9-2009

Writing Across the Curriculum Program Development as Ideological and Rhetorical Practice

Carolyn J. Fulford
University of Massachusetts - Amherst, cfulfor1@nccu.edu

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AS IDEOLOGICAL AND RHETORICAL PRACTICE

A Dissertation Presented

by

CAROLYN J. FULFORD

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2009

English

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AS IDEOLOGICAL AND RHETORICAL PRACTICE

A Dissertation Presented

by

CAROLYN J. FULFORD

Approved as to style and content by:

_____

Anne H. Herrington, Chair

_____

Charles Moran, Member

_____

Donna LeCourt, Member

_____

Patt Dodds, Member

_____

Joseph Bartolomeo, Department Chair
Department of English

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AS
IDEOLOGICAL AND RHETORICAL PRACTICE

SEPTEMBER 2009

CAROLYN FULFORD, B.A., KEENE STATE COLLEGE

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Anne J. Herrington

Few research studies have focused on WAC program development. Those that exist do not examine the ideological grounds for programmatic changes. This dissertation explores the dynamics of such changes through a four-year ethnographic study of WAC program development at a small, public, liberal arts college. The study employed extensive participant observation, interviewing, and document collection to trace how curricular and cultural changes around writing take shape and what ideologies and rhetorical practices come into play during that complex change process.

The site for the study is of special interest because WAC there was in transition from an informal coalition focused on changing culture and pedagogy to a potentially institutional program equally invested in curricular reform. My study documents the interactions that characterize the change process, using Jenny Edbauer's conception of rhetorical ecology for its explanatory power in non-linear discursive environments.

I analyze rhetorical encounters between a wide range of institutional constituents, including administrators and faculty from multiple disciplines. In these encounters, higher education's historic ideologies surface and interact in complex ways with WAC's ideologies. Using critical discourse analysis, I unpack these interactions and ideological

multilectics, examining how language and values circulate among multiple users, texts, and sites within the rhetorical ecology of one college, influencing the shape of program developments.

WAC scholars suggest that contemporary practitioners need to forge alliances with other cross-curricular initiatives in order for WAC to continue as a viable educational movement. My analysis of how WAC advocates at one college positioned their efforts in relation to other curricular changes reveals both benefits and costs resulting from such alliances. Although alliances can produce significant reforms, working with groups that have divergent ideological premises risks positioning WAC in subordination to others' ideological priorities.

Two intertwined strategies appear to mitigate this problem: 1) ideological recentering on WAC's core theoretical commitments and 2) formation of recombinant multilectics by identifying the ideologies in play and considering how, or whether, core WAC ideological commitments align with them. Acts of recentering that incorporate deliberate multilectics may be key survival strategies for WAC programs as they interact with other cross-curricular initiatives.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure   Page

CHAPTER 1

WAC PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, SITUATED

The fall semester of 2007 at North River State College marked the debut of a significant curricular overhaul to its undergraduate program. After years of planning and negotiation, the twenty-four-member General Education Committee had succeeded in replacing the prior general education curriculum with an Integrative Education Program that was both more aligned with prevailing trends in liberal arts education and responsive to recommendations from the college's accrediting association. Although not necessarily sharing the same premises and sense of exigency as the General Education Committee, the college's interdisciplinary Writing Task Force nevertheless played a role in assuring that writing was a prominent feature of these curricular changes. In the plans approved by the Faculty Senate in 2006, writing was identified as a major category in the intended skills outcomes for the new curriculum, and a freshly-designed Writing and Thinking course was positioned as one of two required foundational courses in the reformed curriculum. Language in the plans for further development of the Integrative Education Program suggested that writing would also be built into the curriculum somehow after the first year, although how and when had not been determined by the players at the time the program went live for the 2007/2008 academic year.

For those interested in writing across the curriculum program development, one of the telling features of the new program was its Writing and Thinking course. This course differed in several ways from the traditional essay writing course it replaced. It involved a sustained, themed writing project instead of multiple essays, faculty from any discipline

1

could propose and teach different themes, and Writing and Thinking became the responsibility of the Integrative Education Program rather than the English Department[1].

In the context of writing across the curriculum (WAC) scholarship on first year writing, the most salient aspects of the new writing course at North River were the involvement of faculty outside of the English department, and the concurrent shift of administrative responsibility for the course, with the Integrative Education Program holding it instead of English. Both practices remain unusual, nationally, but were particularly remarkable given this college's history with writing. Here was an institution that had, since 1985, consistently positioned the English department as the entity responsible for assuring the "English Language Competence" of students who passed English 101. Furthermore, in keeping with national trends in first year writing labor, the responsibility for teaching this service course had increasingly been allocated to adjunct instructors in recent years. Given this history, how was it possible for such an institution to move so far ideologically that, in 2006, some philosophers and biologists were not only incorporating writing into their disciplinary courses but were also, *voluntarily*, taking responsibility for teaching first year writing? How does such significant curricular and cultural change around writing actually happen?

This dissertation explores this question through an ethnographic study of writing across the curriculum program development at North River State, documented through nearly four years of direct participant-observation as well as historical investigation into

---

[1] Although the new configuration was unusual, some elements of this course are familiar terrain for WAC practitioners. According to program descriptions in both Fulwiler and Young's 1990 guide, *Programs that Work,* and Connolly and Vilardi's 1986 collection, *New Methods in College Writing Programs,* themed first year writing seminars were initiated at Beaver College in the 1980s and taught by faculty from many different disciplines. In *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*, David Russell observes that first year seminars with special topics were a characteristic feature of WAC programs in the 1990s (315), albeit usually under the auspices of English departments. More recent articles by Joseph Harris and Gretchen Fletcher Moon indicate that administrators continue to experiment with cross-disciplinary ways to deliver first year writing in other institutions.

archival materials. The purpose of the study has remained to understand the rhetorical

matrices and the interactions of ideologies that were instrumental in shaping the

positioning of writing in the curriculum and the culture of one small college. Initially, I

perceived such a study in terms of is value to other WAC advocates in helping them

understand the intricate dynamics of developing a WAC program. As my analysis

progressed, I came to see an additional benefit of the study: understanding how WAC

actually works in an ideologically and rhetorically complex context provides grounds for

reconsidering WAC theory.

In this chapter, I situate my study in the context of other WAC scholarship,

provide a brief overview of North River State, explain the theoretical framework, and

delineate the chapters to follow.

Scholarship on WAC Programs

As suggested in my initial description of the general education reforms at North

River, one of the key strategies for groups invested in change was to interact with others

even when their central goals and principles differed. Crafting alliances with other cross-

curricular initiatives is a practice recommended by writing across the curriculum scholars

Barbara Walvoord ("The Future of WAC") and McLeod and Miraglia for strengthening

contemporary WAC programs. Yet collaborating across ideological differences in

specific institutional contexts in order to make changes in how, when, and by whom

writing is taught – as well as how writing is *understood* – is a tremendously intricate

process.

This complexity is partially documented in the body of descriptive accounts of

WAC programs, a genre that comprises a considerable number of the publications about

WAC. During the decades of WAC's emergence in U.S. higher education, descriptions of programs in a wide range of institutional contexts such as those published by Connolly and Vilardi in 1986 and Fulwiler and Young in 1990 were valuable because they informed the WAC community of the immensely diverse and adaptable nature of WAC activity. Although the wealth of program descriptions has been useful to the field in that it demonstrates many models in many contexts, the genre leaves unaddressed the crucial work of analyzing how programs take shape. What are the actual practices that facilitate WAC changes and experimentation? And what happens in complex institutional environments when groups with divergent ideological commitments interact to shape cross-curricular initiatives? Such analysis requires qualitative studies designed to explain how beliefs and practices about writing come to be positioned and negotiated in their different institutional contexts. But it is insufficient to only examine how such change happens without also reflecting on how situated WAC development might cause us to rethink WAC theory. Theories that have historically informed WAC practices, especially theories of cognitive development and academic discourse, continue to frame much WAC research and practice. These frames have been productive for researchers, especially as they investigate student learning, and for practitioners as they argue for WAC pedagogies. But the iteration of WAC has become more complex over time as the movement has developed in many different and changing institutional configurations. The traditional theories simply are not sufficient, on their own, to account for the phenomenon as it exists now or to aid WAC practitioners in adapting to and critiquing contemporary issues in higher education that affect their work.

Although few qualitative studies currently examine WAC program development, naturalistic research on WAC pedagogy is relatively prevalent and demonstrates the

usefulness of such close observation and analysis to the field. WAC researchers including Lucille McCarthy (*A Stranger in Strange Lands*), Anne Herrington ("Writing in Academic Settings" and "Teaching, Writing, and Learning") and MacDonald and Cooper ("Contributions of Academic and Dialogic Journals to Writing about Literature") use qualitative approaches for studying students and classrooms. Other qualitative WAC studies such as those by Walvoord and McCarthy (*Thinking and Writing in College*), Walvoord and colleagues (*In the Long Run*) and Fishman and McCarthy (*Unplayed Tapes*) focus on faculty development. Although these are not program development studies or studies of institutional writing culture, they do indicate in more depth than program descriptions can some ways that WAC pedagogies might be implemented in other settings.

Established WAC scholar/practitioner Susan McLeod has built on the pedagogical research, program descriptions, and her administrative experiences to produce a number of guides for designing and sustaining programs, beginning with *Strengthening Programs for Writing Across the Curriculum* in 1988, followed by another guide, *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs*, with Margot Soven in 1992. Around this same time, McLeod's survey of U.S. WAC programs led her to conclude in "Writing Across the Curriculum: The Second Stage and Beyond" that WAC programs were entering an institutionalized stage in which the security represented by widespread curricular incorporation of WAC was accompanied by the risk of losing the energetic and theoretical foundations characteristic of the nascent movement (342). In "The Future of WAC," Barbara Walvoord articulates a solution to these risks by urging WAC administrators to carefully nurture relationships between the WAC movement and up-and-coming cross-curricular cousins as a survival strategy, "not necessarily the survival

of WAC programs as currently formed and named, but the survival of WAC's goals for faculty career-long growth and for student learning" (73). In other words, for Walvoord, the survival of WAC as a named institutionalized program is less important than the continued circulation of WAC's ideological commitments, and the method for assuring such ongoing circulation is collaboration.

McLeod and colleagues' more recent guidance for WAC program administrators, *WAC for the New Millenium*, includes thoughtful representation of different WAC programs that do what Walvoord urges: engage with the language and ideas of other trends in higher education such as assessment, technology infusion, learning communities, and service learning initiatives. McLeod and Walvoord point the way for future program development strategies, as does Stephanie Vanderslice in her discussion of diffusion theory and innovation strategies for WAC. All three suggest some possible directions for WAC program development, yet such theoretical guidance needs to be complemented by actual studies of WAC in specific institutions to understand how theoretical concepts play out in the lived complexity of real situations.

Despite the enduring interest in program development indicated by the number of published program descriptions and how-to guides, empirical studies of WAC at the institutional level remain unusual. Several applied studies do have bearing on program development, but are primarily interested in students' writing and development (Herrington and Curtis; Carroll) or student writing and disciplinary discourses (Thaiss and Zawacki). One article that does center on program development is Westphal-Johnson and Fitzpatrick's longitudinal case study of a program at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The authors focus on multiple factors impeding and facilitating WAC program articulation with general education reforms. Their study demonstrates the

value of an empirical approach for examining the intricacies of program development. However, while the University Wisconsin-Madison study does expose complex relationships between various institutional programs and constituents, it does not overtly examine the ideologies that inevitably play a role in curricular and programmatic changes as shown by other theoretical and historical studies (Ohmann; Trow; Trimbur; Russell; Soliday).

When WAC administrators form strategic alliances with groups invested in other initiatives, the question is not only whether a program survives in concrete terms, but, as Walvoord indicates, whether the deeper intentions and values of the program thrive. My ethnographic study of the changing position of writing at a small public college acknowledges the ways in which the work of WAC development is institutionally situated; local factors determine what intersections are possible in a given rhetorical network, and what other groups exist for WAC advocates to interact with. However, my study is also ideologically situated, focusing on the dynamics of ideological exchange and dialectic as WAC practitioners engage with groups involved in assessment initiatives, general education reforms, and other cross-curricular initiatives derived from different theoretical paradigms and initiated due to different exigences.

In my analysis, I apply both pragmatic and critical lenses. This is a utilitarian project inasmuch as I investigate the rhetorical practices of advocacy and alliance-building so crucial to creating and sustaining successful WAC activities. Writing program administrators, WAC facilitators, and even higher education administrators who have other kinds of programs in mind can gain strategic knowledge from an empirical study that reveals rhetorical activity of WAC leaders engaged in the discursive ecology of one small college. However, just as composition scholars have done with many

pedagogical studies, applying a critical lens on these administrative practices and rhetorics is important as well. Any process of WAC program development is situated in historically and ideologically-rich contexts. And, as I will show, the language WAC leaders use in the complex process of changing local culture and practices is not isolated from the ideologies invoked elsewhere in higher education and in larger social structures.

To discover the theoretical and ideological commitments in play at North River State, I ask: What beliefs and values do WAC leaders invoke as they interact with other institutional constituents in their attempt to develop a program or culture of writing? To take into account the historical dimension of ideological commitments, I ask: How do these rhetorical encounters around WAC reflect and embody historically significant ideologies and ideological dialectics in higher education? To illuminate the complexity of responses to ideologically-rich interactions around writing pedagogy, curriculum, and culture, I ask: How do WAC advocates and their institutional collaborators adapt, reproduce, resist, and engage with the key ideologies in play in the discursive ecology of North River State?

Empirical pursuit of these questions reveals dynamics of WAC development that have until recently had only anecdotal documentation. This study should help WAC scholars gain a more nuanced understanding of how curricular and cultural changes around writing actually happen, and furthermore, provide grounds for rethinking WAC theory in light of the complexities of WAC practice.

The Scene of WAC Changes

My research site provided ample opportunity to observe rhetorical and ideological practices that play into curricular and cultural change. The site, for which I use the

8

pseudonym North River State, is a small, public college that enrolled over five thousand students at the time of my study. It was founded for teacher training but has since repositioned itself as a liberal arts college, although it maintains strong professional programs. North River State was of special interest because, at the time of my study, writing across the curriculum there was in transition from what had been a relatively informal coalition focused mainly on changing individual pedagogy to potentially a more institutional program with equal investment in curricular and cultural reform. Within the community of WAC advocates at North River, however, there was dissent about whether working directly toward curricular change was an appropriate strategy, or whether enduring cultural changes around how writing is used, taught, and understood would be best achieved through continuing to focus on faculty development instead of curricular changes. Moving from a coalition toward something more programmatic has thus been a contested and multifaceted progression. My study documents the complex networked interactions that characterize this ongoing change process, using Jenny Edbauer's conception of rhetorical ecology for its explanatory power in such non-linear discursive environments.

When I began my exploratory research in 2004, my intent was simply to ground what I had been learning about WAC theory by observing WAC in practice. At the invitation of one of the leaders, I sat in on the Writing Institute at North River. For one week in June, eight faculty members from four different disciplines met with the three facilitators in a pleasant conference room normally used by the Management department. On the first day of the institute, the facilitators placed ideology at the center of their work by having these disparate faculty participants articulate what they valued about writing. The list of faculty members' values that accrued over the course of the day became a

reference point that the group would return to again as they encountered other ways of thinking about writing. They discussed and debated readings in cognitive development theory and composition studies, considered their students' writing and development, and discussed pedagogical strategies for encouraging their students' growth as learners and writers. Toward the end of the week, faculty began to draft assignments that incorporated their emerging thinking on these newly encountered ideas about the role of writing in student learning and the role of cross-disciplinary faculty in teaching students to write. Although the Writing Institute's content was framed by these facilitators' professional theoretical commitments and tailored to the context of North River State, the practice of faculty institutes as intensive approaches to pedagogical change is of a piece with many WAC programs. It was not the only recognizable WAC feature at North River in 2004 that I was interested in.

By the time my observations began, several important WAC elements were already in place. Although the college did not have a WAC program as such, it had for over a decade hosted both grassroots WAC activity and a writing center with a broad mission of working with students and faculty across the disciplines. Faculty interest in the idea of WAC had existed at North River since the early 1990s. Much of this interest had been aroused and consolidated by the Writing Center Director. With her leadership in 1994, a core group of faculty who were interested in writing began working together as an informal but respected coalition, the multidisciplinary Writing Task Force. Membership in this task force included faculty from departments of Mathematics, Theater, Psychology, English, Biology, History, Physical Education, and Communications, among others. That group met regularly and eventually created venues to reach out to other faculty to share debate, beliefs, and resources about writing. They

hosted a website, published a newsletter, and orchestrated workshops and other public events about writing and writing pedagogy. Since 2000, Task Force members had also written four editions of an institution-specific guide to writing, and always with a substantial section devoted to writing in the disciplines.

In 2003, a year before my study began, three Writing Task Force members – Miriam, who directed the writing center; Karen, who directed first year composition; and Ben, the chair of the English Department – argued for funding so they could offer faculty a more extensive introduction to the theory and practice of writing pedagogy than had been possible during previous brief, intermittent workshops. With funding from the college and the sponsorship of the Writing Task Force, this trio initiated the first weeklong summer Writing Institute, in which faculty from a wide range of disciplines participated.

By the time of my initial encounters with the WAC developments at North River, a history of pedagogical WAC activities and community-building around WAC ideas at the college was thus well established. Over the four years of my study, this loose community was involved in rethinking writing at the college at the same time that North River was undergoing a period of extensive changes exemplified by the reforms to general education. Although there was some membership overlap between the two groups, tensions emerged between the Integrative Education Program Committee and members of the Writing Task Force over design and principles for the reforms. The uneasy collaboration between these groups did have tangible curricular results, however.

Although, as the director of first year composition pointed out, WAC activity was late to start at North River compared to the national WAC movement, grassroots leadership in writing, once established, proved deep and durable. Over the course of my

study, enduring WAC elements of stable core leadership, a writing center, the Writing

Task Force, and the faculty development institutes continued while additional WAC

elements emerged. Conditions and priorities at the college changed as well over the four

years. My research examines most closely the intersections where developments in

writing culture and curriculum were interlaced with other institutional changes arising

from different exigencies.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

To form the theoretical framework of this study, I draw on Jenny Edbauer's

concept of rhetorical ecology, Norman Fairclough's approach to critical discourse

analysis, and ideological dialectics that have been revealed in historical studies of higher

education. Edbauer's rhetorical ecology allows me to analyze program developers'

rhetorical networks and the ways their attempts to articulate WAC purposes in a changing

educational climate interact with other constituents' interests and purposes. Examining

these articulations and networks in terms of historic ideological dialectics contributes to

understanding the relationship between WAC program development rhetorics and potent

institutional and cultural discourses. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis methods are

appropriate for examining the key ideologies and the networked rhetorical pathways

along which these migrate and interact with others, and for uncovering discursive

practices by which institutional structures may be changed.

Rhetorical Ecology and Critical Discourse Analysis

Pointing to the limitations of notions of rhetorical situations as discretely bordered

spaces, Edbauer argues instead that "rhetorical situations operate within a network of

lived practical consciousness or structures of feeling" (5). Her alternative term, rhetorical

<div align="center">12</div>

ecology, denotes a distributed network of rhetorical activity rather than a fixed singular scene or situation (12-13). The concept of ecology that Edbauer introduces suggests richly interconnected processes, nonlinear interdependent networks, and the complex relationship between the microscopic and the macroscopic. This is useful, especially in that the model emphasizes movement and interaction, replacing more static representations of rhetorical elements (i.e rhetor, audience, text) with a theory that accounts for the fluidity of language and the dynamic processes of rhetorical encounter and exchange. Edbauer illustrates her meaning by examining the circulation of "Keep Austin Weird" rhetoric, a directive initially generated by an independent bookstore owner in Austin, Texas, in protest of franchise commercial development. Edbauer documents how this statement went "viral" (19). That is, it circulated locally, was used by different groups in different settings to invoke alternative meanings, and also was transformed, (e.g., "Make Austin Normal") in response to different exigences, conveying different ideologies. Her point is that all of these utterances of "Keep Austin Weird" and its adaptations intermingle—"concatenate"—with one another. Rhetors have limited control over the ways audiences make new use of expressions, yet rhetorics that concatenate, even when these are changed or come into conflict during circulation, demonstrate a certain discursive and ideological potency.

In my own study of North River State, WAC rhetorics such as the idea of "writing to learn" circulate, and in the process are resisted, adopted, adapted, and reworded for different purposes by different groups. Richly contested when it first surfaced prominently at North River, "writing to learn" has become a persisting touchstone concept that has partially subverted (although not supplanted) a previously dominant construction of writing as a competency. By mapping the matrix of the college's

rhetorical ecology around WAC – its exigences, pathways, groups, histories, key events, and shifting relationships – I make visible the networks of interaction that contribute to such changing cultural values and their manifestation in curricular reforms that pertain to writing.

Although my study is, like Edbauer's, locally situated, the ideologies in play at North River are common to both contemporary and historical educational discourse. Edbauer's terms are particularly useful for understanding the complex interactions *within* a relatively local discursive economy, but it is possible to take the ecology metaphor further to illuminate this broader scope of significance.

To do so, I complement the model of rhetorical ecology with Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of the relationships between discourse as text, discursive practice, and social practice (*Discourse and Social Change* 73). In Fairclough's framework, discursive details visible at the textual level are imprinted with the ideological investments that structure social practices such as curricular reforms. Fairclough points specifically to textual evidence of commodification language as it surfaces in contemporary educational discourse. For instance, he notes that when terminology such as "client" or "customer" replaces the word "student," the connotations position all constituents of educational institutions within marketplace ideologies. Fairclough explains:

> Such wordings effect a metaphorical transfer of the vocabulary of commodities
> and markets into the educational order of discourse. … [T]he metaphor is more
> than just a rhetorical flourish: it is a discursive dimension of an attempt to
> restructure the practices of education on a market model, which may have …
> tangible effects on the design and teaching of courses. (209)

14

Furthermore, Fairclough writes that when meanings of key terms seem to be highly contested in the textual record, this instability of meaning can reflect intensive ideological conflict on the order of both discursive and social practice (186). Applying Fairclough's model to WAC discourse at North River State allows me to show the contested ideological process of WAC program development utilizing all three levels of discourse. Changes in what is said and written reflect (and instigate) changes in beliefs and values which can become visible in practices and programs at the institutional level. WAC advocates at North River State engage in a complex rhetorical process of, over time, attempting to alter the dominant local connotations of "writing" and "teaching writing" in order to bring about both cultural changes affecting how writing is understood and curricular changes affecting how and by whom writing is taught. Fairclough's model is designed well for use in such situations of ideological contestation.

Fairclough's central Foucauldian point is that discourse has the power to shape the social and material world – and vice versa – (88-9) and the analytical method he offers is intended to show just how that shaping happens (37-8). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides a useful theoretical bridge between fine-grained ethnographic description of a complex local discursive network and the broad scope of historically and socially significant ideologies that flow through the rhetorical ecology of North River State College. Furthermore, CDA is enhanced by ethnographic approaches. Ethnography adds the perspective of participants, something not evident in the textual analyses of either Edbauer or Fairclough. Insiders' perspectives on language use within rhetorical ecologies – including their insights about intentions and exigencies – aid in understanding texts and their effects within intricately networked contexts.

The rhetorical ecology model helps address the first part of my project: to notice

how, in a local network, language and ideas move or "bleed" (9) as Edbauer puts it,

traveling and changing in unpredictable ways. With this framework, I track recombinant

viral cross-pollinations of ideas, and listen for the concatenation of texts and ideas

throughout the locally situated network. Yet despite the many dimensions that the

rhetorical ecology model illuminates, Fairclough's CDA remains necessary in order to

open the concept of ecology more fully so it includes the crucial ideological dimension

that broadens the critical reach of this study. Using both models to analyze findings from

ethnographic data, I explore not only the networked discursive events within North River

State but also ideologies that move fluidly across temporal and institutional boundaries.

Ideological Dialectics of Higher Education

When academics rationalize programs and argue about the purposes of education,

warrants for those arguments often derive from educational values that have been in

circulation for centuries. A WAC facilitator arguing for pedagogical changes might

appeal to the ideal of innovation, for instance, an ideology pervasive in contemporary

consumer culture but also rooted in the diversification of institutions and disciplines that

has been a dominant characteristic of U.S. higher education since the early 19th century.

James Berlin's study of changes to college writing instruction during the 1800s and

Russell's influential curricular history of writing in the disciplines show that examination

of historical ideological trends and conflicts can help make sense of contemporary

curricular and pedagogical changes. But because I draw on ideological dialectics that are

evident in the broader field of higher education, my study also depends on the work of

historians of higher education. I borrow from historians such as Laurence Veysey and

John Thelin – as well as Russell – the practice of noting dialectic pairs among higher education's ideologies. These scholars identify historically significant pairs that continue to surface as powerful contemporary ideologies in higher education, influencing policy and program decisions.

From among the many systems of value that undergird the material expression of higher education in the United States, I have selected four ideological pairs for their applicability to the rhetorical ecology of North River State College during the time of my study, and specifically those that have relevance to the curricular and cultural changes at the site. From historical studies, these are utility/liberal culture, tradition/innovation, and unity/differentiation. The contemporary assessment climate further reflects a potent dialectic between values of accountability and autonomy that also has implications for WAC program developers (see Walvoord "The Future"; Condon; Rutz and Lauer-Glebov). Each of these dialectic pairs represents competing and complementary values that inform higher education's manifestation on both national and local levels.

Utility/Liberal Culture

This ideological pair marks both long-standing conflicts between and attempts to marry the values of pragmatic education and cultural education. The frame of utility privileges questions such as, "Is the education of practical value? Will it be useful to the student and society?" The frame of liberal culture, on the other hand, motivates such questions as: "Will the education produce persons of taste and reason; will it develop in them the intellectual habits of mind that correspond to contemporary cultural expectations?" According to Veysey, a longstanding strand of argument in favor of pragmatic education traces from Ben Franklin and others from colonial times, particularly

those outside of academia (59). Veysey further associates utility with the ideal of service (68). The concept is used as well to frame industrialists' and politicians' support for applied rather than pure research during university growth in the industrial revolution (76-77). Russell associates the ideal of utility with a long-dominant "culture of professionalism" (vii) within U.S. higher education.

Although the concept of utility has different associations, education for liberal culture has considerably more variant meanings (see Bruce Kimball's *Orators and Philosophers* for a thorough history of the complex meanings attributed to liberal arts, liberal education, and liberal culture). Kimball calls advocates of education for liberal culture "New Humanists." These are scholars who followed the dominant ideology of education at and around the turn of the century that emphasized education for gentlemanly culture – a notion in competition with the nascent movement toward specialized sciences (173). Veysey similarly defines liberal culture as an educational ideal that stands in contrast to other purposes, utility and research, that gained dominance in U.S. higher education after the Civil War. Like Kimball, he associates the term with a tradition of gentlemanly scholarship adapted from Oxford and Cambridge models (180-81).

W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington's stances represent the ideological poles of the utility/liberal culture pair, with Washington arguing in his 1895 Atlanta Exposition address for a strictly utilitarian education for black citizens. He urged their preparation in "agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions" (128). James D. Anderson, however, reports that while industrial philanthropists tended to gravitate to Washington's vocational model, northern white missionary societies and black religious organizations tended instead to underwrite

18

"classical liberal education for black Americans as a means to achieve racial equality in civil and political life" (433). Dubois denounced Washington's form of pragmatism as "a gospel of Work and Money" ("Of Mr. Booker T. Washington" par.15), arguing and adapting the New Humanist line instead: "Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people" ("The Talented Tenth" 561). Although Dubois's stance contrasts mightily with Washington's, it is significant that he nevertheless simultaneously employs the rhetorics of utility while arguing for liberal rather than industrial education.[2]

Dubois's rhetorical marriage of utility to liberal culture has lengthy precedent. John Henry Newman rationalized liberal education as useful education half a century earlier in his "Idea of a University." Historians such as John Thelin and Goodchild and Wechsler further indicate the overlaps between utility and liberal culture by emphasizing that, especially after the American Revolution, institutions with traditional liberal arts curriculums were largely intent on producing clerics and other professional men – an ultimately vocational end achieved through classical means.

At North River State, this dialectic's relevance is evident in the changing institutional identity and the discourse about writing in which both utilitarian and liberal cultural ideologies surface.

---

[2] The essay, "The Talented Tenth," is of ideological and rhetorical interest because in it Dubois draws productively not only on the tensions between values of utility and liberal culture but also on most of the multiple ideological strands highlighted here. For instance, he adapts traditional ideas about education as an aristocratic enterprise (and in so doing, deploys rhetorics of excellence and liberal culture) for the innovative, equitable purpose of "uplifting" (561) both the character and material conditions of his race. He argues for liberal education, but only for a differentiated population – those among the "talented tenth" of the race deemed most suited for cultural leadership.

Tradition/Innovation

In *The Emergence of the American University*, Veysey poses a dialectic between tradition and experimentation. His later article title suggests stability and experiment as an alternative. Thelin characterizes the dialectic as between tradition and hybridity. I adapt instead Christopher Jencks and David Reisman's usage of tradition and innovation. Using the term innovation allows for incorporation of the insights of critical theorists such as Min-Zhan Lu who has illuminated education's relationship with new capitalist ideologies in which innovation and the idea of the new figure prominently.

Martin Trow discusses market innovation as one of the hallmarks of U.S. higher education and associates it with both diversification of institutional type and rapid growth overall in the number of institutions. He notes that the founding, and failing, of colleges happens at an unusually high rate in the U.S., much like the pace of small business development and failure, because U.S. higher education is based on a market economy model rather than a product of centralized government planning. (See also Ohmann.)

The tradition/innovation dialectic is evident from the earliest U.S. institutions. Thelin explains that Anglophilia influenced the kinds of institutions and curriculums that colonial founders intended, but the complex, hybrid enactment of colleges in the context of the colonies meant they did not really match the Oxford and Cambridge models. It becomes difficult to separate the idea of innovation from its close kin, differentiation, because the rapid development of varied institutions seems to depend in part on an influential player's or group's intent to innovate, resulting in marked differences among U.S. institutions of higher education. Examples from the mid-1800s include Oberlin's innovation of race and gender-inclusive admissions, Harvard's initiation of a controversial elective system, and Ezra Cornell's comprehensive intent to create "an

institution where any one could study anything" (qtd. in Thelin 301) demonstrate a range of innovations that contributed to the U.S.'s significant diversity of institutional types.

Thelin explains that attention to tradition, in contrast, developed surprisingly late in U.S. higher education. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the surviving colonial colleges began to make much of their pasts. But since awakening to the rhetorical usefulness of heritage, many older institutions have capitalized on the idea of tradition to support their appeals for funding and enrollment. Such a commodification of the historical thus seems paradoxically of a piece with the same marketplace dynamics that make innovation such a prevalent value. Conflating the two terms produces the trope, "a tradition of innovation," frequently deployed by both businesses and institutions of higher education.

This malleable dialectic pair with its binary yet overlapping traits is illustrative of the complex relationships possible among ideological categories. Innovation's association with differentiation is similar to tradition's associations with concepts of liberal culture and unity. These recombinant associations indicate that the dialectical pairings I have chosen are only starting points for ideological investigation. The idea of networked affiliations and fluid relationships highlighted by the rhetorical ecology model suggest a kind of mobile multilectic among historic ideologies.

Accountability/Autonomy

Although less evident in historical accounts of higher education than the other dialectics I point to, accountability/autonomy currently commands much consideration in higher education and has certainly gained the attention of WAC scholars. The Association of American Colleges and Universities casts this dialectic in terms of

21

academic freedom and responsibility in a 2006 statement, and higher education

management researcher Steve Michael places accountability, academic freedom, and

autonomy all into play. His summation of the dialectic characterizes a basic relationship

between the terms: "If academic autonomy is a privilege that the state is morally obliged

to its higher education system in order to realize excellence, academic accountability is

the response that institutional leaders are morally bound to offer to their society" (134).

Like innovation, the concept of accountability as it has emerged in higher

education has roots in the wider culture, specifically manufacturing culture, in which

systems of financial accounting and quality assurance for products and services have

been framed in terms of accountability for decades. As the prevalence of educational

management discourse suggests, application of management principles has transferred

from manufacturing and other corporate environments to K-12 education and is now also

firmly part of the higher education landscape. Interestingly, Barbara Walvoord sets up an

alternative dialectic between access and accountability to mark this change in prevailing

principles in higher education over time (69). At North River State College, this

contemporary dialectic is evident explicitly in responses to accreditation pressures, the

accreditation standards themselves, and within discourse about implementation of

curricular changes and assessment. It is close to ubiquitous, even when decoupled from

these contexts. The interactions of this dialectic with WAC rhetorics and practices is one

of the key areas of analysis in this study.

Unity/Differentiation

Both ideologies, unity and differentiation, map easily onto North River's

curricula, but this pair also pertains broadly to changing national trends in higher

education. A general movement away from an ideal of unity and toward differentiation –

especially manifested in the development of specialized fields – parallels Trow's tracing

of the elite to mass shift in U.S. higher education. Neither trend necessarily represents an

uncontested ideological progression; the ideal of unity continues to motivate many

educational models. Yet we can still trace overall changes in ideological dominance from

colonial times to the present.

At colonial colleges, students and faculty consisted of relatively homogenous

class, gender, and racial demographics (Thelin 30). Furthermore, the denominational

roots of each of these early colleges combined with a common curricular pattern of

classical general education, contributing to the prevalence of unity as a prominent value

in the first century of U.S. higher education (Kimball 195). However, Trow points out a

process of differentiation began early through the founding of multiple new colleges and

continued with the dominant trend toward diversification of both institutions and fields of

study (16).

The unity/differentiation dialectic has been recognized in WAC scholarship.

Russell's book, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*, is organized

around this dialectic; Russell frames it as specialization/community. The dialectic

relationship between ideologies of unity and differentiation also resonates particularly

well with ideological tensions currently represented in differences between writing across

the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID), or the general and the

professional approaches to writing instruction, as Russell identifies these (311). A subset

of WAC can be constructed as a project of potentially unifying acts such as faculty

development initiatives that work across disciplines to foster pedagogies that use writing

as a learning strategy, whereas the WID subset represents the more discipline-specific

pedagogies in which practitioners guide students to learn to think and write as specialists in different fields.

 As with the other ideological sets, however, it is inaccurate to view either unity/differentiation or WAC/WID as strictly binary pairs because they are frequently at work simultaneously. At North River State for instance, hybrid wordings such as "writing-across-the-disciplines" suggest an attempt to deploy the unifying implications of the term "across" while acknowledging the differentiation of disciplines.[3]

Ideological Dialectics of WAC: Writing to Learn/Writing in the Disciplines

 The ideological dialectic of writing to learn/writing in the disciplines has its basis in the theoretical foundations for the WAC movement. Learning theories provide the conceptual frameworks for writing to learn, while rhetorical theory and theories of academic discourse shape the concept of writing in the disciplines. A brief overview of WAC history situates this dialectic in both its theoretical and social contexts.

 Historians such as Berlin and Russell make the case that WAC precursor ideas were in circulation long before WAC became a movement; however, a confluence of social conditions was necessary for the key WAC concept of writing to learn to gain traction in US higher education. James Britton and his colleagues in the UK are widely credited with introducing their US counterparts to ideas about the relationships between language and student development during a 1966 Dartmouth Seminar. The language and learning approach advocated by Britton, Nancy Martin and others was manifested in the language across the curriculum movement for primary and secondary education in the

---

[3] See Thaiss, "Theory in WAC" (311-13) for additional discussion of what the word "across" evokes in WAC.

UK, but was pared down to focus on writing and learning when translated to US contexts. Initial US WAC developments furthermore concentrated in higher education rather than K-12. WAC in the US also owes its writing emphasis to Emig's work in 1977 in which she made the argument that writing is a unique mode of learning. Relevant to the WAC movement as well were broader social contexts; in the 1970s, changing enrollment demographics and pressure exerted on higher education from press reportage about declining literacy skills of college graduates combined to create conditions ripe for educational reforms.

Reflecting on the differences between UK and US implementation of language and learning theory, Martin remarks, "WAC in America looks to be a response to the expansion of higher education and the corresponding demands for *adequate standards of written language*" (qtd in Herrington and Moran 4, Martin's emphasis). Social anxiety about literacy, although conceived in reductive ways, heightened accountability pressures on US higher education and resulted in some commensurate willingness to experiment with different approaches to writing education. The irony is that a hyperbolic sense of public crisis around writing standards provided an exigence for developing programs founded on relatively complex theories of language.

Studies of writing process and learning published in the late 1970s and early 1980s built on earlier language and learning theory, contributing to WAC's conception of writing to learn by demonstrating that writing is a staged process which is more usefully conceived of as a cluster of actions rather than as a product (Flower and Hayes), that this process is recursive rather than linear (Sommers) and that properly designed writing assignments can scaffold or accelerate student learning (Sommers, Lunsford).

This collective focus on the thinking, composing, and learning processes of writers that abbreviates to the WAC ideology of writing to learn is complemented by rhetorical theory and theories of academic discourse that incorporate the differentiated social and institutional contexts of writing, including considerations of audience and disciplinarity. Studies that inform the writing in the disciplines part of WAC's ideological dialectic demonstrate writing's role in shaping a field's specialized knowledge (for instance, Bazerman in *Shaping Written Knowledge*) and identify differences in language practices of different discourse communities. Research on writing in diverse academic fields such as Bazerman on scientific articles (*Shaping Written Knowledge*), Herrington on chemical engineering classes ("Writing in Academic Settings"), and Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman on graduate writing in an English rhetoric program has contributed to the development of writing in the disciplines within WAC by offering nuanced theories of particular academic discourses and activities, as well as, on the pedagogical level, practical understandings of the multiple academic situations, genres, and the accompanying different ways of thinking and writing that students may encounter as they write across the curriculum (see Maimon et al, *Writing in the Arts and Sciences*, and Bazerman, *The Informed Writer* for the pedagogical implications of developments in WID theory).

While many WAC scholars see the component frameworks in this writing to learn/writing in the disciplines dialectic as complementary rather than competing (for instance, Herrington and Moran, and McLeod and Soven), Russell points out that conceptual distinctions between WAC's long established principle of writing to learn and the more recent developments of writing in the disciplines have at times been mapped as sharply contrastive (310-13), and markedly so when the general idea of learning to write,

including notions of a standard transferrable skill set, become associated with WAC. The rhetoric of learning to write as it circulates in both popular and assessment discourse is not typically in alignment with WAC's writing to learn and writing in the disciplines principles. When writing is configured as an assessable product, skill, or competency, the concept of learning to write loses its emphasis on learning, aligning more closely with an ideology of accountability instead, and is subject to commodified concepts of mastery and attainment.

Understood through the lenses of WAC learning theory, learning to write is situational and highly complex, and thus writing cannot be adequately represented as a general skill or skill set that is mastered once and for all. However, the idea of writing as a skill is persistent in part because discourse around skills is congruent with an ideology of accountability that is deeply embedded in higher education. Ironically, the ideology of accountability often provides the exigency for developing WAC programs despite running counter to principles such as writing to learn, at least in reductive rhetorical manifestations of accountability (i.e. discourses of "competency" or "mastery").

WAC Dialectics in Interaction

At North River State, Britton's emphasis on the value of exploratory writing for learning as it was later adapted by Peter Elbow and Sommers's body of work on writing processes and student development were touchstone theoretical pieces that local WAC advocates used, often in conjunction with complementary frameworks from developmental psychology. Although some of the WAC developments at North River were responsive to differences in disciplinary values, the central theoretical commitments of those who became WAC leaders at the college meant that variations on rhetorics of

writing to learn were more prevalent at this site than writing in the disciplines, and it was

the interactions between this ideology and others that most directly shaped programmatic

and curricular changes during the course of my study.

In my analysis of WAC rhetorics in circulation within the rhetorical ecology of

North River State College, I focus most intensively on the viral activity of the rhetoric of

writing to learn, especially as it interacted with rhetorics associated with the ideology of

accountability. But I also examine how the central dialectic of writing to learn/writing in

the disciplines interacted with other ideologies of higher education that were evident in

everyday discourse at this site, coalescing in some circumstances as nuanced ideological

multilectics made manifest in curriculum and institutional culture.

<div align="center">Project Overview and Dissertation Outline</div>

The purpose of my study was to learn how curricular and cultural changes around

writing take shape and what ideologies and rhetorical practices come into play during that

complex change process. In chapter 2, I explain the ethnographic methodology and

outline the specific methods I used to select a site, gather texts, record interviews, and

conduct participant-observations over time in a repeating cycle of data collection,

analysis, and refinement of inquiry. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 describe and analyze the key

periods, events, and players active in the development of cultural and curricular changes

around writing at North River State. Chapter 3 uses archival texts and reflective

interviews to focus on conditions and exigencies leading to the initial period of WAC

development at North River State when the ideological dialectic of writing to

learn/writing in the disciplines came into active circulation within the rhetorical ecology

of the college. Circulation involved discursive struggle between historically dominant

notions of writing as a competency and a viral principle introduced in the early 1990s of

<div align="center">28</div>

writing as a tool for learning. The chapter furthermore explores evidence in the historical

data of interaction between WAC ideologies and other higher education dialectics such as

utility/liberal culture, unity/differentiation, and accountability/autonomy, tracing how

these interactions altered the local permutations of WAC practices and rhetoric.

Chapter 4 describes a decade of crucial WAC developments: the transformation of the

writing center, its interrelationship with the Writing Task Force, and the first years of the

Writing Institute for faculty. With exemplar events involving these WAC features, I

explore the interactions between WAC ideologies and the two dominant ideological

dialectics during this period: accountability/autonomy and unity/differentiation. These

same dialectics and a polyphony of agendas come into play during concurrent sweeping

changes to the general education curriculum. I focus on this phenomenon in chapter 5,

examining most closely discursive interactions and ideological struggle involved in

general education reforms, especially those including cultural and curricular changes

around writing as exemplified in changes to both the structure and the premise of the first

year writing program.

In the conclusion, I discuss theoretical and practical implications of the

ideological and rhetorical practices evident at the study site, including extensions of the

rhetorical ecology model and implications for understanding and consciously using

ideological multilectics in the development of other WAC programs. WAC scholar

Barbara Walvoord suggests that contemporary WAC needs to forge alliances with other

cross-curricular initiatives in order to continue as a viable educational movement. My

analysis of how WAC advocates at North River State College positioned their efforts in

relation to other unfolding curricular changes at the college—including the major

overhaul of the general education curriculum—reveals both benefits and potential costs resulting from such alliances due to ideological differences.

The findings show that although alliances with overlapping agendas can result in significant, tangible reforms, working with groups that have substantially different values and beliefs underwriting their agendas does risk positioning WAC in accommodation or subordination to others' ideological priorities. Walvoord's advice to WAC practitioners, ally or die, may be valid, but this study suggests that the risks of ideological de-centering are high when forming alliances with disparate other groups. Periodic recentering on WAC's core theoretical commitments and deliberately forming recombinant ideological multilectics can be strategic practices in such situations so that WAC is not subsumed by its own partnerships.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES FOR STUDYING CURRICULAR AND CULTURAL CHANGE

To study institutional change around writing, I adopted an ethnographic case study methodology that incorporated archival research. All of the aspects of the research design were chosen for their necessity in investigating my research questions, even as these questions evolved in light of recursive analysis and data collection.

The study needed to be longitudinal because the programmatic changes I sought to understand unfolded over time. Abstract cultural changes such as evolution of the ideas and values that undergirded the more structural curricular and programmatic changes also needed to be mapped over time. What was most difficult about using a longitudinal approach was determining when to stop gathering data, since the program developments I had initially sought to uncover did not necessarily arise as I had expected. Closure on the data gathering was a somewhat arbitrary decision because the writing culture and accompanying curricular structures continued to evolve.

Although at the end of my research, no named WAC program as such existed at North River, over the four years of my observations, I did document a tangible shift in emphasis from faculty development activities to increasingly curricular manifestations of WAC ideologies. Furthermore, the ways writing was taught, discussed, and structured into the curriculum at North River were demonstrably different in 2008 than when I began the study. These ongoing changes were the complex product of discursive interaction that placed WAC ideologies into multilectic conversation and competition with many other powerful ideologies in circulation in higher education. I needed time to

learn about these many layers of interaction that played into the changes around writing at North River.

Ethnography seemed appropriate for my project because its methodological roots in anthropology were designed for understanding culture, and it was evident from my exploratory findings at North River State that the changes around writing across the curriculum there were cultural as well as programmatic. The ethnographic research practices (participant-observation, gathering of meaningful artifacts, speaking with participants) used to uncover cultural practices and their meanings, and in this case, cultural changes, seemed suitable for my research questions. But they also appealed to me because the practices align with my sense of ethical research. For instance, participants' interpretations are included in the research design, the methodology allows for complex researcher subjectivities, and ethnographers tend to generate findings inductively, through a recursive cycle of data collection and analysis. These elements were all central to making sense of my case study of writing across the curriculum developments at one institution, and hopefully the kind of sense that participants would find credible.

Finally, interactions with participants and observations of discursive events over the four years that I was present at the study site yielded unanticipated lines of inquiry that called for archival research to augment the more typical ethnographic methods I used.

My research questions branched and deepened as I tried to understand, initially, how a WAC program developed. I later revised this purpose, seeking to understand the rhetorical matrices and the interactions of ideologies that were instrumental toward changing the positioning of writing in the curriculum and the culture of one small

college. My overarching questions became: What beliefs and values do WAC leaders

invoke as they interact with other institutional constituents in their attempt to develop a

program or culture of writing? How do these rhetorical encounters around WAC reflect

and embody historically significant ideological dialectics in higher education? How do

WAC advocates adapt, reproduce, resist, and engage with these ideologies in the

discursive ecology of a small public college?

<div align="center">Site Selection: Luck and Relevance</div>

As indicated in chapter 1, the site I chose for my research, North River State, is a

small, public, liberal arts college with strong professional studies programs. I knew from

living in the area for many years prior to my study that North River was closely identified

locally with its history as a teacher preparatory institution. It seemed a valuable site for

scholarship on writing across the curriculum because in 2004 when I began exploratory

work, WAC developments there were under construction rather than fully established.

The primary method for site selection I used was not a deliberate process of

choosing from many potential institutions, but rather the product of fortunate

circumstance and informal networks. On learning of my emerging interest in WAC, a

former professor of mine suggested I might be interested in observing a summer faculty

development institute on writing that she would be co-facilitating at North River. When I

took her up on that invitation, I did not foresee developing a longitudinal project from it,

but my initial observations revealed the site's value for a more extensive study of

program development. It appeared that the voluntary pedagogical activities around

writing across the curriculum had the potential to become an institutional program at

North River, and I wanted to understand how that process would unfold and what WAC advocacy at that site might entail.

WAC-like practices and curricular influences at North River State took shape in a context of other significant institutional changes. Curricular and administration changes during this longitudinal study were striking in their number and scope. Major curricular reforms included an "Integrative Education" curriculum (approved by the Faculty Senate in 2006) replacing the decades-old general education offerings, a transition from a three-credit to a four-credit model (with all disciplines completing the transition by fall of 2007), a new honors program initiated in the fall of 2007, and a radically overhauled thematic first year writing course (piloted in AY 2006/07, fully instituted in the fall of 2007). High-profile leadership changes over the duration of the study included the hiring of a new college president (2005), creation of a provost position (2006), and replacement of two out of three divisional deans (2004 and 2008).

WAC leadership during this time had been relatively stable, however. Organic WAC leadership had existed since the early 1990s due to faculty interest – much of it aroused and consolidated by one invested individual, the writing center director. And although at the start of my study the college did not mandate designated WAC or writing intensive courses, it did support typical features of WAC such as the writing center and faculty development institutes.

The curricular changes that I observed incorporated WAC values and were grounded in many years of both grassroots WAC activity and the writing center that works with students and faculty across the disciplines (under current leadership since 1992). WAC allies have initiated faculty discussion about writing and teaching since at least 1994 or earlier when the writing center director formed a multidisciplinary Writing

Task Force. Membership has included faculty from departments of Mathematics,

Theater, Psychology, English, Biology, History, Physical Education, and

Communications, among others. That group published a newsletter sporadically from

1999 through the close of my project and organized workshops and other public events

about writing and the teaching of writing. Since 2000, Task Force members have written

four editions of an institution-specific text, with titles varying from *The [North River]*

State College Guide to Writing to *The Guide to Writing*, always with a substantial section

devoted to writing in the disciplines. Since 2003, three workshop facilitators – 1)

Miriam, the writing center director, 2) Karen, the director of first year composition, and

3) Ben, the chair of the English department – have led extended faculty development

institutes on writing pedagogy for faculty from a wide range of disciplines.

The relatively small size of the college means that WAC leaders interact with a

significant proportion of the staff, students, administrators, and other faculty and thus

circulation of language and ideas there is more possible to observe than it might be at a

larger institution. North River State's rhetorical ecology provides a reasonable scope for

this study.

<div align="center">Researcher Role: Changes, Complications, Implications</div>

The quality and quantity of data I have been privy to has increased over the years

due to my changing position on the continuum of insider/outsider at North River State.

Initially, my status as a former student of the college[4] helped me gain access. But

because I was observing a WAC faculty development institute (an aspect of the college

that had been invisible to me when I was a student there) and because the power distance

---

[4] North River was one of three undergraduate institutions I attended.

I perceived between myself in just my second year of graduate school and the cooperating tenured or tenure-track faculty participants, I identified as a relative outsider during the exploratory research and felt deferential toward those who had been my teachers. I did bank on previous teacher-student relationships, however, when setting up some of my interviews, so the degree of comfort with the institution and selected faculty that I had gained while a student there was helpful.

In 2006, however, my role as researcher became both enriched and complicated by accepting a temporary part-time position as writing center assistant director at North River State. As an employee, I became a familiar presence in a number of settings at the college, more so than if I had retained just the roles of former student and researcher. My access to people, events, and texts was streamlined through that familiarity. Going native, however, meant that it became difficult – and potentially unethical – for me to privilege the researcher role in settings where I was expected to function as the writing center's assistant director rather than an outside observer. Participation thus outstripped observation on many occasions from 2006 through the end of data collection in 2008, especially when I was enacting my day to day duties involving the peer tutoring staff. Although at one point in my study I received approval for including tutor perspectives in my study from Institutional Review Boards of both the University of Massachusetts and my research site, I found that I was ultimately reluctant to do so. I needed to create some degree of role distinction for myself so that I could be fully present as a workplace participant rather than a researcher participant-observer especially during my working relationships with the undergraduate staff. So although I know that undergraduate tutors could have augmented my study with their perspectives, I have opted to leave these at the

sidelines of this work in order to preserve the primacy of my role as their assistant director.

On the other hand, I did not apply the same sharp distinction of roles when interacting with some faculty, particularly those who were most consistently familiar with my research agenda. Instead, when I noticed strands of interest to my research arising in interactions such as work-related email correspondence with a faculty member, I would request permission to incorporate such evidence in my research data. The most role overlap I experienced was in my working relationship with Miriam, the center's director and a key player in the WAC changes at the college. The distinctions between our relationships as researcher-subject, mentee-mentor, employee-supervisor were extremely fluid in ways that would not have felt appropriate had I extended this fluidity to the tutors. However, Miriam frequently demonstrated that she was cognizant of our multiple roles and aware of my research, and because I did not perceive harm in the flexibility of our positions, I was comfortable embracing the phenomenon and utilizing information and impressions that were woven informally into our conversations.

Although I interacted with many other people on campus, my close working relationship with Miriam meant that much of my understanding of the WAC evolutions first came through her. That was both a strength because of the consistency of my access and a limitation of perspective because my own ideological affinity for WAC's core commitments such as writing to learn meant that Miriam's perspective often seemed natural to me. I attempted to balance my personal comfort with Miriam's point of view by seeking out many other sources as well.

My employment at North River further altered my degree of access because I was part of the comprehensive email list of the college's faculty and staff and Miriam invited

me to join the Writing Task Force. Joining the staff made me aware of a wealth of announcements and discussions that were part of the rhetorical ecology of the college. I made a habit of saving emails that seemed relevant to my research interests. Because I had not anticipated this means of acquiring data when I first proposed my study, I developed a protocol (as suggested by the director of the University of Massachusetts Institutional Review Board) for requesting permission from senders after saving pertinent email texts[5]. Becoming a member of the Writing Task Force was a privileged immersion in a group that was central to the ongoing changes I studied, and I took research notes during many of the meetings I attended. During most of my membership with this group, I believe that I erred on the side of taking the observer role, and only gave myself wholeheartedly to participating as a contributor after I had closed my data collection. This reserve was in part because I was the only non-faculty member in the group, but primarily I felt cautious about altering the research site through asserting too much of a presence. I probably need not have been so cautious. Beverly Moss writes of ethnographers' roles, "The goal in negotiating a role is to interfere as little as possible with the daily routines in the community" (158), and while my quietude certainly accomplished little interference, it also, in retrospect, may not have been necessary or appropriate. Taking a more active role on this task force would not have altered its routine. I wish that I had offered more to this group that so generously permitted me to take part in and document conversations that had so much relevance to my research agenda.

---

[5] See also the Participant Observation section for a description of this protocol.

All in all, although "being there" to the degree that I was sometimes involved some researcher-coworker role conflict for me, it also contributed to the quality and breadth of data I gathered, deepened the degree of trust and familiarity I developed with participants, and ultimately shaped my analysis so that this is undoubtedly a different – and I believe more grounded –   study than it would have been had I not been employed on site.

<center>Data Collection: One Source Leads to Another</center>

The data gathered from research at the college is comprised of participant-observations, semi-structured interviews, and textual artifacts gathered from multiple different sources and at different points over time as a means of triangulation (Rossman and Rallis). In an effort to provide anonymity to my participants, their names and that of the institution have been changed. In some cases, I have also altered the titles of participants, programs, and in-house publications.

Data collection and analysis have been interwoven and recursive, with periodic analysis used to inform each new round of data gathering and with inductively-derived themes informing further reading in preparation for deeper data analysis. Such a cyclical, recursive approach is endorsed by Coffey and Atkinson. Furthermore, the ethnographic practice of "being there" as Wendy Bishop and Rossman and Rallis explain, results in an immersion in the community that allows for natural acquisition of texts and awareness of events that are of interest for the study. I found that to be characteristic during my field work. For instance, a remark heard in a Writing Task Force meeting I attended resulted in not only acquiring a sheaf of texts documenting assessment attempts for the new first year writing course, but also in pursuing a theoretical strand that marks the ideology of

<center>39</center>

accountability. Using critical discourse analysis to follow this ideological strand

sensitized me to other instances in which rhetorics of accountability permeated the

discourse about writing. These in turn led me to archival research to see how far back I

could trace such rhetorics across genres in the textual record. So although I present here

a descriptive taxonomy of the three different types of data I drew on, in practice (and in

keeping with a model of rhetorical ecology) these types were often entwined and

overlapping as I simultaneously sought multiple kinds of data in pursuit of a line of

inquiry.

<u>Texts</u>

My data gathering began and ended with texts. In preparation for observing the

2004 faculty development workshop, I conducted a cross-institutional study of web

representations of WAC to compare public textual evidence of WAC at North River State

against similar online texts from better known programs. My final data gathering forays,

as late as 2009, were textual also as I discovered historical material in the college

archives that helped me make sense of locally powerful ideological positions that

remained in intriguing relations to WAC dialectics. During the course of my study,

textual discoveries were constantly interspersed with the data gathered through the more

personal contact of field work and interviews.

I gathered textual artifacts relevant to curricular changes involving writing, such

as assessment reports on the first year writing course pilot and general education reform

planning documents. I also chose texts that historicized current WAC efforts, including a

history of the college, college catalogs dating from 1956 through the present, a self-study

in response to national accreditation standards, and newsletter archives from 1996-2007.

The newsletters, furthermore, provide evidence of emerging and contested values around writing, writing pedagogy, and writing curriculum. Of particular interest were those newsletter issues that documented recurring themes and interactions with readers (including letters to the editor, for instance). Additional texts that showed the trace of interactions between WAC facilitators and others included Writing Task Force emails, and event invitations and meeting notes from the director of first year composition.

The principle of selection I used when gathering texts changed depending on what line of inquiry I was pursuing. Initially, I took a broad sweep approach: I gathered anything I could lay hands on if it had to do with writing or with curricular change even if these documents seemed only tangential to WAC. I sought artifacts that could provide context for understanding the writing culture and institutional identity of North River State. Institutional web pages, mission and values statements for the university system, the college, and the Writing Task Force (including drafts for the latter two), college newspapers, human resources materials, and mass emails from the provost's office presented evidence of prevailing ideologies and ideological dialectics in the rhetorical ecology of the college.

To refine my quest for productive points of analysis, I used critical discourse analysis, identifying key texts (as well as field notes and interviews) that represented ideological poles. Some of the most useful and characteristic texts offered glimpses of hybrid discourse, such as documents from the English Department and the Writing Task Force that included skills and/or competencies language alongside rhetorics of writing to learn.

Thomas Huckin discusses such hybridities: "Writers belong to multiple discourse communities, and the texts they write often reflect their divided loyalties" (88). This

assertion seemed salient for many of the texts I chose, and perhaps more so because many

of these texts (e.g. mission statements, catalog texts) were the results of collaborative

work in which individual writers' multiple discourse communities were compounded by

those of their coauthors. Using critical discourse analysis, however, frames such

situations in structural rather than individual terms; the presence of dissonant rhetorics in

single texts may reflect ideological contestation within larger social structures such as an

institution or even the transnational field of higher education. I gathered texts that

included ideological dissonance or hybridities in order to identify the multiplicity of

ideologies that seemed to be contributing to the ways writing was constructed in the

rhetorical ecology of North River, and to look at how these ideologies interacted in single

texts, intertextually among different texts, and interdiscursively across texts and events,

but with the broader intention of understanding the relationship between discursive

struggle and curricular developments.

Textual sources serve as springboards or touchstones for other rhetorical

encounters and they provide a fossil record of discursive events and ideological

circulation at North River State. As faithful and detailed as such imprints can be, the

texts I gathered nevertheless cannot duplicate the fullness of participant-observation.

Appropriately selected textual evidence does, however, augment my field notes with a

relatively stable means for tracing migration, adaptation, conflict, and evolution of

rhetorics over time and among different participants in the rhetorical ecology of North

River State.

I used analysis of textual artifacts to identify relevant ideological strands and to

trace rhetorical networks within the discursive ecology. I also used texts during some

interviews to check on my assumptions, comparing my readings to the interviewee's

interpretations. Some texts (such as assessment reports on the pilot first year writing course) were explicitly brought to my attention by faculty members who were aware of my research interests.

With the exception of publicly-available documents such as those visible on the college web pages, I sought informed consent from the writers before analyzing relevant texts as research data.

Interviews

In 2005 and 2006, I conducted, recorded, and transcribed twelve semi-structured open-ended interviews with eleven different participants. After rounds of analysis and considerable data collection through multiple other means, I followed up with several more focused but less formal interviews in 2007 and 2008. These later interviews served primarily as member checks and took the form of brief emailed questions and responses as well as in-person conversations during which I took notes but did not tape record the responses.

I interviewed the three facilitators of the Writing Institute (one twice), deans of two of the three divisions of the college[6], three Psychology faculty and two Biology faculty who had participated in these institutes, and an English Education faculty member whose interests cross-pollinated with WAC. Although most of my interviews were with people who had some affinity for or affiliation with WAC, I did make efforts to observe during events that would attract not only WAC advocates and allies but also other

---

[6] The third divisional dean remained unavailable after several attempts to contact him for an interview. I decided not to make a further pest of myself, but did obtain some indication of his viewpoints on writing at the college via a newsletter article that summarized his statements.

persons who were likely to voice alternative points of view about the changes to the college and the place and purpose of writing for students.

In initial interviews with WAC facilitators in 2005, I sought to understand each one's take on the purposes for writing pedagogy and curricula at North River State, their perspective on other North River State faculty and administrators' beliefs about student writing and writing curriculum, and, more broadly, to gain a sense of the institutional culture in which North River's WAC program developments were taking place. Interviews with the divisional deans that same year focused on the institutional environment in order to gain a sense of the climate for writing and WAC on campus. In one of these early interviews, a dean introduced writing competency rhetorics that required archival research as a follow-up to uncover the historical contexts for such rhetorics.

Preliminary analysis of the facilitator interviews yielded some of the language that became important in my investigation of historical ideological dialectics. "Innovation," for instance, surfaced prominently in my interview with Karen, the composition director. Both Ben and Karen brought up ways in which "skill" was a troublesome term to apply to writing, thus alerting me to the need to dig deeper to discover the ideological roots for such a prevalent concept.

One of the most valuable aspects of ethnographic research for a study such as mine is that it is crafted both about and with participants. Although in my design my participants were not literally co-researchers, their perspectives shaped what kinds of data I sought. Following up on leads from interviews comprised one of my core research activities. Some of the most productive strands of my inquiry, such as my archival investigation of the events of 1994, arose because participants pointed to significant

events of the past. I also looked to participants to enrich or refute aspects of my ongoing

analysis. Member checks after some analysis further served to reassure me when I was

on the right track, and redirected me when I may have been misreading a situation or

giving too much emphasis to something that was not actually all that important.

Interviews, emails, and informal conversations with key participants when I had

developed some preliminary findings were particularly useful in this way. In a 2006

interview with one participant, for instance, I asked her to weigh in on the recent

institutional changes I had selected for further study.

> COLLIE: Can I check with you, too, on some assumptions of mine? I know that
> [the college] is going through a lot of changes, just in the years I've been
> observing …. I want to list the ones I'm aware of and you to tell me what other
> changes, important ones, you see going on or did I miss something. Definitely,
> what did I miss? And maybe help me order them in terms of importance. Okay.
> Here's my list. ….
> YVONNE: [refusing the list] Hang on a second. Let me just brainstorm for a
> second and see the things that really come up for me.

Although the change events that Yvonne came up with independently turned out to be

identical to mine, the ways that she ordered them in relation to their importance to

cultural changes around writing were more complex than I had considered at the time.

"The 4-credit shift is most important because it affects everyone. There's no way for any

department or any faculty to get out of thinking about that," she said. So while checking

with Yvonne reassured me that I was selecting events sensibly, her perspective also

helped me differentiate the field so I could go on to gather more data about the changes

she called out.

<u>Participant Observation</u>

Fieldwork in the form of participant observation is a characteristic core method of

ethnographic research. My most methodical approach to conducting relevant participant

observations was identifying a potentially significant event or interaction, requesting permission from the host(s) to attend as a participant-observer, arriving before the designated time in order to take notes on spatial-rhetorical qualities of the setting, and keeping two-column handwritten field notes that separate the quoted and summarized language of the event from my comments. I provided a summary of my research project to at least the host in the case of large semi-public events and all participants in the case of smaller venues such as Writing Task Force meetings. I also explained my project, requested permission, and supplied informed consent forms for those I thought I might wish to quote directly in my research. (See Appendix A.)

In the best circumstances, I followed up this observation protocol by crafting a research memo within 24 hours of the observed situation. In practice, however, I was sometimes guilty of variation on this diligence. My observation notes have often remained in handwritten form without developing immediate memos. And sometimes I did not realize I would want to quote a participant until after the fact. In that case, I contacted the participant again, explained my research, disclosed the specific language that called my attention, and provided an informed consent form, always emphasizing that participation was voluntary and permission could be withdrawn at any point. My observations included Writing Task Force meetings, faculty development institutes, open meetings about general education reforms, and opening day epideictic/informational speeches. In the early phase of my research I attended events to see what language seemed significant and what themes emerged. As my research progressed, I also observed events to identify specific discursive moves that seemed to have ideological significance.

Participant observation of WAC-related events allowed me to identify significant rhetorical interactions between WAC facilitators and other constituents of the college. Preliminary analyses of situations that involved moments of contested values were helpful in identifying categories of ideological dialectics for further analysis. For instance, one morning during the weeklong faculty development institute in 2005, discussion of values was the central activity rather than a tacit undercurrent. Facilitators Miriam, Ben, and Karen asked faculty participants to identify what they personally valued about writing before identifying what they ask for in student writing and to how they go about articulating those values in assignments and response. An unanticipated moment that day in which one of the participants responded to an assigned reading further foregrounded values and beliefs about writing. From field notes of that morning:

> The big event, early, was Del's [Associate VP of Academic Affairs] revelation about assessment. She objected to the negative slant on assessment in the Sommer's article, but said she was imagining differently what really might be measurable. Miriam was subtly catching the eyes of the other facilitators and me [… which I took as her marking the significance of a] shift in this key administrator's [Del's] belief systems.

The three facilitators' debriefing at the end of that day confirmed that they saw movement in Del's beliefs as fragile but potentially significant. Del has historically been a proponent of relatively reductive writing skills outcomes, a stance informed by standards discourse and assessment pressures, and the facilitators were cautiously optimistic about the implications of her suggesting that she was imagining differently what to assess.

In this observed situation, accountability ideology as embodied by the associate vice president of Academic Affairs, (whose position involved her intimately and often in institutional assessment activity), seemed in tension with other ideologies that came into

47

high relief during discussion of the individual values that faculty placed on writing. What many faculty members articulated was less about skills than about engagement and connection, and observing such ideological differences first hand early in my research informed my development of theoretical frameworks for further analysis.

For some observations, I chose campus events that might illuminate values undergirding curricular changes more sweeping than only the gradual WAC developments. For instance, I attended one open forum on proposed general education reforms in the fall of 2005. Toward the end of the forum, the acting vice president of Academic Affairs spoke in support of the proposed changes, describing the necessity of being active in initiating high-profile curricular changes such as those under consideration. He spoke of attending a national conference and seeing how "hotness" – that is, the perception of the new – attracted potential funding sources. In an otherwise buttoned-down speech, his use of the word "hot" to describe external perception of this college's plans sounded more like marketing orthodoxy than an educational appeal. Witnessing these comments helped me establish the contemporary relevance of the historic ideological tension between innovation and tradition in higher education, and alerted me to pay attention to how discussions closer to WAC also invoked these values. There was another significant ideological strand also in play at that general education meeting: clear indication that three different external assessments had provided the impetus for the proposed curricular changes, suggesting the relevance of the ideology of accountability.

My position as a member of the community meant that I developed a felt sense of the institution that augmented my formal participant observation at key events. Informal conversations and emails with participants during my normal daily routine as an

employee of the college inevitably had an impact on the shape of my study. As my

analytical frameworks took shape, I became sensitized to certain kinds of rhetoric and

ideologies, so when these cropped up in conversation, I could not help but take note.

Such moments often functioned as informal triangulation.

Although it was not always possible for me to reconstruct which event or

conversation led me to specific knowledge about the network of pertinent relationships, I

used reflective and analytical research memos for sorting through the information gained

through familiarity. This recurring turn to analysis helped me further hone my inquiry

approach, including guiding the additional texts I gathered, events I attended, and people

I sought to interview.

Data Analysis

As I hope I have shown, analysis and data gathering activities proceeded

continuously during this study, informing each other in an ongoing, organic, and

triangulated fashion. My analysis was guided by Edbauer's concept of rhetorical ecology

and Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis. As explained more fully in the

preceding chapter, I draw on the notion of sites as networked rhetorical ecologies as I

trace how key rhetorics circulate and change within North River's ecology of multiple

and interacting players, discursive events, and other rhetorics. I drew on Fairclough's

conception of three levels of discourse practice – textual, discursive, and social – and as

with my use of Edbauer, traced key phrases and wordings within texts and

interdiscursively across texts and genres and events as these wordings reflected different

ideologies, including dominant dialectics of higher education. I analyzed individual texts

and clusters of data informally and continuously in attempts to make sense of what I was gathering, then revised my questions in light of emerging findings.

To make explicit some of my accruing implicit knowledge, I periodically turned to macroscopic analysis, such as mapping the WAC affiliations I was aware of, and showing in these maps various points of contact between WAC facilitators and other campus groups and initiatives so I might determine how, in Edbauer's terms, rhetorics moved across this matrix of relationships. For instance, there were tight affiliations between the Writing Task Force, the Writing Institute, and the Center for Writing because Miriam, the center's director, coordinated all of these. This step of macro-analysis helped me identify that her central role in all three entities served an ideologically unifying function. The relationship was much more tentative between WAC facilitators and the teaching resource center that was instituted during my study. There was also an uneasy, sometimes functional, sometimes troubled affiliation between people involved in general education reforms and the three WAC facilitators. The contact between these groups was marked by discursive differences in the ways writing and learning were represented. This latter troubled but productive pairing became a crucial relationship to watch as the curricular changes around writing unfolded, and remapping my changing understanding of the rhetorical ecology helped make visible the networks of interaction that appeared to be most important in the unfolding WAC developments. My understanding of this relational network evolved further and developed temporal layers as close analysis of key texts and encounters informed my interpretation of the pathways, groups, histories, events, and relationships that mattered in this context.

A related macroscopic step was the creation of a timeline of significant curricular changes and relevant rhetorical encounters in the development of WAC at North River State. (Appendix B shows a mature version of the timeline produced late in my analysis process.) All of the steps in big picture analysis were informed by primary textual evidence and participants' indications of what mattered. Assessing the corpus this way provided an adequate sense of the crucial events, texts, and relationships in the discursive ecology around WAC so I could further focus on the key data microscopically. Creating this timeline not only helped me make sense of a developmental sequence of WAC-related events, but more importantly, it enabled me to identify key moments, texts, and initiatives as these related, in Edbauer's terms, to how a given rhetoric (e.g. writing to learn) was advanced, altered, conjoined, or dropped, including when it came in direct contact with other rhetorics in circulation. Maps of the rhetorical ecology are provided in chapters 4 and 5.

To analyze the beliefs and values WAC leaders invoked as they interacted with other institutional constituents in their efforts to develop a program or culture of writing on campus, I examined field notes from events such as the faculty development institutes, looking especially carefully at the language the workshop facilitators employed when engaging others in discussion about the role of writing in their teaching and in the institution. I also adopted Fairclough's attention to interdiscursivity as I looked for evidence of beliefs and values in selected newsletters from the Writing Task Force and listened to what participants said directly and indirectly about their theoretical commitments during interviews and observed events. It was important, as well, to understand what competing and complementary ideologies were in circulation, and these were abundantly evident in the various genres of college publications as well as field

notes, such as those I kept from general education reform discussions and the 2006 pilot institute for the new first year writing course.

To answer how rhetorical encounters around WAC also reflected and embodied historically significant ideological dialectics in higher education, I drew on Fairclough, coding the data for words and phrases that corresponded to the ideological dialectics identified in chapter 1 as unity/differentiation, utility/liberal culture, tradition/innovation, and accountability/autonomy.   Many of these terms surfaced verbatim in the data, but terms that suggested these ideologies were equally important to identify. For example, I coded terms such as "hot," "new," "experimental," "pilot, "reform," "transform," and "progress" as part of innovation rhetorics. I also followed Edbauer's model closely as I traced local variations in the phrasing of writing to learn as these appeared in departmental and writing center publications, Writing Task Force documents, conversations, and faculty institutes.

Answering my last question, "How do WAC advocates adapt, reproduce, resist, and engage with these ideologies in the discursive ecology of a small public college?" depended on prior coding steps that used critical discourse analysis and were framed by the rhetorical ecology concept. I analyzed the circulation and alteration of key rhetorics, focusing most frequently on the rhetorics of writing to learn and their troubled intersections with competency discourse as I traced the language used by WAC advocates and others on campus during the process of cultural and curricular change.

Neither Fairclough's critical discourse analysis methodology nor application of Edbauer's theory of rhetorical ecology typically incorporate participants' perspectives. However, combining Fairclough and Edbauer's analysis strategies with ethnographic methods has been a productive process. Two examples illustrate the kinds of insights

that participants provided throughout my study, augmenting my analysis methods. The first I develop more fully in chapter 4. During a 2005 interview with Miriam, a key participant, she called attention to the fact that she had renamed the writing center several years previously. If I had used pure textual analysis, I would not have benefited from direct knowledge of Miriam's sense of exigence for making this rhetorical move. Miriam explained in terms that Fairclough would have appreciated why this renaming was important to the project of advancing the position of writing and the center for it on campus.

A second example, profoundly affecting my development of chapter 5, enabled me to see from a participant's perspective how it felt to be engaged in acute ideological contestation that had high stakes curricular implications. I interviewed Karen, the director of first year writing, shortly before the Writing and Thinking Pilot Institute that she was coordinating in conjunction with Integrative Education Program Subcommittee members. This committee held very different views from Karen on the core purpose of the institute and the pilot course. Karen's interview and an anecdotal report from a debriefing she had afterward provided frank impressions of how she experienced the conflict. Karen's situation humanized Fairclough's concept of discursive ideological contestation for me, while illustrating Edbauer's assertion that rhetorical ecologies are not just matrixes of interaction but also complex "structures of feeling" (5). Because of the richness that participants such as Miriam and Karen brought to my understanding of the discursive and cultural changes I witnessed, I believe this study is not only useful for the questions it explicitly engages, but also for demonstrating the value of developing hybrid rhetorical analysis methods that go beyond text to include participants' interpretations of their own contexts and intentions.

As valuable as my participants' perspectives have been, I nevertheless bear full

responsibility for any interpretive errors I may have made in my analysis of the

phenomenon of cultural and curricular change around writing at North River. It has been

a great comfort to me during the four years of my study to know that the research method

I have chosen (and sometimes stumbled through) reserves a place for humility and

subjectivity.

CHAPTER 3

GROUNDS FOR CHANGE: CONDITIONS AND EXIGENCIES FOR WAC EMERGENCE

> In looking ahead into the next decade, we recognize that [North River] State College will face the challenge of balancing its identity as a liberal arts college with the need to stay flexible in its program offerings. We must strike a balance between our traditional liberal arts mission and the job market, with its increasing demand for specialized vocations …. At the same time we believe that our students will continue to need a broad-based grounding in the sciences and humanities to ensure career flexibility in a world whose changing demands no one can accurately predict.
>
> – from North River State College Self Study 1999/2000

North River State College was founded in the early 20th century as a normal school for teacher preparation, and it followed a common trajectory from those modest roots: becoming a teachers college in the thirties, then a "multipurpose"[7] state college later in the century. In the 1980s, North River further refined its mission when it joined COPLAC, the Consortium of Public Liberal Arts Colleges. This gesture can be interpreted as a decision of the college's leaders to publicly assert the school's relatively new institutional identity against the historical backdrop of its prior existence as a teachers college. Institutional assessment data indicate that COPLAC membership was also used to "benchmark" – that is, membership signified having a consortium of institutions similar enough that they could measure themselves against each other.

Formally, the declaration of North River's affiliation with liberal arts colleges functioned much as the marriage pronouncements of clergy at a wedding: a name change and a new partnership signaled the fundamental institutional change. However, since this entity did not actually spring forth fully formed, divorced from its past, the prior iterations of what the school had been remained influential long after its change of name

---

[7] term from North River's 1980 Self-Study Report

and mission. This tangible presence of a past institutional identity had significant implications for WAC developments at the college.

In this chapter, I make the case that the complexity of North River State's institutional identity had crucial bearing on the discourse around writing prior to and during early WAC activity at the college. To do so, I first discuss the WAC field's traditional attention to institutional type (e.g. liberal arts, professional), and then show how the nuanced expression of type that unfolded during my qualitative inquiry led me to rely more on a concept of institutional identity. The notion of identity enlarges upon type by taking into account not only empirical attributes but also affective and historical domains that contribute to constituents' felt sense of an institution. A complex model of institutional identity incorporates what Edbauer calls "lived practical consciousness or structures of feeling" (5), and allows for the simultaneity of what an institution is, was, and strives to become. Like personal identity, institutional identity is not necessarily singular but instead is likely to embody tensions between multiple accrued identities. Archival texts such as college catalogs and writing handbooks as well as reflective interviews with participants demonstrate the salience of institutional identity in the evolving and ambiguous discourse about writing at North River during the early development of WAC at the college.

Discursive and cultural conditions led to WAC developments well prior to my presence as a participant-observer. In this chapter, I identify historically dominant ideologies of writing dating from the late 1950s and disclose the emergence of discursive contestation at North River in the early 1990s. This chapter identifies a seminal event that introduced WAC discourse locally, key players who took up and disseminated writing-to-learn discourse further, the initial formation of WAC alliances, and early viral

movement and mutation of the WAC ideologies as they interacted with other dialectics in play in the rhetorical ecology of North River State.

<u>Institutional Type, Institutional Identity</u>

WAC programs are always situated somewhere, so studies and program descriptions routinely summarize attributes of the local setting, including the type of institution where the program exists. Size, highest degree granted, funding structure (private or public), and professional foci such as seminaries and schools of pharmacology are among the traditional attributes of institutional type that are raised in WAC literature.[8]

In his history of the WAC movement, David Russell notes the importance of such basic differences in institutional type for the development of certain program features. Size seems to matter, in particular. WAC's initial developments took place in such small, private, liberal arts colleges as Grinnell, Carleton, and Beaver because they were structurally and historically conducive to interdisciplinary reforms[9]. Russell's work also documents WAC efforts at large public research institutions, and he discusses a range of WAC trends that arise depending on different kinds of institutional contexts. Institutional type seems as though it would be relatively straightforward to define, but attributes such as size and public versus private control are merely the rudiments of institutional features relevant to WAC program development.

In 2005, prompted by the needs of educational researchers for increasingly nuanced models of type, the Carnegie Foundation overhauled its basic empirical

---

[8] See Barbara Walvoord and coauthors, *In the Long Run*, for a typical treatment, and Thaiss and Zawacki for particular diligence in discussing the relationship between institutional type and WAC strategies.

[9] For direct accounts of some of the first U.S. WAC activity of the 1970s, see Connelly and Irving on Grinnell, Harriet Sheridan's description of faculty development at Carleton, and Elaine Maimon and her WAC cohort from Beaver College.

classifications of institutions of higher education in the U.S., greatly increasing the number and complexity of the attributes it tracks. For instance, one of the foundation's newer measurements of undergraduate instructional programs assesses "the proportion of bachelor's degree majors in the arts and sciences and in professional fields," resulting in five different weighted distinctions. Most U.S. baccalaureate-dominant institutions demonstrate some combination of arts/sciences and professional majors in their undergraduate programs, with roughly a third, including North River State, classified as balanced. But even the more nuanced taxonomies of type such as those developed by Carnegie can only provide "time specific snapshots of institutional attributes and behavior" and may therefore need augmenting with a concept of institutional identity that is both more fluid and more representative of accrued characteristics over time.

Naturalistic studies and program descriptions that account for institutional type show that Carnegie's empirically-derived label for some mixed type institutions, "balanced," may not necessarily translate to a feeling of balancedness for those on campus. For instance, in Lee Ann Carroll's description of Pepperdine, one of the institutions meeting Carnegie's balance classification, she shares a faculty member's characterization that indicates the uneasy coexistence between two traditions: "[It] is a preprofessional school masquerading as a liberal arts college" (31). Such a sentiment might well be shared by some of my study participants regarding North River State; in 2006, I overheard a faculty member dismissively describe the institution as a "glorified community college." Such informal expressions of a felt sense of the identity contrast with public representations of institutional identity such as in mission statements and grant proposals where expressions of an achieved or assumed liberal arts identity serve specific rhetorical purposes.

The tensions between North River's heritage type as a professional teachers college and the liberal arts type many stakeholders aspire for it often make less for a feeling of balanced coexistence than of competition between identities, as one faculty member's discussion of the changing institutional culture revealed. Claude, a member of the Psychology Department, spoke with me in 2005:

> I see North State as an institution in transition. You know it started out as a normal school, but even … during the tenure of [the previous] president…, they moved from its … provincial roots to … trying to be a really good public liberal arts college. [But] it's got a lot of holdovers. And those holdovers are cultural and they are also embedded in personnel and they are also embedded in … unresolved issues, like the issue between the liberal arts and professional studies, and the idea that all of them have a role to play …. I think you'd see especially among faculty who have been here for a while, it's now a very different campus than it was.
>
> So I see … the campus as divided now. Is it sharply divided? I don't know how sharply divided, but it's certainly divided on some issues. And dialog on campus is somewhat stilted because we have a number of people arguing for change and dramatic change in a number of areas: general education, the four-credit model. And others are resistant…. So as a consequence when you take something like writing as a particular example of this, there are people on campus that are really dedicated to increasing the ability of students to write and to write throughout the curriculum and all the various disciplines – and then there are others.
>
> There's no one I think you can find who would say writing is not important, but … there are others [for whom] that's as far as their commitment goes, that lip service of saying "oh yes that's important," but if you look at the way their courses are structured or the assignments they give, there's no follow through on that. They don't really believe it. Or if they do believe it they don't know how to implement it. And to be honest, …I understand, from the difficulties I've encountered, the reluctance of somebody who teaches a large section. …. If we really are serious about infusing writing throughout the curriculum then I think we have to really pay a lot more attention to class size and the ratio of students to teachers.

Claude's observations make clear that North River's institutional identity is neither simple nor fixed, that the past identity reverberates in current debates and attitudes, and that the material resources to realize the goal of becoming "a really good public liberal arts college" lagged these intentions, complicating WAC implementation.

The tensions between the idea of a professional school and the idea of a liberal arts college that Claude's interview illustrated invoke historic dialectics of utility/liberal culture. Utility is an obvious core ideology for professional education; however, historic arguments for the liberal arts, such as those of John Henry Newman and W.E.B. Dubois, typically do not make a simple argument of liberal arts for liberal culture's sake but instead fold in some concept of the social utility of developing liberally educated persons. Similarly, even though many of North River State's rhetorical moves since establishing COPLAC membership were efforts to align with a liberal arts identity, a wide range of data such as mission statements, assessment statements, and interviews demonstrate that this project involved an interweaving of utility and liberal culture ideologies similar to Newman's and Dubois's. These interlacing ideologies are evident as well in much of the discourse around WAC development at North River.

The concept of institutional identity – configured to allow for history and feeling, and ideological competition and coexistence – aids in this analysis of WAC at North River: the school's ongoing identity construction functioned both as a constraining context and an area of agency for WAC leaders. The institution's hybrid identity contributed to some of the struggles WAC leaders experienced as they advocated for particular practices, projects, and theories; however, the construction of the college's identity was also a project in itself and one in which WAC leaders took part.

At North River, the tensions between the teachers college it had been, its current identity claims as a liberal arts college, and the different ways different groups were attempting to identify the college for the future contributed to the feel of the place during my research. Its faceted identity was evident in discourse explicitly about the current state and future direction of the college, such as is demonstrated in the excerpt from the

self-study that opens this chapter. Identity also figures prominently in mission statements for the whole college, as well as those for groups within it, such as the Writing Task Force. Because the primary tensions were between professional and liberal arts identities, the historical ideological dialectic of utility/liberal culture came into play in instances where institutional identity was a relevant feature of the data. Of particular salience for my study of WAC development were the ways that identity tensions and the related flux in the college's mission appeared to be interdiscursive with struggle over the meaning of writing at the college. Such complexities furthermore appeared to have contributed to ambiguities about where the responsibility for writing resided.

Defining Writing: "Competency" and "Means for Learning" in Dialectic

There were two competing ways that the meaning of writing had been understood and framed at North River in the recent past: as a competency and, more recently, as a means for learning. Such local conceptions of writing reflect higher education's divergent strategies for responding to social anxieties over writing skill. These anxieties are exemplified in the crisis rhetoric of Merrill Sheils's 1975 *Newsweek* article, "Why Johnny Can't Write," widely cited as an exigence for higher education literacy reforms. Competency discourse around writing correlates with the movement toward standards-based assessment that is evident in the work of national and regional accrediting bodies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Discourse about writing as a means for learning derives from the WAC movement's theoretical underpinnings codified in the writing to learn ideology.

For decades preceding the 1990's, writing as competency was the dominant rhetoric and ideology at North River. In the early 1990's, that ideology of writing began to be contested by those advocating an alternative conception of writing as a means for learning.

I discovered evidence of discursive struggle between these two circulating concepts at North River State that preceded my presence as a participant-observer. Archival catalogs dating from 1958 through the present were especially rich sources for competency-skills rhetorics. There were gaps in the archived series, but among the available texts, a story of the meanings for writing unfolds, with periods of change punctuating longer periods of apparent uncontested stability.

As a genre, college catalogs tend to be rhetorically conservative. Their function is largely informational and, although typically published anew every year, sections are unlikely to be rewritten unless there is compelling reason to do so. Therefore, although catalog text does not capture the networked interactions of rhetorical activity that accompany structural changes, it is likely that any changes in the discourse around writing that do make it to catalog text are indicators of such activity. When the text reflects significant alteration to the meanings of key terms, then catalog text can further serve as a marker of ideological contest.

In every catalog I examined from over a fifty year span, first year writing was positioned as a requirement for at least one semester, and at times two. This local finding is congruent with what both Russell and Berlin (*Writing Instruction*) identify as a modern trend in required first year composition. At North River, the names of this requirement changed over time (e.g. Freshman English, English Composition, Essay Writing), yet the

inclusion of writing in the description of this, the only required freshman course, remained a constant.

In fact, the North River course descriptions were remarkably consistent from 1956-1987. Each description over that thirty year period included, with little variation, the language evident in the 1956 catalog: "written and oral composition, to develop the student's ability to think clearly, read appreciatively, and express his thoughts cogently (42). This historic description includes precursors to the ideology of writing to learn. Some connection is made between writing and the development of thinking in the first intention of the course, and the terms "develop," "think," and "thought" have resonance with the cognitive developmental concepts that formed a theoretical basis for the WAC movement. However, more transactional rhetoric is used for the last ability that the course seeks to develop: cogent expression. The word "expression" here appears to be used in the communicative sense rather than the processual sense with which it has come to be inflected through Britton and others' learning theory. Perhaps more interesting than the approximate ideological alignments that might be teased out of this description, however, is its evident solidity. The uniformity of this course description language over three decades is a strong indicator of both the catalog genre's tendency toward conservatism and the likelihood that the conception of writing at the college was largely uncontested during a thirty year period.

Writing as a Competency

Although the excerpt above represents remarkable textual stability about writing courses, some important new language about writing did come into play in the early 1980s, with precursor language appearing in the 1970s. An interview in 2005 with

Simone, then the dean of the Humanities Division, alerted me to one persistent way that

writing had been defined: as a "competency":

> When I first arrived, Collie (this is ancient history)[10], there was what used to be
> called C Competency in English 101. C Competency was this mysterious thing
> that I could never get my head around…. You couldn't pass an English 101 with
> a D; you had to get a C in order not to have to take it again, the reason being that
> that C was intended to attest to your competency as a writer.

Prompted by this conversation, I sought evidence of the terms "competence/y" and "C

Competency" in the college archives, both to learn when these came into the record and

whether there was historic textual evidence of any discursive contest between this

concept and that of writing to learn.

I assumed from my conversation with Simone that the required first year course

would be the most likely location for competency language. Yet the first college catalog

appearance linking the idea of competence to writing actually comes in the description of

an elective writing course, English 323 Writing and Research, initially offered in 1971

and described as follows:

> A course in the rhetoric of clarity. How to collect facts, check their accuracy,
> organize ideas, and report them with logic and style. The course will consider
> library research, the use of style manuals, and how and when to quote, cite,
> document, illustrate, revise, compress, and edit. Each student will practice
> competence in writing for his particular discipline. (93)

From the description, the English elective appears to be research-intensive and

preparatory for writing in other disciplines, although this does not appear to be a WID

approach because writing for disciplines is not presented as differentiated. The emphasis

on clarity echoes the communicative terms "clear" and "cogent" used in the freshman

course description. Although English 323 was not a required course, its position in the

---

[10] Simone reports joining NRSC in 1990. She had been the chair of the English department during one of
the principle periods of ideological struggle over writing.

English Department suggests that the department was accepting some responsibility for students developing writing competence broadly applicable to other disciplines. The occurrence of the general phrase "competence in writing" is repeated in the course's description until 1977, after which it went out of circulation for eight years, at least in this type of text.

It wasn't until the1985-86 catalog that the rhetoric of writing competence or competency regained discursive traction, but it did so emphatically when the term "C Competency" became associated with the required first year English course. Under the General Education Requirements section of the catalog, English Language Competency appears in bold font and is explained with the following text:

> English Composition (ENG 101) is required of all students. It should be completed during the freshman year and is not open to juniors and seniors unless they are transfer students. A grade of "C" or better must be attained. Students receiving a grade less than C must repeat the course until the C level is achieved.

Identical language repeats in every catalog year through 1993-94.

At twenty years distance it becomes difficult to identify for certain the exigence for the development of the C Competency policy; however, instances of intertextuality between archival national and regional standards, excerpts from a North River State self-study that were responsive to such standards, multiple years of catalog text, and an English Department publication indicate likely connection between this policy and broader accountability concerns faced by many professional education programs. Reflective statements from several participants further suggest that assessment for the college's teacher education programs was a plausible exigence for the C Competency language. According to my participants, two faculty members who preceded Yvonne and Miriam in the respective positions of English Education and writing center developer

during the 1980s were both involved in teacher preparation. Programs in higher education designed for teacher preparation are accountable to state and national governing bodies that develop standards for accreditation. Although by many accounts, the assessment climate for higher education in the 1980s was less comprehensive and pervasive than it is currently, it was probably nevertheless expedient at that time to respond to accrediting bodies in language that would be comparable to the language of the standards. So, for instance, when NCATE requires affiliated programs to assure that teacher education students develop competency in a certain set of skills, it simplifies the process of responding to the standards if the curriculum shares the discourse of the accrediting body.

Teacher education program standards reflect broader ideologies of accountability. Several of the NEASC standards in use in 1992 through the end of the decade, not specific to writing or to teacher preparation, illustrate the ubiquity of rhetorics of competency in broad educational discourse. Competence surfaces in terms of faculty performance in standard 5.12, in relation to the different levels of competence expected of graduate versus undergraduate students in standard 4.20, and in 4.7 as a standard measure of educational attainment level graduating students should be able to achieve regardless of institution. These 1992 regional standards do also address writing directly, in universal terms, in standard 4.19: "Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English."

The various passages from North River's catalogs and its 1993 English Composition manual are noteworthy for the ways the terms "competence" and "competency" accrue density and ideological significance over time. In the 1971

description of the upper level Research and Writing elective, competence in writing appears simply something to "practice." In the 1985 catalog, however (concurrent with the same year's Institutional Report that emphasizes English Language skills), the term has accumulated more weight; the relationship between discourse and institutional structure is entwined when not just a course but the abstract term, "English Language Competency," becomes a graduation requirement. Competency under that policy, much like the language of its contemporary NCATE and NEASC standards, invokes a fixed state or level that must be "attained" or "achieved" before junior year.

The 1993 English Composition Manual embeds further density into this already weighty concept by identifying five component language skills that are demonstrable by earning C Competency in English 101:

> C Competency is more than grades on papers; it involves other language skills and attitudes tested either formally or informally throughout the semester, including writing, reading, speaking, listening, research skills, and attitudes toward research. (14)

The litany of "writing, reading, speaking, listening" in this text parallels language adopted by the college in 1985 in response to standards from NCATE[11]. In the 1986 Institutional Report, the General Studies component at North River begins with: "To achieve a well-rounded education, baccalaureate students should … [d]evelop competence in English language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (30).[12] Interestingly, although the four skills appear equivalently emphasized within the set, no

---

[11] From Institutional Report Volume I, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, [North River State College], March 1986, Basic Programs

[12] Fairclough identifies this as a skill set derived from applied linguistics (209). My 2005 interview with the Dean of Professional Studies and my observations in 2006 during meetings about general education reforms (during which there was considerable debate over intended skills outcomes for the new program) verify the discursive endurance of this skill set at North River State.

distinct courses are offered for reading or listening, and courses in public speaking are

available but not universally required. Only writing commands a universally required

course of its own, English Composition, although in the course description above, the

English Department appears to take responsibility for testing all four identified language

skills, plus "attitudes toward research."   However, in its fuller description breaking down

what C Competency entails for students, oral elements are not in explicit evidence:

> Students who earn C Competency in English 101 are able to demonstrate the
> following skills:
> – the ability to synthesize their experience and their readings in their writing
> – the ability to develop their ideas using logical, specific and appropriate samples
> – utilization of standard organizing principles
> – a command of Standard Written English
> – the ability to write for various purposes to various audiences
> (English Composition Manual 1993-94 14)

In rapid succession in this excerpt, the similarly inflected terms, "skills," "ability,"

"standard," "competency," compound to shore up a specific construction of writing that

is also congruent with regional higher education accreditation standards in use at that

time. Fairclough identifies such instances of layered related terms, or "overwording," as

a symptom of "intensive preoccupation" (Fowler et al qtd in Fairclough) with an ideology

or ideological project (193).

Fairclough furthermore categorizes words like "skill" and "competence" as part of

commodified educational discourse, a discourse that structures educational practice into

marketable and measurable units of content or learning (209). Claiming that students will

demonstrate "a command of Standard Written English" after English 101, for instance,

suggests that there is such a thing to be had (and purchased), and it is both stable and

portable once attained[13]. The discourse around the C Competency policy positions

---

[13] David Russell, citing Mike Rose, names this phenomenon the "myth of transience" (7).   Russell explains the myth
as an expectation that marginalized writing instruction will take care of what may be perceived as a temporary, local

learning to write as a one shot deal, attainable in one semester of a first year course,

unless there is something deficient about a student, who then, according to the English

Composition Manual, must take an In Progress grade and retake the course until C

Competency is attained (15).

Although another section of the manual mentions "writing as a tool of learning"

(1), and both process and rhetorical approaches that inform the course practices are very

briefly introduced, the C Competency policy is a notably extensive section of the manual

that illustrates the ubiquity of commodification language as well as the potency of

accountability rhetorics at this time in the college's discourse around writing.

My interview with Simone indicates that under the C Competency policy, the

English department was the body held fully accountable for student writing. Members of

other departments expected certified writers who would be consistently fluent in their

courses:

> So everyone all over the college were able to say, "Well, they got their C
> Competency, didn't they?" Right? "So what were you people doing in that
> English class if you gave them a C Competency?" Or "So how come when I ask
> them to write something in my Biology class, they can't – they got a C
> Competency in English, didn't they?" …. The culture was, "English is supposed
> to be taking care of this, so how come they're not?.... I would never give this a C,
> look!" Sociology teacher: "Here's the student writing, you said they were a C
> writer, right? … And you gave them a C!" Unbelievable. That was the culture.
> That was the culture. "How come they don't know how to use periods and
> semicolons? You gave them a C!"

It is clear from the record that writing was not the domain of cross-disciplinary

faculty during the early 90s, but archival texts nevertheless indicate some ambiguity over

whether students or the English department were held accountable for writing

competency. Through the competency rhetorics of the catalogs and the 1993 manual,

problem of poor student writing.

69

students are positioned as unqualified to proceed to junior level standing unless and until they meet the policy's terms. One particularly fascinating word choice in the English Composition Manual is the use of "tested" in this excerpt: "C Competency … involves other language skills and attitudes tested either formally or informally throughout the semester…." (14) In this passage, using the word "tested" as opposed to "taught" positions students as either competent in language skills or not, with the course functioning as evaluative rather than as a teaching and learning context in which to develop such skills. Although in this text the department remains positioned to certify students' attainment of a certain standard, the accountability for writing competency that the college placed on the English Department here appears deflected by the department to the students. In such a representation, not only are rhetorics of writing to learn invisible, but the learning and implied teaching elements of learning to write are also absent.

The dean's interview indicated the urgency she felt about eliminating "C Competency" language, not only because she rejected the notion of perfectly portable fluency, but also because of the policy's impact on the positioning of the department:

> It was really my first priority when I became chair of the English Department. We've just so got to get rid of this C Competency thing. Just the whole message was wrong, *wrong* … that it was the English Department's responsibility, the English Department's *fault* if at subsequent levels students weren't writing at a reasonable level.

<u>Writing as a Means for Learning</u>

In the early 1990's, conditions at the college changed so that the previously uncontested ideology of writing as a competency began to be challenged, setting the stage for altering the practice of isolating writing instruction within one department. New people were hired into the English Department and the writing center, and these new people, who held different intellectual commitments, emerged as local vectors who

gradually familiarized the campus with different ways of thinking about writing and learning, and, simultaneously, different ways of thinking about responsibility for student writing instruction. Yvonne, a newly hired specialist in English Education, was well versed in the field of rhetoric and composition. Miriam, the new writing center coordinator, was utilizing cognitive developmental theory as a core part of her dissertation framework. Yvonne and Miriam had an ally in Simone, a recently hired literature professor in the English Department who became department chair shortly after her arrival in the early 90s. Although individually Miriam's and Yvonne's positions might have appeared marginal in 1993 (Miriam's position was part time hourly ABD, Yvonne was only newly on tenure track), they had Simone's strong sponsorship. These women's areas of expertise and shared investment were quickly evident to each other and they formed an informal alliance soon after meeting.

In 1993, Miriam and Yvonne applied for a small internal grant to conduct a study, "How Much Writing is Required of NRSC Students?" They sought to have more than assumptions and complaints from which to base future discussions about writing curriculum. The grant proposal language points toward the potential for curricular change:

> The information collected from this study could radically change future dialogues about writing on this campus and provide some factual basis for our "blame" discussions. Rather than speculating about the amount and kind of writing students do, we can use the findings of this report as the basis for our discussions about how English 101 should be revised or about whether we need a good writing across the curriculum program. (1)

Although it would be many years before cross-curricular changes around writing developed at North River, the emphasis on cross-curricular "dialogue" and "discussions"

in the proposal language accurately forecasted the primary means by which WAC ideas would take root in the decade that followed.

At the close of spring semester in 1994, the ideas fomenting in the small working alliance of Simone, Miriam, and Yvonne gathered a wider network after Simone invited Peter Elbow to campus to conduct a workshop during faculty development week. According to Simone, exigencies for this event were multiple. The composition program needed revitalization, Miriam's new leadership at the writing center was running up against residual conceptions of how a center should be run, and most significantly, Simone pointed out:

> We were struggling with the strange old perception that writing was commas and semi-colons and "Damn that English department for passing along to us students who can't write!" and we had, I believe, just ended the … awful English Comp idea of "C competency" which perfectly reinforced the … conception that English could fix writing…. Oh, people all over the campus were lamenting the loss of the "C competency" requirement, because now the English department was abandoning its responsibility to teach students how to write. The point [of bringing Elbow to campus] … was to impress upon the campus that one course and one department are not responsible for writing, and that we all write to learn, our students in all fields need to write.

Elbow's talk was entitled "Writing for Learning – Not Just for Demonstrated Learning." This event proved seminal both to the long term cultural project of contesting the dominant ideology of writing as a competency and to Simone's related and equally long term project of repositioning the English department in more positive terms. Simone reflected:

> We were trying to change the culture of writing on campus and who better? ….He came to do a workshop with us to bring the campus faculty and staff together around what it means to teach writing. Yes, writing to learn. And, yes, writing across the campus. I truly think we billed it like that. We pushed it like crazy. People came from everywhere on campus, a big crowd. It was … a one and a half day workshop. … People came. People worked. He was amazing.
> I believe it was a watershed event.

In the talk preceding the workshop, Elbow suggested ways faculty across disciplines could think about writing as a means for learning and therefore use writing differently than just as a method for evaluating students' assimilation of course content. These classic WAC concepts weren't wholly unfamiliar at North River. Three key individuals amenable to this way of conceptualizing writing – Simone, Yvonne, and Miriam – were already in position in the English Department and writing center, and there had been a gesture toward "writing as a tool of learning" (1) in the 1993 composition manual even prior to Yvonne assuming the directorship of English 101. However, the archival records and reflective interviews suggest that "writing to learn" rhetorics were not in circulation before 1994 beyond perhaps a handful of people. The occasion of Elbow's talk and two-day workshop for faculty from every department was apparently the first public introduction of the rhetorics of the WAC movement to the campus. From Elbow's lecture notes:

> What I want to stress here … is writing for learning or "writing to learn." …. The goal isn't good communication or good writing but rather figuring out better what you don't yet understand. I will try to show that even though low stakes writing-to-learn is not always good as writing, it is particularly effective at promoting learning and involvement in course material …. (1, emphasis Elbow's)

According to Miriam and Simone, Elbow's ideas were not universally well-received. Response during the talk was reportedly "extremely oppositional,"[14] with skeptical commentary focusing on complaints about surface features of student writing, a phenomenon Miriam and Yvonne had noted previously in their study proposal, rather than engaging with the central idea of writing to learn that Elbow raised.

---

[14] The quote is from field notes, a conversation at a Writing Task Force meeting April 9, 2009. Miriam had emphasized this point as well during her 2005 interview.

<u>Forming and Defining a Writing Task Force</u>

Such faculty resistance to an initial exposure to writing to learn rhetorics might have signaled the end of discussion. But instead of turning away from what had been a controversial idea, Miriam acted on the strength rather than the content of the response. Something was up about writing, or people would not have been so bristly during Elbow's talk. She explained her actions:

> … I got the list from Simone of all the people who attended that meeting. I didn't know anybody on the campus. … I was stuck in the [writing center] room, I had no status, no nothing[15]. But I was also in a harmless position. A powerless position. And I didn't know any of the history. [But] Simone… gave me the names and I wrote everybody a letter and I said if you are interested in talking about writing,… come to this lunch. …. So I organized this lunch and … oh that room was packed. And I said, "Hi I'm Miriam and I have no agenda except let's have a conversation about writing." But of course I did have an agenda. ….We had a wonderful lunch, a wonderful conversation, it was one hour and it was over and two seconds before it ended I said "If any of you would like to stay I'd like to start like you know, maybe like a task force on writing or something like that where we can continue this conversation." … Six or seven people stayed. ….[Yvonne] stayed … [she was] the Director of English 101 at that time…. As it turned out, I had the head of the faculty union to my left, …the head of the Theater department,… the chair of the Psych department. [One] from Physical Education. [One] from Biology. It formed a cross section across the campus. ….And that's where we began.

Another person might have taken note of the contentious response to Elbow's talk and backed away from ideas that seemed to elicit such a strongly negative reaction from faculty. But Miriam chose instead to use the multilectic debate over writing to learn/writing to demonstrate learning/writing as competency as the exigence for formation of a cross curricular group whose initial purpose was simply to talk about writing.

---

[15] Miriam's position in 1994 was part time hourly, working as coordinator of what she characterized as a one room underutilized writing center.

MIRIAM: It began with having a conversation about writing on the campus and within a year I was writing little mini grants asking the VPA for money for this and money for that. Could we have a workshop. And we had Margot Soven come. So we were beginning to do little things.

Miriam talks about small steps, but according to Simone[16], the group's influence had not been minor:

They are the best group on campus…. They are the group on campus that defines their goals themselves and nobody has charged them to do anything. Anything! They just recognize this is what needs to be done and we're going to do it. So they do it. They go out and get grants ….They are interdisciplinary…. They are the group that has changed the culture.

Both Simone and Yvonne indicated that the distressing results of the study of writing that Miriam and Yvonne initiated shortly before the Writing Task Force formation indicated a need for intensive work to promote writing and writing pedagogies across the curriculum. Yvonne explained the 1993-94 study and its findings:

The results were a little scary, but you know it was good to do that and then to put those results out. …. [We asked 40 students] what kind of writing they did over their four years. And it was one of those things where you get a clear, clear picture: … they did this intense English 101, then they go to Gen Ed and do nothing, and then they pick it up again when they get into their major. And so there was this desert of like three semesters where they could go without writing a paper. So that was where we started. Okay, well, this has to change. Because there's all this complaining going on when they get to their majors, and well of course there's going to be complaining going on, what do you expect! They haven't seen a computer for a year and a half!

Simone credits this study with initiating crucial changes, not necessarily curricular changes addressing what Yvonne called the three-semester writing desert, but gradual changes in faculty engagement with writing as they became part of a cultural "shift in emphasis" on where writing should be assigned and taught, and especially regarding who

---

[16] Simone was not a member of the Writing Task Force, but expressed firm support. When I asked her about membership in the group, she indicated it had never seemed necessary, but she was delighted with the work the group took on: "As chair of the English Department, I just thought that's fabulous, go for it.… It didn't have to be me, you know what I mean? It never had to be me."

would be responsible for it. By 2005, Simone could assert: "Now we are recognizing that writing is all of our responsibility.… The culture is changing." (4:28-30). The language Simone used in 2005 strikingly echoes this assertion Miriam and Yvonne made in their 1994 report of the writing study findings to faculty and North River administrators: "…if students are to improve, we all need to accept responsibility for helping them."

The convergence of conditions in the mid 1990s that formed the genesis of these cultural changes included Yvonne's and Simone's desire to alter the discourse around freshman writing. At roughly the same time that Yvonne and Miriam proposed the 1994 survey of student writing, Simone and Yvonne shepherded a change that was neither to pedagogy nor to the shape of the writing curriculum but instead to the discourse about the freshman writing course. They dismantled the "C Competency" policy. The language was dropped from the 1994/95 catalog, which appeared just months after Peter Elbow's visit. What remained, within the General Education requirements section, was only the title "English Language Competence" and the persisting two sentences identifying the terms of the requirement: "English Composition (ENG 101) is required of all students. It should be completed during the freshman year and is not open to juniors and seniors unless they are transfer students." The two eliminated sentences had expressed an unadulterated gatekeeping function: "A grade of "C" or better must be attained. Students receiving a grade less than C must repeat the course until the C level is achieved." Excising these from the catalog description did not necessarily reduce the gatekeeping role of the course, but it did create a more neutral, less punitive tone toward students. Subsequent evidence from newsletter archives of the Writing Center and Writing Task Force indicates continuation of this general trend away from blaming students for perceived writing deficiencies and toward changing faculty pedagogies and attitudes

about writing instead.   A 1996 issue of the *Writing Center Newsletter*, for instance,

includes a response tip sheet for faculty, "Efficient & Effective Ways to Comment &

Correct Student Writing," co-written by Miriam and Yvonne. The introductory blurb

refers to the authors' original distribution of the handout at an all-campus faculty

development session where "we did not have enough handouts, and the animated

conversation extended well beyond our time limit" (4). The guidance is aimed at altering

faculty response practices and has a rhetorical effect of normalizing both the occurrence

of error and the need for useful response to student writing.

This newsletter was also the first archival evidence I found of the Task Force

defining itself. It had been meeting informally for its first years. By 1996, it was

meeting regularly enough to announce its activities in the *Writing Center Newsletter* and

to declare a mission: "to serve as a catalyst for moving individual faculty unrest and

discomfort about the status of students' writing into the mainstream of our campus

objectives and curriculum" (1). Despite this mention of the curriculum, Miriam echoes

Walvoord's emphasis in "The Future of WAC" on WAC as ideological rather than

programmatic change when she wrote three years later, "everything I'd like to see happen

has more to do with perceptions and attitudes than with programs and dollars."[17] In other

words, she wanted an ideology of writing and learning to become widespread in the

college's culture. Specifically how that system of beliefs would become manifested in

programmatic and curricular changes was not the main point, at least not in 1999.

As subsequent analysis chapters show, the Writing Task Force's project of

ideological and cultural change – and eventually curricular change as well – was a fluid

---

[17] From the first *Writing Task Force* (rather than Writing Center) *Newslette*r, 1999.

and long term discursive project that employed rhetorics of writing to learn in complex

multilectics with other ideologies.   It entailed discursive alignments such as with North

River State's ambiguous liberal arts identity. It involved ongoing discursive struggle as

well, especially with potent, widely circulating, commodified educational rhetorics.

Chapter 4 provides further evidence and analysis of change in this ideologically complex

rhetorical ecology by examining the evolution of core WAC features, particularly the

Center for Writing, the Writing Task Force, and the cross-disciplinary Writing Institute.

CHAPTER 4

**REWRITING CULTURE: CHANGING POSITIONS, PERCEPTIONS, AND
PEDAGOGIES**

Between 1994 and 2005, writing across the curriculum ideologies bled into

everyday discourse in the rhetorical ecology of North River State. By the time of my

pilot study in 2004/05, discourse connecting writing and learning was not only evident in

writing's designated institutional locations (e.g. English Department, writing center), but

these connections were also becoming visible in disciplinary pockets, spoken amongst

deans, and were deeply established in the discourse of the multi-disciplinary Writing

Task Force. This naturalization of key WAC concepts was the result of committed

leadership on writing and a network of both strategic and serendipitous interactions

involving affiliated faculty. These individuals and groups were alliance-builders who

acted as vectors for an idea of writing, especially variants of the ideology of writing to

learn, and whose connectivity inside and outside their immediate rhetorical ecology

created occasions for ideological bleed and hybridities.

During this decade, the Writing Task Force was invigorated by the addition of

two new members from the English department who had been hired in 1998 and 2000.

With Miriam, this trio formed a committed and energetic subgroup who collaborated to

form extended pedagogical relationships with cross disciplinary faculty outside of the

Writing Task Force. Thus the focus on writing that had begun as an insider discourse

between a small number of like-minded people in the early 90s gained other strong

vectors and allies in what one participant described as "ripples" that extended well

beyond those for whom writing was inherently a primary concern due to their

professional positions. This growing network circulated ideas about the relationships

between writing, thinking, learning, and teaching not only among those already invested,

but also relocated such discussions to venues that would attract others in the broader college community, gradually maintaining and building the network. Local variants on WAC ideologies thus circulated organically through informal relationships and intentionally through formal outreach activities of the Writing Task Force.

The story of the infusion of WAC practices and discourse into the culture of the college is not without its ideological and material struggles, however. The transformations of the writing center, its evolving relationship with the Writing Task Force, and the faculty development Writing Institute that arose from these connections all provide key contexts to show both growth and struggle in WAC developments during this period. The highlighted events provide snapshots of ideological convergence and conflict that was involved in North River State's ongoing cultural changes around writing.

<u>Repositioning the Writing Center</u>

David Russell writes that writing centers are integral to many WAC programs; strong relationships between centers and WAC have been evident since the origins of the WAC movement at key institutions as different as Michigan Tech and Beaver College. Muriel Harris explains that writing centers can function as physical and conceptual focal points for WAC: "When a WAC program works with or through a writing center, there is a visible focus, a focal point, a place for writing on campus, a center for writing" ("The Writing Center," 111). Bazerman and his coauthors agree, suggesting that "the writing center serves as the nerve center" (*Reference* 25) for many WAC programs.

Bazerman's figure of the "nerve center" is an apt one for North River's center, as it suggests both energy and connectivity, characteristics of this vibrant location in WAC's rhetorical ecology. At North River State, where no official WAC program existed as

such, the writing center evolved into what Harris calls a "de facto WAC program" ("A Writing Center," 90), taking up characteristic writing across the curriculum projects and developing these to suit local conditions and issues. By the time I joined its staff in 2006, it was evident the writing center served as both a physical space and rhetorical location for writing across the curriculum vectors and allies such as the Writing Task Force, the tutoring staff, and key cohorts of faculty. From this locus, advocates for WAC gestated ideas, forged connections, and re-centered themselves around core concepts of writing and learning.

Creating an Autonomous Structure

The late 90s through 2002 were a time of profound repositioning for North River's writing center that significantly enhanced its ability to function as a focal point for writing across the curriculum. Fiscally and structurally, the center gained a measure of independence that was further enhanced by both a physical move to a new space and change of status for the director. The director subsequently also repositioned the center through renaming. Its increasing autonomy was hence both discursive and material.

A 1998/99 reorganization of instructional programs provided an opportunity for the writing center to gain autonomy and reframe itself. Previously, it had been loosely clustered with disparate programs such as media services and academic tutoring under the umbrella of the Instructional Design Center. The writing center acquired its own budget line and direct accountability to the associate vice president of Academic Affairs as a result of reorganization. Here, the historic dialectic of autonomy/accountability is demonstrably intertwined. The center's emerging autonomy from the Instructional Design Center shifted its location on the institutional hierarchy, making it not utterly free

81

from the institution, but positioning it as accountable on a higher level of the structure. Evidence of the instructional area's restructuring shows up distinctly in an institutional self study of 1999/2000 that discusses the writing center in the Programs & Instruction sections rather than the Support Services section where other tutoring services remained. This particular repositioning subtly evokes the dialectic of liberal culture/utility. Support is clearly a utilitarian function, whereas the center's alternative alignment with programs gestures toward its evolving liberal cultural interest in the intellectual identity of the college and its constituents. At roughly the same time as the self-study, the Writing Task Force advocated successfully that the center director's position be converted from staff to a tenure track line. The combined effects of the center's new structural independence and the director's improving status facilitated the director's increasing autonomy in reshaping the center's mission in collaboration with the Writing Task Force.

In 2002, that autonomy was further reinforced by a physical relocation. The center had been a single open room within a suite of student support services that was itself part of a multi-use building that housed offices such as admissions and financial aid. When the center moved, it took over a renovated cottage in a quiet but accessible section of campus. Although no longer in a high traffic building, the smaller building's single purpose and physical independence contributed to the center's emerging status.

Renaming and Redefining

Not long after the physical move, Miriam repositioned the center rhetorically by initiating a name change. She returned from a conference inspired: "I said, 'I'm turning this into a Center for Writing. I see an umbrella.' And my first plan for the task force was massive. I had charts all over and I said 'Let's get a grant to do this whole thing.'

82

And actually that's what we're winding up doing, it's just been piecemeal'." She wanted the writing center to become, both in name and in function, the Center for Writing. Replacing the generic "writing center" with the new name entailed considerable bureaucratic finagling. "People thought I was nuts," she said, but she insisted. "The words matter," Miriam later told me. She asserted that the new name would reflect the scope of what she wanted the center to be.

Naming conventions for writing centers vary. Although "writing center" remains the norm, alternative names such as "writing studio" or "writing lab" reconfigure ideas about what activities the space is for by evoking working spaces such as an art studio or an experimental laboratory. Names such as "writers' center" or "center for writers" on the other hand emphasize who the center serves. Centers with multiple functions may reflect mixed missions in names such as "center for writing and speaking," or, if the work with writing is folded into broader tutoring services, that may be reflected in a name such as "center for academic success." Such names respond to and/or attempt to shape local context.

Miriam's choice to rename the writing center at North River State was an activist rhetorical move that connoted both advocacy and ownership, and asserted not only the center's position on campus, but writing's position as well. In 2005, Miriam had posters and pamphlets made that suggested in visuals, text, and organization the intricate relationships between students, peer tutors, and faculty who all had a stake in the center. She also unveiled a new motto for the center that encompassed the overarching philosophy: "Think… write… learn." Writing is bracketed on both sides by the cognitive processes that formed the basis of Miriam's commitment to writing. Although the sequence suggests a possible emphasis on learning as the end product, by eliminating any

prepositions that would define a specific cause and effect relationship between these terms, the meaning potential was subtly broadened from the traditional WAC phrase of writing to learn. In Miriam's moves to set the center apart from generic ideas about writing centers' functions, her acts of renaming and philosophy promotion suggest a multilectic comprised of innovation, differentiation, and autonomy interlaced with writing to learn and liberal culture.

This Center for Writing that had slipped out from underneath the umbrella of instructional services became something of an umbrella itself, hosting peer tutoring, the Writing Task Force, and an expanding breadth of collaborative projects that maintained the ongoing relevance of writing, learning, and teaching as campus issues. The improving status of the center could not be taken for granted, however. To reinforce its gains in autonomy and breadth of mission required rhetorical tenacity. Ongoing conversations with the director indicated that she had to work to keep the Center for Writing from being too narrowly perceived in utilitarian terms among remedial support services. In a 2008 draft of an institutional assessment, for instance, Miriam noticed the Center for Writing was positioned in a support services section instead of under instructional programs. She argued successfully for that to be changed, but the necessity of her action illustrates that retaining hard won ground about the Center for Writing's mission and position on campus, even as these evolved, remained an ongoing rhetorical maintenance project.

The Writing Task Force/Center for Writing Relationship

Miriam pointed out that because of the Writing Task Force, she rarely had to act in isolation to defend the center or propose new ideas. The Center for Writing and the

Writing Task Force were interdependent. The task force would not have begun without the initiative of the center's director, and the center would not have achieved faculty status for its director without the Writing Task Force's advocacy. Miriam often utilized the weight of this group rather than acting as a lone spokesperson for writing or for the center. In many outreach occasions, such as panel discussions about writing or invitations to faculty development institutes, the Writing Task Force assumed the sponsoring role. It also was an advocate for the Center for Writing when the director's voice alone might not have been sufficient. Miriam described an example of this advocacy role: in 1999, outside assessors had recommended that the center refine its mission, separating WAC activities from peer tutoring. Miriam saw these two functions as intricately linked, however, and with the support of the Writing Task Force, she was able to make the argument to the administration to continue developing an integrated mission that involved the center in work with both faculty and students. This is an instance of the unity/differentiation dialectic having structural implications.

The Center for Writing might not have attained structural autonomy, either, without the allied strength of Writing Task Force members. Miriam explained that when reorganization of instructional programs was under discussion in the late 90s, it was not clear where the writing center would be positioned. But, she said:

> [B]y that point I had the task force firmly situated…. There was huge talk about where to put me. And it could have gone under the [Academic Support] Center. That would have been the logical place, but I said no and my task force said no. It wasn't just me saying I don't think that's a good idea. Ten faculty were doing this.

Although the Center for Writing and the Writing Task Force were closely aligned with each other, they exercised considerable independence from other institutional programs and departments on campus. That is not to say they were isolated from the rest

of the college; there were many means of connection between the center, the Writing

Task Force, and other campus groups. However, the structures they evolved were

autonomous from the usual decision-making structures of the institution, yet that

autonomy was sometimes subject to external and internal pressures to become more

directly involved in specific campus initiatives.

An Evolving Mission

The Writing Task Force was a self-defined group rather than one charged by the

administration to achieve any particular ends. Members therefore remained free to

choose the group's projects and agendas. Because Miriam both coordinated the Writing

Task Force since its inception in 1994 and directed the Center for Writing since her

arrival in 1992, these enterprises shared certain ideological commitments about writing

and learning, and were significant focal points in the rhetorical ecology around writing at

North River.

Miriam explained that, as the "Think… write… learn" motto suggested, the

connections between writing and thought were her main interest, "what I think of more

than WAC and WID." She said her approach was influenced by the field of cognitive

developmental psychology more so than by composition research. She also expressed a

rhetorical pedagogical philosophy.

> MIRIAM: …You have to help these students to write [because] language and
> words matter, … they impact on the world. To think, to question, to learn is a
> birthright and …. I want [students] to be convinced, to be persuaded, to say as
> parents, as citizens, "This is what I think, this is why I think it." To say that in the
> world of business, to say that to their children, to say it to a teacher when their
> kids go to school. To speak, to say something. And I know that the world
> respects and tends to listen more when it's said in certain ways.

This excerpt demonstrates Miriam's commitment to the utility of rhetorical approaches for enabling students to "say something" in ways that will be heard. It also suggests her liberal cultural commitment to students as thinkers. A concise fusion of this utility-liberal culture-writing to learn multilectic surfaced anonymously at the Center for Writing in the fall of 2008; on the reception area whiteboard, a tutor wrote "Think…write…<u>say</u> something! (please)" – a message that endured for most of the semester in this usually ephemeral location.

Task force conversations and faculty development projects became a mechanism for extending Miriam's personal pedagogical philosophy to a collective, and for intertwining it with other writing advocates' theoretical commitments. Although Miriam was a strong and ideologically defining figure in the Writing Task Force, members, who came from spectrum of disciplines, did express a range of perspectives on writing that were evident in publications and discussions. Ben, a member and the chair of the English Department, evoked the unity/differentiation dialectic when pointing out that these faceted perspectives were a strength of the group:

> BEN: The Writing Task Force is separate from the English Department…. And I think that's probably a good thing.
> COLLIE: Why?
> BEN: Because it brings to that conversation from the very beginning a range of commitments to writing in different areas of the college rather than it all coming out of English. We're all parochial, and English is the same. If you listen to all of us talk,…we're not unlike any other discipline. We have our perspective and so … the conversation about writing [in the Task Force] is much richer from the beginning because you have different people and different perspectives…. What we've learned …[is] that those people [in different disciplines] are writers…, that they have values about writing that matter to them, that they care about writing, that they want their students to write. …. So from the beginning there's this rich dialogue that is possible.
> Ben's further remarks, however, indicated that in the task force unity seemed to

edge out differentiation: "people […] have less of a stake in their professional identities,

in the discipline." Members joined because, as Miriam explained, "I select and I invite," but also because they fundamentally cared about writing. That commitment unified the group, while having multiple perspectives assured that the reasons writing mattered would be various, providing another kind strength that complemented Miriam's ideologically centering think/write/learn principle. The diversity of disciplinary representation was also a political strength that contributed to the general respect the group engendered on campus, aiding in its unstated mission of supporting the Center for Writing.

Statements from members during and about meetings indicated that there were intrinsic rewards to belonging to a group where intellectual discussions were stimulating. An email from one member to the rest of us after one meeting in 2007 captures that sense of the value members placed on the group's intellectual substance: "Today I was once again reminded why I remain on the [Writing Task Force] - the discussion was thought-provoking and I can say I learned something new again." In an interview, Ben explained how Miriam's leadership style facilitated such discussions, identifying her as "someone who can hold us accountable to our best ideas." There was wide agreement among the membership that the conversations were among the most interesting they joined on campus. The intellectual camaraderie that members found in belonging to this group indicate that the ideology of liberal culture, enacted in this manner, was not directly about producing students' intellectual and civic identities, but had to do with fostering a collaborative intellectual culture among faculty. The respect and elevation of intellectual conversation was a particularly sustaining, powerful feature of the rhetorical ecology around WAC projects at North River that both brought potential WAC agents together and facilitated the discursive movement of ideas to other quarters.

Although members clearly valued their intellectual engagement in the Writing Task Force, there were occasions when members sounded restless about accomplishing something, and they were not always in agreement about what tasks were appropriate for the group to tackle. The group sporadically debated whether it should be neutral or active on curricular changes. Conversations on that question had been evident since its inception and continued to arise during my observations. Kenneth, a longstanding and widely respected member, regularly argued against the group becoming overtly political by taking positions on programs or curriculum. Invoking the liberal culture/utility dialectic, he wanted to preserve the Writing Task Force's primary identity as an intellectual forum for discussion about issues around writing rather than have it evolve into a policymaking group serving an institution function. Additional textual and interview evidence further indicated the group's ambivalence on direct curricular involvement. Curriculum emerged from time to time as a hot topic, as is clear from newsletter issues entitled "Is English 101 a Bad Idea?" (2001) and "What Is the Role of Writing in a General Education Curriculum?" (2004), but the group usually opted for presenting differing perspectives and sparking campus discussion on such issues, while steering away from specifying programs or details despite their collective interest in promoting writing across the curriculum. These actions suggested a certain accountability for ideas, but autonomy from institutional structures.

As Yvonne and Simone noted in interviews, the 1993/94 study of students' self-reported experiences with writing over time highlighted a potential exigency for curricular change that the nascent Writing Task Force might have taken up in 1994. At that time, it could have been argued from the results that the three-semester writing "desert" that the study uncovered after freshman composition was grounds for curricular

reform. The evidence shows instead that the Writing Task Force's initial intent was aimed at altering pedagogies and perceptions about writing, that is, attending to the cultural context before or in lieu of addressing the curriculum directly.

In online documents available at the start of my study, a balance between liberal cultural and utilitarian conceptions of both writing and the group itself is evident in the Writing Task Force's mission. Interestingly, their overarching mission, "enabling the entire college to be committed to the effective and consistent teaching of writing," does not align tidily with either component of the classic WAC dialectic of writing to learn/writing in the disciplines, although both WID and unity are subtly suggested in the "entire college" phrase. A utilitarian concept of learning to write dominates. In light of this teaching-focused mission, the group's objectives statement carries more ideological complexity.

The first objective, "To facilitate conversation about writing on campus," has the liberal culture-unity flavor and was an objective manifested in informal conversation as well as in sponsored events and publications that raised intellectual and pragmatic writing issues for faculty consideration. "To support and advance writing-across-the curriculum projects" was the group's second objective, in very broad terms. In that there was no program as such, WAC projects at the college folded in elements from the other three objectives (cross-curricular conversations about writing were a WAC feature, as was faculty development and the Center for Writing). The third objective uses the utilitarian-accountability discourse of training, improvement, and teaching practice: "To support faculty development and training that improves the practice of teaching writing."   The ideology of unity is the main element of the final objective, "To collaborate with the Writing Center staff." Altogether, then, a single page of the 2004 web presence of the

90

Writing Task Force reflected a multilectic comprised of utility/liberal culture, unity, and accountability that was more evident than the WAC dialectic, although that does appear more emphatically in other representations of the group and its work.

Ideology aside (as if that were possible), language in the online mission and objectives statement about involvement in curriculum is vague, leaving room for project advocacy and support, but not identifying curricular change as the group's main purview. However, the group does take a position about the existing curriculum: "Writing should permeate the curriculum rather than remain relegated to English 101 and the few discipline-specific writing courses now offered." In this rhetorical move, the Writing Task Force identifies a situation that requires changing – insufficient WID – but does not specify what changes should be made in order for writing to "permeate the curriculum." It is unclear in this statement what meaning for writing the Writing Task Force ascribes. Did the group envisioned writing as a means for learning that "should permeating the curriculum" or did they seek the more utilitarian construct of skills instruction to be taken up across the curriculum? In this text alone, this crucial difference was not unpacked. The word "should" and the call for more of the college to take up writing did, however, suggest accountability's ideological significance in the position statement.

The group members' ambivalence about their role in direct curricular advocacy was only somewhat evident in the public face presented in the website, but ongoing debates within the group were referenced during my observations of 2006 and later, and may have contributed to the cautious language task force members sometimes used when publicly broaching curricular issues. For instance, one of their outreach activities since 1999 was sporadic publication of a newsletter distributed to all faculty. An October 2001 issue asks provocatively, "Is English 101 a Bad Idea?" but an accompanying article

clarifies that the Writing Task Force was not in the business of advocating for or against any particular changes, or of evaluating the English 101 program at North River. Instead, Miriam explains in the editor's column that the Writing Task Force sought to engage the campus in the national controversy over first year writing. She identifies the liberal cultural, intellectual, conversational purpose of the issue: "to explore how members of our campus feel about the theoretical value of English 101….[and] to facilitate and invite intellectual discussions" (1).

Whether explicitly stated or not, the newsletter was often a forum for enacting the group's discursive objective, "to facilitate conversation about writing." One strategic pattern noticeable in the archives and confirmed by Miriam was for the task force to raise a provocative intellectual question to the campus community then to follow this up with action such as further inquiry or a campus gathering, thus potentially invigorating and enlarging WAC's rhetorical ecology through discursive exchange with members of the community who were not already engaged in the network. An example of this approach is a cycle of articles that span the initial three editions of the newsletter from October 1999 to March 2000, engaging faculty on the theme of grading criteria for student writing, a theme clearly associated with accountability, a historically dominant cultural value, while also circulating alternative rhetorics of writing affiliated with WAC ideologies.

<u>"Is This an 'A' Paper?"</u>

The first article emerged from what Fairclough might identify as "intensive preoccupation" with writing standards, a discursive manifestation of accountability ideology. Recurring faculty discussions about grades, grammar, and "abstract notions

such as 'quality' " were reported in the newsletter as the exigency for the October 1999 article, titled, "Is This an 'A' Paper?"   In it, the Writing Task Force issued a call for an all-campus grading experiment. They provided a sample essay and a one-sentence explanation of the assignment; faculty were asked to grade the paper and describe its strengths and weaknesses.

One month later, the November newsletter included several follow up articles: findings from the grading experiment, related recommendations for faculty, and another assignment for faculty to grade, this time accompanied by the full assignment sheet the student had been given. The findings demonstrated little agreement among faculty about the overall quality of the original student sample for which no assignment sheet was attached. Grades ranged from A through F, and the article comments on remarkable differences in faculty perceptions of the clarity, organization, and even degree of grammatical accuracy of the sample. Miriam's write-up frames these results primarily in terms of individual differences: "The issue isn't that we reach consensus on definitions or values about writing…. The real issue is twofold: it's about how well we know ourselves and our own criteria, and how clearly we communicate our very individual expectations to students." In Yvonne's recommendations article in the same issue, differentiation is described in terms of disciplinary more than personal differences: "We tailor our assignments to reflect the thought processes and formats of our disciplines." Neither article suggests that individual or disciplinary differences in what is valued in a piece of writing are in and of themselves problematic. The issue is posed instead as a problem of assuming that personal or disciplinary criteria are universal standards that need not be discussed with students.

In this newsletter, Writing Task Force members discuss the findings of the grading experiment in terms that evoke a relationship between the ideological dialectic of unity/differentiation and accountability. They resist the unifying principles of standardization in light of faculty differentiation about writing expectations, yet cast pedagogical recommendations in unifying language. The authors use "we" and "our" pronouns to urge faculty to clarify individual expectations to students because neither "we" nor "our" students can assume that personal grading criteria are universal: "…if we want good writing from our students and we want to receive papers that actually meet our expectations, we need to take on the responsibility of explaining our assignments to our students." This article shifts accountability from students (who cannot be expected to adhere to universal standards, since these break down upon investigation) and instead holds faculty accountable. The articles together advocate a unifying pedagogical principle: given faculty differences, instructors should explicitly and in writing communicate their purposes, requirements, and grading criteria to students – who can then be held accountable to these explicit local standards.

Unity is an especially powerful ideology. Divergences from unifying assumptions can cause profound discomfort, registered even by task force members in a second stage of findings that was reported in the March 2000 newsletter. An article writing by Michelle, a physical education professor and founding member of the group, indicates: "Responses from Paper I … showed a <u>disturbing disparity</u> in grades assigned" (emphasis mine). Although the grade range reported from this second experiment was not as wide (A through C) as the previous experiment (A through F), it remained broad especially given that the assignment sheet was attached. The article language, however, gives scant attention to the remaining differentiation and instead concentrates on

94

overwording that emphasizes the unity of the responses, starting with the title: "Faculty Approach Consensus." Words such as "consensus," "agreement," "congruence," "congruity," and "synch," appear throughout the article.

The dominant multilectic evident in the cycle of articles around the grading experiment was unity/differentiation-writing in the disciplines-accountability. Although accountability was not evidently a central principle for the Writing Task Force, it was a constitutive ideology for assessment efforts, which were in high gear at the time due to an accreditation timeline, and a culturally dominant one. Reflecting that ideological emphasis, the findings from the study reported in "Is This An 'A' Paper" are mentioned, but reductively, in North River State's 1999/2000 institutional self-study for accreditation. The accreditation document flattens the findings and emphasizes only that "results showed a lack of common standards for the assessment of writing." As Edbauer demonstrated with her examples of the flexible uptake and alteration of "Make Austin Weird" rhetoric, in rhetorical ecology, the mobility of discourse means that an originating rhetor's intent may become lost or intentionally altered as language is reattached to different exigencies. In the case of the grading experiment findings, the Writing Task Force's exigency for exploring and circulating these differed from the writers of the self-study who appeared more ideologically aligned with universal standards-based conceptions of accountability, entirely silencing – at least in the venue of the self-study – the alternative conception of faculty accountability posited by members of the Writing Task Force.

The rhetoric of "lack" in the accreditation text suggests that faculty should develop standard ways to evaluate student writing, running counter to the Writing Task Force's position that writing quality can and should be evaluated differently depending

95

on the assignment context and the personal criteria of the instructor[18], as long as those criteria are communicated to students. Much of the textual record from this time span suggests a fundamental incompatibility between the two divergent belief systems; different understandings held by different stakeholders in writing at the college meant that crosstalk about writing, its meaning, and how it would be valued and taught, surfaced frequently.

Rewriting Pedagogy

A different lack that task force members perceived and sought to address was the absence of occasions to discuss writing pedagogy outside of their group or the English 101 instructor group. To that end, some of the Writing Task Force's earliest outreach activities to extend WAC's ecology included faculty development workshops, such as the reportedly highly attended 1996 workshop about responding to student writing that was mentioned in the Writing Center Newsletter of that same year. Miriam explained that she became impatient with the time constraints of brief workshops, though. Conversations would begin, people were interested, but it was difficult to build up to anything or to do any follow-through work with participants.

Miriam had previously collaborated intensively with Yvonne on such WAC projects as the pre-task force study of writing in 1993/94, and the two had coauthored the first campus-wide guides to writing in 1998 and 2000. Yvonne's departure from the group to concentrate on general education reforms and other projects shifted the composition of the task force and created a need for new project partners. Although Yvonne remained an ally of the center and the task force, as did Simone, two new

---

[18] These differences are furthermore a function of faculty autonomy, contributing to the viability of an understanding that such differences should be expected rather than erased in a college environment.

members invigorated the English Department/Center for Writing alliance and took the

Writing Task Force in new directions. When Ben, an English faculty member (hired in

1998) who had been a writing center director elsewhere, and Karen, the new director of

English 101 (hired in 2000) joined the task force, their combined investments and

energies were a timely addition. Yvonne spoke with me about the synergies between

Karen, Ben, and Miriam when I asked her to generalize about the rhetorical approaches

she observed in this trio:

> Karen … frames a philosophy that I think the four of us all just believe in, which is that writing will better inform instructors of what students know and have learned, that it really is a great gauge of how well you're teaching and reaching them…. For students, it's a way of making them smarter. It's a way of making them able to think and to really celebrate when they …get something so well that they can't wait to share it. And that's exciting.

The shared beliefs that Yvonne articulates here span writing's evaluative function (it

shows faculty "what students know and have learned") and its classic WAC function as a

means for learning. She continues, explaining how these beliefs about writing's utility on

both counts fuels Karen's rhetorical appeals to faculty:

> So when [Karen] talks to faculty, she talks about writing not as if it was a burden – which is how a lot of them see it, a great burden – but as this enterprise that the two can enter into and really get something out of, and I think that's really important. She's like a cheerleader, and I mean it really works. People do get excited about it. And I think that Ben and Miriam don't have quite that cheerleader quality about them, [She laughs]. Ben will approach it [as] serious intellectual engagement is what it's about. … Again, if you want to know if your students are learning, this is how you find out.
>
> Miriam I think has those same beliefs. When she's approaching faculty it tends to be much more issue focused, practical focused: here's what you can do; here's how you can do it; here's how other people have done it; you should listen to them; they'll tell you how to do it well…. Here's the newsletter. Here's an issue we should be grappling with, and here's what six people say about it. You know, where do you enter into that? And of course a lot of people don't enter into that at all, but when they do, she has that gift of saying this is not about me, this is about what the faculty on this campus are doing. This is what your colleagues are doing. You could be doing it, too. If you just put your mind to it.

So yeah, she's more of a prodder and less of a cheerleader, but they all work together pretty well.

Yvonne's take on the trio's beliefs about writing and her discussion about how these three rhetorical agents circulate those beliefs to other faculty privileges the ideology of utility. In pedagogical contexts, in which faculty will pragmatically want to know precisely how attention to writing will be useful to them and their students, this makes sense. What is not fully articulated here are other liberal cultural beliefs that motivate developing the intellectual climate of the institution through faculty and students use of writing for thinking and learning.

Ben describes how, in the Writing Task Force, individual beliefs about writing converged into a shared commitment that energized their work together, a phenomenon that, for him, starkly contrasted with committee work that had less intellectual passion behind it:

> We all complement one another in really interesting ways .… It's unpredictable and really fun in a way that a lot of the other work that I do … isn't, because … we like one another and we respect one another. …Sometimes in college committees … you show up. …. you do the work, but there isn't that ongoing commitment to something.… What it is, at root, is that we're really committed to a set of ideas that we share and [that] animate the whole. Because even if we said different things, at the base of all that we share really powerful fundamental ideas.

Ben indicated during our interview that this shared commitment to fundamental principles was characteristic of the Writing Task Force as a whole, but was intensified in the relationship that developed between him, Miriam, and Karen. These three formed a vibrant new working trio who collaborated to devise alternative ways to sustain contact with faculty and engage both the utilitarian and the liberal cultural arguments for writing across the curriculum. The evidence of this trio's combined energies was palpable by the time I began my exploratory research in 2004, especially in the Writing Institute that they

98

co-created, building on a decade's worth of workshops and forums hosted by the task force.

<u>The Writing Institute</u>

Miriam explained that broad pedagogical changes she hoped to encourage could not take hold in any consistent manner when the task force was only able to offer sporadic, 50-minute faculty workshops. So Miriam, Karen, and Ben wrote an internal grant to strengthen the Writing Task Force's faculty development offerings. The trio coordinated their first Writing Institute in 2003; this weeklong event attracted six participants from disciplines as varied as mathematics, art, and anthropology, and became an annual fixture of the college beyond the end of my study.

According to facilitator reports, the core activity of the initial institute week remained consistent in subsequent years. The Writing Institute design was both theoretical and practical. Participants read and discussed selected composition theory to better understand student writing and faculty response[19]; the centerpiece of the theoretical work was Miriam's introduction of readings on developmental psychology and discussion of these theories' bearing on student writing. The facilitators' practical goal was for faculty to experiment with applying the theoretical principles during the following academic year, particularly through revision of their writing assignments and response practices.

---

[19] Selections from 2005 were numerous and included multiple articles by David Bartholomae, Nancy Sommers, Gordon Harvey, and Peter Elbow (including text from his 1994 presentation at North River State, "Writing for Learning – Not Just for Demonstrated Learning"), as well as Robert Kegan, "The Constitutions of the Self," William Perry, "Cognitive and Ethical Growth: The Making of Meaning," Marcia Curtis and Anne Herrington, "Writing Development in the College Years: By Whose Definition?" – among others.

The summer institute was repeated in 2004[20] with the same core approach. This time seven participants attended, including two from health science and a cohort of three psychology faculty. The cohort from the Psychology Department was a fortuitous development; the trio turned out to be an enduring departmental alliance, one of the informal groups that contributed to North River's writing culture over time.

When comparing 2004 institute participant interviews with my 2005 field notes, I was struck by the continuity of the writing to learn ideology that the facilitators introduced to participants. Interviews with the three psychology faculty ten months after the 2004 institute show that participants used and reflected on the writing to learn discourse they had taken up during that experience. They also elaborated on and integrated this discourse with some of their other values. I cross-reference the excerpted reflections from the psychology cohort with concatenating discourse from other occasions to demonstrate the mobility, endurance, and adaptability of the central ideology promoted by the Writing Institute facilitators, as well as to show points of ideological conflict.

Adding Writing vs. Integrating Writing

Jennifer, an assistant professor fairly new to the Psychology Department, characterized her experiments with her teaching approach in terms that aligned with the discourse of the institute: "I'm trying to use writing as a way of learning, and as a venue

---

[20] Because my presence at the 2004 institute predated formal Institutional Review Board approval process, I do not include observation notes from my exploratory work of 2004. The excerpts I present derive instead from my next stage of research that built upon that introduction, including interviews with selected participants from the 2004 institute, archival materials, and participant-observation field notes from the 2005 institute. The pedagogical emphases, coordinators' theoretical premises, and arrangement of course materials were similar across years, although the discussion details did vary due to the different people involved.

for [students] focusing on critical thinking and reasoning skills…. Content is always important, but it's the higher processing of information that's more important." Jennifer's elevation of "higher processing of information" over content alludes to some local perceptions that delivery of disciplinary content and attention to writing competed for pedagogical time. Sue, a health science professor who attended the May 2005 institute, called this tension a "constant battle of content versus process."

A comment Sue made on day three of the 2005 institute contextualized the feeling of accountability for content delivery that other faculty expressed as well, especially those in professional programs such as education and health sciences where broad institutional accreditation pressures are compounded by those of the fields' credentialing associations. Sue had written her program's accreditation self-study in 2003. In order to meet accreditation requirements, Sue explained, health science graduates had "ninety-eight competencies" the program needed to demonstrate they were meeting. Her institute colleague from the Physical Education Department was similarly concerned about meeting program accreditation requirements. Discussion about this issue resurfaced in an August follow-up meeting of the 2005 cohort as they were fine tuning their assignments for the upcoming semester.

Several pages of my notes from that August meeting are studded with language such as "standards," "accreditation," "requirements," "competencies," reflecting participants' concern about their accountability to external bodies. The degree of attention participants felt they needed to give to the content standards in their programs sometimes made the addition of writing to learn seem difficult even to participants who expressed personal investment in the philosophy and pedagogical approaches introduced at the institute. In this expression of conflict, the overlap of two rhetorical ecologies with

101

distinctive purposes deriving from different ideological commitments was beginning to be evident.

Jennifer from the 2004 cohort alluded to the content/process tensions that were operative at North River, but Sue and others among the 2005 institute participants seemed more preoccupied with the issue. Sue's experiences taking responsibility for her program's self assessment contributed to this strand of conversation, but another cause may have been a development unique to the 2005 institute. Del, an administrator who was very much involved with assessment and curricular issues, observed during the full institute week.

The first Writing Institute in 2003 had been comprised entirely of facilitators and six faculty participants. The institute in 2004 that I attended was the first occasion this group shared their activities with an outside observer. By 2005, interest in what was happening during these faculty institutes had resulted in external grant funding, my continued research presence, and the addition of two other participant-observers who attended for most of the sessions. One was a faculty member making a documentary of the institute, and the other was Del, the assistant vice president of Academic Affairs. The head count in 2005 thus included three facilitators, seven core participants, and the three participant-observers. Del's presence in particular signaled that this voluntary faculty development opportunity was now on the institutional radar.

I introduced Del briefly in chapter 2 as the participant whose administrative work necessitated familiarity with accountability discourses. Her participation in the institute was significant for several reasons. One was that although the facilitators kept steering conversation away from curricular concerns and back toward pedagogy, Del's curricular interests emerged again and again, and were in part shared by other participants. Del also

brought to the institute agendas and ideological commitments (such as curricular reform and accountability) that were not only informed by her administrative perspective, but also were propelled by the Faculty Senate's recent vote, just one month before the institute, to approve a set of long-gestated general education principles and outcomes. Most importantly, her presence at this institute was a precursor to her acute interest the following year in another project that emerged from Writing Task Force members.

During the institute, Del's discourse about assessment and curriculum shared common ground with faculty anxiety over content tradeoff when they contemplated adding time-intensive pedagogical processes like writing. Ben addressed such concerns, fusing the writing to learn/writing in the disciplines dialectic into a writing to learn in the disciplines concept as he articulated a position that writing to learn is integral to, rather than in competition with, disciplinary goals: "When faculty talk about WAC, it is always additive. But writing is a powerful means by which students can acquire content, [and] wrestle with core questions of the field," he told the group. Ben's statement posits writing as a tool that can be used toward utilitarian, differentiated ends.

This moment in the third day of the 2005 institute – during which discussion of WAC principles intersected with both disciplinary concerns and related accreditation issues – formed a complex multilectic comprised of the WAC dialectic of writing to learn/writing in the disciplines, plus utility, differentiation, and accountability ideologies. The existence of multilectics such as this does not mean that all the ideologies present aligned with one another, but only that multiple ideologies were discursively formed into recombinant, interactive clusters during a single discursive event.

Although the institute facilitators were not using the theoretical framework I apply in my analysis, their rhetorical actions indicated sensitivity to the participants'

other ideological commitments. Ben's move to position writing as integral to disciplinary work was a hybridizing attempt. Miriam addressed disciplinary difference by acknowledging it and finding alternative points of unity. She spoke of how much others like Sue had to contend with, and how she, Ben, and Karen had the "luxury" of giving their first attention to their students' writing because of the kinds of courses they taught. Miriam asked, however, that faculty from other disciplines use the institute as autonomous faculty members to focus on "what's important; what are you looking for?" instead of becoming caught up in all the discrete competencies accreditation put on the table. Karen reinforced Miriam's emphasis on faculty autonomy. She also incorporated utility rhetorics when she asked one faculty member who was perseverating over how many goals a course must accomplish: "But what do you want them to be able to <u>do</u>?" She also reassured the faculty that students could "work through ideas with writing," calling up Ben's fusion approach of writing to learn in the disciplines.

<u>Focusing on Difference to Move toward Unity</u>

In chapter 2, I mentioned that the facilitators of the Writing Institute explicitly used differences in values around writing to frame the institute experience. The activity they used to do this contained threads of the discussion of grading differences that had been published more than five years prior in the November 1999 <u>Writing Task Force Newsletter</u>. In both the newsletter and the institute, task force members posited personal and disciplinary reasons that faculty applied different values about writing as they evaluated student work. The first day of the 2005 institute was entirely devoted to naming and analyzing these kinds of different values held by the participants.

In Miriam's opening remarks for the week, she explained that for the first day and a half, she wanted people to set aside their concerns about students and student writing. The agenda was to "open up ways of thinking about writing, why we ask for it in the first place, what compels you to keep doing it, how … you conceive of this process…. It's got to start with you. What do you value? [What are the] constraints of the disciplines? [Do you] perpetuate, disagree [with these constraints]?" By Thursday the group would begin rethinking writing assignments and exploring pedagogical possibilities suggested by the previous days' theoretical discussions.

To further position faculty, rather than students, as the subjects of the work that Monday, participants all brought drafts of a current writing project for discussion. Karen led participants into small group work: "[We will] talk briefly about the texts of what we write, notice how they are visually different, notice language use differences." She had participants show drafts to each other and explain their writing contexts and struggles. An accompanying handout asked faculty to list both their disciplinary and individual values for good writing. "Is there a discrepancy?" Karen asked. "Are they the same? Different?"

Much of the first three days of the institute focused on articulating not only faculty differences but also developmental differences between student and faculty writers. This attention to differentiation paradoxically provided a context for the ideology of unity, an ideology that was inherent in the facilitators' principle of writing as a means for thinking and learning across disciplinary contexts. Unity rhetorics included terms like "center," "core," and "integral." As these excerpts from the institute demonstrate, instances where these unifying terms surfaced also frequently invoked the writing to learn ideology:

105

"May I be utopian here for just a moment? What if – where do we <u>start</u> if writing is central to a course – [and] content [is] scaled down? …. How do you design a course around writing?" (Ben, facilitator, day 1).

"What's the core piece? …. Is this about learning to think and to write to learn? A <u>cycle</u>?" (Irma, education faculty, day 2)

"What do you ask students to think about? How well do you ask them to think? [This is] integrated…. Writing ties the curriculum together." (Miriam, facilitator, day 2)

"Processes of reading and writing are integral to cognition."   (Miriam, day 2)

Bullet points on the chalkboard during discussion of cognitive developmental theory and related articles on writing, day 3:
- It is the <u>writing itself</u> that causes the [cognitive] shifts
- Writing as a developmental intervention

"Doing academic writing is an invitation to participating at the table. For these articles [the readings for the day[21]], writing is the main course, the entrée. You may not believe that. Writing is not a sidebar, not appetizer, dessert. Not to put disciplines at the side, but this is an intense … integration [of writing and disciplinary content]." (Miriam, day 3)

At the follow-up gathering of the 2005 Writing Institute cohort in August, faculty

discussed their new assignments. Violet, from communications, affirmed the institute's

unifying language: "It's all about integration."

<u>The Utility of Writing to Learn</u>

Another core ideology evident during this institute was utility. The utilitarian

concept of writing as a tool had been in written circulation since at least 1993 at North

River[22], including in an excerpt from the description of the institute: "an opportunity to

---

[21] Nancy Sommers & Laura Saltz, "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year," and Marcia Curtis & Anne Herrington, "Writing Development in the College Years: By Whose Definition?"

[22] The phrase, "writing as a tool of learning," appeared in the 1993 English Composition manual.

work closely with faculty in other disciplines to find ways to use writing as a tool for learning and not just a method of evaluation."[23] An introductory letter to students in the 2000-2001 writing guide by Yvonne and Miriam also includes the tool metaphor: "…writing is a useful tool for learning. Writing can help you clarify your thoughts, work through ideas and problems, remember what you have learned and realize what you haven't, and prepare you to respond to a situation (3). An edition of the guide written by Karen and Miriam for 2004-2005 shows the enduring circulation of the concept: "The [North River State College] community … values writing as a learning tool as well as a form of communication and expression" (11).

Barbara, a psychologist from the 2004 cohort, picked up on the utilitarian "tool" metaphor. In this excerpt, Barbara adapts the rhetoric of writing as a tool to describe its fit with her clinical and personal values:

> I've always been interested in writing as a tool. As a matter of fact… I was in a women's writing group years ago just for my own personal benefit, and I've always been interested in writing as a therapeutic tool in my practice as well.

Barbara's example shows that when a rhetoric such as "writing as a tool" circulates, it can become inflected with disciplinary and personal values that specify what the tool is for; this phenomenon suggests connections between ideologies of utility and differentiation as they intersect with WAC.

Barbara's colleague, Claude, was the third psychologist from the 2004 Institute cohort. His evaluation of the utility of writing evokes an additional set of ideologies as he mapped the new discourse onto his existing knowledge and commitments:

> You know we keep stressing … writing to learn in the institute but actually I'm aware of both the strengths and the limitations of writing to learn. … Writing

---

[23] This line from the Institute description strikingly echoes the sense and syntax of the title of Peter Elbow's talk from a decade prior, "Writing for Learning – Not Just for Demonstrated Learning."

allows you to … spell out an idea in serial form, slows you down, you get to look at the gaps in the argument, allows you to develop an argument that is bigger than you can think about at one time, but I have a whole chapter in my thesis that talks about the difference between mathematical models and verbal models, and a number of instances where people … using …verbal reasoning and verbal argument came to …wrong conclusions. …

In writing you don't have to specify your premises. You don't have a set rule for how you go from premises to conclusions the way you do in mathematics. So I think the limitations have to be acknowledged for me as well.

Like Barbara's comments, Claude's measurement of strengths and weaknesses he perceived in writing to learn contains traces of the utility ideology. What does writing allow one to <u>do</u>? In positive terms: form extended, complex arguments. The drawback for Claude is that one can also make erroneous arguments using writing. The tool metaphor is unstated but evoked; writing in this conception is a potentially flawed tool that can result in bad logic or "wrong conclusions" in the finished product, or more to the point of writing to learn, wrong conclusions in the writer's thinking. In addition to the ideology of utility, Claude's evaluation here evokes accountability, in that he evaluates the efficacy of writing as a tool for learning to think clearly and logically.

Although in this excerpt Claude's skepticism about writing to learn is foregrounded, it is important to note that institute facilitators referred to him as a "model participant." He questioned premises, but he shared the facilitators' deep commitment to student learning, and he experimented with incorporating writing and substantive response even in his largest lecture classes. Claude's ongoing consideration of writing's role in his pedagogies was furthermore influenced by belonging to a strong cohort of other psychologists. In an interview, his colleague Barbara discussed the function and appeal of having others with whom to share approaches and experiences:

I think that just being able to have people in the department to talk to about what you are doing keeps the ball rolling. You know you don't feel … like you're the

only one you come in contact with who is doing this[24]. … There's a lot of overlap in what [Jennifer and I] teach. She does a case study paper too, although she does it very differently from the way I do it. So we do a lot of talking. We even do case consultation ourselves…. We're both practicing psychologists outside of the college very part time, so we have that in common as well. … I think it does help for people who have … collegial relationships with one another to be doing it [teaching with writing] almost as a team.

During the year after their institute, the three psychology faculty not only had each other to continue pedagogical discussions with, but they also took Miriam up on an offer she made to all Writing Institute faculty. Anyone who participated in the institute could request an experienced undergraduate writing assistant – a tutor from the Center for Writing – with whom they could collaborate in order to facilitate the pedagogical experimentation encouraged by the Writing Institute. These were highly flexible arrangements, most commonly involving writing assistants becoming familiar with the core writing assignment of the course and tutoring all students in the class at some point during their drafting.   Miriam offered this in light of faculty anxieties about "adding" writing, but it also was a means for stitching relationships between the Center for Writing and participating departments, for weaving the rhetorical network.

Centering Writing

Even before the 2004 institute, the facilitators recognized that voluntary writing assistant arrangements and fortuitous disciplinary cohorts, although valuable, did not guarantee the degree of sustained involvement that was needed to do justice to the complexities of pedagogical change. For the third year of the institute in 2005, facilitators made fundamental changes to the institute's funding stream and its duration.

---

[24] Violet, the only journalist from the '05 institute, remarked during a panel event that she felt that sense of connection cross-curricularly: "It helps that people across campus are [also working on this]. Students are seeing [writing] as part of our culture."

These were related. In addition to the five days in the summer, an external grant supported participants' continued relationships through monthly meetings of the cohort and regular teaching consultations between facilitators and individual faculty members.

In the context of pedagogical work during the 2005 institute, Ben asked faculty what it meant to place writing at the center of a course; the proposal written late in 2003 that ultimately won financing for that institute more broadly asserts that writing is central, not just to pedagogy, but to the college. This concept of centrality is not directly evident in the Writing Task Force mission statement in online circulation during that time period. It states: "Given [North River State's] mission as a public liberal arts college, the teaching and learning of effective writing is the primary mission of the [Writing Task Force]." Key phrases such as the utilitarian "effective writing" and vague liberal cultural implications of "mission [of] a public liberal arts college" concatenate across genres but are set out in relatively unassertive terms in the online document. In comparison, the grant proposal's language asserts a foundational claim for writing's centrality: "Since 1993 [sic], the [North River State College Writing Task Force] … has promoted the idea that the teaching and learning of effective writing should be at the center of our mission as a public liberal arts college." As elaborated in the proposal, this statement unequivocally exposes the ideological agenda the Writing Institute was intended to serve, one that mingles the liberal cultural-writing to learn ideological partnership with a utilitarian-accountability inflected concept of learning to write.

Unlike the assumed institutional audience for the online Writing Task Force mission statement, the proposal's audience – the granting agency – had no inherent stake in the culture of North River State, so it was rhetorically appropriate to be direct about an agenda. In fact, not having one might have been detrimental to the argument for

funding. The less direct statements on the website of the same period may have been

politic, nonthreatening to other institutional stakeholders who might not have embraced a

direct agenda for positioning writing at the center of the college.

According to the grant proposal, although "the College is very much committed to

writing and to the teaching of writing," the "campus culture" interfered with positioning

writing centrally. The writers elaborated on what constituted the problematic culture,

invoking Elbow's discourse from a decade previous – writing for learning, not just for

evaluation – while also criticizing the prevalence of skills discourse. They asserted:

> Helping faculty become more effective teachers of writing requires not only
> intensive training, but sustained support. However, we face a campus culture that
> relegates writing instruction to a single introductory course taught, in large part,
> by adjunct instructors. Moreover, it is evident that:
> - Our students lack consistent instruction in writing, even though they are
>   expected to write well;
> - The majority of our faculty, despite a decade's worth of effort, still view
>   writing merely as a skill[25]—something that is learned once and then used
>   when necessary;
> - Most faculty members see writing as a way to evaluate students rather
>   than a way to facilitate learning; the notion that writing and thinking are
>   inextricably linked is a vague notion—if it is present at all.

In a letter of appreciation to the funding organization, Miriam, Ben, and Karen reiterate

the broad cultural-ideological agenda their pedagogical institute was intended to serve,

stating: "these efforts will transform the culture of writing on our campus."

---

[25] In my 2005 interview with Ben, he discussed his approach to countering skills discourse, using
the WAC dialectic and unity ideologies . "…[S]kill is not isolated from [content] – they're
working together…. Writing is one means by which we acquire content knowledge in the
disciplines. And it's not the only one. It's a really good one. But when you talk about it that way
it becomes clear that it's not just a skill. It's not isolated. It is integrated with the learning about
biology or learning about Tolstoy or what have you.

The process of transforming North River's institutional culture was neither speedy nor straightforward. It was an ongoing ideological agenda set and reset by key players – Miriam, the Writing Task Force and the trio within it, the English/Center for Writing alliance – that entailed multiple agenda items, and these shifted over time as conditions of the institutional context changed. The groups and individuals involved extended into an intricate network that, together, altered discourse, pedagogy, and curriculum related to writing. I bracket ideology for a moment to map this phenomenon as it existed at the college. Figure 1 represents the network of elements and interrelationships – a rhetorical ecology – through which changes to the culture of writing at North River State were facilitated, circa 2005.
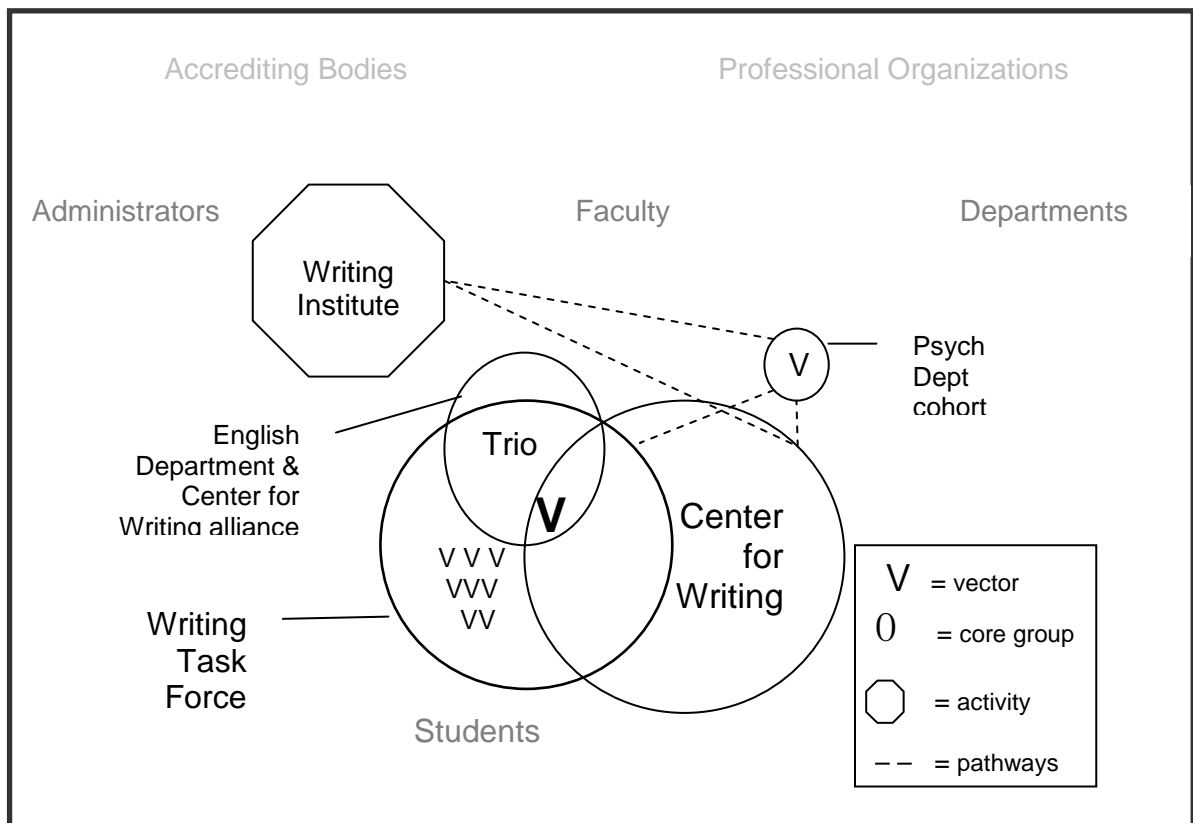
Figure 1: The Rhetorical Ecology of WAC at North River State College, 2005

<u>Groups</u>

Although the image utilizes interlocking circles, and this is a model of groups that share some membership overlap, this representation is not exactly a Venn diagram because the relationships I seek to represent here are so intricately networked that it would be difficult to visually represent the multiple connections and their varying intensities, including the dimension of time, without overly complicating the display. It can be useful, however, to imagine the circular figures (such as the Writing Task Force) within the ecology as core, connective groups that share WAC's local ideological agenda. Other groups represented in grayscale text (such as students and professional organizations) are also part of the WAC rhetorical ecology, but not necessarily invested in WAC's ideological agenda. Each group has the capacity to connect in some manner with any of the other groups in the rhetorical ecology, such as through shared membership (as the Venn elements display), through collaborative activity, or through discursive circulation of ideas. Groups are richly connected when key members participate in more than one group and when groups share joint activities.

An example clarifies the complexity of interconnections in this model. The small oval labeled "Psychology Department cohort" represents the group of three psychology faculty whose collegial relationships predated their joint participation in the ideological agenda of changing the culture of writing at North River State. Their alliance toward this end was solidified during the 2004 Writing Institute, which is represented by a faceted shape because although it can be considered a group (a node), it is also an activity (something groups do). The Writing Institute was sponsored by the Writing Task Force but coordinated by a subgroup, here represented by a distinct node marked Trio. With disciplinary links to other long-time English Department allies, the trio also forms the

"English Department & Center for Writing alliance" because it was part of a contemporary iteration of a well-established alliance between the department and the center.

The Psychology Department cohort had a self-sustaining relationship characterized by frequent interaction among the three members around pedagogical issues. This node is not represented as free-floating, however, because the group remained connected to the Center for Writing after the Writing Institute experience due to individual participants' relationships with the center's director and their pedagogical partnerships with writing assistants the director designated for them. Further enriching the network of relationships along the dimension of time, one member of the psychology cohort had been a Writing Task Force member some years prior to her participation in the Writing Institute.

Vectors

An additional facet of the rhetorical ecology is the presence of vectors who energize groups, move among nodes, and can travel outside of the local ecology.   Ideas need a vehicle to "go viral" (that is, move through a system as a virus would, replicating and mutating). Vectors, either as individuals or a collectivity, function as this vehicle; they move ideas through an ecology by forging connections between individuals and groups, causing interactions that not only transmit ideas but expose them to alteration, modulation, and hybrid recombination with others. Although texts do some of this grunt work of transferring ideas, vectors in this model of a rhetorical ecology have qualities of commitment and agency that, though manifested in text production, are characteristic of individuals or groups rather than the materials they create.

Rhetorical ecology concepts of virus that Edbauer introduces and of vector as I use it derive from medical language; a related mathematical definition of vector is also useful because it provides two dimensions of vectors, magnitude and direction, which I loosely adapt to illustrate vectors' function in a rhetorical ecology as I came to understand it at North River State. Three different kinds of vector are represented in Figure 1: a central vector, a disciplinary vector, and a collective.

I consider a vector's magnitude in terms of commitment and connectivity. A vector's magnitude can further be plotted in terms of power, either institutionally vested power such as represented in administrative positions, or power accrued through means of commitment and connectivity, or some combination of both. Direction can be conceived of as pathways a vector forges for an idea. The director of the Center for Writing (Miriam) is a central vector, a particularly strong individual agent in two areas of magnitude due to her principled commitment to the ideological agenda and her multiple connections to groups and individuals within and beyond this agenda's immediate rhetorical ecology. Miriam is represented by a large **V** in the graphic at the area of membership overlap between the Center for Writing, the Writing Task Force, the task force trio and its broader departmental alliance with the center.

For visual simplicity, Figure 1 does not represent all vectors or emergent departmental alliances in the WAC network in 2005, and it certainly does not illustrate all the connecting pathways between groups. However, the example of the Psychology Department cohort does indicate how vectors established connections that expanded the rhetorical ecology of WAC. The former Writing Task Force member, Barbara, was a vector (symbolized with a v) to the Psychology Department, bringing the discourse of writing to learn to her colleagues and inviting them to connect to the Writing Institute.

This vector's movement between core groups forged pathways from the Writing Task Force to her department to the Writing Institute, then followed an existing pathway between the Writing Institute and the Center for Writing.   As will be evident in chapter 5, other departments had similar vectors not delineated in this figure.

A third vector represented in Figure 1 is a collective rather than an individual; at certain key times, the Writing Task Force functioned as a vector when the group acted with one voice, such as when making its argument for Miriam's change in status, and during its support for the writing center's move to independence as an instructional/academic area rather than a service unit. On other occasions, the collective unified around an issue to raise in such public forums as a newsletter, in-house panel, or conference presentation, but on these occasions they typically utilized members' faceted perspectives rather than a singular voice.   The different modes of operation depended on the task. To get something concrete done, strength and singularity of purpose were often chosen. To facilitate culture-making through conversation, however, a tactic of providing multiple perspectives on one central issue seemed to be more suitable because this strategy offers other constituents many potential points of connectivity to the core of discussion.

Once vectors established network pathways, others who did not necessarily have the same magnitude of commitment or connectivity could nevertheless recognize and use these pathways. For example, psychology faculty who participated in Writing Institutes after 2005 traversed a pathway forged by Barbara and further established by the departmental alliance.

The medium through which all this viral networking happens is discourse, and the purpose that drives the relationships in this particular rhetorical ecology is the shared ideological agenda of creating a culture of writing.

<u>Revisiting the Writing Task Force, Rethinking the Task</u>

As this map of the rhetorical ecology of WAC advocate's ideological agenda suggests, the network involved in changing the campus writing culture was rich and expanding. By 2005, the Center for Writing was a well-established independent entity, the director's position was securely tenure track, the Writing Institute had attracted external funding to deepen its offerings, and a core relationship between Miriam, Ben, and Karen had solidified around developing the institute. Alliances in various departments were beginning to emerge due to cross-disciplinary engagement in elements of the cultural change. More broadly, reforms to the general education curriculum and transition plans for a 4-credit model were gaining momentum on campus, and these conditions seemed ripe for continuing to strengthen the culture and position of writing. Given all this accomplishment and momentum, Miriam began to feel restless about the purpose of the Writing Task Force. She wondered what its task was, in 2005, now that "we've gotten everything we wanted."

> I have been at a loss with the task force this year. … We've gotten everything we wanted and I'm not sure I can think of a project for us to be doing. The [writing] guide's out. You know, I get bored. I don't just want to do another newsletter. You know we've been doing newsletters. That's cool but… the campus is 4-credit, 3-credit, there's so much going on: [new] president, VPA, and we got the …grant [for the institute]. So what is this group of wonderful people going to do [now] other than support me? … I can't find it. So … I brought it to them and I said, "This is how I'm feeling."   And [a member] said, "…Should we disband?" And I said, "Well, let's talk about that."   …We decided that it was very important that we … not disband, that we be a presence during the transitions. But I still couldn't find a direction.

Miriam spoke of her discomfort using the task force only to sustain the existing gains.

She used terms that evoked the ideology of innovation as she wondered whether

publishing "another newsletter" really contributed anything to an institutional context

where there was "so much going on."   This group had the demonstrated capacity to act

as a vector. Collectively, they had a shared commitment to a overarching ideology, but

without a concrete direction they only had magnitude of commitment and potential

connectivity, but no place to go.

Ben discussed this period of uncertainty as well, and of the process of finding new

purpose for a group that had achieved so much on its self-defined agenda. I quote his

interview at length because Ben narrates this critical juncture well, especially detailing

the creation of fresh exigency for the group's continued existence in the rhetorical

ecology:

> …[T]he task force exists in this really interesting space, and … it is the
> astonishing savvy of Miriam to recognize that space and to fill it …. I don't think
> that she planned it. No way. But she takes advantage of … situations as they
> evolve, and now it's consolidated. I mean now she has a faculty position. She's
> interdisciplinary. We have the [grant] money. We have these various
> components, the [Writing Task Force] –   we're working on the task force.
> What's [its] role …? With [the Writing Institute] really happening, what about
> the task force? … we're concerned about it.
> So Miriam goes to 4Cs [College Composition and Communication Conference]. I
> sit down with Yvonne and Karen over spring break for quiche and coffee and long
> afternoon conversations and we're talking about the same things: …what about
> 101? What about what we're going to do in Gen Ed? What does it look like to
> have writing at the center of the undergraduate experience at North River State?
> What does that look like? So Miriam is off listening to Nancy Sommers in San
> Francisco. We're sitting [back home] and we're talking the same stuff. And so
> then we get back together and Miriam looks at me and says, "We've got it. This
> is the task force."

As a strong vector, Miriam worked both inside and outside the expanding local rhetorical

ecology of the groups' writing agenda for the college. She used conferences as idea

expeditions that might provoke further development of the agenda. In San Francisco, she

had been especially inspired by a session on a first year writing program in which courses

were taught by faculty from across the curriculum, and she brought her excitement about

this idea back to her allies in the English Department:

> I went to this theme-based English 101 session…. Sitting there very quietly
> thinking, "I don't know why I'm going to a 101 program because that's not me,"
> but this looked kind of interesting. I go and I [think], "Wow this is fantastic. This
> is what we need." And then I heard other people in the audience asking
> questions, "Well, we do this at my school," and I was thinking … there's a lot
> going on in 101.

In Miriam's conversations with members of this informal alliance, it became clear that

dismantling the old English 101 and reworking it as a WAC course was something others

supported, but that they would need to proceed with care. Ben explained the way the

alliance decided to navigate the politics of transforming the curriculum of the college's

sole required course:

> BEN: …[R]ather than Karen and Ben or Karen, Ben, and Yvonne, or Karen, Ben,
> Yvonne and Miriam – whatever combination of that group – redesigning the first
> year experience course, whatever it is, some sort of seminar whatever – rather
> than us doing that, it's the task force. There's this existing group that can
> redesign the first year course and make it a writing intensive instruction or
> whatever you want to call it course. And it's coming from them. It's not coming
> from one department. Because that's the other problem. If you have it come
> from a department, you're already politically disadvantaged. Because everybody
> already has a sense of who you are and what your priorities are and they've
> already made those kinds of judgments, distinctions, whatever. And we're also
> blinkered. We all see it from where we see it.
> So … we go [to the task force] and we say we're going to talk with the
> Gen Ed committee next week. What are we going to say? Let's imagine
> something different.
> COLLIE: We, the task force?
> BEN: We, the task force. It includes all of us…. So Karen and I say we're willing
> to give up 101. We're willing to entertain that idea. We have good reasons to do
> it. There's [also] good reasons to keep it. I think we understand both of them,
> staffing implications and so on. Adjunct issues, all of it is coming into play. But
> the basic thing is to say, "Look we've been having this conversation for years.
> What can we imagine that would be better based on what we've been talking
> about?" So we have them do that work.
> COLLIE: The work of imagining?

BEN: The work of imagining. And it's outside of the disciplinary structures of the college. It transcends all of that stuff.

The Writing Task Force had raised curricular issues in the past as part of their discursive mission to get faculty talking and thinking about writing in broader ways than the prevalent skills discourse. But the group had previously skirted direct involvement in curriculum, and some members remained hesitant to take that step.

Although in 2005 Miriam, Ben, and others envisioned the Writing Task Force utilizing their uniquely interdisciplinary space to propel radical change to first year writing, their project's timing coincided with massive general education reforms, thus attracting other constituents into the course design and implementation.

In chapter 5, I describe the contested project in depth. As the informal network of WAC advocates tried to advance their ideological agenda, expanding their influence from pedagogical to curricular change, they attempted to collaborate with groups more firmly embedded in institutional structures who saw the course in very different terms. Despite the ideological fray resulting from this incomplete alliance, a new course was conceived, piloted in 2006, and fully replaced English 101 in the fall of 2007. My analysis focuses on ideological conflicts and resonances evident during course development and its 2006 pilot institute. I analyze the differing ideological bases for the course as deployed by general education reformers and WAC advocates, and discuss the rhetorical practices of those WAC advocates most intimately involved in the curricular struggle.

CHAPTER 5

CURRICULAR INTERFERENCE

The idea of having the Writing Task Force develop an innovative cross-curricular first year writing course arose at a time of intensive curricular activity at North River State. During its initial stages of formal development from 2005-2007, the idea of this first year course was situated at a convergence of two different ideological projects, both cross-curricular, and both doing the kinds of work that Walvoord indicates have the potential for viable WAC alliances. Because of profound ideological differences, however, the original principles for the course change proposed by task force members became subordinated to those of general education reformers, requiring WAC advocates to compromise, adapt, and bide their time.

Conditions and Exigencies for Changing English 101

The two groups who became involved in transforming the first year course had differing reasons to do so.

WAC Exigencies

For writing's chief advocates on campus, the timing seemed ideal to substantially change first year writing, invigorating it with a variety of faculty-initiated themes and enriching it with a sustained research and writing project. The rhetorical ecology for WAC at North River had expanded to include a sizable number and impressive breadth of campus constituents, among them undergraduate peer tutors, the dean of Humanities, and a growing number of faculty representing every division. All shared some understanding of writing's relationship to thinking and learning, the core commitment of this network. Official arenas where this concept was central – the Center for Writing, the Writing Task

Force, and the Writing Institute – were complemented by the growth of unofficial alliances and cohorts of invested faculty members. Furthermore, the whole faculty had exposure to the discourse of writing as a means for learning and thinking through the Writing Task Force newsletter and events. This growing network suggested that ideological conditions at the college had changed sufficiently to support a rigorous new model for first year writing.

Change was in the air. Unity and innovation rhetorics abounded in the rhetorical ecology of the college as a whole. The idea of "the new" figured prominently in campus events and publications in the wake of shifts in top leadership positions. In 2005, the administration's campaign for broad curricular reforms relied heavily on the ideology of innovation, and on the value of uniting behind change. The college's marketing strategies during this period discursively privileged the institution's liberal arts identity, linking it to rhetorics of excellence. Into this active multilectic of innovation-unity-liberal culture, it did seem like apt timing to propose transforming English 101, the only required course in the curriculum and one that was perceived in ideological terms that did not appear to be currently dominant; the course was widely understood to be traditional and utilitarian. An exigency as well was Miriam's sense that the Writing Task Force was in need of a task significant enough to justify continuing to come together.

Both Ben and Miriam envisioned the Writing Task Force's potential role in this effort as substantial. They also calculated that by the fall of 2006 there would be twenty-one faculty from across the disciplines who would have shared the Writing Institute experience. These faculty could be the pool for the new course; they could create differentiated sections reflecting their own personal interests and disciplinary themes; thus, for the first time, providing students with content choices about the first year writing

course. Yet faculty could also continue to work with the institute facilitators for their continuing development as teachers of writing, with a common understanding of what that meant anchored in the theoretical integration of writing and thinking.

In 2005, Simone shared Miriam's sense that sustained attention to writing pedagogy had at last made it imaginable to enact such ambitious curricular change: "I think now that would be possible, to have a first year student seminar, because I think we have, as a result of all the work of the Writing Task Force, the trained faculty who would know what it means to teach writing at an introductory level."

For WAC advocates, the ideological multilectic underwriting the exigency for developing such a curricular project was comprised of the writing to learn/writing in the disciplines dialectic and the unity/differentiation pairing that historically coincides with it; the multilectic also involved associations with both innovation and liberal culture as these were invoked in the college's broad institutional changes.

When a group from the Writing Task Force approached the General Education Committee with their emerging ideas, they expected the concept of a new course would be well received given the institution's trends toward curricular transformation. They also hoped and expected that they would be welcomed to develop first year writing anew. They did not expect, however, to end up sharing the project. But general education reformers became deeply interested in 101 innovation as a concrete beginning point for their overarching curricular overhaul, one they could use both to attract external funding and to reassure accrediting bodies that the college was indeed making progress on an area of concern identified in their assessments.

General Education Reform Exigencies

In response to ongoing accreditation pressures, North River State's Office of

Academic Affairs had taken up the daunting agenda of reforming the college's general

education program, a program which had remained essentially static for decades.

Genuine attempts had been made by various groups in the past to revitalize that

curriculum, but none had gathered sufficient support to pass the required Faculty Senate

vote. So when reforms became a matter of accreditation, potential reformers already

faced a campus pattern of failure and inertia on this agenda. They had their work cut out

for them.

Although campus members such as Del and Yvonne had long been invested in

creating a more vital general education curriculum, the urgency to follow through in 2005

had external motivators. An excerpt of a 2001 letter of accreditation to the college from

its regional accrediting organization summarizes the work on general education that the

commission expected North River State to address:

> … a revision of the general education program represents a priority for the
> academic program. Work to date, including surveys, has resulted in the approval
> of new goals for general education, but as yet no agreement on how they should
> be implemented or student learning assessed. We are encouraged by reports of
> further institutional action in this area and anticipate that by the time of the
> progress report [fall 2005], the institution will be able to report the design and
> implementation of its revised program and the means to assess its effectiveness,
> consistent with our standards, especially 4.15, "The general education
> requirement is coherent and substantive, and it embodies the institution's
> definition of an educated person. The requirement informs the design of all
> general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation."

In this text's lexicon of "goals," "assessment," "standards," "requirement," and "criteria,"

program revision is clearly associated with an ideology of accountability. Furthermore,

the term "coherent" from the accreditation standards circulated intensively among general

education reformers at North River, evoking the unity ideology, as do the terms "general" and the word "integrative" that ultimately replaced it as a new program took shape.

By January of 2006, an Integrative Education Program Subcommittee of the General Education Committee was attempting to develop a definition of learning that would suit North River State's institutional context and address the related "definition of an educated person" that the assessing agency indicated was also an institutional decision. In their meeting minutes, the group invoked the college's broader ideological agenda, asking, "Might the term 'liberal arts' be key to our definition?" The multilectic that infused the discourse of general education reforms was thus accountability-unity-liberal culture; writing did not figure into the combination as yet.

Writing: One Piece of General Education

I gradually learned to tune my ear to the discourses linked to the ideologies of accountability, unity, and liberal culture as these circulated among participants who were intimately involved in the general education reforms because I wanted to better understand the ideological context in which the WAC advocates' writing agenda was a part. In 2005, the dean of professional studies explained the general education reform agenda, the "big frame" as he put it, as something I needed to visualize even though the focus of my inquiry was on writing.

> COLLIE: … I wanted a kind of snapshot picture of what you saw as progress with incorporating writing at [North River]…. I know that the institute facilitators are hoping maybe we'll be able to change the writing culture here, but I've also heard some people express, well, you know, not everybody feels that's critical.
> PAUL: Well I don't think everyone's going to. … Are we going to get everyone rolling in the same direction? Probably not. Are we going to try? Absolutely. … See the big frame here is we're trying to have the campus adopt a key principles document which is going to be the foundation of our general ed program.
> COLLIE: So this is brand new?

125

PAUL: This is brand new. …. We've never had this discussion before. We've had some Gen Ed proposals but we never had the discussion about what is the basis of the proposal. We had a discussion about this program, that program, this course, that course, this thing that thing, but never … what are the assumptions in the Gen Ed program. So I think we finally got this right after thirty years. Because this hasn't been changed for thirty years. And that intentionality – the first bullet there [referring to a draft "Key Principles" document] – to develop skills [in] communication: writing-reading-speaking-listening, information literacy– … so you [see] that actually, [writing is] the first bullet!

COLLIE: It is.

PAUL: It's the first bullet. And … we want to be intentional about the program because the shift for us is we want a general education program, not just a series of disparate courses, because right now our general education is a list. It's a menu of courses that you pick from. There's no coherence to what goes on. … So this whole thing is forcing some conversations that need to be had that haven't been had. …. We need to look at the wider lens here. … . We hope that by the end of this semester [spring 2005] … the campus will have adopted these key principles and that we can move forward ….And writing will be one of those themes which will be blended into the program.

Paul picked up on "coherence" rhetorics from the accreditation standard. He also articulated what would remain a powerful discursive positioning of writing as the reforms developed: writing as one theme or strand among many.

By the time the skills list Paul referred to was approved as part of the program principles, it included nine different categories of equivalent weight: "The program will have identifiable goals to develop skills and abilities in writing, reading, speaking, listening, critical and creative thinking, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and technological fluency." During his interview, Paul also spoke of writing as part of another multiplicity of educational values: "I think this is an opportunity to highlight … not only writing but the other things here as well…: scientific inquiry, interdisciplinary studies, understanding of diversity and multicultural perspectives…." Paul implied equivalent importance for each of these strands in the big frame of curricular reform. There appeared to be a lot of components in circulation.

Among other constituents who had long been arguing for writing's centrality, the number of items accumulating in the general education principles was alarming. The shear quantity of skills, approaches, and values was extensive, though not surprising for an initiative developed by a committee that incorporated the perspectives of more than twenty cross-disciplinary members. One of the approved key principles for the program was, in fact, its inclusiveness, and that inclusiveness might have been strategically necessary in the face of the history of general education reform failures. But it was the absence of hierarchy that most concerned WAC proponents. Yvonne pointed this out in 2006:

> Look at … that list of those skills that came out of the new [Integrative Education Program], because even though writing is right there, so are a whole bunch of other things. And they [the committee] say in their statement that they deliberately did not put any hierarchy in there, and one of my criticisms was, "Why not? Don't you think that some of these are more important than others?" … If the philosophy … of the new general education program is that writing is not more important than computer skills, or even information literacy, if they really are all equal, then there is no center, and that's what the campus is saying. That they don't have a one thing that they would say is central to learning.

These two divergent conceptions of writing – that it was one among many important skills and that it was a central means for learning – continued to be evident during struggles over writing's position and articulation in the changing curriculum. From 2005 through 2008, those differences were newly visible at the curricular level; their presence was testament to the enduring quality of the ideological struggle that had been evident in North River's culture since the early nineties when the introduction of WAC dialectics encountered and countered competency rhetorics. The struggle between ideologies of accountability and writing to learn continued in the pedagogical anxieties documented during the 2005 Writing Institute, as notions of writing as an additive versus an integral part of teaching and learning concatenated in the discourse of participants.

127

As Writing Task Force members and General Education Committee members competed to reshape the first year writing course according to contradictory ideological commitments, they were simultaneously competing about cultural beliefs embedded in divergent discourses about writing. The cultural context for writing had palpably changed since 1992; many more constituents had become familiar with the conception of writing as a tool for learning and thinking, and more had experienced teaching in relation to that principle. Yet the commodified educational discourse of writing as a compartmentalized competency or skill remained more powerful. The underlying ideologies of writing to learn and accountability around which these differences formed sometimes appeared irreconcilable.

Nevertheless, an awkward collaboration formed between the General Education Committee and Writing Task Force members as they collectively worked up the institutional momentum necessary to create a new first year course. These groups' respective agendas – general education reform and creating a culture of writing – had their own rhetorical ecologies comprised of structures and groups that shaped and shared core principles, and vectors who interacted both inside and outside of the local ecology, facilitating viral movement of the principles into the institution's broader rhetorical ecology. Figure 2 shows the positioning of first year writing in 2005/2006 as an enterprise of interest in these two distinct agendas, thus shaped by the divergent discourses and ideological principles in circulation within two rhetorical ecologies.
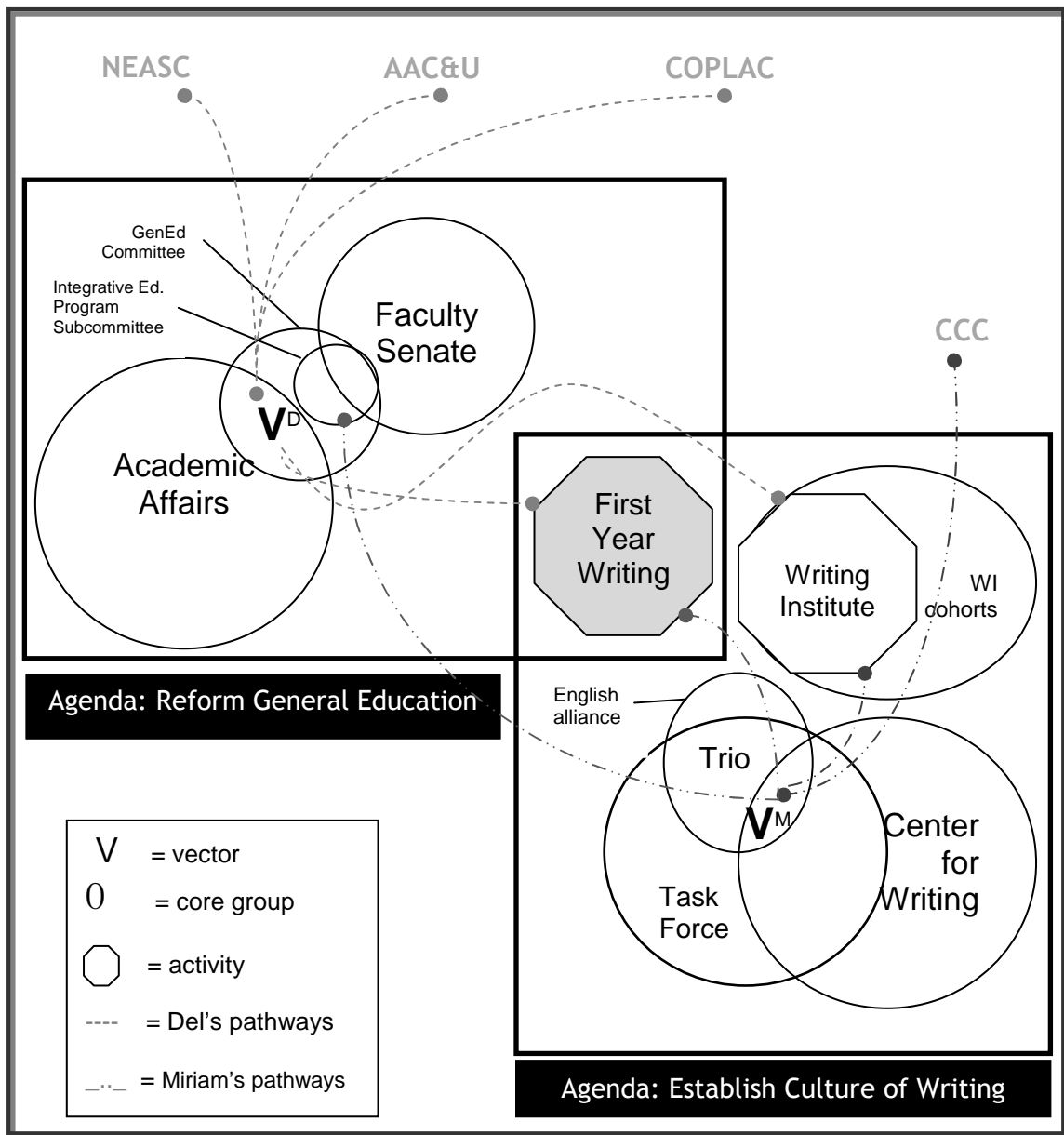
Figure 2: One Course, Two Ideological Agendas, c. 2005/2006

For legibility, this figure only shows two of the vectors, Del and Miriam, and their representative internal and external affiliations and pathways as they established rhetorical ecologies around different ideological agendas. Alhough Del and Miriam's respective powers as vectors were derived from different structures and they networked

in different patterns, their pathways brought them into shared contact, and they demonstrated similar magnitude of commitment to their respective agendas.

One difference between the ecologies of the writing agenda and the general education agenda was the nature of the groups most intimately involved. Both Miriam and Ben described their agenda as a grassroots initiative. Although the Center for Writing belonged under the auspices of the Office of Academic Affairs, and the affiliated Writing Task Force and Writing Institute used institutional budget monies as well, these groups' ideological commitments and decisions about tasks were independently fueled by faculty interest rather than defined by the administration. The growing informal cohorts and alliances attested to the organic rather than institutional development of this ideological network. The general education reformers, on the other hand, were fully institutional, and the origins of their agenda were a need articulated externally and mediated by the college administration, most visibly Del, although faculty were networked into the project through personal interest and Faculty Senate committee assignments.[26]

As the metaphor of ecology suggests, the borders around each agenda's ecology were porous, and some groups and individuals could and did participate in both agendas. The Office of Academic Affairs, for instance, had institutional oversight over the Center for Writing, although the assistant vice president's observational involvement in the 2005 Writing Institute suggested her chief commitments resided outside of that ecology; Del was more focused on (and functioned as a vector for) the agenda of general education reform. The Faculty Senate and its General Education Committee included individuals

---

[26] The structural differences between the groups taking up a grassroots agenda and those involved in an institutionally-sponsored one did suggest differences in their modes of operation, access to material resources, and in members' reasons for commitment.

who were involved in nodes within the other agenda, facilitating discursive exchange across what might otherwise have seemed discrete rhetorical ecologies. Groups in both ecologies furthermore participated in an institutional agenda of establishing North River State's liberal arts identity, as vectors involved in each agenda utilized rhetorical alignments with that identity as a way both to forward their projects and to shape local understandings of what the idea of the liberal arts encompassed.

With all this ideological activity going on at once, it was not clear which ideologies would dominate construction and implementation of the new first year course. Discussions with Karen and Miriam indicated that after the Writing Task Force members had forwarded their idea to the General Education Committee in 2005, what was immediately picked up was not so much the opportunity to create a more rigorous and engaging interdisciplinary writing course, but instead the realization that 101 was an old model, the English Department was willing to give it up, and there was an opportunity to use that slot in the curriculum to launch an integrative education model. During the period of initial uptake, some alternative notions of the seminar ("freshman year experience," for instance) did not even explicitly emphasize writing.

Because of the many vested interests, multiple agendas, and highly charged atmosphere of sweeping but not yet wholly defined institutional change, the 2006-2007 period was highly complex ideologically. In addition to the Writing Task Force's ongoing commitment to variants on the principle of writing to learn and the subordinate presence of its dialectic partner, writing in the disciplines, the other prominent ideologies in play during this contested phase of course formation were liberal culture, innovation, unity/differentiation, and accountability/autonomy. Some of these ideologies were shared across agendas (although inflected differently), and these would over time become

131

weighted in their degrees of influence toward shaping the actual curriculum; however, during the course pilot and the planning of it, the ideological field often seemed cacophonous.

<p style="text-align:center"><u>Gaining Partners, Losing Sole Ownership</u></p>

Writing Task Force members began their discussions about creating a new first year course in the spring of 2005. By the spring of 2006, the idea had gained a following if not a precise shape, and the General Education Committee was deeply involved. Their stated principle of inclusivity meant that Karen, Miriam, and other people who were part of the rhetorical ecology for the writing agenda had been invited to participate in the General Education Committee and its task-based subcommittees. Miriam had been on a nine-member Integrative Education Program Subcommittee contributing to the course's development, but in March she said her subcommittee had recently been dismissed and supplanted by another group tasked with the next stage of institute planning. Although the course title, Writing and Thinking, indicated writing's prominence in the seminar, minutes from the group's February meeting indicated there was no consensus at that time about the focus of the institute that faculty would attend in preparation for teaching the course. For example, this discussion item, "writing as 'component' and writing as 'frame' of institute and pilot work," was raised (very likely by Miriam or Simone, who also was a subcommittee member), but the minutes indicate there was no agreement on which conception the committee would forward.

Miriam, Ben, and Karen met in March to shape a national conference panel they were putting together, but their concerns about the course usurped discussion of the upcoming conference. Miriam worried about what would happen to the core principles

around which the pilot course idea was founded if people who were not necessarily committed to these principles took on course and institute development.

Karen was also concerned; both Del and Simone expected her to coordinate the course, but she was not clear how the lines of hierarchy would work. Her work as director of English 101 had depended on her ability to make independent decisions, but signs indicated the General Education Committee planned to retain oversight of the new course. "Does that mean I get to make decisions or that I work for a committee?" she asked.

The trio was deeply distressed at their sense of fissures in the design and implementation of a course that had captured their imaginations only a year before. In light of the sense of uncertainty about what the General Education Committee would make of the course, the three began reexamining assumptions they had made going into the project. For one, they had identified Writing Institute participants as the ideal multidisciplinary faculty to diversify course themes in first year writing. But it was no longer clear that these would necessarily be the faculty tapped for the new course. Miriam asked, "Are we saying that <u>anyone</u> can [teach writing]?" Karen thought about it. "Not everyone can teach Quantitative Reasoning[27] …. What does it mean to teach writing?" The trio considered the differences between the Writing Institute premises and what the new course might demand of instructors.

> MIRIAM: We're not asking them [Writing Institute participants] to teach a writing course.
> KAREN: But the people teaching the Writing and Thinking course <u>will</u> be asked to do this.
> BEN: It's a matter of degree. They can <u>potentially</u> do this – with proper training, support.

---

[27] Quantitative Reasoning was other foundational course intended for the new Integrative Education Program.

It was now clear that the Writing Institute would not be the development vehicle for the

new course's faculty. The General Education Committee had written a separate grant and

was designing their own institute.

The trio also discussed the foundational concepts of thinking, writing, and

learning that they had gone into the project imagining would be shared by others who

became involved. They knew their own commitment to the connections, but were now

not sure these would translate to others unless they had a theory and practice experience

such as the Writing Institute.

> BEN: But it's in the title of the course: <u>Writing</u> and <u>Thinking</u> …. How are we
> defining the relationship between these two terms? I don't know if we have the
> right language.
> MIRIAM: We <u>know</u> the connection inside ourselves.
> BEN: There's a difference between <u>knowing</u> and <u>experiencing</u> something.

My notes from that meeting represented a fraction of the dialog, but the overall sense of

the discussion was that a core assumption was newly unsettled for this trio. They did not

question the connection between thinking and writing that was the ideological basis for

their agenda, but they did wonder anew about who would be able to teach writing well or

how instructors would come to understand writing as the main purpose of the course.

Without control over the course design, faculty selection, and faculty preparation, and

without clear authority for Karen to direct the course independently, this trio was no

longer sure how writing would be positioned in the implementation.

<div align="center">One Institute, Multiple Agendas</div>

Two months later, a cohort of thirteen faculty who were scheduled to teach fall

sections of the pilot Writing and Thinking course met for a grant-funded institute for the

course. The institute's title was "Integrative Teaching and Learning: Writing and

Thinking" (hereafter, the pilot institute). These faculty included Yvonne and five adjunct

instructors who had also previously taught the English 101 course, a sociologist who had taken the 2004 Writing Institute, and Natalie, the Biology Department cohort vector who had taken the 2004 institute as well. The remaining five, from philosophy, technology studies, and education, had no prior experience teaching writing courses and their commitment to the principle of writing to learn was unknown.

Karen would be responsible for coordinating the pilot course. The differences between the writing assigned in English 101 and the sustained research and writing project now planned in the interdisciplinary Writing and Thinking course meant that even experienced English 101 instructors would need a new frame for thinking about the course. Karen's most pressing responsibility, however, was to provide what Ben had identified as "proper training and support" for disciplinary faculty who had never taught writing. When invited to co-facilitate, Karen therefore requested four days of the institute to focus on writing theory and pedagogy. Other members of the Integrative Education Program Subcommittee planned most of the faculty development week, however, and they had many topics they wished to cover.

The institute's substance reflected the multiple agendas of the subcommittee, and bore out the Writing Task Force trio's fears that writing would not figure centrally in this group's conception of the course. Karen ended up with only a day and a half for pedagogical content to help the faculty learn teaching strategies appropriate to the course design. There were also five other presenters who addressed a wide range of topics. The week included a full day to discuss the course in the context of general education reforms, a day and a half with a guest speaker on inquiry-based learning, just a day and a half for Karen to cover (as the week's schedule indicates), "the writing component" of the course – including designing a substantial writing project, responding to student

135

writing[28], and evaluating student writing. The remaining two days of the institute

introduced information literacy, curriculum design, and three different presentations on

assessment. This densely packed week did not allow Karen the time she desired to work

with the faculty because there were so many competing agendas.

I was privy to Karen's earlier frustrations during the planning period. She said

that instead of this being understood as a writing course, the other coordinators were

compartmentalizing the writing. She quoted them: "You'll have a day to present the

writing part of the course.'' Karen emphasized their concept of "the writing part" rather

than writing being the central means to meet other learning goals of the course as she and

other WAC advocates had intended. Although the ideology of unity figured prominently

in the inclusiveness principle and in the concept of integrative learning that institute

facilitators sought to promote, the compartmentalization not only of writing but of other

"components" of the institute ironically embodied the ideology of differentiation more

fully.

Having multiple presenters contributed to the fragmented rather than unified feel

of the institute, but the number and diversity of interests of those in attendance on the

first day invoked the full dialectic of unity/differentiation emphatically. Present that

Monday were the three main facilitators, thirteen pilot course instructors, and an outside

speaker scheduled for the day. In addition, nine observers attended. These were a library

faculty member, the assistant vice president of Academic Affairs, the dean of

Humanities, the grants officer responsible for securing funding for the institute, the

institute assessment leader, me in my researcher role, and three faculty who were

---

[28] Faculty discussion about the first topic, designing the sustained writing project, extended longer than the
time allotted. Karen decided it was necessary to address this key feature of the course thoroughly, so she
postponed the topic of responding to student writing until the group met again in the fall.

developing a second foundation course on quantitative reasoning and wanted to see this institute as a model.

On the one hand, having nine observers suggested the diversity of interests unified behind this one course. On the other hand, it underscored the plenitude of different values that were in play around this new course and the not-yet-formulated curriculum of the Integrative Education Program for which the pilot course seemed to serve as a synecdoche. As this was the first course envisioned for the new curriculum and sufficiently developed to run as a pilot, it seemed that nearly the full range of skills, goals, and assessment outcomes that were under discussion for the program as a whole became threaded into the expectations and possibilities set out during the pilot institute.

Already Interdisciplinary, Not Yet Integrative

My prior observations of Writing Institutes sponsored by the Writing Task Force prepared me to expect disciplinary differences among the pilot course's instructors; these were present, but not prevalent. The concept of interdisciplinarity seemed instead to unify many of the pilot instructors. A sample of introductory comments shows the appeal that interdisciplinarity held for many of the participants.

Larry, an adjunct American studies instructor who also taught at the local public high school, mentioned that American studies was "already interdisciplinary," a phrase that would repeat in other participants' introductions.

Arianne, an adjunct writing instructor, said she also already saw herself as interdisciplinary. She said she often confronted her own teaching ideas with: "How do we justify doing this in an English course? ….But now, this isn't an English course," so

she felt she did not have to make things marginal or fret about what she could or could not talk about. She called this, happily, "smashing the box of disciplines."

Sam, a tenured philosophy professor with twenty eight years at North River said that his course on the Holocaust that he was adapting for the pilot "already was interdisciplinary." He called the Writing and Thinking course design "redemptive" because a model like it was suggested in the previous general education reform attempts in which he had taken part

Ron, another long time faculty member, said he had been through three efforts to reform general education at North River. He figured he already taught interdisciplinary courses in the technology and design areas, so he had "better come to a workshop that gives me the credentials to do what I already do."

Like other participants, Lauren, a tenured education professor, gravitated toward the cross-disciplinary intent of the course, but for her it was because it would be a new experience: "I want to stretch myself beyond teaching education." She also felt, "If the college does well at interdisciplinary studies, then our students will do well."

These faculty, many of whom identified themselves, their teaching, or their fields as "already interdisciplinary," seemed to have been attracted to that language and to have ascribed meaning for it. But Celia, an adjunct instructor with a law degree who had taught both English 101 and women's studies, said although she was excited to bring legal and feminist themes into a writing course, she remained uncertain about the new terms used to frame general education reforms: "This week I want to clarify integrative and interdisciplinary." Celia also spoke of her concrete teaching concerns about transitioning from assigning multiple papers to having just one large written project for the course: "I am a bit insecure about how I do this." And understandably so. This

138

element of the course was a significant change from the traditional English 101 curriculum, and an issue that Karen had hoped to address thoroughly with the group.

Both the theory behind making the change and the practical teaching issues the pilot course instructors would encounter were substantive faculty development topics. Although Karen had not been afforded much time to do this work, she was among instructors who were evidently moved by the ideology of unity that was common to discourses of both interdisciplinarity and writing to learn. In fact, as excerpts of discourse from the 2005 Writing Institute indicated, the word "integral" and other unifying terms were already deployed by WAC leaders to convey their philosophy of writing's relationship to thinking and learning. So far, however, texts emerging from curricular reform groups that used both "integrative" and "writing" were vague on the former and, from a WAC advocate's perspective, too concrete on the latter. For instance, the language in the 2005 call for course proposals did not represent the discourse of writing and thinking as integral processes as Miriam and other Writing Task Force members had in other forums. The call explains instead: "These pilot courses will focus on developing writing and thinking skills, integrating learning experiences that reinforce other skill development, and creating faculty-defined topics of compelling interest across the disciplines." Here, writing is firmly positioned among skills, and integration seems synonymous with inclusion, used vaguely to suggest adding opportunities for further skill development.

This vagueness was not isolated to North River's use of the term. Although already in use in the title of the Integrative Education Institute Subcommittee, a list of goals generated for the group's spring 2005 meetings included, "develop a working definition of integrative learning." The document gives the context for this need:

> "Integrative studies," "inquiry-based learning" "interdisciplinary design" are terms used by many across this country as the debate regarding effective collegiate instruction and pedagogical design evolves. The Association of American Colleges and Universities has coordinated conferences and has published widely regarding these topics; however, no universal or single pedagogical approach for integrative learning has been endorsed. Rather, colleges and universities … have defined the term for their institutions….

Celia's comments during the pilot institute reflected the continued uncertainty about precisely what integrative learning meant in North River State's curricular reforms. Pilot institute notes furthermore suggested that no habitual association had been built between concepts of integrative learning and writing to learn. As examples from chapter 5 showed, the discourse of integration in relation to writing was present in the Writing Institute, in Writing Task Force members' speech, and the Writing Task Force Newsletter, but evidently it had not gone viral into the larger rhetorical ecology.

Given the historic dominance of accountability discourse manifested in repeated positioning of writing as a competency, discrete skill, or an additive component in an already crowded field, what would WAC leaders need to do to actually integrate writing into the new curriculum, and have it understood – outside of their agenda's local ecology – as a means for, as integral to, thinking and learning?

This was a problem apparently shared by curricular reformers at other institutions. The outside presenter for the first days of the institute had been chosen because her college was two years further in the process of similar reforms, and they used an inquiry-based learning concept to frame their curricular changes. Yvonne looked at the presenter's curriculum plan for her institution, and asked, given the language of "infusion" of writing into the curriculum, what was the rationale for retaining a traditional composition course. The presenter rolled her eyes. "You didn't vote for this, did you?" Yvonne asked. The presenter shook her head, but said she wanted to be fair

and represent why the course was still there. At her institution, faculty said, "I don't know where I'll have time to do the sort of technical work of teaching writing." (Simone, who sat next to me that day, quietly repeated the phrase, "Technical work. Hm.") The presenter also said she found there was faculty resistance to "adding more things." Both comments indicated the WAC advocates at North River were up against a powerful combination of ideological elements. Accountability filtered through standards discourse to position writing as a skill and its teaching as technical work; accountability's dialectic partner, autonomy, surfaced in the form of faculty choosing not to "add" writing to their pedagogies; differentiation further separated writing into the instructional domain only of writing instructors; and tradition kept first year writing in its place. These ideologies crossed institutional boundaries. Although in 2005-2006 innovation trumped tradition at North River, and unity rhetorics fueled concepts of both integrative learning and writing to learn, the most powerful ideology countering WAC development at both the presenter's institution and North River State was accountability.

Accountability for What?

Like any of the ideologies in play, accountability was inflected in multiple ways as it was associated with writing at North River. Thus far, I have primarily shown dominant manifestations of the ideology of accountability as these appear in educational standards, college catalogs, and other texts and occasions that reproduce the prevalent standards-based rhetorics of skill and competency. However, during my observations at the college, WAC advocates invoked accountability in a range of ways.

Yvonne interacted with the Education Department frequently because her position included teaching and supervising secondary English education students. When I asked

her about rhetorical strategies she used when she was advocating for writing, her response indicated that the dominant variant of accountability served as an exigency for education faculty to take writing seriously in the discipline. Given her history as one of the key people responsible for eliminating the C-competency requirement, I thought her rhetorical alignment with standards-based language was intriguing. Yvonne's discussion of her rhetorical moves suggests a multilectic of writing in the disciplines-accountability-utility that filtered down to a highly pragmatic principle of learning to write:

> … [T]he major criticisms … that the elementary education faculty get about our students are about their reading and writing skills. So this is something that is a negative reflection on us and it's a genuine concern because it's not nice to be told your students can't read and write and you're graduating them from college out of your program. When I do talk to [education faculty about writing], it's that sense of accountability, that there is a judge waiting at the end of this program who is going to be flabbergasted at those students graduating who cannot read a children's book aloud. And who cannot write on the board grammatically correctly. And so that's an easy way to say you have to keep them writing, you have to keep them writing a lot. And you can't just be doing fluff comments … because if you don't get [students] soon taking this stuff seriously, …they're going to have all kinds of problems. So for them, it's a pretty practical issue and there's an outside motivation.

Yvonne shows she is not uncomfortable with using accountability rhetorics and invoking external judges in order to motivate education faculty to assign and respond to student writing frequently. In her construction, education students are held accountable for writing skill by external judges – certification examiners, principals, potential peer teachers, parents. By proxy, the education faculty and programs are also held accountable for their graduates' literacy performance. Yvonne furthermore suggests a role for emotion – in this case, embarrassment – in the application of accountability rhetorics, thus structuring feeling into the local equation of how to make writing matter. She also contrasts this kind of standards-based judgment against process pedagogies that

she also takes seriously but understands as limited given credentialing and other career

conditions of graduates entering the professions:

> Within English Education, our students all have to pass a written … test before they can get certified … It's a hard test and it's opposed to everything that we teach about writing because it's four questions, two hours, on the spot, and our students really struggle with it… I think and I say I'm all in favor of the writing process, I'm all in favor of revision but [if] our students can't answer a parent's email on the spot, without it appalling the reader, there's something wrong with that. … When it's an English Education student, it's not right to let them go. A lot of my approach… is totally practical… They have to pass the test or they've gone through a four year program for nothing. And there's employment waiting for them and there are principals and other teachers who will judge them up one side and down the other if they can't do these things and so writing becomes important …. Those are important skills to somebody.

In that process approaches are associated with writing to learn, Yvonne's discussion adds

that ideology into the multilectic as well, but the more evident combination is utility-

accountability-differentiation-writing in the professions; utility is the core reason for

alignment with accountability in the differentiated context of writing for K-12 educators.

Discussions with Simone, Ben and Karen turned up an alternative rhetoric of

accountability. Simone and Ben focused on aspects of faculty accountability. Simone

suggested the traditional campus expectation that only the English Department was

accountable for writing had shifted by 2005, "Now we are recognizing that writing is all

of our responsibility.… The culture is changing." Ben's focus on faculty was different.

He and Karen independently linked accountability with thinking. In Ben's case, his

comment that a good leader was "someone who can hold us accountable to our best

ideas" referred to faculty being intellectually accountable, suggesting a community of

thinkers facilitated by a leader who kept "our best ideas" in circulation.

Karen's terms were similar to Ben's, but she referred to students' ideas instead, as well as faculty strategies for holding students accountable for their ideas, for their thinking, and for their writing:

> [If students] are treated like adults and intellectuals – which often means maybe not agreeing with them and saying "No I think you're wrong, I think you need to make a better case"– that allows them to say, "Look I'm accountable for what I say, for what I read, for what I write. And this has to be good. In order for people to take it seriously I have to do this." … When they do that, when they start that process of "I have something to say and oh okay wait that didn't work and I'm going to try this …" and then at the end of the process when they've got this paper, this assignment that they really feel like they can argue, … they're creating knowledge.

In Karen's discussion, a multilectic of liberal culture-accountability-writing to learn infuses the discourse. Liberal culture's emphasis on reason and habits of mind dovetails with Karen's investment in treating students like intellectuals. She positions students as directly accountability for the quality of their thinking and writing. However, she also holds faculty accountable for using writing to learn strategies that hold students intellectually responsible for "creating knowledge." This is in contrast to holding students and faculty accountable for writing skills, and Karen elaborates on that difference, correlating emphasis on skills with a preoccupation with obedience.

> I want students to understand writing as an entry way into thinking and inquiry and understanding issues. …. That it's not just a skill. And I feel so strongly about this: writing is not just a skill to be practiced, it's not something like using the right fork and knife at the table where they can learn to follow directions and be good little citizens. It really is about learning how to write so they actually can find their way into a larger conversation. … I think that their voices are important and through writing they learn how to think about issues and how to understand what's going on around them, so for me the writing serves a much larger purpose than just getting words on a page and getting something right.

Again, Karen evokes the liberal cultural value of education to develop persons of reason who will be contributors to culture. Although her discussion underscores the limitations of looking at writing from a skills-etiquette-obedience standpoint, her comment, "it's not

144

just a skill," does not preclude this dominant conception of writing. She brackets skill instead to develop what she sees as writing's "larger purpose."

Yet another way that accountability surfaced in WAC leaders' discourse was in Karen's conundrum; she felt responsible for the pilot course but had insufficient authority to lead it in a manner than aligned with her principles. Our second interview took place shortly before the fall 2006 semester when the course pilot would go live. It was no longer an English Department class, but the administrative structures for the Integrative Education Program had not yet been formalized:

> Our provost … said that one of the things … he doesn't want to see happen here, and he does see happen here, is … people have a charge or have a responsibility but have no authority to carry it out. And I'm very worried about how this position that I have now is being defined. Who do I work for? …. Who do I go to? ….[I'm] figuring out where does this class fit, where do I fit, and how much authority do I have to do things. Do I have to check with [the General Education Committee] for everything? So that's an issue. It's an issue. I think the college has to decide, what will this director have independently from any committee. ….
> And the thing is I can see ways [the course] could get so messed up, and I can't prevent it from happening because it's just, I just don't have the power to do that. But you know, I'm accountable for this course at the same time.

In Karen's worries about course leadership, she invokes a perfectly balanced dialectic of accountability/autonomy. Her point was that she had not been afforded sufficient autonomy to do a good job directing this course; however, she still felt accountable for its success. Karen was caught in competing notions of accountability, as well. She was burdened by a sense of onerous and inefficient accountability that was manifested in having to forward questions and decisions about the course to a committee. She was also accountable to the ideals for the course that she held in common with members of the Writing Task Force who had initiated the course in the first place. But the committee and

145

the task force were motivated by very different values about writing, so Karen's position in 2006 as the course pilot was underway remained uncomfortable.

Writing and Pedagogy: Between the Cracks

There remained a lot of question by the end of the pilot institute week about pedagogical concerns, reflecting the abbreviated time for practical issues as well as the differentiated degrees of experience the faculty had with teaching writing. My notes from the sessions indicate that often, regardless of the central topic a presenter had the group working on, the side discussions would shift to pedagogy. With over half the group experienced with teaching writing, these discussions appeared to be as productive as they were impromptu. Over lunch one day, Sam, the philosophy professor, asked his tablemates what peer response was, how it worked. The group included an education professor who provided models, and I offered additional strategies. Sam was frank about his relative inexperience teaching writing. Blue books and term papers, those he understood from his twenty eight years of teaching philosophy, but he was intrigued by the processes and interventions he heard other faculty mention and wondered what and how to incorporate these into his course.

On Thursday of the institute, the cohort's desire for more pedagogical discussion bubbled over. An impromptu discussion of reading instruction arose when instructors were comparing the kinds and quantities of texts they planned to assign. For some faculty, surprise and anxiety ran high. Others stepped in with advice. Larry started the discussion, wondering how much reading to assign.

> KAREN: They will be doing their own research and that's reading [that is] not in your control.
> NATALIE: Maybe I'll use a course pack.

146

DEB: Do you do this in class? Critical reading? Teaching them how to read?
I've made stupid assumptions in the past.
KAREN: Sorry for making vague generalities about reading [but] they may read
as if they are memorizing it, … reading for facts and not ideas.
NATALIE: We're being asked to teach reading?!! Alarms are going off! ….
LIA: [It's the] same thing; reading is writing.
NATALIE: That sounds terrifying to me.
KAREN: It's really figuring out what you want them to read for.
NATALIE: (Whew.)
….
NATALIE: I may have been teaching reading all along … but I haven't been
<u>aware</u> of what I've been doing.
…
YVONNE: I'll send you a chapter on this.

Later, Yvonne advised the group that people should "knock down content" because they

should expect to be spending "days on peer comment… teaching reading, teaching

documentation." She offered this "not to be discouraging, just realistic," she said.

These pragmatic conversations expressed almost exclusively the ideology of

utility, sometimes in combination with the WAC dialectic, especially reconfigured as

utility-learning to write (learning to teach writing). Instructors' pressing need to think

about the how – not the why or the what, but the how – of teaching a Writing and

Thinking course happened primarily between the cracks of the official institute agenda.

During the institute week and its planning, writing had been marginalized, as had

pedagogy and leadership on writing. In portions of the course development, Miriam and

Karen had been "included" in the subcommittee but as Yvonne observed, their position

was marginalized rather than made central. What did it mean to position writing

rhetorically at the foundation of a new curriculum, but to compartmentalize writing and

to place experienced writing specialists at the margins?

Metaphorically, the concept of Writing and Thinking as a foundation course

suggests some of the problems North River's WAC advocates faced during the

implementation of this new course. Core courses are another common term for required courses in general education curricula, and they metaphorically evoke centrality --- a position that North River's WAC advocates had long sought for writing in the college's culture and curriculum. Naming the course a foundation instead disrupted the possibility of a centering metaphor; centering had been an important gesture and centrality a key rhetoric of the WAC advocates to date. Although foundation is also a seemingly sturdy position, it strongly evokes building blocks. Discrete blocks of knowledge align well with step-by-step concepts of increasing skills attainment, and that in turn derives from standards discourse. Under the weight of an ideology that cut across institutions, pervading K-12 and higher education discourse, it proved difficult for vectors involved in a WAC agenda to reclaim a more central discursive position for writing to think and learn, one that it had never fully attained outside of its own rhetorical ecology despite a great deal of rhetorical effort.

<div align="center">Epilogue</div>

Although a pedagogy "crash course" Karen had planned on a day in August 2006 for the pilot instructors again accommodated many visitors affiliated with the General Education Committee, and thus incorporated discussion of this group's curricular and assessment agenda, Karen was able to use about half of the session time for her cohort's teaching concerns.   As the course's pilot year unfolded, the General Education Committee became increasingly preoccupied with their broader agenda of fully reforming general education; because other elements of this agenda competed for their attention, gradually Karen gained more control over the content of her faculty development offerings.

In 2007, the massive curricular changes became official. The college adopted the Integrative Education Program, including a 4-credit curriculum, in time for the 2007-08 catalog year. These changes as well as an enrollment increase placed demands on campus space and time resources, resulting in the loss of a traditional common mid-week slot that had been kept clear of classes to facilitate faculty committee work and other meetings. In the absence of its habitual time slot, and without the first year course project in its firm purview, the Writing Task Force went virtually dormant as a collective during the 2007-08 year. There were no meetings of the group as a whole, although members remained involved in its agenda in various dispersed ways, such as the trio's continuation of the Writing Institute, and deepening involvement in the Writing and Thinking course.

In contrast to the relatively large amount of time devoted to curriculum and assessment during the pilot institute, the 2007 institute week for the Writing and Thinking course used only one half day for discussion of the course's position within the Integrative Education Program. All of the remainder of the week was devoted to theoretical and pedagogical concerns . This included presentations by writing to learn vectors such as Miriam, who spoke on "Sustained Writing Projects and Cognitive Development," stitching the course back into some of its theoretical origins. Ben and veteran Writing and Thinking instructor/Biology Department vector Natalie co-presented on "The Role of Reading in [Writing and Thinking]" – a fascinating transition for a person who had expressed "We're being asked to teach reading?!!" the summer before, and who had found the thought "terrifying." Natalie also went solo for her presentation on "Making the Shift from teaching Gen Ed Bio Courses to [Writing and Thinking]."

Although Karen experienced periodic pressure to respond to the General Education Committee's agenda, and continued to feel tension between her accountability

149

for the course and her limited autonomy, most subsequent follow-up meetings for the Writing and Thinking instructor cohorts after 2007 were guided by Karen's sense of what faculty needed and thus were usually focused on timely pedagogical concerns. Other members of the Writing Task Force and experienced Writing Institute faculty trickled into the instructor cohorts, as well. Miriam began teaching a section, Ben, as well, and a program that paired Center for Writing tutors with Writing and Thinking faculty established further connections between the course and the rhetorical ecology from which it had been imagined and gestated.

By the close of my study in the fall of 2008, the Writing and Thinking course was well established, attracting a mix of adjuncts and disciplinary faculty similar to the pilot demographics. The departmental labor constraints at a small college made it difficult for many otherwise interested faculty to participate while still meeting the need for specialized course offerings for students in their majors; however, new Writing and Thinking sections, thirty-eight sections during one fall semester, continued to be proposed in an increasing range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary themes.

The Writing Task Force, after its hiatus in 2007, also regrouped to assure that writing would not become relegated to this single course, and to continue their ideological project of changing the campus's culture of writing. In the grant proposal written by the task force trio in 2003, pedagogical change and cultural change had been implicitly equated. Miriam's October 2008 email to the Writing Task Force lobbied anew for curricular change to be their cultural agenda:

RE: Rethinking and Reinventing Who We Are

150

Dear All,

To recap for those of you who were here and to fill in for those of you who couldn't make it last week: we spent yet another hour struggling to find a direction. We decided to rewind the tape, form a kind of study-group with articles about writing that might help us find our voice. Ok, I thought on and off all week-that's fine, but not really powerful.

In this opening, Miriam summons the group's vector qualities – collective voice and

direction. She refers as well to the group's decision to reestablish its intellectual

grounding. This is a quiet recentering move, although Miriam expresses ambivalence

about it. She continues:

And then during [a Writing and Thinking] meeting last night about what happens to students after the course and again today when I met one of my first-year students from last year and she said, "After I finally got all those skills and you tortured us about how essential they are, not one piece of writing last semester or this," I realized, we really should do something about this.

Here, Miriam recounts her movements in a rhetorical ecology where writing is the

chief topic of discourse. The Writing and Thinking cohorts have become a node of that

ecology. Miriam's students, as well. The year without writing that her former student

reports concatenates along the historic dimension of the ecology, resonating with the

findings, the "three-semester desert," reported from the study of writing Miriam and

Yvonne conducted fifteen years before, a reminder of how enduring the exigency for the

Writing Task Force's agenda remains. The discourse of writing here is utilitarian, neither

writing to learn nor writing in the disciplines, but just plain skills. But the absence of her

students' apparent need for them is what Miriam seems to be holding the task force, the

college, accountable for in this message.

.... I started thinking that perhaps this is indeed our place.

In other words, times have changed. We have been grass roots working to change the culture through workshops/discussions/[Writing Institute]. We have stayed away from curricular issues, but that doesn't mean we have not been involved with the curriculum. We have asked the campus to think about how they teach writing, why they teach it, how they evaluate it, and on and on.

Maybe we should do that again and ask faculty to turn their attention to the central issue that is now confronting us which is how other courses in the curriculum are building on the newly-acquired skills and ways of thinking about writing that are introduced in [Writing and Thinking]. I see tremendous potential and significance here. If we sit by and don't strenuously advocate for the deliberate building on this way of teaching writing, [this course] can be seen as just another Eng 101-a one-shot answer for everything.

Miriam makes a recombinant move here, borrowing the building-blocks motif from the notion of a foundation course, but adapting it to fuse with not only the idea of building skills but also "ways of thinking about writing" and "this way of teaching writing." Since her audience is the Writing Task Force, she leaves these ways implicit. Her readers would have understood "ways of thinking" as shorthand to suggest the think/write/learn fusion Miriam had long argued, and the "way of teaching" to incorporate multiple elements, including an emphasis on developing arguments and scaffolding students through a rigorous and sustained process of research, questioning, rethinking, much talk, and drafting.

As Miriam's letter suggests, conditions at North River State might have changed in some respects over fifteen years, but the same ideologies continued to have great impact on both the discourse around writing and the pedagogies and curriculum that also comprised the culture of writing at the college. The agenda of establishing a culture of writing was necessarily ongoing because the central ideological struggle between WAC dialectics and reductive discourses of accountability continued, and likely would

152

indefinitely because of the cultural power and pervasiveness of that ideology both within and outside academia.

In 2008, the Writing Task Force took up Miriam's call and re-centered on the struggle with a renewed magnitude of commitment. At the close of my study, the rhetorical activity in this group's ecology was animated. Karen and her collective of Writing and Thinking faculty issued a position statement explaining what students did in the course ("think, research, write, revise, research, think, write…") and urging their colleagues to continue challenging these students to keep learning as they had begun. The whole task force was planning a new newsletter and college-wide discussion about ways faculty could build on the first year course regardless of their discipline. And Miriam and Karen were developing a guide that could support sustained writing projects in any course, at any point in the curriculum. All of these efforts were attempts to sustain what ground they had gained and to further change the culture through colleagues' voluntary uptake of ideas. Although Miriam's call had explicitly claimed impacting curriculum as the group's current task, they continued to work through changing discourse, suggesting pedagogies, and raising curricular questions rather than prescribing specific models.

Ben had told me back in 2005, in an optimistic tone: "I like the idea that a task force is ongoing and that it's never going to stop because the task is never complete. We can't complete this work." Given the ideological field, I, too, saw no end in sight for their labors.

CONCLUSION

Findings

Development of a writing across the curriculum program at North River State did not unfold in precisely the terms of my earliest questions because, at the end of my study, there was no official WAC program. However, WAC features were prominent and changes were evident in the positioning of writing within North River's curriculum and culture. Key participants were clear that the comprehensive project they were committed to was transforming the culture of writing at North River State. The data I gathered shows that cultural transformation was an ideological agenda that involved a complex networked system – a rhetorical ecology – comprised of vectors (individual and collective) and groups (formal and informal) engaged in a wide range of WAC activities over time. These all functioned in relation to one another, but the immediate rhetorical ecology of WAC, the network within which WAC discourse circulated most hotly, was not isolated from the networks of other ideological agendas at the college. Through the connectivity of its vectors, WAC discourse at North River State was moved into the larger ideological environment of the institution, in effect increasing the dimension of the network with each interaction. In such an ecology, the discursive movement is constant, and the core principle is interaction.

Such networked WAC activity resulted in changes to the ways writing was understood, taught, and positioned in the curriculum at North River State College. As the timeline of key events from 1992-2008 (Appendix B) demonstrates, the process of transforming North River's writing culture began with attempts to alter discourse about writing, and these efforts never ceased because competing dominant cultural

constructions of writing also flood higher education and thus there was nearly constant exigency for WAC advocates to create venues for discursive interaction that would place WAC ideologies into the mix as well. Advancing and maintaining the immediate rhetorical ecology for circulation of WAC ideas was a critical, ongoing element of activity for those committed to this cultural change project.

<u>Questions of Ideology</u>

At North River State College, the long term ideological agenda of developing a culture of writing entailed not only changing structures and activities related to writing, but also, crucially, altering the dominant systems of belief undergirding both institutional structures and individual actions. The research questions that evolved during my study assume some correlation between belief and structure, that ideologies both reflect the institutions in which they circulate and constitute those institutions by shaping the practices and structures therein. I asked three core questions to try to understand the ideological and rhetorical practices of WAC advocates at North River:

1. What beliefs and values do WAC leaders invoke as they interact with other institutional constituents in their attempt to develop a program or culture of writing?

2. How do rhetorical encounters around WAC reflect and embody historically significant ideological dialectics in higher education?

3. How do WAC advocates adapt, reproduce, resist, and engage with these ideologies in the discursive ecology of a small public college?

The response to the first question is a distillation of the main beliefs forwarded by WAC leaders at North River. The findings on the second and third are intertwined and require a bit more unpacking.

WAC Beliefs

My findings show that WAC leaders at North River State incubated and circulated these central beliefs:

1. Writing is a means for learning; thinking and writing are inextricably linked.

2. Teaching writing is the responsibility of the college, not the English department.

3. Writing belongs at the center of a liberal arts curriculum.

WAC leaders constructed their activities from these principles. They introduced these principles into institutional discourse, invoking them often in their interactions with colleagues. As needed, they also re-centered themselves around these unifying principles, especially during periods of heightened ideological contestation.

These core beliefs about writing resonate with those of other WAC programs, yet they did not arrive at the site one day, a set intact; their specific articulation at North River State resulted from interactions among various local stakeholders. These core beliefs engage not only the classic WAC dialectic of writing to learn/writing in the disciplines, but also other ideologies as well.

Engaging in Ideological Multilectics

These principles are interlaced with multiple ideologies of higher education. For instance, the fundamental belief about writing as a means for learning is half of the WAC dialectic. The belief about the inextricable relationship between thinking and writing evokes the ideology of unity, as does the notion of shared responsibility and the advocacy

for writing's centrality. Rhetorics of shared responsibility evoke the ideology of accountability, and the prominence afforded to the liberal arts and the practice of positioning students as thinkers both signal alignment with the ideology of liberal culture.

Other ideologies that were part of the campus culture were also present in WAC leaders' discourse, and were selectively invoked depending on the rhetorical occasion. Close attention not only to the discourse of the WAC advocates but also to that of other institutional constituents helped me determine what ideologies in addition to the WAC dialectic were significant to the project of changing the culture of writing at North River.

In rhetorical encounters related to writing across the curriculum, WAC ideologies interacted with others, recombining into varied ideological multilectics. At North River State, the prominent historically significant dialectics of unity/differentiation, liberal culture/utility, tradition/innovation, and accountability/autonomy all came into play, but in different combinations and with different weights and connotations depending on the contexts, purposes, and individuals involved in a given rhetorical encounter. For instance, as evidence in chapter 4 demonstrates, the pedagogical focus of the 2005 Writing Institute meant that from the field of higher education ideologies that were significant during my study of WAC development at North River State, a subset of unity/differentiation, utility, and autonomy/accountability were most prominent.

During the institute, individual and disciplinary differentiation was acknowledged, explored, then bracketed in light of facilitators' commitment to a variant on a unifying WAC ideology: the relationship between writing, thinking, and learning. The utility of the concept of writing to learn was emphasized to faculty, while instructors' autonomy was validated through both the voluntary nature of the institute and the freedom of each participant to choose what classes and assignments to alter, and to what

degree. Autonomy's dialectic partner, accountability, also became increasingly structured into the Writing Institute, however, as facilitators established expectations of pedagogical mentoring relationships and follow-up cohort gatherings. Accountability even came to have a financial dimension after 2005; participants were paid a stipend to attend the institute, but the final installment was not disbursed until after their attendance at follow-up gatherings during the school year.

Elements of the rich ideological field were thus selectively taken up in encounters such as the Writing Institute where WAC advocates were the leaders and framers of the conversations. As chapter 5 shows, the field did become much more ideologically complex during contested rhetorical encounters involving reforms to general education. WAC advocates took part in these reforms, but unlike their central positions during the Writing Institutes, they were no longer the primary ideological vectors or vested interests during North State's curricular overhaul. The highly contested transformations of first year writing engaged the different ideological commitments of two main vested groups, producing a thicket of agendas and ideologies.

This situation was dramatic, but given what Walvoord and McLeod have suggested about the WAC movement's necessary alliances, it exemplifies a degree of ideological and rhetorical complexity other WAC advocates can anticipate as they attempt collaborative cross-disciplinary projects. WAC program developers need theoretical tools for unpacking and attempting to understand the profound ideological divergences that may surface around joint projects, and they need practical strategies for how to respond. From findings generated from the conditions at my research site, I assemble frameworks intended for that purpose.

Although the shifting relationships among the set of five historic dialectics I focus on in this study are specific to WAC developments at one institution, the process of identifying ideologies, their affinities and divergences, and their degree of local importance may be portable to other sites of program development. The ideologies presented in my study are not comprehensive, but represent those most pertinent to the process of cultural change that I witnessed. WAC-relevant dialectics that were prominent in the rhetorical ecology around WAC at North River during the period of my study co-existed in mobile multilectics. The writing to learn/writing in the disciplines dialectic is the primary lens of my research and I sought to understand how such WAC ideologies interacted with others during the process of WAC program development. Within that dialectic, writing to learn was the dominant of the two principles at North River during the study.

Two other dialectics, unity/differentiation and tradition/innovation, had clearly weighted distinctions between their two elements, when generalized over the span of WAC developments between 1992 and 2008. The equivalently weighted dialectics, liberal culture/utility and accountability/autonomy, had nearly equivalent strength over that same span, but these elements did shift in standing depending on context. An ideology that was relatively subordinate during some WAC developments could be more prominent during other occasions. For instance, the traditional principle of faculty autonomy in higher education is quite powerful, and was in more evidence than accountability during the 2005 Writing Institute in which faculty participation was entirely voluntary. However, accountability subordinated autonomy during other encounters, such as those involving general education reforms, and it was especially prominent during the struggle over first year writing curriculum. Given higher education

trends, accountability is an ideology WAC program developers anywhere will likely need to engage with, but with caution since its cultural heft is considerable.

Another complex case arises between the WAC dialectic and liberal culture/utility. At North River overall, the component principles of the liberal culture/utility dialectic bear equivalent rhetorical weight, and both come into play in combination with WAC. The recombinant pathway is well developed between writing to learn and liberal culture in formal expressions such as mission statements and grant proposals, but the 2005 Writing Institute and Yvonne's discussion of persuasive points for education faculty demonstrates that utility is also readily invoked in WAC/WID pedagogical discourse.

A much simpler judgment was possible for weighting the dialectics where one was consistently more evident than its partner. Innovation clearly trumped tradition in the rhetorical landscape of North River during the period of the study; discourse deriving from the innovation ideology was ubiquitous, whereas discourse related to tradition appeared only sporadically, and with less apparent effect. Unity and differentiation were almost as straightforward to weigh due to the abundance of unity rhetorics during a period of general education reforms as well as the established affiliation between unity and the dominant WAC ideology of writing to learn. Difference was less subordinated than tradition, however, because WAC leaders directly addressed it, and the historical division between liberal studies and professional studies was an ongoing dimension of the ideological landscape at North River that WAC advocates did engage.

Implications

Ideological Recentering

As my findings show, the higher education ideological soup contains culturally dominant ideas such as accountability and innovation that tend to subordinate others because of their prevalence in discourse inside and beyond any single institutional site. Alternative ideologies risk subordination to these dominant ideologies during rhetorical interaction. Ideological recentering is the act of regrouping to counter subordination by rearticulating commitment to a central ideological agenda, and perhaps also to refine an agenda in light of a changing landscape. As the example of North River State's dual-agenda project of transforming first year writing demonstrates, this recentering strategy becomes especially valuable for WAC advocates during times of high interactivity around a project that crosses ecological domains.

Ideological Recombination

As my study furthermore shows, ideologies are sticky and associative. This associative tendency is evident in powerful historic dialectics as well as in traditional cross-dialectic pairings such as writing to learn with unity and accountability with utility. In lived discursive events and texts, ideologies rarely stand alone or even in simple dialectic, but instead form complex multilectic relationships. The stickiness of ideologies also offers recombinant possibilities for altering the terms of engagement. Deliberate ideological recombination can be a form of resistance such as in the cases of both Karen and Ben who decouple accountability from its common association with compartmentalized skills discourse (itself deriving from ideologies of utility and the differentiation/unity dialectic) by recombining accountability instead with notions of

intellectual identity embedded in the liberal culture ideology. Such recombinant moves can also be an adaptive means for collaborating across differences, such as when Writing Institute facilitators acknowledge participants' disciplinary differences in values around writing, then use those differences as a context for introducing a unifying hybrid principle of writing to think and learn across disciplines.

I propose that these two actions, ideological recentering and ideological recombination, are portable rhetorical practices that can be used productively by other WAC advocates to forward their agendas.

WAC Implementation Strategies

As the years of WAC interactivity at North River indicate, several key factors appear to facilitate these strong ideological practices. For practitioners aiming to develop a program, 1) it is important to have an ideological center. This center should be intellectually compelling to the leadership, as Elaine Maimon has pointed out ("It Takes a Campus"). It should also be grounded in research, and have explanatory power for the problems of writing, learning, and teaching that other campus constituents encounter. 2) It is also valuable to have a physical center for WAC. Whether it is a writing center, or a WAC office, or some other institutional real estate identifiable with a WAC agenda and its vectors, physical presence matters not only because it provides gathering space but also because it signals institutional investment in the idea of WAC even if a program is unofficial. 3) Stable and inclusive leadership is crucial. WAC efforts can perhaps start with one person committed to a compelling ideological agenda, but several scholars have warned against having programs depend on a single person. David Russell writes that dynamic personalities can mask a structural weakness, and Russell, Edward White, and

Susan McLeod ("Haunted") all argue that if WAC programs depend too greatly on the strength of an individual, then loss of a leader can equate with loss of a program. The WAC movement's strength instead resides historically in leaders' ability to gain the investment of a wide network of diverse interests. North River's example demonstrates the power of developing both core and dispersed, affiliated leadership. This leadership-vectoring factor is directly related to the concept of rhetorical circulation in an ecology model.

In Edbauer's model, the bleed of discourse happens independent from agency, as an ongoing function of networked discursive interaction. Edbauer's analysis focuses on the movement of rhetoric rather than on the agency of vectors who propel rhetorics. But the ways in which ideologies and rhetorics move and pool in a rhetorical economy depend on what rhetors do with what bleeds their way. Individual and collective choices about what concepts to combine or redefine, where to affiliate, magnitude and modulation of commitment – all can affect how others engage with ideas in circulation as well as what structural manifestations of ideas actually occur. On a practical level, WAC advocates can exercise some measure of discursive agency by understanding characteristics of the ideological field in which their own agenda operates. They can then making strategic, selective use of those characteristics both to shape their own agenda and to network it into compatible others, including broader institutional agendas.

Vectors' mobility in a field thickly populated with ideas and agents for other ideologies means that, through interactions, WAC ideologies come into more or less generative contact with other concepts and rhetorics, and constantly. These points of contact are occasions for an enormous range of recombinant multilectic possibilities.

With a sense of ideological implications informed by awareness of historic dialectics[29], WAC agents can sift through the multilectic field and make strategic decisions about what hybridities could facilitate their agendas, and then discursively reinforce the desired connections. Of course the process and potential results are not as controllable as this makes it sound, given the constitutive power of ideologies in which WAC agents are already embedded. Rather than entirely controllable processes of multilectic formation, any such acts of agency are attempts to understand and engage productively with what is already present. Miriam's example of "taking advantage" of shifting conditions as new discursive opportunities arise is an apt model.

North River State's organic manifestation of WAC demonstrates how rich the connective possibilities are in a complex rhetorical ecology in which many constituents accept that change is a constant. Yet the WAC advocates' experiences also indicate how daunting the ideological work is of attempting to deeply change not just structures and practices but the belief systems of an institutional culture. But the point of an ecological system is not to reach stasis, but to regenerate conditions for change over and over again.

---

[29] Those I have identified in this study as relevant to WAC at North River are a starting point. Additional historic dialectics that are prevalent in higher education but that I have not used here include access/excellence and criticism/creativity. These and other dialectics have constitutive properties that may hold more sway in other sites of WAC program development. Local observations are necessary for uncovering the most discursively powerful ideologies in circulation at a given institution.

APPENDICES

INFORMED CONSENT
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Study title: WAC at a Changing Institution

Introduction to the study: I am inviting you to be a participant in a research study conducted by Carolyn Fulford. The purposes of this study are dual. The first aim is to theorize the particular and changing nature of Writing Across the Curriculum at a small public college. Secondly, I intend to describe the strategies of the administrators, faculty, and tutors who are involved in writing policy at the college– and thus aid others as they evaluate, advocate, and/or incorporate writing pedagogies across multiple disciplines. Because I want to understand the interactions of people and ideas in the same institutional context, I will conduct my study at one school, Keene State College.

I hope that my analysis of the data gathered in 2006, 2007, and previously during an exploratory stage of the present study will directly contribute to the knowledge of rhetoric and composition scholars and higher education administrators about the complex relationship between program and institution. During the next several years, I may work on presentations or articles for peer-reviewed journals such as *College Composition and Communication* or *WPA Journal* based on this research which is also my dissertation study. Findings from this study will be provided to the college's writing institute facilitators for their use in evaluating and/or facilitating Writing Across the Curriculum at the college.

What will happen during the study: To continue this research at [North River] State College during 2006 and 2007, I will observe events related to the […] Writing Institute and/or the Writing Task Force and interview faculty members who are or have been involved in the institute or the task force. I will also observe tutors in the Center for Writing such as during meetings and trainings, although not while tutors are working directly with tutees. I will interview members of the college community (excluding students under eighteen years of age) who have a stake in writing policy. Curriculum, tutoring, and administrative materials from participants along with texts and audiovisual materials generated by or for the college (i.e. mission statement, website, video recordings of events) will supplement the data from observations and open-ended interviews.

Participation in this study involves up to three 30 to 60-minute interviews and sharing curriculum, tutoring and/or administrative materials if you choose to. Estimated time for participation is thus approximately one to three hours.

Who to go to with questions: If you have any questions or concerns about being in this study you should contact me, Carolyn Fulford, at (603) 363-4969.

How participants' privacy is protected: I will make every effort to protect your privacy. I will not use your name in any of the information I get from this study or in any of my research reports. Once I receive the consent forms, I will create a database of participants, assigning pseudonyms to each person who agrees to be in this study. I will then use these pseudonyms when referring to participants. Interviews will be transcribed using pseudonyms. I will keep transcripts, tapes, textual materials and consent forms in a locked file at my home. Any audiovisual recordings which include you and to which the college allows me access will remain the property of the

maker or the college but will only be used to augment my research notes and will not be used directly in presentations or publications resulting from this research.

Risks: I will make every effort to represent fairly what you say in interviews and any materials that you share with me. Because participants are known to each other and the study results will be shared with the writing institute facilitators, it is unlikely that I can ensure the mutual anonymity of the interviewees. In any reports, presentations, or publications resulting from this research, I will use pseudonyms for the participants to ensure confidentiality.

Benefits: You will have the opportunity to reflect on you own teaching, tutoring, and/or administrative experience, which could be beneficial in that you may gain insight into your own work. By sharing my research, I hope to contribute to theorizing the relationship between Writing Across the Curriculum and institutions which utilize it.

Your rights: Participation is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to be in the study, you have the right to tell me you wish to withdraw your participation at any time and I will then remove your contributions from the data.

Review Board approval: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Massachusetts Amherst has approved this study, as has the IRB at Keene State College. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study you may contact the Human Research Protection Office via email (humansubjects@ora.umass.edu); telephone (413-545-3428); or mail (Office of Research Affairs, 108 Research Administration Building, University of Massachusetts, 70 Butterfield Terrace, Amherst, MA 01003-9242).

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AND SIGN BELOW IF YOU AGREE

I have had the chance to ask any question I have about this study and my questions have been answered. I have read the information in this consent form and I agree to be in the study. There are two copies of this form. I will keep one copy and return the other to Carolyn Fulford.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS FOR WAC AT NORTH RIVER STATE

Events contributing to changing and sustaining writing culture, pedagogy, and curriculum

Year	Endings, pauses	Culture	Pedagogy	Curriculum	Key Events
1992		1, 2			1) New writing center leadership and new hires in the English Department result in 2) English/writing center alliance.
1993		1, 2			1) New English 101 leadership and English/WC alliance initiate 2) a campus wide writing study.
1994	1	2, 3	4		1) C – Competency policy is revoked, 2) the English/WC alliance conducts and reports on the cross-curricular writing study, and 3) the Writing Task Force is formed in the wake of 4) Peter Elbow's faculty development workshop.
1995-1997			1		1) First reports of Writing Task Force pedagogy events appear in 1996 Writing Center Newsletter. These appear to be sporadic and varied over a period of several years
1998			1		1) A 1st writing guide is produced by the English/WC alliance.
1999	1	2	3		1) After the Instructional Design Center disbands, 2) the writing center gains structural autonomy, and 3) the Writing Task Force Newsletter series, "Is This an 'A' Paper?" circulates.
2000		1	2		1) New hires in the English department become an instrumental Writing Task Force trio (widening the English/WC alliance), and 2) a 2nd edition of the writing guide is published.
2001				1	1) Writing Task Force Newsletter asks: "Is English 101 a Bad Idea?"
2002		1	2		1) The writing center relocates and adopts a new name: Center for Writing. 2) A new writing partnership revamps the writing guide.
2003			1	2	1) The 1st Writing Institute is held and 2) the English Department pilots a 4-credit curriculum.
2004			1,2,3	4	1) Another edition of the writing guide is distributed, and 2) the 2nd Writing Institute fosters 3) a strong cohort from the Psychology Department. 4) The Writing Task Force Newsletter asks, "What is the Role of Writing in a General Education Curriculum?"
2005			1,2	3	1) The Writing Institute gains external funding, and develops 2) a strong cohort from the Biology Department. 3) Members of the Writing Task Force and English Department hatch plans to overhaul English 101.
2006			1,2	3,4	1) The writing guide and 2) the 4th Writing Institute continue, while 3) the General Education Committee pilots a new first year writing course 4) providing a summer institute for faculty teaching it. This institute

					is more curricular than pedagogical.
2007	**1**		**2,3**	**4,5,6**	1) The Writing Task Force goes dormant during a year of massive curricular change. 2) The 5th Writing Institute continues, while 3) the 2nd institute for first year writing gains pedagogical content. 4) 4-credit curriculum and 5) Integrative Education reforms begin college-wide, and 6) the new FYW course replaces English 101.
2008			**1,2,3**	**4**	1) Pedagogical development continues through the 6th Writing Institute and the 3rd first year writing institute. 3) The '08 writing guide is tailored to the FYW course and 4) the Writing Task Force takes up renewed focus on curriculum beyond the first year.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, James D. "Training the Apostles of Liberal Culture: Black Higher Education, 1900-1935." *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860- 1935.* Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 1988. Rpt. in Goodchild and Wechsler. 432-456.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. "Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility." *Liberal Education* 92.2 (2006): 6-13

Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *When a Writer Can't Write*. Ed. Mike Rose New York and London: Guilford Press, 1985. Rpt. in Villanueva.

Bazerman, Charles, et al. *Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum.* West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press & WAC Clearinghouse. 2005. http://wac.colostate.edu/books/bazerman_wac/

Bazerman, Charles. *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

_____. *The Informed Writer.* Boston: Houghton, 1981.

Berkenkotter, Carol, Thomas N. Huckin, and John Ackerman. "Conventions, Conversations, and the Writer: Case Study of a Student in a Rhetoric Ph.D. Program." *Research in the Teaching of English* 22.2 (1988):9-43.

Berlin, James A. *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984.

Bishop, Wendy. *Ethnographic Writing Research: Writing It Down, Writing It Up, and Reading It*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook : Heinemann, 1999.

Bitzer, Lloyd P. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* 1 (January, 1968), 1-14**.** Rpt. in *Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries.* Eds. William A. Covino and David A. Joliffe. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1995.

Bizzell, Patricia. "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?", *College Composition and Communication* 37 (October 1986): 294-301.

Britton, James, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, and Harold Rosen. *The Development of Writing Abilities (11–18).* London: Macmillan Education, 1975.

Bruffee, Kenneth A. "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" *College English* 46 (November 1984): 635–52. Rpt. in Villanueva.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 2009. 17 April 2009. <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/>

Carroll, Lee Ann. *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

Coffey, Amanda, and Paul Atkinson. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data : Complementary Research Strategies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996.

Condon, William. "Accommodating Complexity: WAC Program Evaluation in the Age of Accountability." *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs.* Eds. Susan H. McLeod, Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, and Christopher Thaiss. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. 28-51.

Connelly, Peter J., and Donald C. Irving. "Composition in the Liberal Arts: A Shared Responsibility." *College English* 37(1976): 668-70.

Connolly, Paul H., and Teresa Vilardi. *New Methods in College Writing Programs.* New York: Modern Language Association, 1986.

Du Bois, W.E.B. "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others." *The Souls of Black Folk.* Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co.; Cambridge: University Press John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A., 1903; Bartleby.com, 1999. www.bartleby.com/114/. April 16, 2009.

_____. "The Talented Tenth." *The Negro Problem.* New York: James Pott and Company, 1903. Rpt. in Goodchild and Wechsler. 551-561.

Edbauer, Jenny. "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35.4 (2005): 5-24.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University. Press, 1973.

Emig, Janet. "Writing as a Mode of Learning." *College Composition and Communication* 28 (May 1977): 122–28. Rpt. in Villaneuva.

Fairclough, Norman. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2003.

_____. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992.

Fishman, Stephen M., and Lucille McCarthy. *Unplayed Tapes.* New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.

Flower, Linda S., and John R. Hayes. "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 32 (December 1981): 365–87. Rpt. in Villanueva.

Fulwiler, Toby, and Art Young, eds. *Programs That Work : Models and Methods for Writing across the Curriculum*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1990.

Goodchild, Lester F. and Wechsler, Harold.S., eds. *History of American Higher Education*. 2nd ed. ASHE Reader Series. Needham Heights, MA : Simon and Schuster, 1997.

Harris, Joseph. "Thinking Like a Program." *Pedagogy* 4.3 (2004): 357-63.

Harris, Muriel. "A Writing Center without a WAC Program: The De Facto WAC Center/Writing Center." *Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum Programs: Building Interdisciplinary Partnerships.* Eds. Robert W. Barnett and Jacob S. Blumner. Charlotte, NC: Information Age. 2008. 89-104.

_____. "The Writing Center and Tutoring in WAC Programs." *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs.* Eds. Susan H. McLeod and Margot Soven. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. 1992.

Herrington, Anne J. "Teaching, Writing, and Learning: A Naturalistic Study of Writing in an Undergraduate Literature Course." *Writing in Academic Disciplines: Advances in Writing Research.* Ed. David. A. Jolliffe. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988. 133-66.

_____. "Writing in Academic Settings: A Study of the Contexts for Writing in Two College Chemical Engineering Courses." *Research in the Teaching of English* 19 (1985): 331–361.

Herrington, Anne J., and Marcia Curtis. *Persons in Process,* Urbana IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

Herrington, Anne, and Charles Moran, eds. *Genre across the Curriculum.* Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005.

Huckin, Thomas. "Context-Sensitive Text Analysis." *Methods and Methodologies in Composition Research.* Eds. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale; Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

Jencks, Christopher and David Reisman. *The Academic Revolution.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1968.

Kegan, Robert. "The Constitutions of the Self." *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Kimball, Bruce A. *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education.* New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1995.

Lu, Min-Zhan. "An Essay on the Work of Composition: Composing English Against the Order of Fast Capitalism. *College Composition and Communication* 56 (2004): 16-50.

Lucas, Christopher. J. *American Higher Education: A History.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Lunsford, Andrea A. "Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer." *College English* 41.1 (September 1979): 449-59. Rpt. in Villanueva.

MacDonald, Susan P., and Cooper, Charles M. "Contributions of Academic and Dialogic Journals to Writing about Literature." *Writing, Teaching, and Learning in the Disciplines.* Eds. Anne J. Herrington and Charles Moran. New York: Modern Language Association, 1992. 137–55.

Maimon, Elaine P. "It Takes a Campus to Teach a Writer: WAC and the Reform of Undergraduate Education." *Composing a Community: a History of Writing across the Curriculum.* Eds. Susan McLeod and Margot Soven. West Lafayette, Ind: Parlor Press, 2006. 16-31.

Maimon, Elaine P., Barbara E. Nodine, Gail W. Hearn, and Janice Haney-Peritz. "Beaver College." *Programs that Work: Models and Methods for Writing across the Curriculum.* Eds. Toby Fulwiler and Art Young. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1990. 137-161.

Maimon, Elaine P., Gerald L. Belcher, Gal W. Hearn, Barbara F. Nodine, and Finbarr W. O'Connor. *Writing in the Arts and Sciences*. Cambridge MA: Winthrop, 1981.

McCarthy, Lucille. "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum." *Research in the Teaching of English* 21.3 (1987): 233-365.

McLeod, Susan H. "Writing Across the Curriculum: The Second Stage, and Beyond." *College Composition and Communication* 40.3 (1989): 337-43.

McLeod, Susan H. "WAC at Century's End: Haunted by the Ghost of Fred Newton Scott." *Writing Program Administration* 21.1 (1997): 67-73.

McLeod, Susan H., and Margot Soven, eds. *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992.

McLeod, Susan. H., ed. *Strengthening Programs for Writing Across the Curriculum*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.

McLeod, Susan. H., Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, and Christopher Thaiss, eds. *WAC for the New Millennium : Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum-Programs.* Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

Michael, Steve O. ""In Search of Universal Principles of Higher Education Management and Applicability to Moldavian Higher Education System." *The International Journal of Educational Management* 18.2/3 (2004): 118-137.

Moon, Gretchen Flesher. "First-Year Writing in First-Year Seminars: Writing across the Curriculum from the Start." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 26.3 (2003): 105-118.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges. *Standards for Accreditation.* 22 January 1992.

Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University*. 1852. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Ohmann, Richard. *English in America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Perry, William G., Jr. "Cognitive and Ethical Growth: The Making of Meaning", Eds. Arthur W. Chickering and Associates, *The Modern American College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981. 76-116.

Rossman, Gretchen. B., and Sharon F. Rallis. *Learning in the Field : An Introduction to Qualitative Research.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications, 2003.

Russell, David R. *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History.* 2nd ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

Rutz, Carol, and Jaqulyn Lauer-Glebov. "Assessment and Innovation: One Darn Thing Leads to Another. *Assessing Writing* 10:2 (2005): 80-99.

Sheils, Merrill. "Why Johnny Can't Write." *Newsweek* 92 (December 8, 1975): 58-65.

Sheridan, Harriet W. "Teaching Writing Extra-Territorially: Carleton College." *ADE Bulletin,* 44 (1975): 32.

Soliday, Mary. *The Politics of Remediation: Institutional and Student Needs in Higher Education.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.

Sommers, Nancy. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." *College Composition and Communication* 31 (December 1980): 378–88. Rpt. in Villanueva.

Sommers, Nancy, and Laura Saltz. "The Novice as Expert: Writing in the Freshman Year." *College Composition and Communication* 56.1 (2004): 124-49.

Thaiss, Christopher J. "Theory in WAC: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?" Eds. Susan McLeod, Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, and Christopher Thaiss. *WAC for the New Millennium : Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum-Programs.* Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. 299-325.

Thaiss, Christopher J., and Terry Myers Zawacki. *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines : Research on the Academic Writing Life.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006.

Thaiss, Christopher, Kathleen Campbell, Robert Clark, Stanley Zoltek, and Donald C. Holsinger. "George Mason University." *Programs that Work: Models and Methods for Writing across the Curriculum* Eds. Toby Fulwiler and Art Young. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1990. 221-42.

Thelin, John R. *A History of American Higher Education.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Trimbur, John. "Literacy and the Discourse of Crisis." *The Politics of Writing Instruction on Postsecondary Education.* Eds. Richard Bullock and John Trimbur. Portsmouth NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991. 277-95.

Trow, Martin. "American Higher Education: Past, Present, Future." *Educational Researcher* 17.3 (1988): 13-23.

Vanderslice, Stephanie. "Listening to Everett Rogers: *Diffusion of Innovations* and WAC." *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines* 4.1 (2000): 22-9.

Veysey, Laurence R. "Stability and Experiment in the American Undergraduate Curriculum." *Content and Context: Essays on College Education.* Ed.Carl Kaysen. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973.

_____. *The Emergence of the American University.* Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Villanueva, Victor, ed. *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*, 2nd ed., revised. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003.

Walvoord, Barbara E. "The Future of WAC." *College English* 58.1 (1996): 58-79.

Walvoord, Barbara E., and Lucille McCarthy. *Thinking and Writing in College: A Naturalistic Study of Students in Four Disciplines.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1990.

Walvoord, Barbara E., Linda Lawrence Hunt, H. Fil Dowling, and Joan D. McMahon. *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs.* Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.

Washington, Booker.T. "The Atlanta Exposition Address." 1895. *Up from Slavery.* Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1963. 157-71.

Westphal-Johnson, Nancy, and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick. "The Role of Communication and Writing Intensive Courses in General Education: A Five-Year Case Study of the University of Wisconsin-Madison." *Journal of General Education* 51.2 (2002): 73-102.

White, Edward M. "Shallow Roots or Taproots for Writing across the Curriculum?" *ADE Bulletin,* 98 (1991): 29-33.