of Higher Education in January 2018, provides an overview of these responses. McMurtie categorizes the responses into “camps,” including those who blame students’ distraction on lecture styles rather than something inherent to technology, to those who take issue with Dynarski’s seeming disregard for students with learning disabilities. Dynarski noted that she allows exceptions for students with learning disabilities, while also acknowledging that such an exception forces students to reveal their disabilities. She justifies this choice, commenting that “[t]hose negatives must be weighed against the losses of other students when laptops are used in class” (2). Her critics see laptop bans, both generally and Dynarski’s more specifically, as disproportionately affecting students with accommodations, as these bans either require students to publicly
disclose their disability or force students to go without the necessary accommodations they need to learn. And while these debates unfold nationally, across social media and in various higher education publications, they are reflective of larger feelings towards students’ development of digital and technological literacies.

Now, I do not argue that all courses, in every discipline, should emphasize technological literacy. Nor would I argue that we, as teachers or administrators, should blindly adopt digital curricula across the board without any critical reasoning and support. But, as technology continues to evolve, the way we communicate, both orally and in writing, will continue to change. As educators, we are responsible for preparing students to participate in these new forms of global, and often digital, communication. It is from this broader national context, wrapped up in laptop ban debates and my own perceived sense of responsibility, that I began and continue this research.

Since their first introduction into college classrooms, as early as 1976\(^1\), there has remained a subset of Composition and Rhetoric scholars attentive to the impact that computers and changing technology has had on composition and broader communicative practices. However, despite the wealth of multimodal research, its enactment on college campuses varies greatly across classrooms, programs, and departments. This dissertation offers a deeper study into why these differences exist, ultimately offering an actionable framework for multimodal curricular enactment by Writing Program Administrators (WPAs).

---

Although I originally intended to emphasize the role of Composition and Rhetoric scholarship in curricular design throughout this study, with a focus on the specific studies and/or scholars that enable or influence multimodal curriculum, my research and subsequent findings suggest that more important are the relationships that WPAs foster with key stakeholders across campus: undergraduate students, teachers, and institutional administrators. Through explicit and focused engagement with each of these stakeholders, WPAs can find the sources of support they need to enact multimodal curricular change at the programmatic level. Based on my findings, I offer a model of engagement with each of these stakeholders, considering each stakeholder as both individual groups and interconnected actors. Using this model, WPAs can find potential opportunities and pathways to enacting their own curricular change. Flexible and adaptable to differing contexts, this model can be used by WPAs to identify their needs and the best way of bringing about change in their own programs. While the specific methods may differ, and the approaches may shift, the key stakeholders I identify are universal to all institutional contexts.

**Computers in Composition: Literature Review**

Despite the cyclical calls for technology bans within college classrooms, scholars in Composition and Rhetoric, especially those at the intersections of computers and writing, have maintained the necessity for approaches to writing that engage students in digital and/or multimodal composing. The computers and writing subfield was officially

---

2 In this subfield, scholars have argued about choosing the “right” term. While digital and multimodal are sometimes used synonymously, I prefer “multimodal” as it embraces non-digital, non-print means of composing. For instance, a collage of images can be multimodal without being digital. I embrace this term as it encapsulates different ways of meaning making. Nonetheless, the many functions of digital technologies often means that multimodal is, in some way, connected to the digital.
established as early as 1983, which marked the publication of the first issue of *Computers and Composition* and the beginning of the annual Computers and Writing conference. One important undertaking of scholars in this subfield has been the study and critique of the changing nature of writing over time, brought on in part by the introduction of new technologies. This research, in addition to inspiring decades of scholarship and classroom practices, has played a pivotal role in the development and support of national frameworks and guiding principles for composition curricula, especially FYC. In the following sections, I address the breadth of approaches to computers and writing scholarship, highlighting *some* of the scholarly niches in this field.

**Access: Physical and Abstract**

With any discussion of technology, it is imperative to remain attentive to issues of equity and access. This might mean considering what types of technology students can access, to thinking critically about *how* students engage with these technologies. In her oft-cited 1999 CCCC’s article “Technology and Literacy: A Story about the Perils of Not Paying Attention,” Cynthia Selfe contends that “we [teachers of writing] can no longer simply educate students to become technology users—and consumers—without also helping them learn how to become critical thinkers about technology and the social issues surrounding its use” (431–32). Across college campuses, students are asked to use technology in any number of ways: from composing in a word processor, participating in a learning management system, or working with other (sometimes more sophisticated) digital tools and software. As such, is it teachers’ responsibility to ensure that students are critically aware of their engagement. Otherwise, by ignoring technology and refusing to acknowledge its effects on the writing classroom, teachers risk “[unwitting participation]
in the inequitable literacy system,” a system that they are committed to improving (Selfe 429). Selfe’s advocacy for this explicit instruction and engagement with technology is likewise reflected by scholars focused on building equitable classrooms and curricula.

When computers were first introduced, their high costs made them unique to those schools with larger budgets, which often intersected with race and class, meaning only those who already held privileged places in society could access technology’s potential benefits (Banks; Hawisher et al.; Selber; Selfe). As technological innovations led to lower costs which increased physical access to technology, research around issues of access also evolved, with scholars suggesting layered notions of access. While prior research on access was primarily focused on physical access, with questions directed at better understanding who could even access physical computers, this layered approach helped reconceptualize the discussion from a sole focus on material access to include concerns about access to the skills and literacies needed to use these tools. In 2004, Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe proposed three levels of access: the “macrolevel,” considering the impact of larger social, political, and economic factors on a person’s access to computers; the “medial level” serving as an intermediary stage with access drawn from a person’s interactions with various “institutions, organizations, and professions”; and lastly, the “microlevel” focusing more on each individual person’s experiences and “conditions” that impact access (673–74). While Hawisher and Selfe’s levels include direct physical access, they also require we pay attention to the more ideological factors (e.g.: larger political and economic forces) that must be considered when talking about a person’s access to and interactions with computers.
Two years later, in his 2006 book *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, Adam Banks proposed a new five-layer access model. Banks begins with a foundational layer, material access, which refers to a person’s ability to work with a computer through personal ownership, community spaces, etc. Building upon this foundational level, he proposes: functional access, including the knowledge and skills to use technology; experiential access, when the tools become relevant within a community, creating opportunity for involvement in creation and design; critical access, which involves knowing enough about particular technologies to be able to resist, critique, and avoid them when necessary; and lastly, transformative access, which is a full immersion and includes having physical access, involvement in design from early conception, and both basic and more advanced skills to be able to determine effectiveness for oneself (41–45). Like Hawisher and Selfe, Banks’ five levels of access move from a focus on the material and repositions discussions of access to include consideration of how engagement occurs, and the skills needed to critically engage. Banks reconceptualizes how access is understood by requiring that these conversations address not just the ability to find or own a computer, but also the ability to understand how to make use of the technology for one’s personhood, for change, and for resistance.

**Explicit Instruction and Multimodal Literacy**

Building upon these layers of access models, scholars have continuously advocated for explicit instruction that fosters students’ multimodal composing literacies. This research makes evident that composition teachers must move students beyond thinking of the multimodal composing they do outside the classroom as something separate from their professional lives, both in college and careers beyond. Similarly, it is crucial that they learn
to see computers as not just “neutral” writing tools. As part of this, teachers must present explicit learning opportunities for students. As Stephanie Vie points out in her 2008 *Computers and Composition* article, “students possess technological know-how and access to computers but lack technological literacy skills” (10). Of course, this is not universally true; not everyone has physical access to computers and internet, and not all students share the same level of “technological know-how.” Nonetheless Vie directs attention to the need for technological literacy skills, skills that can and should be addressed in the FYC classroom. Vie is not alone in her emphasis on helping students develop these literacy skills. In fact, her work echoes scholarship from people like Kathleen Blake Yancey, Cynthia Selfe, and Jody Shipka who have each advocated for this explicit instruction and engagement in composition classrooms.

More recent scholarship likewise takes up the need for explicit instruction, with a critical focus on issues like authorship and ownership, fair use and intellectual property, and the manipulation of personal data by algorithmic logic, all brought about by changing technology (Courant-Rife; Reyman; Beck). The rapid evolution of algorithmic logic raises new concerns about access that can be limited by algorithms, especially those algorithms created by corporations that determine what content is available to users; at the same time, data mining practices lead to targeted advertising based on a user’s previous online habits, further posing challenges to equitable access and online experience (Beck; Reyman; Sheridan et al.). In both instances, it remains crucial for composition curriculum to include explicit instructional opportunities related to the changing nature of these writing spaces. The more opportunity students have to compose in these spaces themselves, the more critical they can be during their own online engagement. Despite their ever-presence,
computers are always at risk of “going invisible,” and thus require unique attention and
critical engagement, especially as online spaces continue to be co-opted by algorithms and
shaped without user control (Clark; Madden).

To progress forward we need to remain attentive to critical understandings of
computers and consider how our classrooms might help students critically question and
interrogate the digital spaces in which they work and play on a near-constant basis. In this
research, despite the time passed and the rapid evolution in the technology itself, there
remain echoes of earlier work from scholars like Cynthia Selfe, who, over two decades
ago, in 1999, accurately predicted that the presence of computers in the composition
classroom would only continue to rise. As Selfe contends, it is up to researchers and
teachers to design pedagogies that are attentive to computers’ presence and, perhaps,
dominance.

**Reaching Students in the First Year**

For many students at institutions across the US, one such place for developing their
21st century communicative practices through explicit engagement is FYC, which “for
more than a century now” has remained “the most required, most taught, and thus most
taken course in U.S. higher education” (Fleming 1). As such, FYC is the course with the
broadest reach at most institutions, serving the widest number of students. Additionally, as
a course focused on composition, FYC’s central purpose is developing students’
communicative practices, and, regardless of focus, almost always requires some form of
technological engagement. It is thus unsurprising that some of the strongest support for
fostering students’ digital literacies has come from research on the FYC classroom. This
research takes many forms, but some of the most influential is manifested in shared
outcomes statements and learning objective frameworks put forth by national professional organizations.

The *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (the *Framework*), collaboratively developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project, identifies what students need to be successful writers in the 21st century, both in college and beyond. Although not just for the FYC classroom, the *Framework* is often adapted by writing programs and used to help establish overall learning objectives for their FYC curricula. The *Framework*, which was “written and reviewed by two- and four-year college and high school writing faculty nationwide” identifies the important rhetorical skills, or “habits of mind,” that students need to be successful (1). The habits of mind include: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition, which are fostered through “writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences” (1). Essential to these experiences is students’ ability to “compose in multiple environments,” including traditional alphabetic composition and digital composition. While the *Framework* is not solely focused on developing students’ multimodal composing literacies, the focused inclusion of objectives related to students composing in multiple environments underscores the importance of multimodality. Thus, the *Framework* makes an argument for the importance of integrating these skills within curricula and considers these practices as equal to other rhetorical and communicative practices that students need to be successful, such as developing critical thinking through writing, reading, and research.
In addition to, and preceding, the collaborative publication of the *Framework*, is CWPA’s *Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* (the *OS*), a document that mirrors Composition and Rhetoric’s reception of digital composing. Designed specifically for FYC, the *OS* was conceived of as a “curricular document that speaks to the common expectations for students, of first-year composition programs in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century” (Harrington et al. 323). The *OS* was envisioned as a set of shared goals that writing programs could adapt as needed, as opposed to a set of standards to map onto all FYC classes at all institutions. In its first iteration, adopted in 2001, the *OS* “deliberately avoided an explicit position on computer literacy issues” for a number of reasons including concerns about varying levels of access across institutions, as well as concerns about the potential obsolescence of any named technology (Dryer et al. 130). This absence was later addressed in version 2.0 of the *OS*, published in 2008. This version brought the addition of the “technoplank,” a section added to the end of the document titled “Composing in Electronic Environments”; the “technoplank” was meant to “[address] the interplay between technology and writing,” and, being a standalone section, took into consideration those “colleges and universities where neither students nor teachers have ready access to digital technologies of the internet” (Peckham). The concerns of where to place these outcomes mirrored the concerns found in computers and writing scholarship. Discussions around who had access to technology and the resources to both learn and teach with it were central to this research, as well as those working on the *OS*. In creating a “technoplank,” the *OS* remained an inclusive document where WPAs without technological resources could still find shared experience with the other learning outcomes.
In its third and current iteration, adopted in July 2014, digitality is embedded within the OS. This integration signals a shift in attitudes toward the role of multimodality and technology in FYC and what students need to be successful writers, reflecting the changing nature of composition and communication. Just as *The Framework* emphasizes multimodal literacies, the current iteration of the OS makes multimodal skills an inseparable part of other rhetorical skills students must develop. For example, in the outcomes section titled “Processes,” one of the stated expectations is that “*By the end of first-year composition, students should:* … adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Rather than having multimodal objectives separated out in their own category, multimodality is embedded within broader, more “traditional”, objectives. By embedding multimodal objectives throughout the document, the OS argues that students should be expected to develop their multimodal literacies with as much attention that is placed on developing their more traditional, alphabetic text-based skills.

Despite documents like *The Framework* or the OS, skepticism and resistance to technology, digitality, and multimodality in the FYC classroom remains. This is evidenced by the ongoing cycle of popular opinion pieces in support of laptop bans, as well as in more localized experiences. In my own work with Graduate Teaching Associates as the UMass Writing Program’s Instructional Technology Coordinator, I often met teachers who wanted to know what *minimum* technology requirements they had to meet, which was really just posting a syllabus and homework assignments online. These same teachers would often disengage with any suggestions of including opportunities for digital writing in their classrooms, scoffing at multimodality or digital composition as not the “responsibility” of
FYC teachers. They saw the introduction of multimodality and, more specifically, the technology this inclusion might invite, as distractions that take away from the “real” work of teaching writing. While I witnessed this resistance in my work as the Instructional Technology Coordinator, in many programs it is often directed at WPAs responsible for the design of FYC curricula. It is WPAs who must then find the balance between providing undergraduate students with the skills and experiences they need to be successful writers, while also facing resistance from their teachers and, sometimes, the broader campus community. This balance can be a challenge in and of itself: how is best practice research implemented into curricular design? How can it be implemented when WPAs are met with resistance to multimodality? How might multimodal curricula best serve a program? If local and broader public opinion are in direct opposition to the best practice research supported by national organizations, what are WPAs to do? How can they go about combatting multiple fronts, this blending of public and personal opinion, so as to present students in FYC classes with the best possible curricular experience?

**What’s a WPA to Do?**

I originally set out to address these questions, looking at writing programs with major curricular shifts at all stages. I wanted to understand if, how, where, and at what pace scholarship and research was entering “on the ground” practice. What research had the biggest influence on curricular decision-making processes? How did WPAs go about designing, revising, and implementing multimodal FYC curriculum? My research, however, suggests a very different emphasis. What I found while analyzing a corpus of textual, pedagogical materials and speaking with current and former WPAs at five institutions, was that the scholarship was an undercurrent. It was of course important, as it
had shaped the WPAs themselves as scholars, teachers, and administrators. Yet, that was not the driving force enabling or inhibiting supported multimodal curricula design. Rather, what was universally expressed across my research was the importance of cross-institutional relationships and finding support at all levels of the process. I present these emergent thematic relationships here as a three-tier stakeholder model (Figure 1.1).

The stakeholders most essential to enacting a multimodal FYC curriculum are, perhaps, fairly obvious: undergraduate students, FYC teachers, and institutional administration. What may be new, however, are the ways of engaging with these stakeholders to garner new areas of resources and support for curriculum design and implementation. It is also important to recognize the movement of this stakeholder model, visually represented in Fig. 1.1 using gears and arrows. There are, of course, some undeniable hierarchal elements (e.g.: teachers who evaluate students’ work, institutional administration who set policies that determine teachers’ working conditions and students’ learning environments, etc.); yet, these hierarchal realities are not without mobility and
flux. For example, within any given classroom context, students and teachers often have reciprocal impacts on each other, with teachers learning from their students and students effecting a teacher’s approach to materials. Institutional policy, created by administration, is influenced by the needs of the wider campus community, including teachers and students. While administrators make large-scale decisions based on any number of factors, what remains essential is the undergraduate student experience.

While best practice scholarship has a role in curricular development, I argue that WPAs can find new pathways forward to enact change by engaging with and across these different campus stakeholders: remediation assignments in FYC help by offering explicit opportunities for undergraduate students to move across modes in their work, prompting multimodal transfer beyond FYC. Intentional and flexible training programs that reflect programmatic curricular goals can help prepare teachers more effectively deliver a multimodal curriculum. Lastly, by mobilizing their institutional mission statements and subsequent strategic plans, WPAs can garner support from institutional administrators, support that could potentially result in further resource allocation or, at the very least, help foster connections with cross-campus colleagues. My stakeholder model provides multiple ways to enact curricular (re)design and programmatic change. Some WPAs may find they need to rethink engagement at all levels, while others may find more specific means of engagement with a particular group. Ultimately, this model is adaptable and flexible to meet different programmatic needs across various institutional settings.

Programmatic Research and Adaptability of the Model

The programmatic scope of my research lends itself to adaptation. Much of the Composition and Rhetoric research on FYC and multimodality centers on specific
classroom practices, and much has been learned from these studies. Nonetheless, a classroom focus risks highlighting deviations from the norm, where an individual instructor or set of instructors might demonstrate innovative pedagogies but do not necessarily connect to or reflect the larger values communicated beyond the audience of classroom or across the institution. By not emphasizing individual classroom practices, my study aims to remove one layer of contextual situatedness. Although institutional context remains essential, with a programmatic focus, it is easier to adapt the emergent themes, expressed through the stakeholder model, to meet the needs at various institutional locations. A programmatic focus also creates the opportunity for larger discussions about institutional practices, structures, and resources that may inhibit or challenge certain levels of enactment and mobilization. By looking at larger programmatic resources, I can ask questions about institutional strategies and structures, who they benefit, and why. This allows me to think about access for all students within a given system, while also considering the overall structures in place that make specific kinds of curriculum possible.

Although less common, a programmatic research focus is not entirely unique, as there are a number of scholars who have situated writing programs at the core of their studies. The challenge with this focus though, lies in the variation of writing programs’ responsibilities and roles across different institutions. Depending on the institution, a writing program’s responsibilities may include overseeing FYC courses, managing writing majors and/or minors, operating writing centers, running writing across curriculum (WAC) or writing in the disciplines (WID) programs, conducting university writing assessment and training, and more. For this reason, while programmatic research is not something new, what is meant by “program” and what gets studied can vary widely.
Programmatic research tends to be broad, so as to be inclusive of all writing program styles, taking into consideration the vast number of different administrative positions, institution types and structures, job responsibilities, etc. (Enos and Borrowman; White et al.; Siegel Finer and White-Farnham). Despite its breadth, programmatic research serves as a guiding resource for new and veteran WPAs alike. This existing body of research, however, in making itself applicable to a whole variety of WPAs, is much less likely to present narrow focuses. Thus, it is unsurprising that there have been few concentrated studies that explore the relationship between multimodal writing research and FYC curriculum design.

One way that programmatic studies narrow their scope is by focusing on particular institutional types. Like my study, which analyzes one institutional type (Public Research Universities; see Chapter 2) to explore the relationship between research and practice, is Emily Isaacs’ *Writing at the State U: Instruction and Administration at 106 Comprehensive Universities*. Isaacs’ study is a mixed-method analysis of FYC at 106 state universities, using publicly available materials to offer a bird’s eye view of writing instruction and administration. Her work underscores the importance of broad scope analysis for WPA research, illustrating in the wider picture rather than narrowly focusing on the classroom. Another example of emphasizing institutional structure is Kathleen Ryan’s 2012 “Thinking Ecologically: Rhetorical Ecological Feminist Agency and Writing Program Administration,” in which she argues for the importance of localized context and emphasizes how locality and place are crucial to WPA identity.

My study has a focus on institutional structures (public research universities) and multimodal composition in FYC. Yet, the stakeholder model I present is both flexible and
universal. Throughout this dissertation, I highlight the locally situated experiences of the WPAs I interviewed and the programs they represent. At the same time, it is the shared institutional structure and broad categorizations of stakeholders that ensures a level of adaptability within my model.

**Chapter Outlines**

If a multimodal FYC curriculum is essential for 21st century writers, as both I and other researchers argue, then WPAs benefit from research that queries how such curricular implementation is made possible. I propose my stakeholder model, derived from the emergent themes in my research, for both adaptability and accessibility across institutional contexts. It is safe to assume that all WPAs are going to have to engage with undergraduate students, teachers, and administrative leadership. By presenting my findings within these lenses, WPAs can choose the entrance points that make the most sense for their own local contexts. In what follows, I argue that writing programs benefit from new sources of support and can find new pathways forward to enact substantial change related to multimodal FYC when they engage with these different levels of stakeholders in specific ways. How WPAs engage each group matters, as my findings suggest that there are different ways to leverage these stakeholders, with different means of engagement across each level.

Chapter 2, “Methods,” details my original research questions, with a brief discussion of the evolution of my project throughout the research process. Rooted in qualitative, grounded theory methodology, the shape of my project changed as I conducted textual coding and interviews. I present my five case study institutions, introducing my selection process, and discussing the commonalities of my final five. Chapter 2 likewise
includes the specific methodologies deployed throughout my project. The subsequent three chapters present my emergent themes and each group within the stakeholder model, with each chapter highlighting a specific stakeholder and ways of engagement. I see each of these chapters serving both “why and how” purposes: I present similar studies and research that aligns with what my own findings suggest (why), followed by an analysis of what this looked like at each of my five institutions, either aligned with prior studies or presenting an alternate departure (how).

In chapter 3, “Engaging Students Through Multimodal Transfer,” I introduce the first, and perhaps most important, stakeholder: undergraduate students. Elaborating upon the undergirding assumption about the value of a multimodal FYC curriculum, I argue that students need explicit opportunities for developing their multimodal literacies, which includes meta-cognitive reflection to enhance students’ ability to transfer these literacies to new contexts. By providing students with these explicit opportunities, WPAs can support curricula that better reflect the changing communicative landscape.

Chapter 4, “‘Fun and Games We’ll Call It’: Reaching Teachers Through Intentional and Flexible Training Models,” argues for engaging teachers through flexible and intentional training programs. These training programs, when designed to both model and reflect the multimodal practices of the curriculum, create a space for teachers to build comfort and familiarity with new pedagogical practices. In doing so, WPAs can help foster buy-in and backing for the curricula they hope to enact. In chapter 5, “Mission Possible: Administrative Stakeholders and Strategic Planning Alignment,” I conclude with the final stakeholder group: institutional administration. I argue for WPAs to mobilize their institutional strategic plans to develop rhetorical strategies as a way to garner support from
the broader institutional ecology. By aligning with institutional objectives and initiatives, WPAs can situate their programs and the curricula they deliver as critical to the institution’s success in achieving broader, visionary goals.

Chapter 6, “From Page to Program: Conclusion and Implications,” summarizes how multimodal FYC research might move from the page, whether in journals or at conferences, to program, real on-the-ground enactment. I offer a brief discussion of my unfounded hypotheses, those factors that I had anticipated would play a larger role in programs’ curricular designs but proved to be less important. I see my stakeholder model as universally adaptable across US institutional contexts. There is certainly a required attentiveness to the local context, but, by highlighting the relationships and key actors, I hope to highlight the possibility in the simple; faced with budgetary cuts, declining enrollments, and shrinking programs, it can be easy for WPAs to feel like change is impossible, and that external intervention from outside investments or grant funding is the only way to enact change. Yet, my findings suggest otherwise; in fact, I found that outside investments were less important than the relationship and stakeholder engagement that I detail throughout. As a final conclusion, I offer a reflection of the importance for further research of this variety, calling for the continuation and expansion of the conversation about the importance of multimodal FYC curricula and its enactment on a programmatic level.
CHAPTER 2
METHODS

The shifting nature of composition and communicative practice requires that students have an opportunity to develop their multimodal literacies (e.g.: Ball; Selber; Selfe; Shepherd; Yancey). This research has been further supported by various position statements endorsed by national organizations like the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The original purpose of this study was to first determine if and how scholarship was enacted in FYC multimodal curricular design, to then identify the conditions that either encourage or inhibit this inclusion. Throughout the research process what became apparent was that scholarship was, both implicitly and explicitly, an important part of the decision-making process. Moreover, my findings suggest that what is more important to WPAs in their curricular enactment were the relationships and support fostered through those networks. In the spirit of a grounded theory framework, I shifted my focus throughout the project to reflect what my participants identified as most important to understanding multimodal curriculum design in a FYC program.

When I first began, this study of how research is enacted in programmatic decision making and curricular (re)design was driven by three overarching questions:

• **RQ 1:** (How) Do writing programs in the US engage with and mobilize rhetoric and composition’s research pertaining to FYC and digital technology?

---

3 As discussed previously in Ch. 1, these statements include the Framework, the OS, as well as various position statements published by NCTE and CCCC.
• **RQ 2:** How, if at all, is digital technology used or considered in programmatic and curricular development decisions regarding FYC?

• **RQ 3:** What are the factors and/or conditions that determine a program’s implementation of a curriculum that takes into consideration Computers and Composition research in the FYC classroom?

As I began my data collection and analysis, the focus of the study shifted, with some questions emerging as more prominent than others. For example, I quickly found that, ultimately, for question 1, the answer was yes, writing programs do mobilize the research and best-practice scholarship on multimodal pedagogy in their curricular design. Throughout my textual corpus and across my interviews, references to scholarship were present; in fact, some of the WPAs I interviewed were the scholars producing this work. With that, the next question became: *How?* How were they implementing this research? It was an emphasis on the how, considering the enactment of this scholarship, that shifted the focus of my project, with question 3 serving as the crux: *What enables or inhibits a program’s implementation of a multimodal FYC curriculum?* My findings suggest that it is relationships and engagement with various stakeholders that enables or inhibits a program’s implementation, and my stakeholder model, as described in the previous chapter, highlights what this engagement might look like.

This study is an inquiry into the enactment of curricular change at five different writing programs. My purpose in this inquiry is to offer a model that gives WPAs ways of engaging with stakeholders at their institution to enact their own curricular initiatives. I believe it is crucial to conduct research that considers not just the level of individual classroom, but to consider the broader ecology of programs, curriculum, and institutions in
which FYC courses and WPAs find themselves. In what follows, I describe my process of designing and conducting this study, before offering my stakeholder model and findings in greater detail in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

**Situating the Researcher**

I come to this study with a commitment to multimodal pedagogies in the composition classroom. As a FYC teacher, I believe it is essential for students to practice composing across modes and to understand the when, why, and how of multimodal composing. As a part of that, I believe that general education courses, like FYC, are an optimal space for this kind of exposure, as they have the broadest reach due to their wide enrollment of the largest number of students.

I also come to this study as a first-generation college student who has both succeeded and suffered from varying levels of assumptions surrounding classroom practices. With multimodality, there is sometimes an assumption about certain kinds of practices, like multimodal composing, that they are happening or will happen elsewhere, whether that’s inside or outside of a formal classroom setting. This is a risky assumption, though, for while some students will develop these literacies elsewhere, others do not have access to the same resources. There needs to be a concentrated focus on supporting students’ development of all literacies and composing practices, without the assumption that these are taking place elsewhere and equally for all students.

As a teacher-researcher, I also come to this study with the desire to produce practiced scholarship. I wanted to offer a study that could be adapted in different contexts, or whose findings could be used or applied in some way. Thus, it was important for me to ask questions and conduct a study that would lend itself to practice and application. Theory
and scholarship shape disciplines and provide an abundance of best practices and frameworks, but I think it is equally important for scholarship to be put into action. My hope is that through this study I can help WPAs, even a single WPA, move beyond the fear of not having enough resources to make a multimodal curricular change and to see that there are different levels and entry points for finding these resources and support; I believe that this study can help combat the “impossible” narrative, or the idea that there is only one way to enact change.

**Case Study Selection**

When starting this research, my first step was to select several programs that would serve as my focused case studies. The aim of case study research is to “see what some phenomenon means as it is socially enacted within a particular case” (Dyson and Genishi 10). In this way, case study research is deeply rooted in a local context, but also offers potential for adaptation and meaning making beyond the given location. Case study methodology is common in WPA research, with researchers using their own institutions and practices to speak about WPA trends more broadly (Takayoshi and Huot; Blakely and Pagnac). WPA scholars have been explicit about how case study research can provide crucial evidence to support administrative decisions (Anson; White et al.; Siegel Finer and White-Farnham). Case studies can serve as “jumping off points to address and inspire myriad research questions,” while they also “model a method for WPAs to consider and articulate their own [programs]” (Siegel Finer and White-Farnham 5). Although case studies may be specific to the institution(s) of the study, they can help generate new questions, as well as highlight a specific phenomenon and various approaches or responses to it. By looking at several institutions, I offer a comparative perspective that recognizes
the specific contexts of each program, as well as their different approaches to similar problems, and vice versa.

I narrowed my institutional focus and selected a sample of programs through a two-stage process. In my first stage, I collected a variety of general information about a large number of programs. I began with looking at FYC programs at universities with graduate offerings in Composition and Rhetoric. The purpose of this original criteria was twofold: one, it allowed me to narrow the overwhelming number of writing programs that exist across the US; and two, my inclination was that institutions with graduate offerings in Composition and Rhetoric were more likely to take part in the field’s larger conversations, and many of its subfields, like computers and writing. That is not to say that scholars at institutions without Composition and Rhetoric graduate offerings are not doing this work, but rather, this was one criterion that allowed me to narrow my scope while also being relevant to my research questions.

Using the PhD program data on rhetmap.org, I identified 85 U.S. schools with graduate offerings in Composition and Rhetoric. Using this data, I created an Excel spreadsheet with basic information about each of these 85 schools and their writing programs, including: Carnegie Classification, type of graduate degree offered (M.A., Ph.D.), and some general information about their FYC offerings, including what materials were publicly-available online. I continued to narrow the number of programs from this original 85 by adding two additional criteria: I wanted to look at public research universities (for reasons which I discuss further below), and I wanted programs with either explicit focus on or intention to include multimodal literacies in their FYC curricula. These criteria helped slim down my list from 85 to 39 schools. From the narrowed list of 39, I
selected five institutions that each represent different stages of change and (re)design of their curricula, while sharing similar institutional contexts and demographics and meeting all of my criteria described above.

**Public Research Universities**

A focus on public research universities was intentional, as it speaks both to my own personal educational experience, as well as the questions this study explores. Personally, I am a product of public research university education, having attended these institutions for two of my three degrees. More generally, across the U.S., there is at least one public research university within each state. As such, when taken together, these schools often enroll the most students and grant the highest number of degrees. While they are not students’ only choice for higher education, by the numbers, they graduate a majority of degree-holding individuals in the US, and serve students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (The Lincoln Project: Excellence and Access in Public Higher Education).

Public research institutions, in addition to private donors or grants, receive large amounts of funding from federal and state governments; therefore, these are the institutions that are often most impacted by budget cuts and rollbacks (The Lincoln Project: Excellence and Access in Public Higher Education). Trickling down, writing programs are likewise often deeply affected by these cuts. Focusing on the programs most often found in precarious budgetary situations contributed to further analysis about how programs might enact curricular change in times of budgetary struggle; this inclusion further extends the adaptability of my findings and subsequent model.
Participant Recruitment

Once I selected my five programs (see Table 2.1), I contacted current and former WPAs at each institution. I recruited participants via email, which is also how I collected informed consent from each participant. Of those I contacted, everyone agreed to participate. All participants had the option of remaining anonymous, and two chose to do so, as indicated in Table 2.1. I conducted 60-minute Skype interviews with each participant; there were no follow-up interviews. In addition to those interviews, I collected a large corpus of publicly available textual materials from each program (See Table 2.2). This corpus included sample syllabi and assignments, course catalog descriptions, teacher handbooks and other training materials, institutional demographic information, institutional and programmatic mission and value statements, and more.

---

4 This study was conducted under IRB Protocol 2018-5112. A sample recruitment email and consent form are available in Appendices A and B, respectively.
Table 2.1: Case Study Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>WPA(s) Interviewed</th>
<th>Carnegie Classification</th>
<th>Curricular Change(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass)</td>
<td>Dr. Peggy Woods, Assistant Director</td>
<td>Public, 4 year, R1, Highly residential</td>
<td>UMass recently underwent an external CWPA review, and they are beginning an internal strategic planning initiative. As a part of this, they are revisiting their curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Connecticut (UConn)</td>
<td>--Dr. Brenda Brueggemann, Aetna Chair of Writing and Director --Ruth Book, Former Assistant Director and Doctoral Candidate --Isaac, Assistant WPA and Doctoral Candidate</td>
<td>Public, 4 year, R1, Highly residential</td>
<td>UConn is in the middle of a several year transition to their “Writing Across Technology (WAT)” program. They also received a Steelcase grant that resulted in the design and installation of an Active Learning Classroom for FYC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami University (Miami)</td>
<td>Dr. Jason Palmeri, Former Director</td>
<td>Public, 4 year, R2, Primarily residential</td>
<td>Several year ago, Miami’s writing program underwent a curricular redesign to better align with the WPA OS; during this time, they shifted to explicit multimodal inclusion in FYC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State University (FSU)</td>
<td>Margaret, Assistant Director and Doctoral Candidate</td>
<td>Public, 4 year, R1, Primarily nonresidential</td>
<td>FSU has a very strong multimodal and digital focus, both in FYC and as a wider institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ohio State University (Ohio State)</td>
<td>Dr. Edgar (Eddie) Singleton, Director of First Year Writing</td>
<td>Public, 4 year, R1, Primarily residential</td>
<td>Ohio State recently partnered with Apple to implement their “Digital Learning Initiative.” With this partnership, all incoming freshmen are given iPad Pros and accompanying software. They are also in the very beginning stages of revisiting their curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Pseudonym given at participants’ request.
6 Pseudonym given at participants’ request.
FYC Curricula Across the Programs

Having introduced my five case studies, I want to highlight some of the key elements of FYC curricula, which serves as the basis of my research. In the following dissertation, I look across these five programs and highlight the various stakeholder engagements that impacted their curricula. To better understand my findings and discussion, in this section, I offer overview summaries of these different FYC curricula.

UMass

The FYC curriculum at UMass emphasizes writing as a process and is founded on the belief that students are already writers and that writing happens within a broader social context. The course is divided into five units, with each unit focusing on a different composition genre that expands upon the literacies and skills from previous units. There is an emphasis on fostering students’ rhetorical awareness, and the assignments ask students to shift their perspectives in relation to authors, texts, and audiences. Lastly, and of great importance, is the curriculum’s emphasis on cognitive reflection; students are asked to reflect upon their writing after each unit and more holistically at the end of the course.

UConn

UConn’s FYC curriculum was perhaps the most “in flux” during my time of study. The program was undergoing a complete reimagining of FYC and its role at the university. This shift included a move to the Writing Across Technology (WAT) curriculum, with a full embrace of multimodal composition. Across each unit, the WAT curriculum scaffolds assignments to fully engage students’ digital literacies. UConn also received a highly competitive Active Learning Center Grant from the Steelcase (the furniture company), which resulted in the construction of an Active Learning classroom for FYC.
Miami

Miami’s FYC curriculum is similar to UMass’ in its sequential structure and foundational objectives. Divided across five inquiries, students are given scaffolded assignments as they progress throughout the course. Perhaps one of the most notable differences between Miami and UMass is the fourth inquiry or unit. While at UMass the fourth unit is reserved for teacher’s individual discretion and design, Miami dedicates the fourth inquiry to a multimodal, remediation assignment.

FSU

At FSU, teachers can select from different strands, or themes, for their course; these strands, designed by veteran graduate teaching assistants, are pre-approved by WPAs. There are three overarching projects for the course that are shared across all strands. The third project requires students to remix their prior work across three different genres and is often taught as a multimodal project. While the chosen strand determines the focus or topic of the assignments, the courses share overall course learning objectives derived from the WPA OS.

Ohio State

The Ohio State FYC curriculum emphasizes analytical reasoning, with Writing Analytically by David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen having greatly inspired the philosophy of the course (Singleton). Like some of the other programs, the FYC curriculum is divided into multiple units, each with scaffolded assignments designed to foster students’ rhetorical and analytical awareness. What makes the Ohio State curriculum unique is their concluding assignment, the symposium presentation, which requires students to present their semester’s work in brief oral presentations. As part of this final project, students are asked
to collect images and artifacts throughout the course of the semester that relate to their “text-based” compositions, with the idea being they will use these artifacts as part of the final, multimodal symposium project.

**Grounded Theory Framework**

For my study, I used grounded theory research methods for both data collection and analysis. One of the central tenets of grounded theory as a research methodology is that “data collection and analysis are interrelated processes” which requires analysis of “the first bits of data for cues” to then incorporate “all seemingly relevant issues … into the next set of interviews and observations” (Corbin and Strauss 6). While I describe my collection and analysis as separate processes below, they were interconnected throughout my study. For example, institutional strategic plans were not initially in the scope of my textual corpus. However, following my first two interviews, references to different campus-wide initiatives signaled that these could be potentially important documents. I went on to collect strategic plans for each of my case studies, which eventually resulted in a categorical finding and subsequent level of the stakeholder model (see chapter 5). Grounded theory’s emphasis on the interrelated process of collection and analysis was essential to my study.

Also relevant to this study is the generalizability of findings within grounded theory methods. Like case study methods, “a grounded theory specifies the conditions under which a phenomenon has been discovered” (Corbin and Strauss 15). My study was focused on five large, public research universities, each with deeply rooted institutional identities. Yet, the stakeholder model I present is adaptable across contexts and can be adopted by WPAs across institutional contexts, albeit with some revision. Despite its adaptability, there is a level of locational importance to my findings. What worked for specific case
studies may not be applicable to a different institutional structure. Thus, my study is situated within very specific conditions such as the timing, place, actors involved, and more. What my grounded theory does offer is multiple lenses and levels of approach. It is an adaptable model, one that is meant to remain flexible for specific use.

**Data Collection**

In *Writing at the State U*, Emily Isaacs makes the case for using publicly available materials in WPA research. She argues that “much can be discovered about how an institution teaches and administers writing by combing carefully and systematically through publicly available information” and sees her decision to analyze publicly available material as one way of avoiding the possible “self-selection skew” that arises when a mass survey is distributed across listservs (4 and 9, respectively). And while Isaacs advocates for the potential objectivity of publicly available information, she also recognizes its limitations. *Only* looking at publicly available material “does not tell you why phenomena have occurred it simply tells you what has occurred” (9, emphasis in original).

For this reason, my study includes interviews with current and former WPAs at my participating institutions. While my textual corpus reveals what is happening within a particular program, these interviews serve as answers to the *why*, offering rich descriptions of the programs’ histories and clarifying what I read in the textual corpus. The textual corpus represents the “public face,” those materials made available to a large public audience, while the WPA interviews answered the unspoken questions and uncovered some of the underlying assumptions in the documents. Together, this data speaks to the larger implications of curricular and programmatic design, and elaborates upon the if, how, and why of enacting programmatic and curricular change.
Textual Corpus Collection

To collect my textual corpus materials, I looked at each program’s website to see what materials were available. With the exception of Miami and Ohio State, most programs made all of their materials publicly accessible; I was able to collect syllabi, assignments, training materials, and more. Following my interviews, the WPAs I spoke with from Miami and Ohio State emailed me additional materials including assignments and Teacher Handbooks. Table 2.2 offers a full list of the textual corpus and the materials I collected from each institution.\(^7\) I uploaded these materials to Dedoose, an online application designed for qualitative or mixed-method research. Dedoose allows for coding of text, photos, audio, and video, which made it the most viable option for my study.\(^8\) Once all my materials were uploaded, I created a coding schema, which I discuss further in the data analysis section below.

---

\(^7\) Institutional mission statements and strategic plans, included for each institution, were not originally part of the textual corpus. They were a later addition based on my interviews. This addition highlights the interrelation between data collection and analysis that is essential to a grounded theory research framework.

\(^8\) Appendix C includes a screenshot and brief description of the Dedoose interface.
Table 2.2: Textual Corpus Materials (by Institution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Textual Corpus Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMass</td>
<td>• Training resources (calendars, orientation handouts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample assignments and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional mission statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UConn</td>
<td>• Course moves and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Course planning map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Program philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grant proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher resource book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional mission statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>• Course overview description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional mission statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>• Instructor resource guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample assignments and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional mission statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>• Digital initiative plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Course descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sample assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assignment sequencing infographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Statewide learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Orientation schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional mission statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional strategic plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviews**

I conducted a single 60-minute interview with each of my study participants; there were no additional, follow-up interviews. In line with grounded theory methodology, I followed the principles of intensive interviewing. Intensive interviewing for grounded theory studies is described as a “gently-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants’
perspective on their personal experience with the research topic” (Charmaz 56). With a focus on “research participants’ statements on their experience, how they portray this experience, and what it means to them,” intensive interviewing strategies were best suited for my study (Charmaz 58). While I did enter each interview with a semi-structured question guide, I was much more interested in an organically-developed conversation, letting my participants determine what was most important about their multimodal experience as WPAs.⁹ I audio-recorded every interview for my own reference, using both my laptop recorder and a back-up cell phone application. Following each interview, I transcribed the audio for coding and analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Before uploading any materials to Dedoose, I first created descriptors for each of my case study institutions. The descriptors illustrated the comparable features of my case studies. For each institution, I included: Carnegie Classification, majority residential (do a majority of students live on campus?), departmental housing of the writing program (where applicable), WPA position structure, institutional laptop requirement (where applicable), student population, and the primary instructors of FYC. Table 2.3 includes the descriptor information for each institution.

Within Dedoose, I tracked my coding for all textual corpus materials, alongside my interview transcriptions. For each document, I drafted overall summary memos with my initial observations of the document, as well as any comparative analyses across multiple documents. This allowed me to easily identify patterns across my data, as well as return to documents I analyzed early on in the research process. Dedoose also has a number

---

⁹ A sample interview protocol is available in Appendix D.
of built in features for exporting graphics and running analytics on coding patterns that I found useful in both my analysis and the write-up of my research. These visualizations helped me both discover emergent patterns in my data, as well as supported my presentation of these patterns throughout this dissertation.

### Table 2.3: Dedoose Descriptor Data (by Institution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Carnegie Class.</th>
<th>Writing Program Housed</th>
<th>Laptop Req.</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Majority Res.</th>
<th>WPA</th>
<th>Primary Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMass</td>
<td>R1; Public</td>
<td>College of Humanities and Fine Arts</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20,000 - 25,000</td>
<td>Highly Res.</td>
<td>TT Fac.</td>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UConn</td>
<td>R1; Public</td>
<td>English Dept.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20,000 - 25,000</td>
<td>Highly Res.</td>
<td>TT Fac.</td>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>R2; Public</td>
<td>English Dept.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20,000 - 25,000</td>
<td>Highly Res.</td>
<td>TT Fac.</td>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>R1; Public</td>
<td>English Dept.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt; 25,000</td>
<td>Highly Res.</td>
<td>FT; NTT</td>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>R1; Public</td>
<td>English Dept.</td>
<td>Yes; provided by school</td>
<td>&gt; 25,000</td>
<td>Highly Res.</td>
<td>FT; NTT</td>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Textual Coding: Initial Coding

At the outset of my study, I established an initial coding schema in Dedoose. Table 2.4 details the categories I created and their definitions. This initial coding process is crucial for developing a grounded theory, as it helped me to “define what [was] happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it [meant]” (Charmaz 113, emphasis in original). This initial coding schema was closely related to my original research questions and allowed me to begin further developing these questions and reshaping my approach to the interviews.

10 While these institutions all *primarily* employ graduate students to teach FYC, a number of programs also have lecturers. Ohio State, for example, has about a 50/50 split, whereas UMass, UConn, and Miami are primarily graduate students with some lecturer labor. Florida State was 100% graduate student supported.
This initial coding schema was helpful as I developed and refined my interview guides. Conducting initial coding on the publicly available materials familiarized me with the different programs and institutions, as well as helped me to identify gaps in my own knowledge about the programs. Following the interviews, I returned to some of the collected materials, as well as sought out new ones like institutional mission statements and strategic plans. These new textual materials, as well as my interview transcriptions, required additional codes for richer analysis.

**Textual Coding: Focused Coding**

Following my initial coding of the textual corpus and interview process, I conducted focused coding to help elaborate on my findings and, eventually, develop my stakeholder model. During focused coding, I expanded upon my initial schema, developing new categories and codes based on both participants’ perspectives and my own observations. Table 2.5 identifies the additional codes and their definitions.
### Table 2.5: Focused Coding Schema (Additions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Label</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Democratic” Citizen</td>
<td>Mentions of “contributing member” and societal connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Outcomes or Position Statements</td>
<td>&quot;Framework for Success&quot;; Various NCTE/C's position statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Mentions of curriculum (change) or design &gt; how choices are made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remediation</td>
<td>Where &quot;traditional&quot; texts are used as the starting point and are then remediated in new modes based on audience/purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Used for vague mentions of technology use (i.e.: LMS, research, etc.) NOT tied to any type of design or online assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Flagging mentions of instructor training (in any capacity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA OS Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing</td>
<td>Student Learning Objectives connected to this portion of OS (version 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA OS Knowledge of Conventions</td>
<td>Student Learning Objectives connected to this portion of OS (version 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA OS Processes</td>
<td>Student Learning Objectives connected to this portion of OS (version 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA OS Rhetorical Knowledge</td>
<td>Student Learning Objectives connected to this portion of OS (version 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Program Mission</td>
<td>Any mention of the writing program’s mission statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During my focused coding, I kept the codes from my initial phase, as many remained important throughout the data collection and analysis processes. There were, however, some notable additions and revisions. With regards to the importance of national frameworks or shared outcomes statements, I found that I needed to account for other statements beyond the WPA Outcomes Statements, such as the Framework for Success or other CCCC’s Position Statements. Additionally, the WPA OS as a single code did not fully account for what was apparent in my data. Thus, in my focused coding schema I broke the OS into its different subcategories, such as “Knowledge of Conventions” or “Rhetorical Knowledge,” to account for the presence of specific portions of the OS.
Throughout my research, I also found that remediation was an important component at several of my case study institutions. Remediation as both a required assignment and a theoretical concept was present in both my textual corpus materials and in various WPA interviews; in fact, remediation became one of the primary focuses in the student level of the stakeholder model (see chapter 3). Like remediation, training was also added to my coding schema following some initial coding. Although not within the original scope of my research, the importance of teacher training models and opportunities became apparent in my first few WPA interviews. Thus, it became an additional question I raised in later interviews and something I coded for in my textual corpus. And, again, like remediation, training became an essential component of my stakeholder model (see chapter 4).

**R-Programming and Word Frequency**

Chapter 5, “Mission Possible: Administrative Stakeholders and Strategic Planning Alignment,” looks at the relationship between FYC curriculum and institutional strategic plans. As I discuss further in that chapter, I conducted word frequency analysis because one common critique of strategic plans is that they are empty words without any accompanying action. For this particular thread of my study, I used R-programming code to conduct word frequency analysis and generate word cloud visualizations to display my findings.11

R is an open-source computer programming language “for statistical computing and graphics” (“What Is R?”). Because of its open-source nature, I was able to access and download pre-written code packages for word frequency statistics and word cloud data

---

11 Appendix E contains the detailed code I used to generate the data.
visualizations. While this greatly cut down the amount of programming knowledge necessary to run my analysis, I had to familiarize myself with R’s argument logic and create data sets that were readable by the program. This involved reformatting each of the institution’s strategic plans into a table of words that could be easily deciphered and organized by the program. To simplify my data, I created a list of “Stop Words” to be removed from each of the strategic plan data sets; my full list of stop words can be found in Appendix F. In addition to running word frequency statistics, I also used R to generate word cloud visualizations to support my analysis, which are presented in chapter 5.

**Study Validity**

One of the surest ways to design a study with validity in mind is to triangulate the data, collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources and perspectives. In my own study, I accomplished this by collecting both first-hand accounts in interviews with current and former WPAs and publicly available materials from each of the programs. While my textual corpus helped to identify the shape of the curriculum and the core mission of each program, my interviews helped me flesh out some of these details, as well as uncover some of the unwritten background behind curricular decisions. At the same time, although not negative in case study research, interview data is always at risk of being self-selective or skewed from a person’s own perspective. Thus, pairing this data with a textual corpus that represents a “public face” of the program helped to balance this skew.

It is important to note that all the programs in my case study are housed at large, public research institutions. This was an intentional choice, as discussed in an earlier section of this chapter. However, this also means that my findings are specific to a particular institutional structure, and, even more, are unique to the specific contexts of each
individual program. Despite this, I designed my stakeholder model with adaptability and flexibility in mind. By focusing my findings on specific relationships and ways of engaging with specific campus stakeholders, the approaches I discuss for enacting curricular change remain universal. The details and specifics of engagement may shift across contexts, but the stakeholders I identify are present across writing programs at all institution types.

**Conclusion**

I chose my methodology because it best supports the research and inquiry needed to investigate my initial research questions. By framing my study with the broader scholarship around multimodal composing, and putting my textual corpus and interview data in conversation with each other, I was able to demonstrate how and why curricular decisions are made, and, perhaps more importantly, how WPAs enact curricular change with regard to multimodality. In what follows, I present the findings that this methodology helped me reach. As with all research, there is always room for improvement, and even more room for expanded studies and future research. Nonetheless, I trust that my project was designed to best respond to the questions that I set out to study.
CHAPTER 3
ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH MULTIMODAL TRANSFER

When teachers of composition limit the bandwidth of composing modalities in our classrooms and assignments, when we privilege print as the only acceptable way to make or exchange meaning, we not only ignore the history of rhetoric and its intellectual inheritance, but we also limit, unnecessarily, our scholarly understanding of semiotic systems and the effectiveness of our instruction for many students.


In these opening lines, Cynthia Selfe calls upon composition teachers to embrace the rich history of multimodality in rhetoric, as well as to recognize the importance of helping students learn effectively. Thus, I begin my stakeholder model discussion with perhaps the most important stakeholders, and those whom I would argue have the most at stake: the students enrolled in FYC. As I discussed in Ch. 1, FYC has perhaps the broadest reach across college campuses, enrolling the largest number of students from every discipline. Students take part in the curriculum WPAs design, the teachers that support the curriculum, and the institutional structures that make the curriculum possible; essentially, they are the reason for it all. Ideally, institutional structures are student-centered, developed with students’ needs at the fore; curricula are designed for all students to succeed; and teachers’ pedagogical practices are shaped by the students in their class. Students, then, are an important part of any discussion involving institutional stakeholders, as in many ways, they have one of, if not the, largest stake. Additionally, beginning this model with a focus on students reflects the process of curricular decision-making that WPAs undergo. Prior to developing any teacher training programs, and before thinking about relationships with institutional administration, WPAs must first consider the needs of the students that their courses and curricula will serve.

I want to clarify that I would not argue that these levels of stakeholder engagement happen in isolation. In fact, for many WPAs, it might be difficult to parse out engagement
across stakeholder levels. Yet, there are distinct ways of engaging with each group of stakeholders, and by elaborating on these unique approaches, WPAs may find different levels of commitment to enacting change. They can opt for larger or smaller scale changes, based on their own localized contexts and assessed needs. In this chapter, I focus on students as the stakeholder group who benefit most from a multimodal FYC curriculum. Moreover, to center on student experience, I consider what a multimodal curriculum offers students of writing in our current technology-saturated environment. As Jody Shipka noted in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, “technological changes—that is, the rate at which the communicative landscape is changing—have fueled discussions about what twenty-first-century students of discourse should know and be able to do” (5). This chapter explores what skills students need to develop, while also serving as a foundation and, ultimately, the motivation for WPA engagement with the other stakeholder groups to create a multimodal FYC curriculum.

This chapter expands upon my earlier argument, the underlying assumptions about the need for and value of a multimodal FYC curriculum by looking at how these curricula might engage students in adaptive remediation and multimodal transfer (Alexander et al.). My focus on remediation and multimodal transfer is twofold: remediation practices were present in nearly all my case studies, with this type of assignment serving as one of or, in some cases, the only, multimodal components in different curricula. The notion of multimodal transfer is more implicit, but I draw this from the scholarship that shapes documents like the *Framework for Success* and the *WPA Outcomes Statement* (previously discussed in the Ch.1). In her oft-cited 2004 CCCC’s Chair’s Address, Kathleen Blake Yancey called upon Composition and Rhetoric scholars and teachers of writing to engage
students “in a new key.” Yancey argues that the nature of writing has fundamentally shifted, and that it is up to writing teachers to prepare students with 21st century literacies, namely the ability to transfer their composing skills across contexts and media. She likewise argued for the inclusion of new language to describe and address these new ways of composing. While creating opportunities for multimodal composing is one step, students also need explicit instruction and chances for reflection on how to move across modes in the different contexts they will encounter beyond FYC.

Highlighting the curricular structures of my case studies, and analyzing these alongside FYC multimodal scholarship, I argue that students need explicit opportunities for developing their multimodal literacies that include meta-cognitive reflection to bolster students’ ability to transfer these literacies to new contexts. While the subsequent chapters present the other stakeholder groups and focus on specific actions that WPAs might take, I present engagement with students as a focus on the kinds of assignments and opportunities that foster their rhetorical awareness in multimodal contexts. Interestingly, unlike the later stakeholders, which were more frequently and openly discussed in my interviews, the role of students remained implicit in many of my discussions. This may partially be a reflection of the interview questions asked, which were centered around curriculum and programmatic design. At the same time, however, students were often underlying all responses, for without them, there would be no FYC curriculum to enact. In some cases, there was explicit reflection on the curriculum and what it “does” or what it offers students, while in others, discussions were really focused on the writing program

---

12 Appendix D includes an outline of the types of questions asked during the interviews. Following a semi-structured protocol, some of the interviews followed different lines of inquiry based on participants’ interests.
and its structure. This implicit nature is likewise reflected throughout this chapter; although focused on students as stakeholders, this chapter ultimately centers on the curriculum and assignments that can help foster students’ multimodal literacies. As a response to this implicit representation, I find it is essential to supplement my interviews and case study data with broader research on multimodal FYC curriculum and assignments.

I first introduce the concepts of adaptive remediation and multimodal transfer to illustrate how WPAs might engage students through enacting a multimodal curriculum and initiate programmatic change for 21st century composers. I follow this with descriptions of how each of the five case study programs engages students in multimodal curricula and other opportunities for multimodal transfer. I use these descriptions to then analyze what each of these opportunities does for students, and how it might reflect research on multimodal FYC curriculum. In closing, I argue that students, as stakeholders, should be engaged in multiple, explicit opportunities for multimodal composing. In these instances, multimodality should be connected to their prior knowledge and experiences, as well as enrich their rhetorical awareness. This includes offering students meta-cognitive opportunities to reflect on their choices, fostering a deeper understanding of multimodality beyond simply tool functionality.

**Adaptive Remediation and Multimodal Transfer**

The opening sections of the *Framework for Success* establish the purpose, audience, and context for the guidelines it establishes. One goal of the document is to “foster flexibility and rhetorical versatility” (3). While the terms themselves may differ, this notion of flexibility and versatility is inherent in students’ ability to both remediate and transfer. Rhetorical versatility requires the ability to identify an audience and deploy the correct
modes to best engage with and reach that audience. Similarly, flexibility can be read as the ability to move across modes \textit{and} transfer composing practices across contexts, allowing students to remain flexible across the various composing contexts they face. I specifically focus on remediation in this chapter as it was one of the most prominent assignment frameworks present across the case studies. Furthermore, I move into the notion of adaptive remediation because of its direct links to transfer, which I see as a necessity for engaging with students and various stakeholders, as well as the best practice research that informs shared outcomes statements and suggested frameworks for FYC in the 21st century.

In their introduction to \textit{Remediation: Understanding New Media}, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin describe remediation as new media “presenting themselves as refashioned and improved versions of other media” (14–15). Bolter and Grusin also carefully explain that remediation is not something new to \textit{new} (digital) media, that it “did not begin with the introduction of digital media” (11). This notion of remediation has continued to excite scholars since Bolter and Grusin’s introduction.\textsuperscript{13} Perhaps most notable is Jody Shipka’s \textit{Toward a Composition Made Whole}, which has been described as having “provided writing scholars with a sound theoretical basis and exciting pedagogical possibilities for working across a range of media in composition teaching” (DePalma 618). Like Bolter and Grusin, Shipka argues that remediation is not unique to digital technology and, as such, should not be conflated with digitality. She also argues that “it is crucial that we [composition scholars] commit to expanding our disciplinary commitment to the theorizing, researching, and improvement of written discourse to include other representational systems and ways of making meaning,” and calls for an understanding of

\textsuperscript{13} While remediation as a concept has existed for decades, Bolter and Grusin’s work in 1999 is one of the first moments of the term receiving scholarly attention.
composing that moves beyond the written text, one that takes into consideration the “combination and transformation of available resources (human, nonhuman, and natural)” (131). Like Yancey in 2004, and those whose research has followed, Shipka’s work underscores the changing nature of writing and communication, emphasizing the need for teachers and scholars alike to present these multiple modes in both their classrooms and scholarship.

Despite a recognition of the changing nature of writing, many scholars have also argued that composition has always been multimodal (Gitelman; Palmeri, *Remixing Composition*). Similar to Bolton and Grusin and Shipka, these scholars often argue for conceptions of multimodality that are distinct from digitality. Nonetheless, despite the importance of multimodality apart from digitality, the introduction of digital technology continues to raise new questions for the teaching of writing, especially when thinking about transfer across composing media and contexts. Scholars have thus expanded upon remediation to better understand how it might be deployed more effectively in the composition classroom.

One such undertaking is the concept of adaptive remediation, which Kara Poe Alexander et al. define as “a set of strategies composers can draw on in order to adapt or reshape composing knowledge across media” (34). They continue, describing the necessary assumption with adaptive remediation: that not only does context impact the effectiveness of a particular rhetorical choice, but that “composers can be trained to think about their motives or rhetorical purposes in ways that allow them to reshape and remediate their composing knowledge from one medium into another” (34). Adaptive remediation requires critical reflection on motive and rhetorical purpose, just as it requires that
composers understand the importance of mode and context, and how to adapt composing knowledge across different modes for different purposes, audiences, and contexts. In this way, adaptive remediation is a blending of traditional text-based literacies and those needed for composing in other modes. As such, it can act a sort of curricular bridge between more traditional composing practices, and those practices required by 21st century communication.

Some students enter the FYC classroom already having the foundations of this adaptive knowledge and the ability to compose across modes. Where they struggle, however, is in understanding how the writing they already do across platforms and modes can help them with the writing they will encounter throughout college and their professional lives. And while there certainly is not a one-to-one transfer from the writing they do on social media and their FYC or other composing contexts, adaptive remediation and explicit discussions of multimodal transfer can better equip students with the ability to leverage all of their available literacies, making connections and bridging their rhetorical awareness between composing scenarios. Because multimodality itself requires a bridging of text-based knowledge into new composing modes, it is a useful concept for thinking about writing transfer across contexts.

**Multimodal Transfer**

Transfer as a term is often contested among writing studies scholars. In her 2012 “Mapping the Questions: The State of Writing-Related Transfer Research,” Jessie Moore highlights these complexities, from a lack of consensus in what transfer means to disparate beliefs of the extent to which writing transfer is even possible.14 Despite these

---

14 Moore’s study also underscores the limitations of writing-transfer research as of 2012, particularly the limited scope of existing studies and narrow geographic representation.
discrepancies in transfer’s possibility, I find the concept useful when thinking about the necessity of multimodal composing opportunities for FYC students. For my study, I found Ryan Shepherd’s reconceptualization of transfer productive, especially because of its explicit focus on multimodal literacies. Shepherd suggests scholars move away from thinking about learning transfer as a “‘simple movement’” or “as a literal ‘transfer,’” instead offering a definition of transfer as “creating a bridge or connection between one area of knowledge and another inside of the learner’s mind” (108). In this way, connections within the mind make “prior knowledge accessible in a new situation,” and unlike notions of literal transfer, “no knowledge has moved; it has just become connected within [the] mind to a new context” (109). Shepherd’s definition of transfer highlights the connections students can and need to make across their educational experiences. In this definition, transfer is not a literal picking-up and plopping of experience, but rather, it is accessing and connecting previous knowledge and adapting it to fit a new context.

Shepherd is also not the first to take up learning transfer alongside multimodality to consider how students adapt knowledge across composing modes. In a 2015 study, Michael DePalma used the notion of “adaptive transfer” as a “generative lens for analyzing how writers perceive the application and adaptation of their print-based writing knowledge and their multiple literacies while engaging in processes of remediation” (622). DePalma’s study proposes an alternative conceptualization of transfer for writing studies research, highlighting the “emerging body of research [that] argues that transfer not only entails reusing past writing knowledge in new situations” but that “it also entails reshaping writing knowledge” (616). He goes on to further argue that, despite a variation in terms, scholars “all view transfer as a dynamic activity in which writers have the agency to both draw from
and reshape writing knowledge to suit and influence writing contexts” (616). In both conceptions of transfer, the focus is less on students’ static movement of knowledge, and more on how students might develop an awareness of how to adapt prior knowledge to new contexts. Multimodality is particularly suited for this kind of learning, as it requires students to consider how they might adapt traditional text-based concepts for composing in new modes. At the same time, however, it carries the additional benefit of expanding students’ rhetorical awareness, as multimodality similarly emphasizes the importance of purpose, audience, and genre.

Adaptive remediation and multimodal transfer act as useful frameworks when considering students as stakeholders and are thus essential for curricular change. Engaging students through multimodal curriculum includes fostering their ability to compose across modes and, furthermore, their ability to adapt this knowledge across composing contexts. This requires creating opportunities for them to learn, practice, and explore the multimodal literacies they will need to be successful in future educational contexts. As evidenced through the Framework and OS, students need inseparable links between the development of their multimodal composing practices and rhetorical awareness, with opportunities to practice these skills in tandem.

**Across the Curricula: Case Study Analysis**

Although the level of multimodal engagement across my five case study institutions greatly varied, the most typical assignment was some version of a remediation project. Some programs, like UMass and FSU, had no required multimodal assignments in their FYC curriculum, and the role of multimodality in FYC manifested in very different ways. There was also a parallel drawn between multimodality and the principles of Universal
Design for Learning (UDL), with both UConn and Miami attributing their own multimodal commitments as essential to the practice of UDL. In the following sections, I offer an overview of each of the five programs’ curricula, highlighting the places where multimodality is present for students. Following these descriptions, I return to the research around multimodal FYC, adaptive remediation, and multimodal transfer to analyze how these programs are already engaging their students, and what other opportunities they might consider. By drawing these connections between the general scholarship and my specific case study examples, I aim to offer another level of adaptability.

UMass

The FYC curriculum at UMass does not have an explicit multimodal assignment or digital requirement. In fact, the only “technology” requirement is for teachers to use some form of Learning Management System (most use Moodle or Google Classroom), and to post the course syllabus and homework online. The curriculum, in its current iteration, invites creativity and innovation through the “TBA” fourth unit, which is left mostly to the discretion of individual teachers; this often becomes the place where teachers experiment or play with different compositional modes. It is also, however, a commonly skipped unit in a tightening 13-week course schedule, meaning that in some FYC classes, students are not introduced to any other forms of composition apart from traditional text-based compositions.15

Because the fourth unit is determined by individual teachers, students may have inconsistent experiences across different sections of the course. This unit may be the only

---

15 This fourth unit and its removal is a bit complicated. For some instructors, removing the fourth unit is part of a curricular pilot, and multimodality is embedded throughout the course. However, for others, despite the shared curriculum and the program’s expectation of five units, the fourth unit is taken out and there is no multimodal component to the course.
opportunity for some students to engage in multimodal composing, while other students may find themselves in a course that has multimodality embedded throughout all units, which provides multiple opportunities to practice multimodal composing. Yet, there remains a third group of students, who may find themselves in a more traditional, text-based composition course, with no opportunity for multimodal composing and engagement. Because a number of teachers condense or eliminate the fourth unit to make more time for other units, students’ understanding of composition may be limited, a limitation that can only be addressed by a focused effort on behalf of the writing program to embed multimodality across the course.

This focus on traditional text-based composing was discussed in my interview with Assistant Director Peggy Woods. When asked about the role of technology and multimodality, Peggy responded “It’s so hard. Because I think that boils down to a resource issue. … then we’d have access to all that stuff [computers, technology, etc.]. And I think the fact is that we’re so limited. … I wonder if we’re teaching these archaic forms to students. But part of it is, we’re in rooms that are archaic, right?” (Woods). Peggy points to a programmatic conflict, one that may be all too familiar to other WPAs. Although the program recognizes its limitations, and expresses a desire to implement new approaches, they simultaneously feel constrained by available resources. The concern that the program is only teaching “archaic forms” of writing is prefaced by a comment about resource issues, something Peggy went on to elaborate further, directly after expressing concern over the forms of writing that the curriculum encourages.

Talking about the program’s desire to “open up” to new forms of composing, while also feeling the restriction of resources, Peggy remarked, “I think it would be great if we
could open it up more. Like we’ve got…they have to do some kind of, like, we think about these digital technologies or digital essays. Like, these ways of communicating that are digital, …. But we also have to have the resources to be able to, so the students can do it. And I think that gets in the way” (Woods). Again, Peggy addresses the program’s desire to consider different modes of writing to better support students’ needs, but this desire is immediately halted by a concern about the resources needed, and their unavailability. For, as she previously pointed out, it is easy to fall back on “archaic forms” when you’re stuck teaching in archaic spaces.

Despite the issue of resources, multimodality has entered UMass’ curriculum revision discussions. While many of the objectives of the course, including its focus on writing as a process, have remained vital to the FYC curriculum, the curriculum committee noted that inclusion of multimodal assignments and requirements was desirable as the changes progressed. Still, the concern about resources, both physically across campus and the labor resources of program administration (discussed further in Ch. 4), remain a barrier.

**UConn**

As part of their curriculum redesign and the move towards their WAT curriculum, UConn targeted students’ ability to compose across modes, citing this as crucially connected to students’ composition and (media) consumption outside of the classroom. The goal was for “students to be makers of digital and social texts, not just consumers,” which explicitly encourages students to take their FYC experience outside of the classroom. (University of Connecticut First-Year Writing Program, Instructor Resource Book 2018-2019 9). Saturated by media, this FYC course prepares students to better understand the process of creating the media they consume, hopefully resulting in more
ethical consumption. The program’s Instructor Resource Book likewise argues that the FYC classroom is “an ideal space for students to gain experience with the technological tools that they will continue to use in their future classes and various disciplines” (28). The emphasis here remains on students’ learning needs, both in school and beyond, and FYC students at UConn develop their multimodal literacies to determine their usefulness across different contexts and potential future writing scenarios. Part of this focus requires that students learn about multimodality and technology as more than tools and platforms, encouraging students to make connections with their more traditional, text-based rhetorical awareness to adapt those principles across modes.

One of the program’s early curriculum redesign documents offers the WAT curriculum’s digital literacy framing: “Part of digital literacy, then, requires knowledge of how the tool works, but students must also gauge why this tool works in this situation and determine when to use it, and imagine its impact and implications” (University of Connecticut First-Year Writing Program, "Engagement, Technologies and Tools" 3). Students need an opportunity to develop knowledge of how a tool works that is explicitly connected to an awareness about its rhetorical effectiveness and use. This focus on engagement beyond simply how a tool works echoes the work of scholars like Hawisher and Selfe and Banks (discussed in Ch. 1) who all propose multiple layers of access that must be considered. Relatedly, in a multimodal assignment overview resource, the program argues that “multimodal assignments should always consider the ways use of diverse modes or technologies contribute to students’ rhetorical awareness and abilities; they should go beyond ‘functional’ use of technologies as transparent tools” (University of
Connecticut First-Year Writing Program, “Multimodal Assignment Overview”\textsuperscript{16}. This further highlights the opportunities that UConn’s FYC students are given to develop multimodal literacies beyond design functionality.

In addition to helping students develop their multimodal literacies, UConn’s focus on multimodality also ensures that FYC classrooms are accessible to \textit{all} students. In our interview, Brenda Brueggemann, Aetna Chair of Writing and Director of First-Year Writing, elaborated upon her support of multimodality, remarking, “I believe in multimodality not just because it’s a cool, new thing, but because for me, it resonates deeply with universal design” (Brueggemann). A leading scholar in Disability Studies and UDL herself, it was unsurprising that Brenda directly referenced the connections between multimodal composing practices and the principles of universal design.

Adapted from the concept of Universal Design in architecture, UDL is defined as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Dunn and Dunn De Mers). Patricia Dunn and Kathleen Dunn De Mers argue for writing teachers to adapt the principles of universal design in their own classrooms, and they see multimodal composing as \textit{inherently} inclusive of those principles. They argue that “universal design can help us [as writing teachers and scholars] break out of these limiting word-based pedagogies and assumptions” (Dunn and Dunn De Mers). Not only does UConn see their curricular redesign and multimodal emphasis helping students prepare for the kinds of composing

\textsuperscript{16} Since the research was conducted, this webpage is no longer available. It has been replaced by updated resources in support of the Writing Across Technology Curriculum. Nonetheless, this underscores the program’s conceptualization of multimodal assignments and their purpose.
they will encounter in the future, it has the additional benefit of engaging with the core principles of UDL and helping make the course accessible to all students.

**Miami**

Like UConn, Miami’s multimodal curriculum is inspired by the principles of UDL. In fact, Jason Palmeri, the former First-Year Writing Program Director, credits Brenda Brueggemann at UConn with his approach to multimodality and its reinforcement of UDL, commenting “And of course, Brenda is the person…she actually taught my teacher training class. … I think sort of the universal design values that I bring to this [WPA work and teaching], I very much learned from Brenda” (Palmeri). In their Teacher Handbook, the Miami writing program defines UDL as “a philosophy of teaching adapted from architecture – advocating the use of multiple and flexible strategies to address the needs of all students” (11). The Handbook also provides further resources for implementing the principles of UDL. The goal is to “[give] students as much flexibility as possible. … [and give] students choices about what technologies they’re going to use in their learning that will enable their learning, while also thinking critically about questions of access, and sort of, making sure all those technologies are accessible” (Palmeri). By incorporating the principles of UDL, Miami also engages in critical reflection on the accessibility of particular technologies.

In addition to their commitment to UDL, Miami’s curriculum and assignment sequencing for students was greatly inspired by the students themselves, and the work they brought to their FYC classes. Talking about the curriculum pre-redesign, Jason commented that the course offered an “open” assignment, allowing students to determine their own projects. What the program found in that assignment was that “a lot of students were
designing their own projects to bring in digital and multimodal stuff” (Palmeri). Before the remediation project was a required assignment in the curriculum, FYC students at Miami were already drawing from their prior literacies to create multimodal projects. When redesigning the curriculum then, the writing program acknowledged students’ interest, making multimodality an essential (and required) part of the overall curriculum.

The inclusion of a remediated multimodal project was not a departure from the program’s curricular focus, but rather, an extension of it. Commenting on the inclusion, Jason remarked “in many ways, the focus of rhetoric as the core of the program then guided how we integrated digital technologies as ways of getting students to analyze more diverse forms of rhetoric and practice more diverse forms of rhetoric” (Palmeri). Not only was the curriculum change introducing new forms of rhetoric, but it was also giving students an opportunity to engage rhetorical concepts in new, and deeper, ways: “our digital multimodal composing assignment, when we did a full assessment of student portfolios, was really the place that students met our outcomes not just about digital multimodality, but about reflective consideration of audience” (Palmeri).

As Jason underscored in our interview, the multimodal project in Miami’s FYC curriculum does more than just satisfy students’ development of multimodal composing concepts. It enriches their broader rhetorical awareness of concepts like audience, and in doing so, it increases their opportunity for multimodal transfer. While further examination and research would be necessary to undoubtedly claim that FYC students at Miami have richer rhetorical awareness because of multimodal projects, the broader scholarship on multimodal pedagogies as well as Miami’s own portfolio assessment, suggests this is the
case. This also further highlights Alexander et al.’s concept of adaptive remediation, illustrating how students use rhetorical concepts across modes.

**FSU**

During our interview, Margaret, a Writing Program Assistant Director, spoke about the overall FSU campus community, particularly its relationship to technology and digital pedagogy. She remarked that FSU is a “tech-y campus” where students typically bring their own devices with little to no prompting. From the university-wide strategic plan (discussed in chapter 5) to a redesigned, technology-focused graduate curriculum (discussed in chapter 4), FSU has a long-standing history with multimodality and digitality. It is unsurprising then that undergraduate students are given ample opportunity to embrace multimodality and develop their multimodal literacies. Talking about FSU’s FYC students, Margaret commented that they are “very much embracing of multimodality, technology, digital technologies. We really do want to prepare our students to be 21st century composers” (Margaret). At FSU, the curriculum emphasizes the relationship between rhetorical purpose and audience through adapting genres. Like UMass, however, the multimodal component is not a requirement, meaning it is not necessarily a guarantee in all FYC classes.

In our interview, Margaret spoke about the multimodal element of the FYC classroom, remarking,

So, [the multimodal assignment is] not required. [Teachers] are required to teach a composition in three genres as a final project. And that’s a, it’s a remix project where students take their research paper and…well I’ll admit, I teach it as a digital, multimodal composition. So, there’s flexibility there too. But they take that
research project and they remix it in three new genres. And many teachers want them to pull a full remediation and go multimodal and make flyers or websites or blogs. So, it’s not a requirement, but it’s very much like the norm. (Margaret)

At FSU, like at UMass, multimodality is not a requirement. The curriculum leaves room for multimodal assignments and experimentation, but it is left to the discretion of individual instructors. However, the teachers and students at FSU see multimodality as “the norm,” and the genre project itself is tied to the notion of remediation. By asking students to approach the same topic across multiple genres, the curriculum creates explicit opportunities for students to enrich their rhetorical awareness, requiring critical reflection of the relationship between purpose, modes, and audience.

Ohio State

Throughout much of their time in a FYC class at Ohio State, students are asked to compose more traditional, text-based assignments. When asked about the curriculum, Edgar (Eddie) Singleton, the current Director of FYC, noted, “We think of this course as a course in analysis. And that is sort of as opposed to a course in argument. The largest single project students do we call the ‘Analytical Research Project’” (Singleton). Focused on analysis, many of the assignments that students are asked to complete involve text-based compositions. At the end of the course, however, students are asked to compose a “multimedia presentation [grown] from the work that they [did] on their essays, but aimed at a public, rather than an academic audience, which changes rhetorical strategies in a lot of different ways” (Singleton). Although due at the end of the semester, students prepare for this multimedia project throughout the duration of the course by collecting images and artifacts related to their topic to use in their final multimedia symposium presentations.
When asked about how the curriculum has evolved over time, Eddie remarked that “it’s been a long time since there was a radical change in the curriculum” (Singleton). He went on, however, to talk about the “multiple technology solutions” that the program has tested for the symposium presentation assignment, including PowerPoint, Prezi, and the program’s current platform, Adobe Spark. At the same time, Eddie discussed how the final symposium presentation “grew from another assignment” which was known as the “Commonplace, where students were writing Op-Eds.” Part of the reason for the move to the symposium presentation format was one of sheer logistics, of “the imposition of outside circumstances,” as the publisher who was hosting the Op-Eds could no longer support the project. As a result of the publisher’s changes, and in response to the desire to “involve a visual rhetoric aspect to the course,” the multimedia symposium presentation assignment was added to the curriculum, replacing the previous Op-Ed assignments (Singleton).

Although students mainly compose in traditional text-based forms throughout the course, the multimedia symposium presentation at the end of the course is a great opportunity for students to reflect on their inquiry projects and reconsider what those texts might look like when presented to a different audience in a different context. The assignment likewise requires students to conceptualize the project as more than a written product, as they are asked to collect materials for the presentation throughout the semester. In this way, students are challenged to think in multiple modes throughout the course, and, at the course’s conclusion, must articulate this multimodal thinking in the form of a presentation.

\[17\] At the time of writing this, Ohio State has started the process of curriculum revisions and is in the early stages, which was presented at the 2019 Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference.
When Theory Meets Practice

The importance of multimodal composing opportunities for students is evident across decades of scholarship, from Selfe’s 1999 “Perils of Not Paying Attention” to more recent research around the importance of teaching fair use and algorithmic logic in the writing classroom (Beck; Courant-Rife; Reyman). Just as any new learning task might, multimodal composing poses challenges for students, especially those who are unfamiliar with composing across modes. Thus, the arguments for including multimodal assignments has been supported by research that aims to provide teachers with approaches to teaching multimodality despite these challenges. In “Designerly ≠ Readerly: Re-assessing Multimodal and New Media Rubrics for Use in Writing Studies,” Cheryl Ball argues that “analysis and interpretation of new media texts is becoming more important as writing studies shifts from writing to composing in multiple media” (393, emphasis in original). Ball goes on to provide writing teachers with potential frameworks for helping students move from the role of consumer to producer of multimodal texts, arguing that this level of engagement is essential for all students learning to write. Ball’s focus here on moving students from composer to producer is similar to the goals of UConn’s WAT curriculum, which has an explicitly stated goal of helping students be more than just consumers of media.

Like Ball, Michael DePalma and Kara Poe Alexander recognize the challenges students face with multimodal composing assignments, and as a response, they propose their own set of pedagogical recommendations for ensuring student success with multimodal composing. Some of these recommendations include ample reflective opportunities for students to offer meta-commentary on their rhetorical choices,
remediation activities and practice with composing across modes, and opportunities to reflect upon moments of intervention throughout the multimodal composing process (193–96). They stress the importance of this work, arguing “As new technologies steadily and incrementally reshape students’ … composing processes, the need to understand writers’ experiences in multimodal composition projects is increasingly apparent,” and go on to further credit writing teachers as “best apt to help students develop and transfer the kinds of literacies they will need to thrive in a range of twenty-first century contexts” (197). Despite the challenges posed, DePalma and Alexander highlight the importance of embracing the changing nature of composition and writing teachers’ role in that evolution. They recognize the many struggles with multimodality, on behalf of both students and teachers. Yet, by engaging with multimodality, teachers can better understand their students’ writing experiences. The reshaping of composing processes is in continuous flux, and writing teachers are best poised to help students adapt and transfer learning across these contexts.

While students can develop these skills and literacies in any number of ways, for FYC classrooms, explicit curriculum design that includes remediation activities and opportunities to foster multimodal transfer skills is crucial. In her work, Jody Shipka identifies students’ critical need to engage with multimodal forms of composition. While carefully constructing a definition of multimodal as something not interchangeable with digital technologies, Shipka illustrates how exposure to different modes of communicative practice can broaden students’ engagement with multiple modes as both consumers and producers. She writes,
I am also aware of how writing on shirts, purses, and shoes, repurposing games, staging live performances, producing complex multipart rhetorical events, or asking students to account for the choices they make while designing linear, thesised-driven, print-based texts can also broaden notions of composing and greatly impact the way students write, read, and perhaps most importantly, respond to a much wider variety of communicative technologies—both new and not so new. (9)

For Shipka, and for scholars who have taken up her work in the decade since it was first published, multimodal exposure shapes students’ future engagement with activities like writing and reading. These experiences support students as both consumers and producers of multimodal compositions. This shaping, how students use their literacies beyond the initial experience, is multimodal transfer. Scholars have much to say about the role of multimodality, the extent to which students should engage with it, and its place in the FYC classroom. Yet, there is general consensus that as the nature of writing continues to shift, so too must its instruction. With this shift comes a need for multimodal transfer and opportunities for students to reflect upon composition across modes.

Among my case studies, there were both similarities and disparities in how each program engaged students in adaptive remediation and presented opportunities for the critical reflection needed to ensure multimodal transfer. What these programs highlight are the very different ways that WPAs might engage students as stakeholders when enacting a multimodal curriculum, offering a range of activities and assignments that draw upon the concepts of multimodal transfer and adaptive remediation.
Multimodal Assignments

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted the importance of adaptive remediation for assisting in students’ ability to transfer knowledge. Remediation, as a broad concept, emerged as a pattern at two of my case study institutions, Miami and FSU, both of which have their own versions of remediation assignments. At Miami, this is a required assignment in the curriculum, and all teachers must have their students complete some form of remediation. On the other hand, FSU’s equivalent of the remediation project is framed as a “composition in three genres” project, with many teachers assigning it as a multimodal remediation project. Table 3.1 includes the learning objectives or purpose of the two assignments; in both instances, this information was made available in the Teacher’s Handbook provided by the Writing Program (Landis and Pendygraft; Florida State University College Composition Program).
Table 3.1: Sample Remediation-style Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miami University</th>
<th>Florida State University\textsuperscript{18}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remediation—Inquiry 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Composition in Three Genres</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore issues of audience, the effective construction of arguments, and the rhetorical effects of the chosen media and modalities (e.g., aural, visual, textual, kinesthetic).</td>
<td>The goal of this project is to get students working in multiple genres, so that they develop a theory and practice of composing in multiple modes to mimic the nature of professional work in which colleagues work together to develop ideas and create solutions. By using multiple genres, modes, and media, they learn more about various genres, develop a greater sense of composing for particular audiences, and consider a wider array of rhetorical choices they might employ in writing with purpose. The project examines the importance of genre and audience and also explores different ways of composing, all of which are important for the student’s development of knowledge of genre and communication (78).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Examine and analyze the various rhetorical affordances and limitations of differing media and modalities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn how written language must change to be effective in different media/modalities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn to negotiate the complexities of writing for specific audiences using specific technologies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore how multiple media and modalities interact to create meaning within a text (194).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although very different assignments, both present students with explicit opportunities to reflect upon and provide commentary on their rhetorical choices. While students are asked to compose across modes as the main task of the assignment, they must also reflect upon and articulate the choices they made related to audience and purpose.

\textsuperscript{18} Teachers have their choice of teaching from several “strands” provided in the Handbook. While the overarching course theme changes based on the strand chosen, many of the projects remain the same. The assignment described here, taken from Strand II, is representative of the other versions.
Remediation in these instances is not just about learning new tools, or composing beyond a text-based product, it is also assessing the effectiveness and value of certain modes. For this particular strand of FSU’s FYC, multimodality is explicitly connected to the possible future contexts that students might find themselves in, asking them to “mimic the nature of professional work.”

In both assignments, it is also important to highlight the conception of multiple modes or media. While students may opt for some form of digital technology, the shared guiding principles for the assignments do not make such a requirement explicit. The programmatic requirement is that students compose across modes, but not that they must compose digitally. This level of attention by each of the programs responds, albeit indirectly, to Jody Shipka’s important distinction between multimodality and digitality. Students should be exposed to all available means (or modes) of composition, without restriction. As Shipka argues, constraining students to strictly digital composition is another version of narrow-focused composing skills, which multimodality is meant to work against (11).

Miami and FSU provide examples of how a WPA might enforce programmatic requirements to engage students in the important work of multimodality, preparing them for multimodal transfer and future writing contexts. These assignments provide explicit opportunity for students to reflect upon the choices they made and consider the limitations and affordances of their remediation decisions. Such meta-cognitive work enriches students’ rhetorical awareness and the potential for transfer to new composing contexts.
Multimodal Curriculum

Unlike the other programs, which either had multimodal assignment requirements or no requirements at all, UConn’s entire FYC curriculum is centered on multimodality, as highlighted by the curricular title “WAT: Writing Across Technologies.” Students in FYC at UConn are exposed to multiple multimodal opportunities and are asked to draw on those literacies not in any single assignment, but rather, throughout the entirety of the course. The final overarching, course learning objective highlights this emphasis, where students are expected to “use technology rhetorically”; some of the sub-goals for this include: “Recognize that technologies are not neutral tools for making meaning”; “Asses the context and mode of technology you are using to compose”; “Respond to situations with productive choices to deliver meaningful texts”; and “Employ the principles of universal design to make your work accessible and legible to the widest possible audience” (UConn First-Year Writing Program, Instructor Resource Book 2018-2019 37).

Like Miami and FSU, these learning outcomes emphasize students’ meta-cognitive reflections on the choices they make, requiring articulations of why students make the composing choices they do. Again, this exercise allows students to reflect upon why certain media did or did not work for a specific audience, purpose, or context; such practice can strengthen the possibility that students will transfer these multimodal literacies, as they will have practiced considering rhetorical awareness in relation to mode. Unique to UConn is the explicit objective that connects students’ multimodal work with the principles of universal design, and the focus on designing accessible compositions. Although unsurprising, this inclusion can better prepare students for future writing contexts, as well as bolster their ability to make accessible composing decisions.
Conclusion

Engaging students as essential stakeholders in any curricular or programmatic design change may be obvious to many WPAs. This chapter extends upon the underlying belief of my larger research project: students need explicit multimodal opportunities in FYC in order to be successful communicators in the 21st century. These opportunities likewise need to include a level of reflection which allows students to be both makers and consumers, to create with rhetorical versatility and understanding. Reading different curricular approaches to multimodality alongside what scholars have written about remediation, multimodality, and transfer underscores the importance of these learning experiences. This parallel reading also highlights the very different ways into multimodality, from singular required assignments, to optional inclusion, to entire curricular overhauls. Each approach, when coupled with opportunities for fostering students’ rhetorical awareness and reflection upon decision-making, can strengthen students’ potential for multimodal transfer.

This chapter presents a partial view of this level, as there is no discussion from the student perspective about what is gained from these classroom opportunities. Nonetheless, there is value in building a framework and calling upon ways of engaging our student stakeholders. As evidenced from the case studies, there are a number of ways to engage students, and sometimes, the same approach may manifest in very different ways based on institutional context. For example, at both UMass and FSU, there is no explicit multimodal assignment requirement. Yet, at FSU, the “composition in three genres” assignment is often (but not always) taught as a remediated, digital text, while at UMass, there are students who can complete the FYC requirement without ever having composed something not text-
based. These differences further highlight the importance of local institutional identities and programmatic norms.

The following chapters identify specific actions and ways of engagement with teachers and institutional administrators. While students are presented as their own stakeholder group, represented in this chapter through curricular initiatives, they maintain an implicit presence across all stakeholder groups. For example, the teacher training programs and models I discuss in the following chapter are direct responses to the curriculum in place and the students who teachers work with. Likewise, the strategic plans I analyze in chapter 5 are designed with the students in mind. Thus, in many ways, students are both their own group of stakeholders in the overall curricular design choices, as well as meta-stakeholders intersecting with all levels of my model.
For many WPAs, teacher training or orientation is anything but fun and games. It is an opportunity to introduce a curriculum, a program, even a whole institution to incoming teachers (who are often, but not always, also incoming graduate students), and poses a wide range of considerations. New teachers bring with them preconceived notions about teaching in general, and the teaching of writing more specifically. Every individual enters their teaching position with a range of professional experience, as well as a multitude of their own lived experiences as students in the classroom. WPAs are tasked with how best to connect with these (sometimes conflicting) ranges of experience. These conflicts and approaches have been addressed by scholars in Composition and Rhetoric, with a myriad of articles, chapters, and books dedicated to composition teacher training, both historically and in this contemporary moment.

In the previous chapter, I expanded upon my argument for presenting students with multimodal composing opportunities in the FYC classroom, highlighting the importance of multimodal transfer and remediation activities. Students have the largest stakes in these curricula, as they are the ones who benefit (or not) the most. This chapter focuses on the next group of stakeholders: teachers. Composition teachers serve as a bridge of my model, situated within the middle space, impacted by both the administrative stakeholders who oversee their institutional positionality, as well as the students they connect with across semesters. To best meet the needs of teachers, I argue that WPAs need to strike a balance
between the concerns of local context, and the larger scholarship that shapes composition pedagogy research. Additionally, I posit that WPAs benefit most when they implement training programs that are both intentional and flexible. These training programs should intentionally model the pedagogical practices that WPAs and the curricula they support require of teachers. This modeling must include opportunities for practice, play, and even failure, so that teachers can gain the comfort and confidence they need to be successful. These programs should likewise highlight the flexibility and adaptability of a curriculum, making space for teachers’ own pedagogical values and teacher identities. Lastly, for those programs relying on graduate student teaching support, WPAs should consider how graduate coursework and degree programs might support multimodal pedagogies and curricula at the FYC level.

One common sentiment in the research on teaching writing is that learning to write and learning to teach writing share similar processes and face similar misconceptions (Lindgren; Estrem and Reid, “What New Writing Teachers Talk about”). Margaret Lindgren describes these process parallels as such: “Learning to teach and learning to write are much alike. Both require practice and consistent attention to specific rhetorical situations, and both benefit from critical reflection” (292). Heidi Estrem and E. Shelley Reid, albeit implicitly, address the shared misconceptions when they describe the recursive nature of these learning processes, writing, “learning to teach (writing) is a protean and lengthy process, its uncertain and recursive progress often obscured by the myths of quick competence” (“What New Writing Teachers Talk about” 450). Just as with learning to write, learning to teach can be plagued by the notion that there is a level of “quick competence,” that one day, a teacher gets it, without any need for further reflection or
revision. But as Lindgren and Estrem and Reid point out, the process of learning to teach writing is equally recursive and requires just as much critical reflection as learning to write.

In addition to drawing process parallels between the act of teaching writing and writing itself, Estrem and Reid direct attention to the most common approach in teacher training, pedagogy seminars, that are “designed to guide [new college writing teachers] through their initial teaching experience and provide an introduction to composition studies” (“What New Writing Teachers Talk about” 449). It is in these pedagogy seminars that new teachers are introduced to a wealth of Composition and Rhetoric research that includes an array of concepts, including multimodal composition pedagogy.

WPAs and their teacher training programs in my study were no exception to these conceptions of writing teacher training, as their programs often (but not always) reflected the scholarship on learning to teach writing. Although the five programs had much in common, they also demonstrated the variations influenced by local context. What was evident across these programs was the importance of reaching teachers through intentional training programs that were flexible and supportive of a multimodal curriculum. I refer to these training programs as intentional because of their structure, and how each of the WPAs spoke about their teacher training; it was evident that the training aligned with the programs’ intentions, and that the WPAs modeled the kinds of pedagogical practices they hoped for in the FYC curricula. In some instances, the training program reflected a commitment to introducing composition pedagogy theory, coupled with practice in localized context. While some saw training as an opportunity for “fun and games,” for others, discussions of training programs triggered concerns about scarce administrative resources and how to move forward.
In 2002, Stephen Wilhoit published a bibliographic essay titled “Recent Trends in TA Instruction” that revealed both “general agreement concerning the structure of TA instructional programs,” as well as “ongoing debates over which instructional procedures to employ and concern about the working conditions of TAs” (17). Wilhoit found the most common structural features of teacher training programs included pre-service orientations, practica and coursework, mentorship programs with both faculty members and peers, and opportunities to work as writing center tutors prior to teaching. Despite being nearly two decades old, the structural trends Wilhoit identifies remain common across many writing programs’ approaches to training. Apart from guaranteed opportunities as writing center tutors, each of the programs I reviewed used these structural elements in some form.19

To better support writing programs in their training development, Kathleen Blake Yancey proposed a heuristic for designing new teacher development and training programs. Yancey emphasizes the importance of blending local context and the specific institutional needs with the larger theoretical underpinnings that should drive these programs:

Local needs will of course continue to focus our attention; context, as we know, is critical. But practice suggests that when local needs determine rather than influence a TA development program, it’s all too easy to find that one’s program is rich with technique but absent theory, or sensitive to experience but unable to reframe it. (“The Professionalization of TA Development Programs” 63–64, emphasis added)

19 This also remained true during my preliminary review of Writing Programs across US institutions (see “Case Study Selection” in Chapter 2).
Yancey goes on to argue that, although these training programs “constitute a rhetorical response to a given local need, […] to design good programs, [WPAs] must consider not only the local context but also the larger rhetorical contexts of writing programs” (65, emphasis in original). While Yancey acknowledges the individual and contextualized needs of writing programs, and how those needs must be addressed within elements of the teacher training programs, she also advocates for coupling this with broader theory and research that supports composition pedagogy. Local needs better serve as influences on a program, rather than driving the entirety of a training program’s design. Yet, despite Yancey’s proposed heuristic, an unbalanced emphasis on the local remains true for many training programs. In 2012, Estrem and Reid found “writing pedagogy education has in practice too often relied on approaches that are local self-evident or based on ‘common sense,’ rather than growing deliberately from the work of a formal subfield with theories and practices that are steadily reflected upon, critiqued, researched, and refined” (“Writing Pedagogy Education” 224). Their findings further underscore a common tendency to rely on localized context or a notion of “this is how it has always been done,” rather than drawing from scholarship based in tested and proven research.

My notion of intentional training draws much inspiration from Yancey’s heuristic and the issues raised by Estrem and Reid. While WPAs have institutional requirements and programmatic logistics to consider, they must also train with intention. What theories might help support student learning outcomes and the larger FYC curriculum? What exposure to composition pedagogy scholarship do new teachers need, and how much? Particularly with multimodal composition, WPAs might consider how theory and research can support their curricular design, as well as perhaps assuage the skepticism of new teachers, with their
own ideas of what a FYC class is or should be. In her heuristic, Yancey points to WPAs’
potential desire to shape training around local contexts alone. But, as she puts it, local
context should be one of several *influences* on a training program, not the determining
factor. Instead, training programs must also recognize the wealth of research on the
teaching of writing and allow best practices to iteratively shape local contexts.

In addition to local contexts, WPAs are also faced with teachers’ own preconceived
notions about what it means to teach writing. Sometimes these ideas can inhibit a local
curriculum, actively working against local curricular objectives. But there is also great
benefit in engaging teachers’ prior experiences, as well as their multimodal needs, when
designing an effective training program. In a study focused on training programs for K-12
teachers, Anne Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al. argue that training programs should emphasize
digital pedagogies in relation to contextualized problems, with technology serving as more
than simply a classroom tool:

> what teachers find meaningful with regard to technology could be equated to
> knowledge of instructional problems that technology can help solve, knowledge of
> specific technology that can solve those instructional problems, and knowledge of
> *how* the technology can solve those instructional problems within their own specific
> educational contexts. (400)

In their study, they found that while most training programs emphasized specific platforms
and their uses in the classroom, teachers benefitted more from discussions and explicit
instruction surrounding what we might call the rhetorical purpose of technology, and how
to tie that to specific classroom contexts. Learning about specific platforms is effective and
can help new teachers with minimal multimodal experience; but there needs to be equal
emphasis on discussions about how, when, and, perhaps most importantly, why, certain technologies and approaches are deployed. Jeff Rice echoes this sentiment in his work, arguing that “what’s important […] is not just that we incorporate technology into writing instruction but that we understand technology’s effect on how we write” (279). In both instances, the emphasis is not just on incorporating technology as a tool, but incorporation coupled with intentionality about why and how the technology is being used in the classroom, and what benefits it offers.

Lastly, just as teachers should not make assumptions about their students’ multimodal knowledge or abilities, WPAs should refrain from casting assumptions about the expertise of new teachers. Although Estrem and Reid remind us that “new teachers are not new to the classroom, but just to the front of it,” there are a range of classroom experiences and pedagogical approaches that teachers will bring to their programs (“What New Writing Teachers Talk about” 453). Sometimes these prior experiences manifest as resistance to multimodal curricula, where new teachers, not having been exposed to multimodal pedagogical approaches, see little value in implementing their own. In their study of technology and mentorship at Purdue University, Samantha Blackmon and Shirley Rose found “a direct correlation between a lack of familiarity with computers and a lack of interest in learning to teach with technology” (109). Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al. point to similar research findings, remarking that “one of the main reasons many [K-12] teachers under-utilize technology is because they may not recognize the relevance of a particular technology resource to educational issues faced in their own classrooms” (400). Training programs that offer explicit instruction in not just technology tools, but also multimodal
pedagogical theory can help alleviate these anxieties and skepticism, and perhaps, fill in a pedagogical gap that new teachers may not even be aware they have.

In what follows, I introduce different approaches to teacher training programs evidenced through several patterns in my case studies. Some highlight the importance of explicit instruction and engagement, while others pose new challenges to consider. While I cannot promise that this research will raise training programs to the level of “fun and games” for all WPAs, I contend that designing training programs that are both intentional and flexible can help sustain multimodal curricula. While teachers are one stakeholder level that WPAs must consider when enacting new curricula, they serve as a link between the other two. Providing intentional modeling, opportunities for experimentation, and curricular flexibility can help WPAs engage their teachers in new ways.

**Modeling a “Top-Down” Ethos**

Support from the top-down is essential for WPAs working to implement a multimodal, or really any, FYC curriculum. To garner support from their teachers, the values of the curriculum should be reflected in the training and resources that the writing program puts forth. As Isaac, an Assistant Director at UConn put it, “you need that sort of ethos coming from the top.” This top-down ethos manifests itself in several ways; it is not just in the structure and model of the training program, but also in the style and design of communication materials provided.

At UConn, Isaac cites their current Director, Dr. Brenda Brueggemann, as the “big instigator” in making the shift to a multimodal FYC curriculum. In the following chapter, I will further discuss how Brenda’s work with the larger campus community helped her acquire resources and support from higher administration and colleagues across campus;
when talking about teachers and training, she was likewise praised for her work. As I pointed to in the opening of this section, Isaac highlighted the importance of a “top-down” ethos, and at UConn, that begins with Brenda.

Additionally, Isaac pointed to the materials provided for teachers as evidence of this “top-down” ethos and approach. In talking about the UConn Writing Program’s official teacher training materials, Isaac argued that “Writing Programs, if they’re gonna [sic] ask instructors to be multimodal, have to remediate their materials and be multimodal in the way they present themselves as well.” At UConn, the FYC Program emphasizes the multimodal commitments of their curriculum across their website, training materials, and physical training sessions. For example, on the official FYC program website, visitors are provided with a link to an Adobe Spark multimodal composition offering a narrative of how the new curriculum was first conceptualized and subsequently implemented. Teachers who have further questions about the proposed changes in teaching structures or the development of this new curriculum can refer to different graphic representations, including an infographic timeline (See Appendix I), that highlights the complete process of curriculum revision, from the first meetings to future projection. Figure 4.1 is a screenshot taken from the UConn website that explains the new teaching loads and FYC course breakdown (Morrison). Although a fairly simple illustration, this further speaks to
the program’s commitment to multimodality. Just as the curriculum asks teachers to remediate their classroom approaches and engage students in multimodal composing practices, so too are UConn’s WPAs remediating their own administrative approaches and helping to further foster teachers’ multimodal literacies. This is one of many examples of administrative communication demonstrating multimodal composing practices and enhancing support for the curriculum. Beyond administrative materials, the UConn Writing Program provides instructors with teaching resources to support multimodal engagement. These resources, available through the program’s website, include an Adobe Spark “Annotated Digital Toolbox,” a compendium of “applications, software, and resources,” as well as a bibliography and sample multimodal assignments (Morrison).20

UConn is not alone in its multimodal resource composition. FSU likewise has an expansive set of resources for multimodal engagement available to their teachers. In my interview with Margaret, in addition to naming institutional resources, detailed in the following chapter, she likewise identified some program-specific ones:

[W]e have a digital teaching blog called ‘The Inkwell,’ and that’s one space where we share lessons and that includes lessons with digital technologies and lessons supporting digital literacies. […] We have [the] program website and that includes digital content. There’s even a page where we shared videos that we recently developed and supplementary readings on multimodality and then the lesson plans.

(Margaret)

UConn and FSU illustrate an ethos and commitment to multimodal pedagogy. Not only do they ask their teachers to enact multimodal pedagogies in the FYC classroom, but they

---

20 Since the time of my study, the website has undergone some revision. While the resources themselves are available, they may appear under different headings or in condensed versions.
further reflect this commitment in their own teacher resources and administrative materials. It is not just that teachers can access resources online, but that the resources themselves encapsulate a multimodal ethos and commitment.

Additionally, the UMass Writing Program hosts its own teaching blog, “The Reflective Teaching Blog,” and while it was not originally intended as a blog about multimodal pedagogy, it now serves as an example of how UMass is reconceptualizing its online resources as its curriculum evolves. In the past few years, the blog has transitioned, and is now, in part, a space to showcase the work of the Technology Fellows, a program discussed later in this chapter. With this focus, the blog provides teaching reflections on using technology and multimodal principles in the classroom, demonstrating how other teachers might find space in the shared curriculum for multimodal engagement. Similarly, UMass’ online Teaching Resource Database has a dedicated subsection of resources for multimodal composing. While the database has activities unrelated to multimodality, the recent addition of this subsection further highlights the program’s shifting interest in and commitment to multimodality in the FYC classroom.

Supporting materials and resources are not the only place where this top-down ethos is present. WPAs can both communicate and support the values of their curriculum in the actual training programs they offer. These training programs present clear opportunities for multimodal pedagogies to be enacted, practiced, and experimented with.

**Training Models and Modeled Training**

The *CCCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing* suggests different elements of a teacher training program, with each element separated into “required” and “recommended” subcategories. While the statement offers suggestions for teachers coming
from a range of experience, most relevant to my case studies are the recommendations for
Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs).21 Some of the required elements for GTAs include:
“coursework in composition theory, research, and pedagogy”; “graduate coursework in
teaching with technology”; “intensive and comprehensive TA training”; and “mentoring
partnerships” (Conference on College Composition and Communication). There are few
surprises in the required elements of a training program, with perhaps one exception. In
this statement, CCCC’s identifies coursework in “teaching with technology” a requirement
for GTAs. Not only does the statement recognize the importance of creating opportunities
for learning about teaching with technology, but it is separated out from composition theory
and research and pedagogy, further emphasizing its place in teacher training.

While many of these required elements were present in the writing programs I
looked at, each of the programs took their own unique approaches to FYC teacher training
programs. They all included some form of pre-semester orientation, practicum
opportunities, or a course in composition pedagogical theory; yet they had localized
approaches to FYC teacher training and varying levels of the presentation of and support
for multimodal pedagogies. Table 4.1 summarizes the training sequence of each of the
programs.

In what follows, I look at several of the training programs, illustrating where the
modeling in the training reflects the multimodal commitments of the curriculum. I highlight
the importance of experimentation and play in training programs, contrasting these
moments with examples of exclusivity and tacked-on approaches to multimodal pedagogy.

---

21 See Table 2.3 in Ch. 2.
Table 4.1: Teacher Training Programs (By Institution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Pre-Teaching Semester Sequence$^{22}$</th>
<th>Training Sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| UMass       | New Teachers: 4-day Summer Orientation | First Semester: Alternating bi-weekly mentorship groups + workshops  
  Second Semester: bi-weekly mentorship groups  
  Second Year: Bi-weekly Special Topics Practicum |
| UConn       | New Teachers: 3-4-day Summer Workshops  
  All Teachers: Fall + Spring Whole Program Workshop (1 day) | First Semester: Weekly Seminar + Practicum |
| Miami       | New Teachers: Summer Seminar | First Year: Weekly Practicum |
| FSU         | New Teachers: Pre-service Summer Course “Bootcamp” (6 weeks)  
  New Teachers: Some teachers will work as Tutors in the Reading/Writing Center or Digital Studio the semester before teaching. | First Year: Teaching Methods Course |
| Ohio State  | New Teachers: 1-year fellowship for first year at Ohio (No Teaching)  
  New Teachers: Summer pre-semester workshop (6 days) | First Semester: Practicum (weekly, 3-hour course) |

Play, Failure, and Success: Intention Toward Comfort

When asked about the kinds of support that Miami’s teachers needed, Jason responded:

I think honestly, they need freedom to play and experiment. And I think that they need the freedom to try out different things, and sort of to know, that it will be okay if it doesn’t work. … Trying to just build a culture where failure is just a

$^{22}$ While many programs might host informational meetings for all teachers at the start of a new semester, I’ve included here only those training programs that are designed as whole-day or multi-day workshop orientations.
normal part of teaching. Sometimes, things won’t go as planned. Sometimes you’ll get too excited about the digital that you’ll push it too far and lose another important aspect of the course. But that it’s a risk worth taking. So, valuing risk and failure. But also valuing spaces for reflection and spaces for teachers to talk together. (Palmeri, emphasis added)

While his response was to a question about Miami specifically, what he points to is true for all writing programs and their teachers. Training programs need to offer space for failure; training should support the notion that failure is a normal part of teaching. Just as reflection is a critical part of learning to write, it is likewise a critical part of learning to teach writing. If teachers ask their students to take risks in their writing, then they too will need to take risks in their pedagogical approaches. The training programs at UConn and Ohio State offer two different ways of creating this space and embracing potential failure.

Despite its major curriculum changes, UConn’s training program remains much like many others. A seminar introduces teachers to Composition and Rhetoric scholarship, while a practicum, held in the Active Learning Classroom (ALC) offers hands-on learning experience and practice. In this way, UConn’s training is marked by intentionality. The practicum familiarizes new teachers with the ALC, modeling the kinds of experiences that their students might have as they enter the space for the first time. The sequence of seminar and practicum is a blending of theory and practice, one that puts multimodality at the fore. New teachers are asked to familiarize themselves with both the scholarship on multimodal pedagogies, while also engaging with and modeling this work in their own training.

As the FYC curriculum has shifted, UConn’s WPAs have offered informal opportunities for training and professional development. One to highlight here are the
“sandbox sessions,” offered intermittently throughout the semester. As their name suggests, sandbox sessions encourage play, experimentation, and, sometimes, intentional failure. Brenda described one such session, with intentional failure built into the design:

We had to create something with a program and, like, deliberately mess it up. I didn’t know how to use Canva, right, and that’s what … I said, let’s use Canva because I don’t have the boggiest clue what to do. And yeah, we created a Canva infographic about the life of a WPA, but just to mess it up. Like all the colors, all the font, everything was awful in it. But I learned so much. I learned how to use Canva by messing it all up. (Brueggemann, emphasis added)

Brenda highlights her own experience with the sandbox sessions and, perhaps more importantly, with failure. This example highlights the freedom with intentional modeling and training – a given product, whether it’s a piece of writing or a training exercise, does not, and in fact should not, have to be perfect and correct. Sometimes, intentional training is finding comfort in the uncomfortable. Failing together, failing “in the sandbox,” despite still being failure, feels safer than failing at the front of the classroom. And, as Brenda highlights, it can lead to a great deal of learning.

Although not informal opportunities like the sandbox sessions, Ohio State also creates space for experimentation in their training. In our interview, Eddie highlighted the modeling that takes place throughout the semester course, as well as during the summer orientation:

We can’t teach everybody everything in those 6 days [during the summer]. And so, then during the semester, we try to stay ahead of what’s happening in the classroom so that instructors can feel themselves, be somewhat expert in whatever
they’re teaching. But yes, we definitely address [Adobe Spark Software]. Actually, that’s one of the elements of the summer workshop that usually goes pretty well. Because it’s fun. Like GTAs have fun making a little Spark video. And they realize pretty quickly, oh, that was easy. And I could already explain to someone how to do this. (Singleton, emphasis added)

In this example, he highlights the different ways that training, and modeling more specifically, helps new teachers. By “staying ahead of what’s happening in the classroom,” the seminar itself is a modeling opportunity. Whether through discussion materials or activities, new teachers have a chance to learn from intentional modeling before addressing similar or related themes in their own classrooms. Like the sandbox sessions at UConn, the Adobe Spark training session at the summer orientation allows teachers to explore and learn the platform for themselves. While failure is not the intention of the training session, it becomes a possibility. Yet again though, it happens outside of and prior to the time in the classroom. And as Eddie points out, much like Brenda did with the sandbox sessions, new teachers quickly find comfort with the tool and, perhaps more importantly, comfort with being able to use it and share it with their own students. It is important for teachers to have an opportunity to learn the tools and platforms for themselves, and relatedly, for training programs to intentionally present them with the opportunity for this learning.

Regardless of the form it takes, teachers need a space to try out something unfamiliar, work through failure, and gain comfort in the experience. For UConn, it comes through informal, voluntary “sandbox sessions,” while Ohio and Miami have integrated this work into their formal training, in both orientation sessions and longer practicum meetings. Across these examples, what is most important, is intentional, hands-on
experiences. Training programs that offer teachers a chance to play, succeed, and even fail, model and simulate the kinds of practice and experience that their students will have in the classroom.

**Exclusivity Models**

The UMass training model, despite being the most extensive and longest in duration, demonstrates a lack of multimodal inclusion, with limited sessions deploying the use of learning technologies, and even fewer training sessions focused on multimodality in the FYC classroom. However, despite a fairly consistent training model, the lack of multimodality and digital inclusion was not always the norm. Several decades ago, there was a dedicated mentorship group for Teaching Associates (TOs) with a digital focus, dedicated computer-focused sections of FYC, and informal workshops focused on building websites. In our interview, Peggy commented on the shift away from these offerings. She noted that, as the number of incoming students increased, so too did the number of TOs needed, leading to a more streamlined training model. Regarding the computer-focused sections of FYC, Peggy noted that instructors “were still [being] book[ed] … in the computer labs, but just calling it 112.23 Because it didn’t seem like people, even the students, [were] seeing a difference” (Woods). The informal website workshops were likewise disbanded due to disinterest; Peggy speculates that TOs were starting to come to the program with this knowledge, and no longer needed a specialized workshop on website development.

---

23 The dedicated “digital” sections of writing had previously been designated as “ENGLWRIT 113.” While some sections were scheduled in computer labs, the courses were rolled into standard course offerings, designated as “ENGLWRIT 112.”
In its overall training, the UMass Writing Program does not emphasize multimodal commitments. With its Technology Coordinator position, which has since been reconfigured as an hourly Communications Manager for the program’s faculty and staff, and the Technology Fellows program, the Writing Program communicates that multimodality is optional, an add-on the curriculum for those interested. Drawing a parallel to the WPA OS, the writing program takes a “technoplank” approach, with no substantial multimodal learning objectives for students and no intentional multimodal modeling.

Before the position’s reconceptualization, the Technology Coordinator was responsible for two training sessions at the pre-semester orientation: the first was an overview of the digital spaces TOs may frequent (Moodle, Google Classroom, the Writing Program’s website, etc.). The second varied by who was in the coordinator position at a given time; in one iteration, it was a review of how to use Google Docs for peer-review and online submission of work, while another offered a very condensed overview of multimodal pedagogical theory and best practices. In either case, the session was brief and an outlier from the larger training program, something set apart from the bigger focus of the training and shared curriculum.

The Technology Fellows program, which requires an application, offers a small group of TOs the opportunity to meet bi-weekly to discuss readings on multimodal pedagogy and develop their own multimodal projects for the classroom. Technology Fellows submit reflective blog posts, on topics from the readings, discussion, or their own projects, to “The Reflective Teaching Blog,” and receive a modest stipend for their participation. While this is a tremendous opportunity, it is self-selective, and while the program typically funds all who apply, it requires interest and self-application. As such,
this Fellows program only benefits those who are perhaps already inclined toward multimodality. While not impossible, it is less likely that the program would entice multimodal skeptics. In this way, the program communicates that multimodality is not essential to the program’s goals or to the FYC classroom; rather, multimodal pedagogical theory is exclusive and requires a self-selective process.

In our interview, Peggy expressed a desire for the program to more fully embrace multimodality, noting that this has been a part of curricular revision discussion. Yet, it remains a challenge and concern, one deeply rooted in the local context of UMass. The Writing Program employs over 100 graduate TOs each year, each bringing their own experience and beliefs about teaching. These TOs are managed by an administrative team of 4, with an additional 3-4 faculty members from the English department working as mentors. The sheer size of the program, and the wide range of experience, creates challenges for designing an inclusive training model. It is evident that, in moving forward, if multimodality is to have a place in the curriculum, it will likewise need to find a permanent place in the overall training provided. Otherwise, if it remains an exclusive opportunity for teachers, it will remain an exclusive opportunity for students as well.

**Ties to Graduate Coursework**

While the above examples highlight the modeling opportunities from specific training programs, when FYC teachers are likewise graduate students (as was the case, to some extent, for all of my case study programs)\(^{24}\), graduate coursework can also provide modeling opportunities. As Estrem and Reid remind us, “new teachers are not new to the classroom, but just to the front of it” (‘What New Writing Teachers Talk about’ 453).

---

\(^{24}\) See Table 2.3 in Ch. 2
Although there are certainly differences between being learners and teachers, WPAs can find modeling in pedagogical practices from other coursework areas that are simultaneous with teacher training programs.

In a 2009 *Computers and Composition* article, Kathleen Blake Yancey wrote about her experience redesigning the Graduate Curriculum at FSU, focusing primarily on the use of remixing as the framing lens. Yancey credits FSU’s existing structure with the redesign’s success, arguing, “what made these developments possible, at least in part, was the set of practices and spaces *already* in place, practices and spaces permitting and encouraging re-design and remix” ("Re-designing Graduate Education" 10, emphasis in original). Although focused on the graduate education program, Yancey’s article offers insight into the FYC program, as what GTAs do in their own coursework manifests in their own pedagogies and approaches to teaching FYC. In our interview, Margaret commented on these connections at FSU, remarking that GTAs “deal with it [multimodality] a lot in our graduate program, and so it [multimodality] just **naturally became a part of our curriculum**” (Margaret, emphasis added). Yancey similarly highlights the role of multimodality across the GTA curriculum, writing that “digital technology was ubiquitous throughout. … it quickly became clear that rather than digital technology serving as the focus for a single course, it would be threaded throughout the program … [included] as both method and concept throughout the program” (“Re-Designing Graduate Education” 7). The Graduate and FYC curricula could draw inspiration and support from each other to be successful.

One example that highlights this “natural inclusion” is the presence of e-portfolios in FYC courses at FSU. Looking across the sample FYC syllabi, it appeared that final e-
portfolios were a curricular requirement for all courses, as there was not a single syllabus without the assignment. I was surprised, then, to learn that these are in fact optional assignments. Margaret clarified:

We actually don’t have an e-portfolio requirement. But! So many GTAs have a great experience making e-portfolios, and then so many of our faculty—I should say faculty in composition, I don’t know about faculty across the board. But they actually use e-portfolios in their graduate courses as well. … it’s frequent that GTAs will choose to enact e-portfolios as like a final assessment structure. … Oh, and so, one more thing that sort of supports that. GTAs can take a 1-credit e-portfolio course […] where they actually designed portfolios. So, it can be like a job market portfolio, or a teaching portfolio, but it’s just another space to kind of continue that conversation about e-portfolios, and how they work, and individual design and digitality. (Margaret)

Having created their own e-portfolios, which means having the opportunity to play, experiment, and perhaps even fail, GTAs were more likely to include the assignment in their own courses. As students in the e-portfolio course, GTAs saw the pedagogical value of the experience and what it offered. Although the 1-credit e-portfolio course is unrelated to the FYC training program, GTAs made the connection between this experience and teaching FYC. Just as Yancey found in her study of the program, multimodality and digital technology was threaded throughout the training seminars and other graduate coursework, and unsurprisingly, this exposure transferred into GTAs’ own teaching.

Like FSU, Miami also offers multimodal modeling outside of FYC training, within graduate coursework. Jason elaborated upon this, saying:
We … sort of started up a digital writing grad seminar that pretty much has been offered on an every 2-year rotation throughout ever since. Although, it’s been an interesting thing. We didn’t, like, put it in as a core requirement, but there are enough of us that believe it’s important, that it just gets taught as one of our special topic electives every 2 years. … I just think there’s been an increasing integration of the digital into all of our courses because as I noted, I actually haven’t taught any like, the digital writing course special topics seminar since 2009. But like, Comp Theory and History, I played around with, we did multimodal reading responses and various forms of digital response. And talked about digital pedagogy alongside other types of pedagogies. Or, I just did a Special Topics on Rhetorics and Pedagogies of Social Change. And, of course, we did a lot of work with social media activism and ya know, activist pedagogies around the digital. (Palmeri)

While Miami offers an explicit digital writing seminar for graduate students, multimodal principles are also distributed across the graduate curriculum, exposing students to these pedagogical approaches throughout. It is important to note that in this example, Jason is directly referencing the Composition and Rhetoric Graduate curriculum. That is not to say multimodal pedagogies are not enacted across the department, but that these specific examples he offers are unique to that concentration. While Miami’s writing program training introduces teachers to enacting a multimodal pedagogy in their own FYC classrooms, GTAs also experience this modeling as students in their graduate coursework.

Although multimodal graduate coursework cannot replace explicit modeling in training programs, it acts as a useful supplement to these training programs. Graduate students can learn from the modeling of their own instructors, considering what kinds of
multimodal composing they feel comfortable with as students and then using that in their own classrooms. Like the modeling that happens in training programs, this simulates the undergraduate student experience for graduate students, allowing them to weigh the benefits and challenges of multimodal projects. WPAs may find they have limited time to commit to modeling in their training programs, but they can find opportunity to draw from the coursework their teachers are engaged with outside of the writing program.

**Intentionality and Flexibility**

Across all the curricula and training programs, what remains crucial is intentionality and flexibility. Intentional training programs emphasize the pedagogical values of the curriculum in their training, offering teachers an opportunity to learn, play, fail, and succeed. At the same time, intentionality must be coupled with flexibility. Even with a shared curriculum, flexibility allows teachers to enter a curriculum at their own level of comfort, drawing from their prior knowledge and experience. Jason discussed the importance of this flexibility in Miami’s training, describing the shifting modes and opportunities:

But I think part of it is from day 1, like, we’re putting them in groups and having them record notes and put them up on a CMS or put them up on Google Drive. … At the same time, we just keep doing all these digital technologies, and then talk about, you know sometimes, you might want to give people the option to free-write on paper. And sometimes you might want to try out different forms of handwriting, or you know, close the laptop and look at a book. Like, we try to make it not like, you must use digital technologies all the time. But that, each time we model a way of interacting, like, we’re modeling how digital technologies work in the classroom.
And I think usually, with a very, emphasis on universal design approaches too. On giving students as much flexibility as possible. And I think that’s something that’s been good about our program. … That ethos, pedagogically, then fit into flexible ways of giving students choices about what technologies they’re going to use in their learning that will enable their learning, while also thinking critically about questions of access, and sort of, making sure all those technologies are accessible.

So I think that’s been key. (Palmeri)

Jason highlights the importance of flexibility in training. While teachers are asked to participate in multimodal activities, participation is coupled with reflection and discussion about when that might not be the best approach. Teachers are encouraged to consider when digital technologies may not be the best approach, and when handwritten free writes might serve the purpose better. Additionally, this level of flexibility can help alleviate some of the skepticism and discomfort when introducing multimodality into the classroom. Flexible training models highlight the potential for flexible classroom pedagogies.

Flexible training is also about drawing on teachers’ prior experiences. Like the previous section, which focused on the role of graduate coursework in implementing multimodal pedagogies, WPAs can also benefit from drawing connections between what teachers already do in their courses, connecting this to multimodal approaches that might contribute to these goals and enhance previously-enacted classroom approaches. Jason described the importance of helping teachers see the connection between multimodality and their own teaching goals and practice:

I said, what’s something you care about most in your teaching? What’s something you’d like your students to be better at? Or what’s a concept you’d like them to
understand more? Give me those. Because then you’re like, “Oh, like. Their reflections about audience are like all crap.” I was like okay, let’s start there. And there’s some things you can do to help that be better and we’ll talk about them and share them that have nothing to do with digital technologies. But then there’s some things you can do, ya know, proliferating the technologies they can use to compose and the audiences they can speak to, that feel more real to them and are more connected to them, can make a difference. That kind of dialogic conversation for change. (Palmeri)

Here, Jason illustrates how even the biggest of skeptics can be eased into multimodality. He describes meeting teachers where they are, identifying their biggest needs and introducing multimodal approaches to meet those needs. What is equally important, however, is the reflection and discussion about just how much technology can or will help, or if there are different approaches that might better serve the teacher. Like the training models used at Miami, this approach also requires flexibility and reflection upon what methods and approaches will best meet identified needs.

Sometimes, flexibility and intentionality are inhibited by program size; WPAs may be overwhelmed by the number of teachers and the range of prior experience they bring with them. In these instances, an emphasis on local context and a narrow focus on the shared curriculum can hinder flexibility. At UMass, as the number of incoming students continues to increase, so too does the number of teachers employed by the Writing Program. Related to the growing numbers of teachers is the wider range of experiences they bring with them. Not only do new teachers enter with their own preferences for teaching and classroom identities, but some arrive having taught at other institutions,
within other local contexts, and using other curricula with different values. This was one of the largest concerns raised by Peggy during our interview. She spoke of the shared FYC curriculum, and the challenges of training for it, saying:

We have brand new teachers and teachers who have a lot of experience. And so how do we develop a curriculum that’s going to enable all these people with this various range of experiences, to work within the curriculum that we have? … What makes it challenging is the training part. Like how can we train them to have that consistency, but also there’s such a range. (Woods)

Ultimately, the program’s response to this challenge is an emphasis, perhaps overemphasis, on the local. This narrow focus on localized context can result in the exclusion of supporting theories and research. As Yancey’s heuristic demonstrates, local needs do better to act as influencers on training programs, rather than the definitive factors (“The Professionalization of TA Development Programs” 64). Although emphasis on local needs can be one way to address a range in teaching experience, it should be coupled with the training of best practices supported by research. As my case studies here demonstrate, introducing this research and teaching these best practices can take a number of forms. What remains essential is being intentional and flexible, balancing local contexts and best practice research.

**Conclusion**

While training may never be “fun and games” for WPAs, a focus on intentionality and flexibility can help alleviate some of the common barriers. It can be tempting to focus only on the localized contexts and needs of a program. Yet, it is important to temper local contexts with best practices from scholarship, and programs can do this in a number of
different ways: Designing materials and resources that are themselves multimodal further supports programmatic goals by communicating the value in remediating familiar genres. Likewise, training programs that offer teachers a chance to work with multimodal tools, to play and fail, can help remove some of the discomfort when entering the classroom. At the same time, when these training programs are delivered multimodally, they can better serve as pedagogical models for how to teach using these approaches and teachers can weigh the benefits for themselves as learners.

It is important to recognize that my case studies primarily focus on training programs for graduate student teachers. These approaches and recommendations may look quite different for programs with different teaching structures, for example, a reliance on adjunct labor. In these instances, WPAs may not be able to draw upon graduate curriculum for support. It can also be more difficult to attain high attendance at multimodal workshops when teachers are adjuncts working at several other institutions in precarious labor positions. For this, WPAs may have to rethink workshop offerings, perhaps offering online modules or other ways to experiment and play with curricular values.

Nonetheless, intentional and flexible training programs remain essential for supporting a multimodal curriculum and engaging teachers as stakeholders. Regardless of attendance concerns, it is essential to offer workshops and create spaces where new teachers can play and experiment prior to introducing a particular activity or approach in their classrooms. Writing programs can also develop their own multimodal communication and resources, a small but manageable element of intentional and flexible design. The scope of the approaches in this chapter range from small-scale to things much larger, and WPAs can implement the approach that works for their local context. What is vital to any
approach is a commitment to remaining intentional and flexible, using training programs as an opportunity for modeling curricular values.
In the previous two chapters, I looked at students and teachers as stakeholders, who, taken together, are perhaps the most interrelated groups, as they share the classroom space. In this chapter, I turn to institutional administration as the final group within my stakeholder model. More specifically, I argue that WPAs can best engage with administrators by aligning their own programs with broader institutional initiatives set forth in mission statements and strategic plans.

At universities across the US, institutional mission statements espouse the goals and vision of the campus community. Mission statements first found their popularity in corporate America during the 1970s, but were soon taken up by colleges and universities across the country (Morphew and Hartley). Although sometimes criticized as “empty words,” institutional mission statements can serve as a framework for the larger campus community to establish and achieve shared objectives and goals. As this chapter’s opening quote, taken from Joseph Janangelo’s introduction to A Critical Look at Institutional Mission, highlights, mission statements shape the identity of an institution, marking its past, present, and future. Janangelo also argues that mission statements have the ability to evoke “a legacy of scholarship and pedagogy that contemporary stakeholders can use to steward their departments, programs, and initiatives forward” (xi). In his “What’s the Use of a Mission Statement?,” Jack Meacham describes mission statements as “effective tools for addressing problems, moving conversations among faculty and administrators forward,
and crafting long-term, sustainable solutions" (21). In both instances, the message is clear: institutional mission statements can do great rhetorical work for both the larger campus and surrounding communities, while also acting as a unifying framework for cross-campus departments and programs.

While mission statements underscore the overarching values of the institution, the strategic plan is where these values are put into action; the plans are how the institution envisions enacting the very goals and values it remains committed to. Where the mission statement lays out the values and beliefs of the institution, the strategic plan offers the actionable goals and a path forward to enact these values and beliefs. Focusing on institutional strategic plans can help illustrate where a university “sees” itself moving, and what investments administrators are looking to make to get there. Put differently, if mission statements are the theoretical grounding, strategic plans are the on-the-ground praxis.

For this study, my analysis focuses on institutions’ strategic plans. Although much of the existing research, which I discuss further below, is centered around institutional mission statements, I felt it was important to look at the more detailed articulations of these institutional values. At each of my case study institutions, the mission statements were short pieces of writing, about a paragraph long (See Appendix G). Each statement was broad in scope, evoking the values of producing democratic citizens and promoting diversity in learning; however, the strategic plans were more in depth and offered clearer articulations of the institution’s enactment of their values. I see the strategic plans as one way of institutional goals corresponding with programs and practices across the university. Although certainly not a guarantee of implementation, the strategic plans offer the articulation of the action, the how of the values. And, to examine the support of these
academic programs, I show how the strategic plans at my case study institutions, whether intentionally or not, can shape and reinforce the writing program curricula at these schools.

Across my case studies, particularly in the WPA interviews, institutional mission or strategic planning was not a highly attributed factor, if even acknowledged at all. Most WPAs I spoke with said very little about the larger campus mission, despite their own programs generally aligning with the larger mission of the university. What they did comment on, however, were their relationships and connections with various institutional administrators. It was the discussion of these relationships that led me to the institutional strategic plans for each institution. What became quickly apparent was that there is a close relationship between a writing program’s curriculum and objectives, and the strategic plan and goals of the larger institution. At those universities with strategic plans that explicitly identified their goals and support structures for innovative pedagogies and teaching, or their hopes to strengthen “21st century literacies” in their students, the writing programs were much more likely to enact multimodal curricula supported at the programmatic level. They were also much more likely to identify institutional resources made available to support their curricular goals. Again, this relationship was not always made explicit in my interviews, but I found that the program’s FYC curricula and the WPA’s own understanding of their program’s place within the institution was often aligned with the larger strategic plan and mission.25

In this chapter, I argue that, by making institutional goals a part of the writing program’s own ethos, WPAs can find their own proverbial “seat at the table” when the

---

25 One possible reason for this is that there were no explicit questions pertaining to the institutional mission. In later interviews, as I saw this becoming more of a pattern and following grounded theory methods, I did begin to ask about broader institutional culture and values. However, this was never a primary topic of inquiry during the interviews.
opportunity arises for mission statement revision or future strategic planning. This creates an opportunity for WPAs to shape the larger institutional ecologies within which their programs reside. I argue that WPAs can and should use institutional mission statements and strategic plans to find support from their broader campus communities. While this support may not necessarily come from the highest echelons of the university, engaging with broader campus initiatives can help WPAs foster relationships and collaborations across the larger campus community.

With these campus materials as frameworks for their own curricula, WPAs are positioned to make stronger arguments for resources, whether financial or otherwise. Of course, alignment does not guarantee award, but using broader campus initiatives can help WPAs construct rhetorical arguments that align more closely with administrative concerns. At the same time, WPAs can situate their program and individual courses within the larger campus narrative, benefitting from these inter-campus relationships. As I will discuss further, some programs found new sources of support and expanded resources during times of rescission and budget cuts simply because their curricular design helped to support larger campus initiatives.

**Moving from Mission to Action**

Although mission statements originated in 1970s corporate America, they were soon adopted by colleges and universities, with mission statements eventually serving as a legitimacy litmus test for some institutions (Morphew and Hartley 456). Beyond this, however, institutions can derive many benefits from their mission statements; Christopher Morphew and Matthew Hartley summarize these benefits as such:
First, … a clear mission helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to institutional imperatives and those that do not. Second, a shared sense of purpose has the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution and to communicate its characteristics, values, and history to key external constituents. (457)

Ultimately, mission statements can serve as guiding principles for a college’s decision-making process, while also helping in the recruitment process of new students.

Institutional mission statements have a long history in the university landscape, and there has been a recent surge of Composition and Rhetoric scholarship about institutional mission statements, specifically as they might relate to the work of WPAs (Janangelo; Vander Lei and Pugh; Schoen). Part of this interest could be tied to the reality many colleges are facing: with the number of college-aged students continuing to decline, along with consistently declining enrollments, there is much higher competition for recruitment and enrollment from a more limited pool of the population (“Fewer Students Are Going To College”). To recruit students and survive in the current landscape, colleges are under increasing pressure to have clearly articulated identities and values. In this modern academic enrollment decline, having a “brand” or well-defined value system is crucial, as it could mean the difference between meeting enrollment needs or facing financial degradation—or in extreme cases—collapse and closure. (Schoen 41).

In the 2016 edited collection A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administration, Elizabeth Vander Lei and Melody Pugh seek to answer the question “What is Institutional Mission?” With a focus on how institutional mission can support WPAs and their programs, Vander Lei and Pugh argue for the benefits of aligning writing program mission and objectives
with the larger values and mission of the university. They connect this alignment with the potential for resources, arguing, "When revising writing programs or seeking funding for new program initiatives, WPAs may find it advantageous to draw connections between these efforts and the institution's mission" (111). Relatedly, a robust understanding of and engagement with institutional mission creates opportunity for “a WPA [to] strategically develop curriculum, assess programs, and cultivate administrative support for the goals of the writing program” (113). They highlight how this cultivation of administrative support can lend itself to richer cross-campus relationships and support, as well as the potential for further resources. This can be especially important when a WPA and their program feels less supported by the department they’re housed in. As Brenda Brueggemann put it in our interview, you have to “go where the love is” (Brueggemann). And, in some instances, following the institutional mission can lead to finding more love.

More recently, Megan Schoen’s 2019 “Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It,” takes up the question of what WPAs gain from aligning with their institutional missions. In her study, Schoen surveyed current WPAs to determine their engagement with (or not) institutional missions, and what they perceived as the benefits of or challenges with such engagement. Schoen argues that “institutional mission offers the possibility for both opportunities and challenges to writing programs,” and that exploration of this relationship allows WPAs to “better position themselves to maximize opportunities or mitigate challenges in proactive ways” (38). Schoen’s research highlights the importance of studies that consider the relationship between writing programs and their contextual missions. Her study also pays careful attention to the challenges WPAs face when they try to align with
larger institutional mission statements, such as the possible tension and disconnect between a disciplinary best-practice focus and larger institutional goals.

Furthermore, Schoen found that her respondents identified documents like strategic plans or vision statements as “more important in shaping their writing programs” and claimed they were “more concrete and operational embodiments of their universities’ missions” (50). She suggests this as a potential area for expansion upon her study. While the survey Schoen distributed narrowly focused on mission statements, there was little analysis of the “other documents” that WPAs might use. Schoen describes this limitation, writing, “Because the data revealed that WPAs often rely on other documents or sources of understanding the mission, future research might investigate these documents and how WPAs use them” (55). My study directly contributes to this expansion, as I extend beyond mission statements and focus instead on institutional strategic plans and how WPAs might use them to strengthen relationships and bolster their arguments for further support and resources.

In what follows, I look at the strategic plans from each of the five institutions, highlighting what they share, as well as what makes them unique. I argue that programs which align most with the vision of their institution (whether intentionally or not), have the proven resources and support from higher administration to implement multimodal FYC curricula. I show how programs like UConn benefitted from mobilizing their campus’ vision and, more specifically, new General Education objectives, despite facing a deep rescission. Aligning with an institution’s strategic vision does not guarantee success, and in some cases, alignment may conflict with a WPA’s more program-specific goals. Yet, institutional administrators remain a key group in the stakeholder model, and one way to
leverage their support is by demonstrating the role a writing program generally, and FYC curriculum more specifically, can play in supporting and achieving the strategic vision.

**Strategic Plans: Frequency and Patterns**

Institutional strategic plans are not a universal genre of writing, meaning they can take different forms despite similarities. While they typically share a rhetorical purpose from one institution to the next, (namely to lay out multi-year action plans for the university to achieve its vision) they often differ in implementation time range and document length. Table 5.1 includes information about the overall documents, including the implementation range dates and document length.

**Table 5.1: Institutional Strategic Plan Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Strategic Plan Dates</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMass</td>
<td>2018-2023 (5 years)</td>
<td>13 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UConn</td>
<td>2016-2020 (4 years)</td>
<td>60 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>2013-2020 (7 years)</td>
<td>6 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>2017-2022 (5 years)</td>
<td>20 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>Ongoing, but linked to the “2020 Vision”</td>
<td>19 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these strategic plans is publicly available online, typically found through the President’s or Chancellor’s office webpages. What is notable about these strategic plans is that they share similar date ranges, both in terms of start and finish dates. As I previously mentioned, colleges today find themselves in a much more competitive landscape. With a decline in enrollments since 2008, and a further projected decline due to slowing birthrates, colleges must find new ways to attract a smaller pool of students (“Fewer Students Are Going To College”). Additionally, many public universities, like those in my study, are faced with less state funding and decreasing budgets. Thus, a clear strategic plan is a
necessity for survival. Colleges must have a plan for recruiting students and maintaining enrollments, all while balancing a shrinking budget.

Although much longer than the institutional mission statements, the institutional strategic plans in my study are relatively short documents. These plans often include images of students, faculty, and staff across campus accompanied by quotes that describe individual experiences at the institution. Unlike the mission statements, these plans offer more specific “action-items,” suggesting how the university will achieve its mission; they may also reference specific campus initiatives or funding needs to carry out these actions. Additionally, and like the mission statements, they rely on broad language. They talk of a global society, and how the university will prepare students to be active and responsible citizen participants in said society. The plans rely on descriptors like “innovative” to explain the aims of their pedagogies and research. At the same time, they emphasize their support for teaching, for developing new pedagogies and curricula, and their large, and often ambitious, research agendas. These ambitious agendas pose an opening for WPAs to interpret how their own programs and curricula might help the university achieve its broader, visionary goals.

To better understand the work of each strategic plan individually, and how the plans of each institution might relate to each other, I generated word frequency data using a programming language known as R.\textsuperscript{26} I then used the word frequency data to create word clouds for each institutional strategic plan, as well as a commonality cloud that depicts the

---

\textsuperscript{26} See chapter two: “Methods” for more about R.
top 40 most frequently shared words across the five strategic plans. The individual strategic plan word clouds show the top 40 words appearing in the document 5 or more times.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Individual Strategic Plans}

Although I originally generated word clouds for each of the institutional strategic plans, there are two that I will focus on here to illustrate different aspects of how WPAs might engage with higher administration and their larger campus mission.\textsuperscript{28} I begin with FSU, the only institution where \textit{technology} was in the top 40 most frequent words. I then turn to UConn, whose strategic plan word frequencies reflected its larger campus community, with some of the most frequent words calling upon specific colleges and programs.

\textbf{FSU: The “Tech-y” Campus}

Figure 5.1 depicts the top 40 most frequently occurring words in the FSU strategic plan. The largest, pink words are the ones most frequently shared across the documents, moving to the purple, orange, and finally the green, all decreasing in size. Unsurprisingly, and much like I found across the different strategic plans, \textit{research} is one of the most frequently occurring words. Also appearing with the highest frequency are \textit{support} and \textit{programs}. While this remains a decontextualized view of the words, it is noteworthy that \textit{programs} and \textit{support} would appear as frequently as \textit{research}. It certainly does not guarantee that all campus community members receive support for all programs, but this level of frequency suggests that the institution is committed to making support and some form of programming a priority in their future vision. Having this large scope view of the

\textsuperscript{27} I tested the word frequency visualizations with words appearing at least 7 or 10 times and found minimal differences across these amounts.

\textsuperscript{28} See Appendix H for the UMass, Miami University, and Ohio State word clouds.
institution’s own strategic planning and goals can help WPAs craft stronger arguments for the resources and support they need for their own programs, programs that can help the university achieve the objectives set in the strategic plan.

Moving away from the most frequent words, I turn to the third and fourth levels of frequency, the words shown in orange and green, respectively. Among these words are innovation and technology. FSU stands out as the only institution whose strategic plan has a notable mention of technology, with the word present in the top 40 words across the 20-page plan. While innovation can be found in most other word clouds and often serves as a “catch-all” for universities, technology only appears in FSU. This commitment to and
emphasis on technology at the level of higher administration was further reflected in my WPA interview.

As I previously noted in chapter 3, Margaret described FSU as a “tech-y campus,” where it was common for students to have their own devices, and bring them to class without prompting from the teacher; she went on to tie this to the university’s identity as an R1 institution (Margaret). This notion of FSU as “tech-y” and the connection drawn to the school’s R1 identity is reflective of the institution’s mission and strategic plan. The commitment to using technology as a means to achieve its overall goal is apparent throughout the strategic plan, and within the word frequency data. Although Margaret did not make the explicit connection between the writing program and the institution’s strategic planning, she recognizes that there is, deeply rooted in FSU’s identity, a need for technology and larger institutional support which enables the program to enact multimodal curricula. In a sense, the strategic plan embeds the institution’s normative values which are themselves reflected and embedded in the WPA’s work.

Importantly, however, Margaret noted that, despite a majority of students having their own devices, it “doesn’t mean that there is 100% access or that access is equitable.” This is true across many institutions and is important to highlight. Even a “tech-y” campus like FSU, with explicit regard and support for technological engagement and innovation, must remain attentive to equitable access. This concern may be more apparent or widespread at different institutions apart from FSU, but it is always essential to keep at the fore of conversations surrounding multimodal curriculum.

Despite concerns about equitable access, Margaret pointed to a myriad of institutional resources for students and instructors. When asked about available technology
resources, Margaret first responded with “So, we have a lot. I’ll rattle them off,” before launching into an extensive list of resources from both the Writing Program itself, discussed in chapter 4, as well as the larger institution (Margaret). The list, summarized here, supports the patterns emerging from the strategic plan, with an emphasis on research, support, innovation, and technology: Housed in the English department are two digital studios, where graduate TAs can get help on their own technology projects or book tutors to support digital instruction in their classes. Across the campus there are computer classrooms and “smart laptop enhanced” classrooms, many with computers that offer access to various software. FSU has an office of online learning, as well as tech support which Margaret described as “amazing.” The library boasts a sound recording booth for audio projects and a 3D printer, all of which is open to students and faculty. Lastly, FSU provides students with a “virtual lab,” which comes with access to Microsoft Suite applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) as well as programs like Adobe InDesign (Margaret). While just a sample of the resources available to students and faculty across campus, it is evident that FSU places a large emphasis on technology and, even more so, the software needed to create and design with these tools. While the Writing Program offers the pedagogical support and training for making the most of these resources, which I discussed in the previous chapter, it does so within a larger campus environment that encourages innovation and technological engagement.

The strategic plan itself was never invoked during my interview with Margaret, but it was certainly an undercurrent. Her comments about the overall campus, its R1 identity, and reflections on the student body and their expectations demonstrated clear alignment with the ethos of the university’s strategic vision. The Writing Program is supported by a
number of scholars whose research has been instrumental in developing multimodal pedagogy. At the same time, it is the program’s fit within the larger university mission that makes such work possible.

**UConn: Finding the Love**

The word cloud for UConn’s strategic plan (Figure 5.2) is most interesting in its inclusion of the broader campus community.²⁹ While the most frequent word, *research*, is typical of these institutions, it is the less frequent words that I want to draw attention to. Like the previous figures, the most frequent words are shown largest in pink, with the next levels of frequency shown in orange and green, respectively, and decreasing in size. Like the previous figures, the most frequent words are shown largest in pink, with the next levels of frequency shown in orange and green, respectively, and decreasing in size.

For UConn, these first two levels of frequency are fairly typical: *education, teaching, learning, programs,* and *academic*. Like FSU, it is this third level of frequency, smallest and shown in green, that sets UConn apart; here we see *sciences, social, human, engineering,* and *arts*. This is the only instance across any of the institutional strategic plans where specific colleges and disciplines make an appearance. This highlights UConn’s commitment to recognizing and supporting *all of* its academic departments and programs. Of course, the strategic plan is not a guarantee that support and resources, both material

---

²⁹ For transparency, I do think it’s important to refer back to Table 5.1 and point out that UConn’s strategic plan is substantially longer than the others, at 60 pages. This could certainly be one reason for its larger inclusion. Nonetheless, like the other schools, these are still the top 40 most frequent words. Additionally, this strategic plan featured more images and design features than the others, which contributes to its longer length.
and monetary, are distributed equally across departments and programs, nor does the word cloud suggest how these departments are being invoked. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the intent to support all programs through acknowledgement, showing that the school recognizes its wider campus community.

In addition to discipline-specific descriptors, *interdisciplinary* appears in this level of frequency. Again, this is the first and only occurrence among my sample of institutions where this particular word appears in the top 40 frequencies. This further highlights UConn’s commitment to its broader campus community, while also suggesting a potential desire for cross-campus initiatives. The inclusion of *interdisciplinary* relates directly to the new Writing Across Technology (WAT) curriculum that the UConn Writing Program is

---

**Figure 5.2: UConn Strategic Plan Word Cloud**
currently implementing. The former Writing Program Assistant Director, Ruth Book, pointed to these cross-campus networks as a strength for the program, commenting:

[A]nd that’s something that I think Brenda’s [Brueggemann] been really great about, making these connections across campus. And in ways where we used to be a little more insular. Like, well this is our program and we have to protect it. And she’s like, well, this is our program that I want to tell everyone [about it] and see who can like, get in on this. (Book)

Ruth points to one way in which Brenda has fostered outward relationships and cross-campus connections to get more people involved with the UConn Writing Program. While I discuss these relationships further in a later section, I wanted to draw attention to how UConn’s Writing Program is already enacting the values of the larger institution and engaging with the ideals laid out in the strategic plan. Ruth points to the previously “insular” nature of the program, and how Brenda is actively working to find colleagues across campus who may want to get involved. Brenda herself described this as “go[ing] where the love is” (Brueggemann). This engagement reflects the cross-institutional spirit found within the strategic plan, which likewise demonstrates a commitment to building networks across and amongst the broader campus community.

**Planning Patterns: Coding the Strategic Plans**

In the previous section, I used word frequency data to analyze the general patterns that emerged from two institutional strategic plans. Although word clouds and word frequency data are, by their nature, decontextualized, this kind of data and analysis offers a bird’s eye view of the campus goals. The strategic plan word clouds offer a glimpse of

---

30 At the time of my interviews and research, the WAT curriculum was still in pilot stages. The full roll-out of the curriculum is expected Fall 2020.
what the university is striving towards, while also highlighting emergent patterns. Although certainly not an end point for research, word frequency analysis, particularly analysis that encompasses vast documents like strategic plans, creates new opportunities for digging deeper by providing researchers with a wide-view perspective. This bird’s eye view is well complemented by other research methods like textual analysis and coding which can help make sense of the most frequent words and subsequent themes.

In this section, I present some of the emergent patterns from my coding of the strategic plans. These patterns offer a more contextualized perspective of the documents, which pairs well with the decontextualized word frequency data. Figure 5.4 shows the occurrence and co-occurrences of codes across all five strategic plans; occurrence is an instance where a single code was applied to a portion of the text, while co-occurrence refers to the instances where 2 or more codes were applied together on the same portion of the document. While some singular codes or coding co-occurrences were only present in certain institutions’ strategic plans, I want to first discuss some of the coding patterns that were shared across two or more strategic plans. To highlight what is shared across these strategic plans, I focus in on the singular appearance of technology, before moving into a discussion of the co-occurrence of technology and institutional resources. From there, I narrow in on three specific institutions and how they mobilized their university’s mission and vision.

\[31\] For the detailed coding schema, see Tables 2.4 and 2.5 in chapter 2.
Figure 5.3: Coding Patterns + Co-Occurrences from Strategic Plans

Coding for technology happened in all of the strategic plans, except for Ohio State. In some cases, like at UMass, Miami, and FSU, technology as part of the strategic plan meant an improvement upon or expansion of online and hybrid course offerings. Unlike UMass and Miami, where online and hybrid expansion was the extent of the inclusion, the use of technology went on in the FSU strategic plan to include “[leveraging] technology and relationships with employers and workforce development agencies throughout Florida” for students and alumni alike, as well as “[building] partnerships and connections via technology” (Florida State University 16). At FSU, technology is a strategic tool that can be used to cultivate relationships that will better serve students at the university.

Like FSU, UConn’s strategic plan also included technology as something to be leveraged. For UConn, this leveraging was in reference to students’ learning styles, noting that “students learn in different ways, increasingly relying on and leveraging technology” (University of Connecticut 37). Both schools see technology as something to use to their advantage and it remains a key element in their strategic plan; however, this is done to
different ends. For FSU, this advantage is tied to strengthening relationships with employers, while UConn’s advantage is meeting students’ different learning needs and styles.\textsuperscript{32}

This centering on student experience was present throughout UConn’s strategic plan and set it apart from the others. In addition to leveraging technology to meet students’ varied learning styles, UConn’s plan expressed a need to “address issues of critical importance in our state [Connecticut] and nation, such as […] the cultural impact of technology” (University of Connecticut 24). Here, UConn identifies technological impact as an “issue of critical importance,” and in doing so, vocalizes support, no matter how implicitly, for curricula that recognizes this importance.

For some institutions, technology was merely used as a passing reference to online or hybrid education, which was reflected in the writing program curricula. For schools like FSU and UConn, whose strategic plans described technology as a tool to be leveraged toward differing ends in the interest of students, there is much more support for a multimodal curriculum and pedagogy in the writing program itself. Perhaps even more telling than the appearance of a singular “technology” code is the co-occurrence of the “technology” and “institutional resources” codes, which I discuss in the next section. This co-occurrence further underscores the important relationship between multimodal pedagogies and institutional support.

\textbf{Institutional Resources and Technology Co-Occurrence}

The co-occurrence of “technology” and “institutional resources” was present in every strategic plan, with the exception of UMass’. As with the singular occurrence of

\textsuperscript{32} Although not an explicit or intentional connection, this emphasis on learning needs and styles echoes Brenda’s emphasis on UDL, discussed in chapter 4.
technology, some strategic plans centered on institutional resources to support online or hybrid learning environments. For example, UConn’s strategic plan offers “multiple services” in the “eCampus branch of the Center [for Excellence in Teaching and Learning] to help faculty integrate technology into teaching” (38). A similar commitment is espoused in Miami’s strategic plan, with a promise to “broaden hybrid approaches to learning, online environments, and platforms” (2). In both instances, there are institutional resources available to the larger campus community with the goal of supporting technological engagement. This co-occurrence is directly related to the more specific curricula both of these programs, as it is these institutional resources that encourage, and perhaps enables, a multimodal pedagogy.33 While there are of course other reasons for their multimodal curricula, broader institutional resources and support remain essential.

Despite only having a single co-occurrence, the strategic plan for Ohio State University is framed by the importance of technology and institutional resources. The plan’s introduction reads “Our plan requires enhanced uses of technology and constructive, engaged advising to transform teaching and learning from broadly focused to a target experience” (1). While the rest of the plan is less explicit about the role of technology, as part of the introduction, this foundational occurrence establishes the institution’s overall attitude toward it: technology is a key element for teaching and learning and it is required for success. This enhanced use of technology is further demonstrated by the institution’s identity as a “Digital Flagship” Institution (discussed further in the following chapter).

Set apart from these examples is FSU, which has a more robust commitment to supporting technology through institutional resources, evidenced by the language of the

---

33 See “FYC Curricula Across the Programs” in Chapter 2 for more about the curricula at each program.
strategic plan and the number of technology and institutional resources coding co-occurrences. Like UConn and Miami, FSU is committed to implementing “online learning strategies that will enable expansion of online programs, hybrid learning, and online collaboration” (Florida State University 11). For FSU, however, online learning is only one of many technology-focused goals, and their plan expands greatly upon this initiative.

Most notably, the FSU strategic plan lays out a commitment to establishing resources across campus to support technology and digital initiatives more broadly. The strategic plan reads, “We will extend our technology platform to touch every function of the modern university environment—supporting teaching and learning, enhancing communication, and increasing nimbleness” (18). Very explicitly, FSU demonstrates a commitment to using technology in all facets of university life. They see it as an integral part of teaching and learning, research, and overall communication with their community members. The focus on “increasing nimbleness” also suggests a habit of mind students will cultivate, an ability to move across contexts and technologies. This co-occurrence likewise connects back to the overall word frequencies of the FSU strategic plan, being the only instance of technology appearing in the most frequent words. This was also raised in my WPA interview, with Margaret describing FSU as a technology-driven campus rooted in their R1 identity (Margaret).

The word frequencies and coding patterns across these institutional strategic plans offer different scopes of analysis. While the word frequencies presented a decontextualized, broad scope view of institutional goals, this was reinforced by my coding patterns which highlighted specific moments in the documents. Taken together, these perspectives highlight where and how technology appears within the larger institutional
vision and plan. In the following section, I offer specific examples of alignment between writing program curricula and larger institutional initiatives.

**Mobilizing Missions**

Institutional mission statements and strategic plans were not explicitly discussed in my interviews. Yet, the curricula of three programs (FSU, Miami University, and UConn), when coupled with analysis of the larger institutional values, suggests that each writing program benefited from alignment with their school’s larger vision and cross-campus connections. The success of these three programs illustrates the importance of fostering connections and relationships with the broader campus community to enact curricular and programmatic change.

**FSU and Making the Most of Tech**

The FSU Writing Program’s multimodal FYC curriculum is reflective of the overall institutional goals. Looking back at the coding patterns from the strategic plan in Figure 5.4, FSU stands out as the only institutional strategic plan coded for *multimodality*, *critical digital literacy*, and *access* used in direct reference to technology. One reason Margaret gave for the program’s multimodal emphasis was the Composition Faculty, most notably Kathleen Blake Yancey, who is a leading scholar in multimodal pedagogical theory (Margaret). Although neither the institutional mission nor the strategic plan were explicitly named as factors for their curriculum, this larger campus culture enables the program to continue its work.

Students come to FSU with their own devices and access to a variety of software. Across campus students have access to computer classrooms, digital studios, recording equipment, and more. At the same time, in its strategic plan, the university has established
lofty goals related to supporting research and teaching, innovation, and leveraging technology, which makes programs that will help them achieve these goals necessary. In their strategic plan, FSU promised to “extend [their] technology platform” to all aspects of their campus community, and the Writing Program, as a member of that community, benefits from this vision (18). Additionally, FSU has committed to hiring faculty to support programs’ multimodal curriculum. As Margaret noted in our interview, Kathleen Yancey’s presence in the program has certainly shaped the curricular focus. This was also evident from Yancey’s article in which she reflected on the graduate student curriculum (discussed in the chapter 4). FSU’s FYC program finds itself well supported on all fronts: from the students’ own technological expectations, to the technological resources and support provided across campus, to administration’s goals of extending technology platforms for the whole university.

**Miami’s Use of Innovative Initiatives**

Miami University offers an example of how WPAs can capitalize on the goals and interests of institutional administrators. Although Miami’s strategic plan itself offered few exceptional patterns related to technology, my interview with Jason revealed two different instances of alignment with larger institutional objectives. Although taking different shapes, these instances led to further support and resources for the program as it worked to design and implement a new curriculum with a multimodal focus.

The first opportunity was during the early 2000s when Miami found itself with a Provost who had a deep interest in “doing really innovative things with learning technologies” (Palmeri). Jason went on to credit his colleague, Dr. Heidi McKee, who was able to use this interest to make “arguments for resources and support” (Palmeri). Although
not connected to a larger strategic plan per se, this example highlights the ways in which a WPA used administrative interest and initiative to better serve their program and solicit resources for a multimodal curriculum. Having already wanted to design a more multimodal curriculum, McKee drew upon the Provost’s interest in learning technologies to demonstrate how the Writing Program generally, and FYC more specifically, could enhance this initiative with the right level of support. Starting as a pilot program in a few computer lab classrooms with extra support for instructors, the program eventually founded the Digital Writing Collaborative (DWC). Because of the Provost’s interest in learning technologies, and with the founding of the DWC, the program was then able to acquire more funding and support to strengthen the program and offer larger and more targeted teacher training. Miami offers an example of how to build upon external interest to enact a desired change, while also underscoring the extended process involved. Although there was interest from the administrative level, Miami’s WPAs had to build the argument over time, starting with a pilot program to demonstrate initial interest. In this example, funding did not immediately ensue alignment, but rather funding was a result of demonstration, prolonged alignment, and data.

Following these changes, the program was able to find further support thanks to a larger, whole-campus initiative. Jason describes the writing program’s full shift to multimodality:

Ultimately, when we made the shift [to a multimodal curriculum], we had a President who had this initiative to give money to design the top 25 largest enrolling classes on campus to be inquiry-based. This was a little hard for us to wrap our heads around, because like, FYC, like, inquiry-based is kind of what we do. It’s
kind of what we’ve always been doing. […] As we sort of got into it…sure, inquiry-based was something we were already committed to. But really thinking with that term, I think, enabled us to sort of push more deeply on getting students to collaborate and make knowledge together in class, to be investigating topics of interest to them. To be composing in more diverse genres, in which they can be co-inquirers with us about what makes those multimedia genres work. (Palmeri)

One could argue that this example is a moment of good fortune, given that this particular university President started an initiative for inquiry-based course design and many institutions cannot rely solely on the timeliness of a favorable administration; yet the Miami example highlights the different forms that alignment can take, and the iterative process that alignment may spark. At first, Jason saw this initiative as obvious, as something the Writing Program was “already committed to.” And, in some cases, that is what alignment with a larger institutional mission or strategic plan might be. Not all alignment is necessarily reinventing or redesigning, but rather, it might be demonstrating how a particular curriculum is already supporting or aligning with larger institutional goals. What he also found, however, is that participating in this initiative forced the program to rethink what it meant by “inquiry-based,” and pushed them to strengthen their curriculum and better achieve their own goals of providing students with an inquiry-based experience. This example highlights the mutual benefit of this larger initiative: The Writing Program helped the campus community by providing an inquiry-based course, while at the same time, this initiative created an opportunity for the program to rethink, with even more intention, its own curriculum and articulation of “inquiry-based.”
UConn, GEOC, and Cross-Campus Networking

Drawing connections between mission statements and funding, Jack Meacham argues that “when financial resources are plentiful, opportunities may arise for expanding academic programs or developing new programs,” while also recognizing that the inverse is also true: “when resources become scarce, difficult choices must be made” (21). He suggests that it is through “a conversation grounded in the campus’s mission statement” that these difficult resource allocations are made (21). Although writing in hypothetical scenarios, what Meacham describes is what played out in real time at UConn. By engaging with the overall institutional mission, creating cross-campus relationships, and connecting with larger campus initiatives, the Writing Program was able to find backing and financial resources for their new WAT curriculum. While I describe this process briefly in what follows, Appendix I offers an infographic timeline, designed by Brenda Brueggemann and available on the program’s website, that depicts UConn’s process and the key stakeholders involved; this timeline illuminates the complexity and nuance of building these relationships, designing a new curriculum, and moving toward full implementation.

The WAT curriculum found its early origins at the 2016 Digital Media and Composition Institute (DMAC) hosted by the Ohio State University; this initial DMAC attendance was followed by a second group of attendees in 2017. DMAC is a week-long institute centered on “the effective use of digital media in college composition classrooms” ("About"). During our interview, Ruth commented on DMAC being, for her, the root of the WAT curriculum. It’s also the initial touchpoint for UConn’s own conception of how this curriculum unfolded (See Appendix I).
Following DMAC participation, along with an external review by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the curriculum entered its early stages of piloting. This was also about the time that the English department, and therefore the FYC program, was faced with a major rescission. Despite the usual progression of lost money leading to lost programmatic innovation, the FYC program continued to move forward with its piloting and implementation of the new curriculum. This was partly made possible by an outside grant from Steelcase, who designed and built an Active Learning Classroom (ALC) for the program; the program was then able to use the Steelcase grant to leverage further support from the institution. However, the program also received, prior to the Steelcase grant, a large course redesign grant from UConn’s Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). As part of the grant, the program established a research collaboration with CETL to further study the impact of the ALC.

While the WAT curriculum design was underway, the Director, Brenda Brueggemann, and Associate Director, Lisa Blansett, joined the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) to gain further campus support for their new curriculum. Specifically, GEOC was looking to initiate new digital literacy requirements across campus. As a course enrolling a majority of students on campus, FYC presented the ideal opportunity for helping students achieve these new General Education goals. This partnership with GEOC led to more resources for the new curriculum, as it was essential to GEOC’s new digital literacy requirements. Currently, the Writing Program is working on developing a new model for FYC, where students will enroll in a 1-credit studio in addition to their traditional 3-credit course. The studio will help students achieve these new
digital literacy outcomes set by GEOC, while also acting as a solution to the rescission faced by the program.\(^{34}\)

UConn’s WAT journey illustrates how, even during times of rescission and budget cuts, a program can find other sources of support and funding by aligning with a larger campus vision. It likewise illustrates how complex this process is and underscores the importance of fostering cross-campus relationships. UConn looked outward to DMAC as a starting point for thinking through their WAT curriculum. From there, the program relied on various campus resources, like CETL and GEOC, arguing that their new curriculum was essential for helping support other campus initiatives. While the outside grant from Steelcase brought further clout to the WAT curriculum, which led to funding from the university CIO, it was also crucial for the program to have the support from other campus programs. By connecting their curriculum with the new digital literacy General Education objectives, the Writing Program found additional sources of curricular support, as well as created a new curricular model that could both benefit their students and tackle a shrinking budget.

**Conclusion**

While financial constraints and resources are ever-present challenges faced by WPAs, programs like FSU, Miami, and UConn offer different models of how a program might innovate and (re)design curriculum despite these challenges. One way of trying to overcome these challenges is by finding alignment and consensus with the larger institutional mission and overarching strategic plan. As I previously highlighted, alignment

\(^{34}\) The studio model was not designed as a solution to the rescission but does help the program address these cuts. First and foremost, this model is being tested as a way to better serve students and prepare them as designer/composers.
doesn’t mean sacrificing disciplinary best-practices or re-inventing curricula. Rather, alignment can be demonstrating how what you already do further supports and engages with a larger institutional mission. Or it might mean finding new cross-campus resources and connections resulting in new areas of support.

As one way of thinking about alignment across different contexts, I present here one final word cloud. Figure 5.4 is a commonality cloud of each of the five university strategic plans. The words shown represent the top 40 words that appear in each of the strategic plans. Just as before, the larger, pink words are the ones most frequently shared across the documents, moving to the purple, orange, and finally the green.

Figure 5.4: Commonality Cloud of the 40 most frequently shared terms across 5 strategic plans
It is unsurprising that words like *new*, *education*, and *research* would be most commonly shared. As public research universities, it is to be expected that the future of the schools laid out in the strategic plans would rely on research. For similar reasons, the shared high frequency of words like *public* and *development* is unsurprising. This commonality cloud also highlights a shared emphasis on *community* across each of these institutions, as well as illustrating the importance of *support* and *programs*. In all instances, these words highlight the generalizability of each institution’s strategic plan. *Education* and *research* remain flexible, while also highlighting the key features and essence of the institution. Similarly, words like *public*, *development*, and *community* are vague and offer little about institutional identity. Yet, they also highlight the broader mission of public research universities, which remain committed to the public and surrounding community.

Falling in the third level frequency (orange) are words like *world*, *success*, *partnerships*, and *resources*. Resources might relate to members of the campus community (faculty, students, staff, alumni, etc.), or, in some cases, it could mean the university itself serving as a resource to a larger, external community. Relatedly, the appearance of *world* or *partnerships* underscore universities’ place in a 21st century global economy, where an emphasis on partnerships and networks is key. Within the final and least frequent level are words like *diversity*, *innovation*, *nation*, and *vision*. For many college campuses today, diversity is used as both a guiding vision and marketable ideal. Likewise, innovation is often used to signal change, progress, and/or improvement, all sentiments that make sense as part of a university’s strategy for moving forward.

Looking at what is shared across these strategic plans helps illuminate what it is that these different colleges have in common. While some share geographic conditions or
similar student demographics, they also carry their own visions and ideals. Figure 5.4 above highlights, albeit at the surface level, what actions or ideals these universities share. There is much, however, that sets them apart. And it is these differences, originating from their localized contexts, that WPAs can mobilize to help enact multimodal curricula in their own programs. Similarly, with this commonality cloud, I aim extend this level of engagement beyond these five case studies. WPAs at different kinds of institutions, with different student populations or funding structures, might find their own similarities here. In finding what is shared, WPAs can further consider how they might approach broader institutional alignment in their own programs, using one of these examples as a model.

This is not to say that mission statements or strategic plans are always in alignment with WPAs’ own visions or goals for their program, or that alignment will automatically result in resources and success. As Andrew Jeter importantly highlights in his “People Make the Place,” these are not neutral documents; they are “powerful things, [and] exist at the purview of those with power” (187). In this instance, “those with power” refer to the administrators often tasked with creating, revising, and maintaining institutional mission statements, strategic plans, and other articulations of a school’s values. I argue that by aligning with, or at the very least engaging, their institutional missions, WPAs might find themselves are part of those with power. WPAs can invoke broader campus initiatives set forth in a mission statement or strategic plan to strengthen arguments for resource allocation and support. At the same time, they can position themselves and their programs so as to have a larger stake in the future of the mission, and may find themselves within the purview of power, with potential access to impacting the mission statement’s future.
On the other hand, a lack of alignment could mean isolation and an inability to engage with a larger campus network.

WPAs can benefit from engaging with and mobilizing the mission and vision of their larger campus communities. Aligning with institutional mission or drawing curricular inspiration from the strategic plan can have a number of outcomes. For some programs, aligning with the institutional mission is an unintentional benefit of engaging with disciplinary best-practices. For others, mobilizing the larger university strategy means finding new revenue sources, and increased support from broader inter-campus connections. Regardless of what this engagement looks like, it produces a mutually beneficial relationship for all parties involved: the larger campus community, the WPAs and members of their program, and, most importantly, the students these curricula serve.
CHAPTER 6

MOVING FROM PAGE TO PROGRAM: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As the evolution of technology changes how we communicate as a society, composition, as both a field and a practice, must be adaptable and flexible. For undergraduate students, this shift means learning how to compose across modes and adapt rhetorical concepts; for teachers, this shift means rethinking what it is to “teach writing” in a digital and multimodal landscape; for WPAs, this shift means embracing adaptable approaches to curricular and programmatic design, as well as engaging broader institutional initiatives. This evolution is much larger than any one program or course but, as I demonstrate, because of their proximity to and responsibility for FYC, WPAs play a pivotal role in ensuring that students are prepared for 21st century composition.

Since the introduction of computers into the composition classroom, scholars in Composition and Rhetoric have remained attentive to what this changing technology would mean for conceptions of “writing,” and what these shifting conceptions mean for teaching. Their work has influenced the development of national outcomes statements and expanded research, while at the same time, they continue to face resistance and skepticism about the role of multimodality and technology in a writing classroom. Nonetheless, the rapid evolution and saturation of technology necessitates that students foster their multimodal literacies through exposure, explicit teaching, and practice. And FYC, as the most commonly enrolled course in many institutions, is an opportune space for this engagement.

For FYC, at the most foundational level, there needs to be a commitment to fostering students’ multimodal literacies for 21st century communication. Adaptive
remediation, as presented in chapter 3, can help support this development. Proposed as a set of strategies, rather than a single activity or exercise, adaptive remediation enables students to participate in multimodal transfer across multiple contexts, whether it be across courses in the university setting or bridging their personal and professional writing lives. These opportunities can take many forms, as the examples I have presented highlight. Some programs, like Miami and FSU, opt for targeted assignments that allow students to practice these skills, while others, like UConn, have committed to an entirely multimodal FYC curriculum. All of these approaches are valuable, as they offer students a chance to develop their multimodal literacies and participate in multimodal transfer. The form this takes, then, can and must be determined by WPAs’ local institutional setting. And while students should remain at the fore of curricular decision making, as my research suggests, WPAs must also consider how they communicate their curricular and programmatic values to other key stakeholders – namely, teachers and administrators.

Communicating these values to teachers can take many forms: WPAs might consider the role of training and orientation programs in developing support for their multimodal curricular decisions. At the same time, they might think about how their own communicative documents (emails, training materials, teaching resources) reflect (or don’t) the curricular values of the program. As Isaac noted, “Writing Programs, if they’re gonna [sic] ask instructors to be multimodal, have to remediate their materials and be multimodal in the way they present themselves as well” (see chapter 4). It can be more of a challenge to communicate programmatic values on a larger scale to institutional administrators and others across campus, especially when these stakeholders are unsure of the role of WPAs and their programs. For this reason, it can be beneficial for WPAs to use
their own institutional values (as articulated in mission statements and strategic plans) to align their programs with the larger campus context. Although not always a clear 1-1 alignment, as my case studies highlight, WPAs can use their institutional values and initiatives to build arguments for additional resources and support.

In the following section, I present some of my unfounded hypotheses, namely the less-than-crucial role of external funding and corporate partnerships. I detail these examples in the next section to show what role external partnerships did play for two of my case studies, further underscoring the stakeholders I identified and analyzed throughout the previous chapters. I follow these unfounded hypotheses with suggestions for future research and broader implications of my study. I recognize the limited scope of my project and suggest that my findings can act as a pathway for future, expanded studies. At the same time, I argue that it is my limited focus that enhances the adaptability of my model and larger findings.

**Some Unfounded Hypotheses**

When I began my research, I was initially struck by the potential role of corporate or external partnerships. Two of my case studies were in unique partnerships with corporations, and I was curious if (and how) these partnerships impacted programmatic decisions. I include these unfounded hypotheses for a few reasons: one, I think with any research project, it is important to include researcher assumptions, even if they proved to be less important than originally expected. While I initially thought having corporate partnerships might be a key component for enacting a multimodal curriculum, I found instead that these partnerships were never a foundational cause and, for one program, had no direct impact on curricular decision-making. The second reason is because it can be
easy to look at the work of a different program or institution and make assumptions about why something worked there and would not be possible in your own local context. This is particularly true when the comparative institution has a corporate partnership, much like the examples I discuss further below. Highlighting the role these partnerships actually played, however, underscores that the more important contributing factors for a multimodal curriculum are internal, institutional relationships, and shows that there are other ways to enact real curricular and programmatic change without the support of external sponsors.

As is clear, external sources or corporate relationships are not part of the stakeholder model; that is because neither was particularly responsible for curricular change when compared to the other three stakeholders I have presented. Certainly, UConn’s grant from Steelcase and resulting ALC, which I mentioned previously and will discuss further below, was important in shaping UConn’s curriculum and training models. At the same time, however, the grant was awarded nearly two years after UConn began its curricular redesign. Similarly, at Ohio State, the Digital Flagship Initiative with Apple was neutral at best, and a hinderance at its worst. Yes, external funding and support can certainly help with any curricular initiative – but, what my research suggests is that it is not the only way, and, in some cases, it is unnecessary and can create more barriers to enacting change.

**UConn and the Steelcase Active Learning Classroom Grant**

In Spring 2018, UConn received an Active Learning Classroom (ALC) grant from Steelcase, a furniture company. The ALC designed for UConn challenges the traditional classroom space by removing a clear “front” of the classroom and encouraging a
collaborative and flexible working space. The room includes flexible furniture, including swivel chairs, moveable chairs, a sofa, and tables with paper serving the role of tabletop. There are multiple display screens around the room, whiteboards that detach from the wall, and a variety of media and technology available. In short, the ALC is a dream for implementing UConn’s WAT curriculum.

Yet, the grant came nearly two years after the curriculum was first envisioned. This is not to say that the ALC does not impact the decisions the program makes about curricular implementation. As I mentioned previously, the program is rethinking their FYC model to include a 1-credit lab held in the ALC, which would allow all students to experience the space. Similarly, the Steelcase grant helped Brenda make stronger arguments for resources and support from other areas of campus. Nonetheless, the example of UConn highlights how a program might begin to rethink curriculum and implement change prior to revenue from an external source. In fact, doing so might even lend itself to applying for external funding, as WPAs can use the curricular re-design process, and any potential preliminary findings, to articulate the kind of external funding they seek. While it can’t be ignored that the Steelcase ALC was a tremendous opportunity for UConn’s FYC program, their journey highlights that it is only one small piece of a complex puzzle that resulted in their unfolding multimodal curriculum.

Ohio State’s Digital Flagship Initiative

Beginning in the 2017-2018 academic year, Ohio State partnered with Apple to launch the Digital Flagship Initiative. Tied closely to the college’s strategic plan, the goal for this initiative was to establish “a student-success initiative to integrate learning

---

35 Appendix J offers a top-down illustration of UConn’s ALC, retrieved from https://fyw.uconn.edu/resources-for-instructors/writing-across-technology/active-learning-center/.
technology throughout the university experience; an iOS design laboratory on the Columbus campus serving faculty, staff, students, and members of the broader community; [and] university-wide opportunities for students to learn coding skills to enhance their career-readiness in the app economy” (Davey). As a result of the partnership, beginning in Fall 2018, all new first-year students received iPad Pros with accessories like Apple Pencils and Smart Keyboards, and iPad education apps pre-installed. The ultimate goal of the partnership is to integrate this technology across the campus to strengthen the student experience.

Although still in its early stages, I asked Eddie about the impact of the partnership on FYC courses. Most of the training and support for the initiative is managed by the Office of Distance Education and E-Learning (ODEE), and ODEE staff are available to work with teachers to consider how they might integrate the iPad Pro technology into their pre-existing curriculum and pedagogies. Eddie noted that, at the time of our interview, English department participation was limited to a volunteer-basis, with no formal requirement for participation. More specifically, Eddie remarked, “From a FYW perspective, it’s too early. Other than those instructors who are part of this initiative, it’s too early for me to say, well, from now on, everyone will have an iPad and here are the ways we’ll be using this in class, and here are the ways that the curriculum is going to change” (Singleton).

Because the initiative is still in its early stages, the guaranteed iPad technology has not impacted the FYC curriculum in any real way. Certainly, teachers may begin rethinking their own classroom pedagogies, but at the programmatic level, this partnership did not immediately result in curricular change. In fact, Eddie found that, in his own classroom, the iPad technology created somewhat of a burden for certain classroom activities. Talking
about the Learning Management System (LMS), Carmen, Eddie recounted trying to use the peer review function for the first time. What he quickly found, however, was the function was not compatible with the iPad. This meant having to rethink the peer review activity and considering how to manage the tension and disconnect between platform and technology.

While UConn was already in the midst of a curricular redesign prior to their own external funding, Ohio State had an established curricular identity in place. The Digital Flagship Initiative, while a great opportunity for the campus community, did not have an immediate effect on the FYC program, nor is it clear what effect it will have in the long term. As briefly noted in chapter 2, Ohio State is in the very early stages of revising their curriculum; they presented on the start of this process at the 2019 Council of Writing Program Administrators annual conference. During their presentation, which I attended, there was no mention of the Digital Flagship Initiative, which suggests that, although iPads may have an effect on the physical classroom space, it is not the driving force of any curricular considerations.

It can be easy for WPAs to think curricular change is impossible without external funding or corporate partnerships. I present here two examples where external support was present and engaged with to varying degrees. At UConn, the ALC was clearly a positive addition to their WAT curriculum; however, UConn’s program was already in the midst of curricular revision and rethinking FYC prior to receiving the grant. For Ohio State, although the Digital Flagship Initiative is still new, the access to iPad Pro technology is not a driving force for curricular change. Both instances highlight opportunities for WPAs without external support to enact their own programmatic and curricular change.
Moving Forward

To make substantial programmatic or curricular change possible, WPAs must engage different stakeholder groups. And how they engage with these different groups matters. My findings in this study suggest that there are ways to leverage resources and support across these groups and cultivate new relationships to enact curricular change. By analyzing publicly available materials, representative of an “outward facing” program identity, in tandem with interviews of current and former WPAs, my research highlights the interconnected relationships that WPAs must foster. Although I present my model in three stakeholder groups, each parsed out into a separate chapter, there is an inextricable connection between each of these groups, connections that WPAs can leverage and build upon to enact curricular change. There is important movement across this model, visually depicted with gears and arrows in Figure 1.1. Despite certain hierarchal realities of these stakeholder groups, WPAs will find that they are interrelated, where decisions made for one impacts later decisions in other groups. As I will discuss further below, it is this interconnectedness, however, that makes such broader scope programmatic research necessary.

As with most research, the findings of this study are representative of a small sample. Yet, despite my examples being drawn from large, public research universities, this model is applicable across institutional types and contexts, for while the styles of engagement might shift, the key stakeholders are universal. In this way, my findings can act as potential fodder for further research and expansions upon my study’s scope. First, further research might consider what this stakeholder model looks like at other institutional contexts, or more generally, a broader sample of institutions. For example, what might
engaging teachers look like within a two-year college context, with a primarily adjunct labor force? Or, what might administrative and cross-campus stakeholder engagement look like at a privately endowed institution? Although I would argue that the stakeholders themselves do not change across institutional types or structures, the means of engagement may look quite different once contexts shift. A larger project might take up this question broadly, looking at these three stakeholders within new institutional contexts or structures. Or, a different project might present a comparative analysis, taking up a single stakeholder across multiple institutional contexts.

Another area briefly discussed by two of my participants (Brenda and Jason) is the relationship between a multimodal FYC curriculum and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. Although a very small piece of this study, there is an opportunity for further research of the relationship between multimodality and UDL, specifically from a programmatic or WPA perspective. While a study of multimodality and UDL should aim to be student-centered, having conducted programmatic research, I can see benefit in thinking about the UDL framework for curricular redesign. What might a FYC curriculum designed from the very beginning with a UDL framework look like?

I hope that WPAs will find their own ways to enact substantial curricular change to sustain a multimodal FYC curriculum in their own programs using my stakeholder model. In chapter 3, I looked at students as stakeholders, analyzing the critical role they play in the curricular decision-making process. When provided explicit opportunities to compose across modalities, students are more likely to transfer these experiences into new, communicative spaces. While this multimodal transfer may take many forms, remediation or remix projects were the most common across the majority of my case study institutions.
The act of remediation requires students to think about the rhetorical elements of a given text and reflect on the important shifts that take place when moving across modes. These assignments allow students to foster their rhetorical awareness, enrich their meta-cognitive abilities, and critically consider what it means to compose multimodally.

In chapter 4, I turned to the teachers who facilitate curriculum in the FYC classroom. While this level of stakeholder is often where WPAs may face resistance, there are small shifts that can assuage some of that skepticism. By designing training programs that are intentional and flexible, WPAs may find great support from their teachers. Sandbox sessions, like the ones offered at UConn, are a great opportunity to help teachers find comfort in the unknown, as they offer a space for play and failure which can help simulate the very experience FYC students will have when encountering a new multimodal composing context. Relatedly, WPAs can model their own curricular values through various programmatic communication and training materials. If multimodality is built into the fabric of the program itself, teachers are more likely to see this as “the norm,” and it becomes something that the program just does. It also shows that WPAs themselves are willing to communicate in new ways and new modes, further underscoring the importance of multimodality for 21st century composing.

Lastly, WPAs can find new areas of support and foster cross-campus relationships by aligning their individual programmatic goals with the larger vision of the institution. Chapter 5 demonstrates how WPAs might draw on their institutional mission statements or strategic plans to situate their programs within the larger institutional ecology. What my case study examples illustrated was the complexity and nuance of this process. Like at Miami, alignment is sometimes reaffirming what a program already does, and underscoring
how it supports institutional goals. At the same time, UConn’s extensive work with redesigning their FYC curriculum highlights the multiple administrative stakeholders involved and the long process of fostering these relationships. From these examples, I hope that WPAs can find ways to broaden their own cross-campus relationships and find “where the love is.”

As the research has shown, and as I contend, multimodal FYC curriculum is essential for 21st century writers. Our students must be prepared for all the modes of composition they will encounter across the university, in professional settings, and within their personal lives. Much research has focused on the classroom and what multimodal pedagogies and assignments look like at the level of the individual. Although this research has helped shape disciplinary conversations about the intersections of computers and composition, I argue that we need to extend our lenses to adopt a wider perspective. WPAs should consider the broader ecologies within which their programs are set. While I emphasize people in my stakeholder model and subsequent analysis, the model is likewise about varying lenses to zoom out across the levels of students, teachers, and campus administration. This movement across the levels of the classroom (students), to the programmatic (teachers), to broader campus (administrators) illustrates the wide ecologies that WPAs and their programs are situated within. This study, and the stakeholder model it proposes, provides multiple ways to enact curricular (re)design and programmatic change to support multimodal FYC curriculum to ensure the success and preparation of all students.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

The following will be sent via email to WPAs that I have met at academic conferences through my advisor. You’ll see in brackets the 2 conferences at which I have met these people; only one will be listed per email depending on the context.

Dear Professor [Participant],

My name is Rebecca Petitti, and I’m a PhD Candidate working with Rebecca Dingo at UMass Amherst. We met at the [UConn Teaching Conference in April 2018 or Thomas R. Watson Conference in October 2018], and I’m writing as a follow-up and interview request for my dissertation project.

My dissertation looks at how disciplinary knowledge and research on computers and first-year composition (FYC) gets taken up in writing program design and decision-making. Using research from the field, along with the WPA Outcomes Statements, I’m interested in exploring what factors and conditions impact curricular change and program (re)design, with a focus on digital technologies in the FYC classroom.

I was hoping to interview you in your capacity both as a current/former Writing Program Administrator, and as a scholar in Rhetoric and Composition with extensive knowledge about computers and writing. The interview would be conducted via Skype and would last 60 minutes. I would also be available to conduct the interview at the upcoming CCCC in Pittsburgh if you would prefer an in-person discussion.

At your earliest convenience, please let me know if you are willing and interested in participating. We can then discuss participation consent forms, as well as the best time to talk.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require any further information. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Rebecca Petitti
PhD Candidate, Rhetoric and Composition
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Du Bois 1318
r.petitti@umass.edu
APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Researcher(s): Rebecca Patriti, PhD Candidate
Rebecca Diago, Faculty Sponsor & Dissertation Chair

Study Title: Looking Back and Moving Forward: A Study of Digital FYC and Writing Program Design

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?
This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?
Subjects must currently be or have been Writing Program Administrators, with some level of participation in writing program decision-making. They must also be involved in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship. Subjects must be at least 18 years old to participate.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this research study is to examine if and how disciplinary knowledge on computers and FYC is taken up in writing program design and curricular decision-making. Identifying the places where research enters design decisions helps us track where, and at what pace, scholarship moves into application. This study will explore if, how, and where this research is enacted, and the conditions that are present that enable such engagement. It will contribute to our field’s knowledge about the intersection of research and practice, as well as further our discussions about computers and FYC. Despite rhetoric and composition’s robust research history regarding computers and composition, it is not immediately clear if or how this research is mobilized and enacted in everyday pedagogies and FYC classrooms across US institutions. I believe this study can foster discussion regarding the application of scholarship, as well as help us better understand the determining factors that lead to such engagement and consider what steps we can take to prompt further mobilization of our commitments and values.

4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
The study will consist of a 60-minute interview conducted via Skype. If you would prefer, we can conduct the 60-minute interview in-person at the 2019 CCC in Pittsburgh, PA. The participant will not be contacted beyond this singular interview.

5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in a 60-minute semi-structured interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. Following confirmation of participation and signing of this consent form, you will be contacted to arrange a time for the interview to take place, and details on Skype contacts.

During the interview time agreed upon, you will be asked a series of questions about your writing program and curricular design. These questions will cover topics about research involved in the design choices, overall program structure, and the resources and conditions that led to certain programmatic
design decisions. These questions can be provided prior to the interview if you wish. You may skip any question you feel uncomfortable answering.

6. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?
You may not directly benefit from this research; however, I hope that your participation in the study will help illuminate the ways that discretionary knowledge is enacted in writing program design and programmatic curricular changes. This research can help other writing programs better understand the necessary steps and material conditions that make certain design choices and changes possible.

7. WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?
I believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the study (which includes reviewing and signing the consent form and the 60-minute interview).

8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?
The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records: All audio recording files and interview transcripts will be moved to UMass Box, a secure, online cloud storage site supported by UMass Amherst. Research records will be labeled using coded pseudonyms (if you wish to be addressed using your name and title, you will have the opportunity to indicate this below. Otherwise, I will provide pseudonyms throughout the project). A master key that holds names and codes will be maintained on a password-protected desktop computer only accessible to the researcher. Any materials shared throughout the dissertation process will be done using codes and pseudonyms.

The master key and audio files will be destroyed 5 years after the close of the study. All electronic files containing identifiable information will be password protected. Any computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. Only the researcher will have access to the password, and any information shared will be done using pseudonyms as requested.

At the conclusion of this study, the researcher will publish these findings in a dissertation, conference presentations, and, hopefully, in article publications. Information will be presented in summary format and you will not be identified in any publications or presentations, unless you give permission to be addressed using your name and title below.

9. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
Take as long as you like before making a decision. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher, Rebecca Petriello, at rpetriello@umass.edu or by phone at (508) 844-6284.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or hrpoffic@hrp.umass.edu.

11. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?
You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.
11. WHAT IF I AM INJURED?

The University of Massachusetts does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subjects research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment. I believe there are no known risks of injury in this study.

12. SUBJECT IDENTIFICATION

Please indicate if you wish to be identified by your name and title in any results of this study, including the dissertation, conference presentations, and potential journal articles. Based on your selection below, the researcher will identify you by name and title, and quote verbatim from the interview, or provide pseudonyms and summarize interview material.

☐ I give the researcher permission to identify me by using my name and official title as written here: ____________________________

and to quote from our interview verbatim where applicable.

☐ I wish to remain anonymous in any published results of this interview, and ask the researcher to provide a pseudonym and only summarized responses of our interview.

14. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I can understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

Participant Signature: ____________________________ Print Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: ____________________________ Print Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
APPENDIX C

DEDOOSE

The largest portion of the screen on the left-hand side is the document being coded. The coding schema is to the right. The different colors correlate with codes, and by hovering over highlighted text, I can read whatever notes I may have written and see what codes were applied. The tabs at the top right are various functions of Dedoose, including analysis and reports, memos, codes, etc.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Organizational Structure
1. Your website lists the organizational structure as [will vary based on institution.] Is this still the structure/job duties for the program?

2. Who are the primary instructors of FYC? (i.e.: FT instructors, faculty, graduate students, adjuncts, etc.)
   a. Does that impact the decision-making process or curricular decision?

Historical Context & Change
3. When was the program last (re)designed in terms of outcomes and curriculum?

4. What prompted this change? (i.e.: administrator pressure, funding allocations, change in administrator, change in program structure, external/internal review)

Curriculum & Resources
5. How did your program develop its outcomes? Did you look to the CWPA Outcomes Statement(s) or other shared documents (NCTE’s Framework, C’s Statements, etc.)?

6. What role does/did scholarly conversations, especially those around computers and composition, play in developing your curriculum?

7. What role would you say digital technology plays in your curriculum? (Not necessarily in individual classrooms [although it might be an interesting note to see if there are large deviations across instructors] but rather at the level of the program.)
   a. Is technology engaged beyond the level of use/materiality?

8. What resources does the Writing Program specifically offer instructors regarding digital technology?
   a. What resources are made available through the university?

9. What are the institutional conditions or factors that either inhibited or allowed for digital technology engagement? (i.e.: funding, location of WP, institutional goals/values/missions, outside councils, resources, access, etc.)

Specific to Ohio State
10. Did the “Digital Flagship Initiative” with Apple change the program’s approach to FYC? Why/how?
APPENDIX E

R CODE FOR CHAPTER 5 DATA

Strategic Plans

```r
# reading stopwords to vector
stop_words <- read.csv('Stop Words list.csv', header = TRUE, sep = ',')

# create a vector
exclude <- as.vector(stop_words$exclude_words)

# saving: stop_words <- readlines('Stop Words list.csv')

# reading remove words vector
exclude2 <- c("the", "and", "for", "student", "that", "our", "with", "at", "will", "are", "through", "have", "all","the", "this", "were", "from", "into", "has", "can", "we'll", "students")

# reading data
umass_strat <- read.csv('UMass CSV Revised.csv', header = TRUE, sep = ',', stringsAsFactors = FALSE)

# create corpus
umass_strat_corpus <- Corpus(VectorSource(umass_strat$words))

# remove numbers
umass_strat_corpus <- VCorpus(VectorSource(umass_strat$words))

# lowercase conversion
umass_strat_corpus <- tm_map(umass_strat_corpus, content_transformer(tolower))

# creating up list
umass_strat_corpus <- tm_map(umass_strat_corpus, removeWords, exclude)

# umass_strat_corpus <- tm_map(umass_strat_corpus, removePunctuation)

# matrix
tdmu <- TermDocumentMatrix(umass_strat_corpus)

tdmatrixu <- as.matrix(tdmu)

wordfreq_umass <- sort(rowSums(tdmatrixu), decreasing = TRUE)

# plot
wordcloud(umass_strat_corpus, max.words = 40, min.freq = 5, random.order = TRUE, colors = brewer.pal(4, "Dark2"), scale=c(3, 25))
```
# APPENDIX F

## R PROGRAMMING “STOP WORDS”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Institutions</th>
<th>UMass</th>
<th>UConn</th>
<th>Miami</th>
<th>FSU</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>UMass Amherst</td>
<td>UConn Connecticut</td>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>FSU Florida</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Student(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We'll</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Such</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why
Well
APPENDIX G

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION STATEMENTS

UMass Amherst
“The University's mission is to provide an affordable and accessible education of high quality and to conduct programs of research and public service that advance knowledge and improve the lives of the people of the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.”

UConn
“The University of Connecticut is dedicated to excellence demonstrated through national and international recognition. Through freedom of academic inquiry and expression, we create and disseminate knowledge by means of scholarly and creative achievements, graduate and professional education, and outreach.

With our focus on teaching and learning, the University helps every student grow intellectually and become a contributing member of the state, national, and world communities. Through research, teaching, service, and outreach, we embrace diversity and cultivate leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As our state’s flagship public University, and as a land and sea grant institution, we promote the health and well-being of citizens by enhancing the social, economic, cultural, and natural environments of the state and beyond.”

Miami University
“Miami University, a student-centered public university founded in 1809, has built its success through an unwavering commitment to liberal arts undergraduate education and the active engagement of its students in both curricular and co-curricular life. It is deeply committed to student success, builds great student and alumni loyalty, and empowers its students, faculty, and staff to become engaged citizens who use their knowledge and skills with integrity and compassion to improve the future of our global society.

Miami provides the opportunities of a major university while offering the personalized attention found in the best small colleges. It values teaching and intense engagement of faculty with students through its teacher-scholar model, by inviting students into the excitement of research and discovery. Miami's faculty are nationally prominent scholars and artists who contribute to Miami, their own disciplines and to society by the creation of new knowledge and art. The University supports students in a highly involving residential experience on the Oxford campus and provides access to students, including those who are time and place bound, on its regional campuses. Miami provides a strong foundation in the traditional liberal arts for all students, and it offers nationally recognized majors in arts and sciences, business, education, engineering, and fine arts, as well as select graduate programs of excellence. As an inclusive community, Miami strives to cultivate an environment where diversity and difference are appreciated and respected.

Miami instills in its students intellectual depth and curiosity, the importance of personal values as a measure of character, and a commitment to life-long learning. Miami
emphasizes critical thinking and independent thought, an appreciation of diverse views, and a sense of responsibility to our global future.”

**FSU**

“Florida State University preserves, expands, and disseminates knowledge in the sciences, technology, arts, humanities, and professions, while embracing a philosophy of learning strongly rooted in the traditions of the liberal arts. The university is dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, creative endeavors, and service. The university strives to instill the strength, skill, and character essential for lifelong learning, personal responsibility, and sustained achievement within a community that fosters free inquiry and embraces diversity.”

**Ohio State**

“We foster a culture that provides the opportunity to develop our student-athletes through success in academics and competition to achieve excellence in life.”
APPENDIX H

WORD CLOUDS (NOT USED IN CH. 5)

As in the word clouds from Ch. 5, the largest words represented in pink are the ones most frequently shared across the documents, moving to the purple, orange, and finally the green, all decreasing in size.

UMass Amherst
APPENDIX I

UCONN WAT TIMELINE INFOGRAPHIC

WAT Curriculum timeline

Planning

Summer 2016

First UConn engagement at Digital Media and Composition Institute at OSU
Ruth Bohn attends while Brenda Bruegmann presents

Summer 2017

Second group of students and faculty participate in DMAC
WAT curriculum planning begins; planning for writing studio space begins

Conversations with Adobe and CIO

Early Implementation and Piloting

DMAC

01

02
Fall 2017

- FYW Begins Holding Regular WAT Workshops for Instructors
- Council of Writing Program Administrators External Review
- Rescission Discussions
- FYW Full-Day WAT Workshop for Instructors
- FYW Directors Join GEOC
- FYW Conversation with EGSA
- FYW Receives CETL Large Course Redesign Grant

Winter 2018

- Regular Instructional Design Meetings Begin with CETL
- Storrs FYW Directors Meet with Regional Writing Program Administrators
- GEOC Awards FYW Funds for Assessment of ENGL 1003/1004
- Storrs FYW Directors Meet with ECE
Spring 2018

FYW Receives Steelcase ALC Grant

$4 Focus Groups Run by CETL
Feedback on course solicited from FYW instructors and English dept.

GEOC Awards FYW Funds for WAT Initiative Enhancement

$Conversation with Clemson and UNC-Chapel Hill

Lisa Blansett Joins GEOC Subcommittee on Information Literacy

FYW Directors Present about WAT at End-of-Year English Dept. Meeting

Summer 2018

4 More UConn Affiliates Attend DMAC
René Bohlin, Rebecca Rowe, Aaron Proudfoot, ECE coordinator Scott Campbell

FYW Staff and CETL Write IRB for Pilot Research

FYW Teams Conduct Assessment of ENGL 1003/1004

FYW Teams Draft and Publish Course Moves
Fall 2018

- Pre-Pilot in ALC with New Graduate Instructors
- FYW Directors Join Provost's New Teaching and Active Learning Space Committee
- Lisa Blansett Joins W Subcommittee

Pilot Period

- Summer 2019: Possible WAT Institute
- Spring 2019: Research Pilot for CETL
- Fall 2019: Start Curricula Action Request (CAR) for Pilot
  Will include 3 or 4 sections
- Spring 2020: Re-pilot
  Refine CARs through process

Full Rollout
Future Horizons

Summer 2020: WAT Institute

Fall 2020: New Curriculum Runs
Full Scale

Spring 2021: Assessment of New Curriculum
Stakeholders/Partners

Adobe  CETL  CIO  CUWI

DMAC  ECE  English Department  GEOC

Regional Campus Programs  Steelcase Education

Other Universities/WPAs Consulted

Clemson  UMASS  Louisville  Michigan State  UNC-Chapel Hill

Stanford  Ohio State  Syracuse  NC State
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Brueggemann, Brenda. Personal Interview. 1 April 2019.


Isaac (Pseudonym). Personal Interview. 1 Apr. 2019.


---“Multimodal Assignment Overview.” *University of Connecticut First-Year Writing Program*, https://fyw.uconn.edu/.


