

WRITING-INTENSIVE DESIGNATION: A QUASI-WRITING-ACROSS-THE-

CURRICULUM PROGRAM

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by

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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated first to my husband Troy Templin and to my children Terri Johnson and Don Templin. With their support and encouragement, I have now fulfilled a dream.

This thesis is dedicated to my committee: Dr. Rebecca Jackson, Chair, Dr. Deborah Morton, and Dr. Charise Pimentel, for their support, encouragement, and mentorship while I struggled to complete this thesis project.

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CHAPTER I

UNCOVERING THE PROBLEMATIC POSITION OF WI COURSES WITHOUT THE SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE OF A FULL-FLEDGED WAC PROGRAM

In the ancient Greek drama, the prologue constituted the opening. It set the essential background to the events that would follow in the performance. It focused the interpretive gaze of the audience. In more contemporary use, the prologue becomes a peripheral space for the writer to position herself.

_____Wendy Strachan

Prologue

In the prologue to *Writing-Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty*, Wendy Strachan vividly recounts her experience as the writer/narrator and as the writing expert on a campus where administration felt a responsibility to enhance student learning through writing. Ultimately, Strachan's narrative does not provide definitive answers or results, but, as she states, it does leave "evidence of what is still possible" (235). In this study, I also want to leave evidence of what is still possible in writing-intensive courses, possible *with* the supporting infrastructure that a full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum program can provide. In doing so, I begin this study by first positioning myself as perplexed student and second as concerned writer because I believe Strachan's prediction, "The future will depend on who cares to come forward and take up the challenge of halting a drift toward token compliance and of cultivating a scholarly interest in teaching writing" (235). Taking up Strachan's challenge, I plan to enter the

conversation by looking at what I consider a problematic drift toward token compliance as it manifests itself in writing-intensive courses in my site-specific case history of writing intensive at Texas State University-San Marcos. Specifically, I will argue that “writing-intensive” courses and thus initiatives do not constitute nor can they substitute for a full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) program. This argument hinges on the premise that WAC programs are about campus cultures of writing, something that WI courses alone cannot accomplish. This study seeks to progress a vision of WAC programs as cultural movements to produce better writers through faculty involvement, cultural interaction, and institutional commitment.

This site-specific case history begins with my own experiences in WI denoted courses at the undergraduate level. In these experiences, I will attempt to uncover the problematic position of WI courses without the supporting infrastructure of a full-fledged WAC program, arguing that such courses promote a token compliance subliminally revealed in the WI guidelines that have not changed to meet student needs and expectations. I will argue further that what is needed is a renewed conviction about the value of writing and a renewed commitment to activism and leadership.

Introduction

I started course work at Texas State in the fall of 2002, wanting to become a better writer, a writer who could confidently meet or possibly exceed employers’ expectations. During the twenty years prior to entering the University, employers had expected me to write marketing proposals, edit correspondence and engineers’ reports, compose letters to defaulting credit customers, and proof legal documents. I felt certain that I was not competent enough a writer to meet these expectations, but for some perplexing reason these types of writing tasks seemed to end up on my desk, even though

I was usually hired for my bookkeeping and credit management experience. In fact, I had never indicated, on a resume or in an interview, that writing was one of my particular abilities. Nevertheless, I knew I wanted to claim this competency.

With this in mind, I came to Texas State with sixty-six hours of college credit, earned during my working years, cognizant of what I wanted from my education. I wanted to learn how to write well. I wanted to become a competent writer. Therefore, following my counselor's advice, I declared English with an emphasis on Professional Writing as my major, and I excitedly registered for three writing-intensive (WI) courses, drawing my understanding of "writing-intensive" from the following excerpt found in the 2002-2004 Texas State undergraduate catalog:

Writing Intensive

Certain SWT [now known as Texas State University-San Marcos] courses are designed as "writing intensive" and are labeled as (WI) in this catalog and the schedule of classes. In order to achieve this status, at least 65% of the course grade must be based on written assignments and a minimum of one extended piece of writing must be required. Academic colleges require a minimum of 9 credit hours of these courses for graduation. In addition to certain major and elective courses, the two History and one Philosophy course included in the general education core curriculum are writing intensive. These courses as well as other courses appropriate for writing intensive credit must be taken at SWT. (94)

While this excerpt may be a synopsis to give students a general idea of what to expect, I mistakenly thought that all WI courses would interpret "writing intensive" similarly. I

thought assigning writing would automatically include the teaching of writing. However, I discovered neither of these assumptions was the case: “writing intensive” meant precisely what the description indicated—that quantity of writing was the primary measure. My experiences in three WI denoted courses—1305 General Philosophy, 3301 Literature and the Contemporary Reader, and 3303 Technical Writing—illustrate the incongruence between expectation and reality.

1305 General Philosophy

Early in the semester, the philosophy professor reminded the approximately three-hundred students in this lower-level WI denoted course that the first exam would be an essay exam. Drawing on my community-college composition experience, I thought he meant a standard essay with an introduction, a thesis with three or four developing points to answer a question. However, again, this was not the case—“essay exam” meant answering each question in no more than five, legible, content-specific sentences, a stipulation articulated by the TA assigned to my group. Understandably, I could not see what was writing intensive about this university-level exam; to me, this type of writing seemed rudimentary because the answers to the exam questions were constrained by “spoon-fed” information and then regurgitated on the exam much like the exams I had taken in high school. While it must be acknowledged that exams constrained by total information recall and limited articulation force students to know the material and to attend lectures, I now realize that written exams like these also make grading easier in courses with large student enrollments. In other words, this WI course seemed designed to ease the faculty and staff workload rather than to use writing in meaningful ways to fulfill the required 65% graded writing in this course. Likewise, as Mark L. Waldo

emphasizes, in “Sustainability, Cognition, and WAC,” “In such an atmosphere, there is little commitment to write to learn [or learning to write] rather than write to be tested” (5). Put another way, this course used writing to support the traditional banking and regurgitation of knowledge that is easily graded, but problematic for students because the course was not designed to afford students an opportunity to revise their written work.

Later in the semester, I remember the students wrote “the extended piece of writing” mentioned in the WI requirements, a two-page double-spaced summary of an assigned reading. In this case, too, even though the summary perhaps served to supplement content learning, I believe this assignment, reflected a “token” agenda for assigning writing to meet the 65% graded writing requirement, although I recognize now that this is precisely what the quantification of writing is destined to do. Granted, this summary assignment could be interpreted as writing to learn, a well-known WAC tenet, but WAC scholar John Bean indicates that even summary writers need to understand the conventions germane to summary writing. In *Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active learning in the Classroom*, John Bean states, “In composing a summary, the writer must determine the hierarchical structure of the original article, retaining without distortion the logical sequence of its general statements while eliminating its specific details. Summary writers must also suspend their own views on a subject to articulate fairly what is often an unfamiliar or even unsettling view in the article being summarized” (128). Based on Bean’s insights about summary writing, WI faculty should not assume that students understand the writing conventions germane to any particular assignment. Thus, again there seemed to be little commitment to the actual writing.

As I thought then and I think even more so now, students should be guided toward successful completion of writing assignments, especially in WI courses. Admittedly, this was my first university-level course, but I must begin here because this experience marks a definitive place and time my perception of what WI meant began to change. This change devolved further because of the way the TA in charge of my group interacted with the students. While this TA often invited students to her office to talk about the subject matter, I noticed that during these sessions she subtly guided us away from talking about the actual writing of both the essay exam and the short paper. However, this observation is offered in hindsight without the TA's explanation for not addressing our writing. So now I can only surmise that the TA had not received any practical training or theoretical underpinning to help students with their writing—which, in my way of thinking, served an elitist function because struggling students needed help with their writing as well as with the content. Of course, if *writing intensive* is defined by a quantitative measure and not by writing praxis or theory, then it stands to reason that the content-specific TA fulfilled the intent of the course.

3301 Literature and the Contemporary Reader

Unlike the philosophy course, the 3301 WI literature course was for English majors and minors with the prerequisite of the six-hour sophomore requirement, and specifically focused on “[c]urrent approaches to literature with attention to reading strategies and artistic techniques and conventions” (317).¹ Put more simply, this course was designed to build on composition I and II through writing-intensive assignments and, more particularly, to acquaint students with critical and literary terms. Yet I sensed then

¹ According to <http://www.txstate.edu/curriculumservices/catalog/undergraduate/catalogs/02/04.html>

and perceive even more so now that content knowledge (knowledge gained from lecture and the readings) overshadowed the WI inferred continuum of the six-hour prerequisite (composition I and II). In other words, by opting for two in-class essay exams and one end-of-term paper to satisfy the 65% assigned writing requirement, this WI denoted course met the requirements of the University, but did not explicitly focus on progressing the students' writing abilities through instruction or revision—activities I argue must accompany specifications about how much writing is to be done.

Even then, I felt this lack of attention to the actual writing was problematic because without revision opportunities most students will academically advance without the learning benefits provided in WI courses where writing is frequently and purposely assigned, instructor feedback is provided and explained, and revision is offered and expected. Suffice it to say, progressing students' writing abilities in this class seemed secondary—something that the students should have already mastered. Troubled by this assumed mastery, I spent many hours talking with the English department's writing center tutors. From them, I learned that the act of writing is an evolving process, a process in which higher-order organization and ideas need revision and lower-order grammatical choices and mistakes need thought and correction. Thus, at the end of this course, I felt perplexed by the perfunctory writing-intensive interpretation and the tacit insinuation of mastery.

3303 Technical Writing

As it turned out, the technical writing course took a totally different approach to the WI designation. While this course's double writing emphasis must be acknowledged, I include this course because I believe that it exemplifies how WAC's philosophical

approaches in WI courses can be used not only to enhance content learning, but also to promote students' writing abilities. The WI in this course meant improving writing through extensive feedback and the opportunity to revise. It meant conferences with the teacher. Although conferences, feedback, and revision improved my writing in this course, I still felt apprehensive about taking more WI courses. I wondered if what I had experienced in this course would help me write well in other WI courses, and more importantly, in workplaces like the ones I had previously encountered.

Even with these uneasy thoughts, I still selected eighteen more hours of WI denoted courses, one of which was Professional Writing (emphasis of my major), which I thought would focus on the ways writing is performed in different disciplines. However, Professional Writing proved to be similar to Technical Writing, with an overriding emphasis on business writing (different types of letters, reports, and brochures). In this course, the professor held pedagogical views on revision and comprehensive feedback similar to the professor in the Technical Writing course. Beyond this, she introduced peer reviews in which students learned to read and reflect on each other's writing. Thus, this WI course and the technical writing course contrasted so widely with the WI philosophy and literature course that I sensed a problematic situation for students that needed further consideration.

Ultimately, these experiences prompted me to re-examine the WI synopsis found in the Texas State undergraduate catalog. In doing so, I became even more critically aware that the language allows WI faculty to interpret compliance with the requirements in any number of different ways, creating a problematic situation for both teachers and students. Let me explain by first drawing attention back to the 2002-2004 Texas State

undergraduate catalog, and even more recently to the 2008-2010 Texas State undergraduate catalog which again states that “[c]ertain. . .courses are designed as “writing intensive” and are labeled as (WI) in this catalog and the schedule of classes. In order to achieve this status, at least 65% of the course grade must be based on written assignments and a minimum of one extended piece of writing must be required. Academic colleges require a minimum of 9 credit hours of these courses for graduation.”

From this articulation, clearly both teachers and students would understand that WI means an emphasis on assigned writing in these courses. But this WI articulation neither stipulates that feedback and revision are recommended nor states the abilities that these courses should attempt to foster. In other words, the articulation of the WI requirements leaves room for a widely discretionary interpretation as well as totally ignoring any real benefits to students for taking more of these courses than the required nine hours for graduation.

In many places, including Texas State, WI has come to be defined almost exclusively in quantitative terms. By defining the WI course in this way, I contend that these educational institutions assert what they value: they value that students take WI courses in which a percentage of their grade is based on writing—a grade easily assessed; they value that students take a certain number of WI course work before graduation—a requirement perhaps too lightly considered. Therefore, the WI designation at Texas State fulfills its intended purpose, the WI courses meet their obligation, and Texas State is doing what it says it is doing. This acknowledgement does not mean, however, that we cannot or should not change things. I argue that we should be moving away from a quantitative stance toward a qualitative full-fledged WAC philosophy.

WI programs focusing exclusively on quantity of writing produced assume that the more writing one does, the better writer they will become. And while most writing scholars would agree with this premise to a certain extent, they would also likely argue that quantity alone does not make writers more effective or help them understand the ways in which writing might be used strategically to enhance their learning. I further argue that WI intensive courses are most effective when they are conceived as necessary components of a full-fledged WAC program, when they are designed not only to encourage faculty to assign a certain percentage of writing in their courses but when they re-imagine their courses as sites of writing to learn and learning to write. I further argue that WAC encourages a qualitative approach to writing; it has theoretical foundations about ways to use writing in classrooms to promote learning and to progress students' writing abilities, not as a way to promote a culture of assessment dependant on right and wrong answers. While I realize that most professors are steeped in this culture of assessment, and that writing does not lend itself to "the right answer," I also maintain that if WI courses are to have any value beyond the purely quantitative, then we must understand that writing is about learning, about analysis, about critical thinking, about investigation, and about finding that there may not be one right answer. Thus, as a WAC advocate, I take up Waldo's challenge "to champion writing and critical thinking in the face of pressure to further objectify the curriculum" (13).

As I see it, a quantitative WI requirement also promotes what I call a quasi-writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) program on campuses—"quasi" because the presence of WI courses often suggests that WAC exists when it really doesn't. In other words, the WI component is thought of as WAC, but *without* the pedagogical or the

philosophical influence of a full-fledged WAC program. Granted, at Texas State, there is a WAC web offering through the Writing Center web site, and at times, faculty workshops do take place. However, there is not a full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Program on campus to support faculty and students in WI courses. Without this supporting infrastructure for WI approved faculty, I can reasonably suggest that WI faculty will often “drift toward tokenism” thereby diminishing the benefits that may come from WI courses. These benefits and guidelines are well stated by the Campus Writing Program at the University of Missouri – Columbia:

Writing Intensive Courses maintain a low student-to teach ratio (20:1), require at least 5,000 words of writing, and give students ample opportunity to revise their work to improve their performance. Writing assignments are designed to teach course content and to assess students’ learning, giving faculty the chance to focus on content, concepts and quality of argument while students take responsibility for surface features such as grammar and syntax. WI assignments are tied directly and specifically to the goals of the course and are fully integrated into the syllabus. Through writing and revising, students not only master course concepts, they also learn to think and write in ways particular to their chosen disciplines. Writing Intensive courses attempt to foster the ability to

- pose worthwhile questions,
- evaluate arguments,
- give and receive criticism profitably,

- distinguish among fact, inference and opinion,
- articulate complex ideas clearly,
- deal with problems that have no simple solutions,
- consider purpose and audience,
- understand how given disciplines define themselves,
- become informed, independent thinkers.²

I offer these guidelines and goals because I find that they are in *stark* contrast to the WI description articulated in Texas State's 2002 undergraduate catalog and rearticulated through 2010. I would argue that this *stark* contrast is because, as Martha Townsend indicates, the University of Missouri has had a full-fledged WAC program on campus for approximately seventeen years ("WAC Program" 45). To be sure, I do not know the full implications of this sustained connection, but I do know it is worthy of study.

Guiding Research Questions

Suffice it to say, my experiences in WI courses provided the backdrop for my entry into the MA Rhetoric and Composition program and my growing interest in writing across the curriculum (WAC). As I progressed through the program, I began to realize that most scholarship about WI courses talks about these courses as existing within a WAC program. Consequently, I began to wonder: Could one really exist without the other? What was the relationship between WAC and WI at Texas State? From these precursory queries, I developed the following formal research questions to guide the research for this study:

² According to <http://cwp.missouri.edu>

1. What will a historical investigation of the “writing-intensive” designation at the Texas State reveal? What conclusions about WAC at Texas State and Writing Across the Curriculum in general can be drawn from such an investigation?
 - How and when was the WI designation originally conceived? What was the purpose for the WI designation?
 - What common thread did the WI designation originally share with the WAC movement at Texas State?
 - How did faculty courses receive this WI designation?
 - How has the WI designation and purpose changed over time?
 - How do courses currently receive WI designation?
 - What is the current stated purpose of the WI designation?
 - What specific guidelines do current WI courses follow?
 - How are WI courses currently monitored for compliance?

2. In what ways might a situated Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program transform a “writing-intensive” initiative? How does this transformation help shape a campus-wide culture of writing?
 - What defines a culture of writing?
 - What does a campus-wide culture of writing entail?
 - How do universities promote campus-wide cultures of writing?
 - How do cultures of writing produce better writers?

Benefits of Study

This study will attempt to discover the value of a full-fledged WAC program to a WI component. Toward this end, I will examine how an educational institution without a full-fledged WAC program has historically and is currently using and administering WI components. Because WI designated courses have historically been connected to WAC approaches, this research should extend WAC scholarship about WI initiatives.

Research Methodology

Thinking broadly about a research design for this study, I considered Cindy Johaneck's contextualist theory. Johaneck's Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification urges researchers to consider "research methods for a particular project based not on politics or on personal preferences, but on the contexts in which [their] research questions arise" (111). Considering Johaneck's perspective made sense because it offered a theoretical approach to finding the research methods that would best serve my thesis project. As Johaneck explains, "[A] Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification draws us to an analysis of contexts: what do I want to know? why do I need to know it? how can I frame my questions in a way they can be answered?" (104). Critically applied, these questions led me to the type of study I needed to engage in. Thus, by analyzing my contexts—the context of my convictions as well as the context of site—I was able to determine that a qualitative research methodology not only advanced my arguments but also served the goals of my site-specific "case history."

In choosing to refer to my site-specific research as a "case history" rather than a "case study," I offer Mary Sue MacNealy's attempt, in *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing*, to clear up the confusion about the inappropriate uses for the term or label

case study. To illustrate this point, MacNealy mentions particular situations—in Rhetoric, Education, Law, and Medicine—in which the terms illustrative case, problem case, and case history are more appropriate than case study. MacNealy considers that these terms are more appropriate because “no systematic study is involved,” and she claims that “empirical researchers use the term [case study] to refer to a carefully designed project to systematically collect information about an event, situation, or small group of persons or objects for the purpose of exploring, describing, and/or explaining aspects not previously known or considered” (197). Yet these differentiating features do not quite clear up the confusion because it could be argued that a case history is a carefully designed project to systematically collect information. On the other hand, systematic often implies step-by-step procedures that can be replicated to produce verifiable outcomes.

Therefore, I draw on the ideas of Robert J. Connors, in “Dreams and Play: Historical Method and Methodology,” to expand MacNealy’s systematic view. Like MacNealy, Connors expresses the view that historical research cannot be “systematic, scientific, or predictive” (31). In other words, any triangulation in case histories would serve to support premises or to add details but not to replicate results. While there are verifiable facts in historical research, this type of research most often, as Connors suggests, “tell us stories that may move us to actions” or “paint a picture of the past for us from which we can draw lessons” (31). For these reasons, I find that Connors aptly addresses the work I want to do in this study, and therefore I want to acknowledge that *case history* best represents my retrospective examination of an educational initiative that evolved over a span of approximately twenty years.

In this study, my own experiences in WI courses conjoin with archive data and faculty insights to present a *site-specific case history*, a case history that begins in the early 1980s with the advent of the WI initiative and the first WAC workshops at Texas State. As with any research design, this project began with perplexing questions. From there, I proposed a contextual study, collected historical and interview data, and researched applicable scholarship, and now I assert that my findings are open for examination. Importantly, however, I would like to acknowledge that my research design and data interpretations are not completely devoid of researcher bias. From the outset, the way a researcher views and represents bias determines the research methodology. Thus, by acknowledging bias, I have situated my study within a qualitative methodology.

Besides acknowledging bias, the way a researcher collects data also determines the research methodology. John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, in *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, set the distinguishing criteria of both quantitative and qualitative data. While Creswell and Clark want to show how researchers can include both quantitative and qualitative data in the same research project, they also suggest that one way to distinguish quantitative data from qualitative data is to think of the data as “closed-ended [quantitative] information such as that found on attitude, behavior, or performance instruments” or “open-ended [qualitative] information that the researcher gathers through interviews with participants” (6). By considering Creswell and Clark’s perspective on data, I was able to further determine that a qualitative methodology is applicable to my study because my guiding research questions and my interview questions are mostly open-ended, encouraging lengthy responses and conflicting viewpoints from my own. However, let me be clear: I take a strong position in this study,

and this position may well have influenced the way I designed my interview questions, as well as affected my interpretation of the responses.

In The Active Interview, James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium draw from the 1967 work of Garfinkel and the 1974 work of Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson to address the issue of bias in interview interactions. Holstein and Gubrium offer that “[b]ecause socially constructed meaning is unavoidably collaborative, it is virtually impossible to free any interaction from those factors that could be construed as contaminants. All participants in an interview are inevitably implicated in making meaning” (18). Put another way, the active interviewer should be receptive to new information that may change the way she thinks about her position. On the other hand, she should recognize that interviewees may change or add to their initial responses to interview questions—thereby participate in the “meaning making.”

For this project, I took my interview style and cues from Holstein and Gubrium because I knew my participants had top-down expert knowledge and experience and I had bottom-up experience, so understanding interactive interviewing techniques gave me a way to navigate the human dynamics found in top-down and bottom-up ways of knowing as well as determining the interview pragmatics. These practical aspects began with selecting participants who had the knowledge of both the WI initiative and WAC at Texas State. When this selection was complete, I contacted each selection and requested the interview, and if I received consent, we set a date and time that was convenient for them.

During these initial conversations, I also asked if they would permit me to digitally record our interview interactions. Next, I prepared a Consent Form for each

participant, keeping Texas State Institutional Review Board guidelines in mind. Finally, I considered the interview format and the purpose for the interviews, keeping my guiding research questions before me at all times to maintain relevance to my study. Since I sought historical information as well as expert insights, I decided to ask each participant a similar set of questions because I not only wanted verification of certain events, but I also wanted to compare and contrast expert insights. In hindsight, I want to reveal that I, perhaps unwisely, ask one participant to share her memories about the WI and WAC initiatives at Texas State. While it can be said that memory is sometimes faulty, I found that her responses were similar to the other participants. In other words, she told stories about the WI and WAC initiatives and about the current WI program.

With this in mind and perhaps working backward, I looked for confirming information about asking interviewees a similar set of questions or the same set of questions. I found that MacNealy supports this notion: As she notes, “[I]f the same question is asked of every person in the study, then the researcher reduces the risk of biased answers from some of the interviewees” (201). While I believe that biased answers are inevitable, I think reducing the possibility is a researcher’s responsibility; therefore, I paid respectful heed to MacNealy’s ideas. MacNealy also emphasizes that “drawing up possible interview questions in advance and setting up a specific time and place for the interview provide more reliable data” (201). From the outset, I knew my study depended on reliable data, so again I drew counsel from MacNealy’s way of thinking about where and when reliable data is best collected.

Before the interviews, I reconsidered the interview process from the perspective of Holstein and Gubrium and MacNealy. I also reconsidered Connors perspective on

historical research. While Connors specifically talks about drawing insights from archived data, I want to suggest that his views, presented below, are applicable to my interview data as well:

But these discrete historical facts hang in a vacuum, useless, without the interpretations that order them in all historical writing. And so the two questions that are continually argued about in historical writing are these: (1) Does this interpretation of the historical data seem coherent, reliable, interesting, useful? And (2) What can this interpretation of the past show us about the present and the future? (30).

Taking Connors' questions about historical data into consideration, I went to each interview attempting to ask "open-ended questions" and listening for "coherent, reliable, interesting, and useful information." I went to each interview knowing that my interpretations of the interview data could validate or invalidate my study. I went to each interview looking for insights that could promote positive change—positive change in the future for students as well as for faculty who are challenged to teach content as well as to incorporate writing into their WI course work.

After each faculty interview, I transcribed the interview interactions, trying to keep each transcription as authentic as possible. After the transcriptions were complete, I gave each participant an opportunity to revise their responses. The transcriptions are provided in Appendices F, G, H, I, and J in this study. I publish these transcriptions with this thesis study because the participants are considered experts in their field and their insights contribute to the knowledge-making of this study. Although this is certainly true

of Young, I have chosen to exclude Young's total responses because our e-mail interview did not follow the transcription and revision sequence allowed in the other interviews.

Purview of Research

Ultimately, I aim to extend WAC research, research that does not seem to explicitly suggest or deny WAC's potential within WI courses for meeting the current demand for better writers. While this premise seems tacitly projected in contemporary WAC scholarship, I seek to envision full-fledged WAC programs as necessary components in meeting this current demand. In the next chapter, as a way to enter this conversation, I will review and interpret research suggesting WAC's historical impetus and prevailing principles. I will also review and apply my convictions to research examining WAC's intended role in WI courses and conversely the role of WI courses within a larger WAC program. In doing so, I will continue my focus on a WI designation that represents what I call a quasi-WAC program.

In chapter three, I first will examine WI and WAC archive data. Along with these data, I will analyze interviews with retired and current faculty who taught at Texas State during the advent of the WI initiative as well as when noted WAC scholar, Dr. Art Young, came to Texas State (1984-1986) to conduct faculty workshops to teach the tenets of writing across the curriculum. In chapter four, I will conclude this study by projecting what I believe is still possible in WI courses with the supporting infrastructure that a full-fledged WAC program can provide.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORING WAC AND WI FOUNDATIONS

In the first chapter, I positioned myself first as perplexed student and next as concerned writer. As perplexed student, I examined my experiences in WI courses during my undergraduate years. As concerned writer, I attempted to uncover why I felt uneasy about and dissatisfied with the WI courses I took, and I attempted to situate my concerns within the broader spectrum of concerns about student writing in contemporary educational institutions and workplaces. In this chapter, I first establish WAC as a specialized field; second, I position my research; third, I interpret WAC's historical impetus and prevailing principles; and fourth, I situate the role of WAC in WI courses and conversely the role of WI courses in WAC. My purpose for presenting my research in this way is to keep my research germane to my arguments.

Introduction

Before I look at WAC and WI Foundations, I think it is important for me to establish that WAC has matured into a specialized field. Clearly, the abundance of WAC research and the escalating number of WAC programs supports this premise. Chris Thaiss and Tara Porter in "The State of WAC/WID in 2010: Methods and Results of the U.S. Survey of the International WAC/WID Mapping Project," verify that since 1987, "new data. . . indicates that the presence of such programs has grown in U.S. institutions

by roughly one-third” (534). Moreover, as I will show, research indicates that WAC is primarily about helping all faculty develop a praxis underpinned by theories on learning and writing, but faculty in WI courses particularly. I turn now to positioning the research for my study. In doing so, I begin with the renewed challenge for higher education to meet the increasing demand for better writers.

Positioning the Research

Undeniably, in this new millennium, U. S. higher education is challenged to meet the increasing demand for better writers: better writers for service industries, professional workplaces, academic pursuits, and government entities. A 2008 study conducted on behalf of The Association of American Colleges and Universities shows that employers still give college graduates low scores in their preparedness to write well (Hart 3). To engage this challenge, I believe that contemporary institutions will need to *weave* the activity of writing into their mission statements, their pedagogies, their websites, and implement full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) programs to support faculty, and thus promote a campus-wide culture of writing.

A campus-wide cultural involvement reveals itself in many ways: administrative support, faculty development, student engagement, peer-tutoring, collaborative writing, and writing embedded in most or all course work. In “Writing Intensive Courses and WAC,” Martha Townsend argues that “[c]onscientious integration with the campus mission statement, writing center, service learning, other campus teaching and learning programs, campus assessment activities, technology, general education, graduate programs (by employing graduate students in the disciplines to assist with WI courses), and so on go a long way toward creating a curricular requirement that is tightly woven

into the institutional fabric” (243). In other words, WI courses, when fully integrated within a larger WAC program and with solid institutional support, *can* create an atmosphere for students to learn how to write well in their chosen fields and other fields as well. The presence of writing-intensive courses alone, however, does not have the same effect.

To be sure, some universities, like Texas State, may not have fully conceptualized this symbiotic integration of writing and learning, but may have adopted writing-intensive (WI) initiatives to incorporate writing into discipline courses thereby creating what I call “quasi writing-across-the-curriculum programs.” Understandably, these quasi-writing-across-the-curriculum programs experience potential problems when WI faculty develop an awareness of the difficulties associated with “the frequency of writing, the usefulness of instructor feedback, the opportunity for revision, and, most important, the design of writing assignments and their ‘fit’ with the pedagogical aims of the course,” (Townsend “Writing Intensive Courses and WAC” 235). This situation further devolves when faculty are so far removed from WI origins that they have no idea what WAC is, and they realize that there is not a specialized program on campus that helps shape their understanding.

Moreover, as Susan McLeod and Elaine Maimon observe in “Clearing the Air: WAC Myths and Realities,” administration and faculty may need to recognize that “both historically and today, WAC is a complex programmatic entity, intended to enhance students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills” (574). In other words, from the beginning, WAC principles and programs have been about enhancing the educational experience for both teachers and students, about getting students ready for workplaces,

about teaching students to read closely, and about helping them develop their “problem-solving skills.” McLeod and Maimon further argue that WAC has outlived its presupposed positioning as an “educational fad,” and has clearly demonstrated its “staying power” (574). Like McLeod and Maimon, I want to emphasize the “staying power” of WAC programs; however, I want to expand their arguments to include the idea that WI components under the direction of a full-fledged WAC program, using WAC approaches and principles, can produce better writers, better writers with “critical thinking and problem-solving skills.”

Interpreting WAC’s Historical Impetus and Prevailing Principles

While this section reviews WAC’s historical impetus and prevailing principles, its undercurrent suggests WAC’s stance against institutional complacency about the value of writing, beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing in the present. As Chris M. Anson relates in “Reflections, Faculty Development, and Writing Across the Curriculum: The Power of Scene,” “The movement now almost universally known as “writing across the curriculum” (WAC) had its beginnings in a conviction: writing belongs in all courses in every discipline” (ix). This conviction has not changed over time and Anson offers a rationale for this conviction. “Teachers of all subject matters are those best prepared to help students write in their own fields; after all, they read the field’s literature and they themselves usually contribute to its base of knowledge. They are the field’s readers and writers, its gatherers and distributors of intellect” (x). In short, WAC began with the conviction that there should not only be assigned writing in every course, but writing should also be taught by course instructors because they know and write the language of their field.

Anson further relates that this conviction was a reaction to decades of “compartmentalization and specialization” that put the responsibility for teaching writing in the “specific domain” of English departments, and more specifically, composition studies within English departments (ix). While it does stand to reason that one or two composition courses taught in an English department cannot adequately prepare students to write in other disciplines, Anson only hints at the difficulties with and the resistance to turning this conviction into a reality. Recently, in an interview question posed by Xiaoli Li of Clemson University and published in the 2008 *WAC Journal*, Young, who got involved in WAC at the very beginning of the WAC movement, addresses the issue of resistance:

The kinds of questions I get [in workshops] are: How can you cover all the content? How do you handle the paper load? All these students are doing writing and they want teachers to read them, but teachers don't have time to read them. With multiple drafts, students turn in writing, and teachers need to read it, give feedback, ask students to revise, and read it again. How can this be done? I try to show faculty that if students have to look at your comments and do something with them, and if part of the grade is how they revise, then they will learn. It is difficult, though. I give suggestions such as have the students critique each other the first round, then give you the final draft. Sometimes these suggestions work, but sometimes teachers say it is not for me. (71)

In this interview interaction, Young addresses faculty's resistance to incorporating writing in their courses that has not seemed to change over time. Specifically, faculty

resists taking time away from teaching content to handle the paper load and having to respond to students' writing. Along with these indications of resistance, Young indirectly suggests ways for faculty to use WAC principles such as feedback, revision, writing to learn, learning to write, and importantly introduces peer-reviews in which learning is socially constructed.

Robert Samuels, in "Re-Inventing the Modern University with WAC: Postmodern Composition as Cultural and Intellectual History," builds on Young's indirect reference to the social construction of knowledge. As Samuels observes, "writing-across-the-curriculum approach to higher education pushes us to see knowledge as being socially constructed through shared acts of collaboration that cut across disciplinary borders. . . ." (1). In other words, "shared acts of collaboration" not only have the power to involve students in learning together, but also have the power to unite disciplines (students and teachers) into what Young sees as a "community of scholars" constructing knowledge together. But beyond these possibilities offered by WAC proponents Samuels and Young, we can link this underpinning to a socially constructed culture of writing, a culture of writing finding its way into every classroom, a view perhaps first envisioned in British researcher James Britton's work. Bazerman et al., in "History of the WAC Movement," observe that Britton and his colleagues "favored a looser form of classroom talk and privileged students' responses" (21). Broadly speaking, this means that Britton understood how socially constructed classroom talk serves an epistemic purpose for students.

Moreover, Bazerman et al. credit Britton with recognizing how language plays "an important role in discipline-specific learning" and arguing for "writing in all classes,

not just English classes,” and imply that Britton and his colleagues provided an impetus for the WAC movement in the United States (21). Although Britten’s work, like Anson’s, argues specifically for “writing in all classes,” I would argue that Britten’s work also provided the momentum for the first WAC workshops to offer faculty ways to use writing-to-learn assignments and in turn cleared a pathway for WI denoted courses to teach discipline specific discourse, a discourse sometimes labeled “writing to communicate.” Although using “writing to learn” and “writing to communicate” in the same course may seem problematic, McLeod and Eric Miraglia, in “Writing Across the Curriculum in a Time of Change,” assert that “[m]ost of us who have been involved in WAC programs from the beginning see ‘writing to learn’ and ‘writing to communicate’ as two complementary, even synergistic, approaches to writing across the curriculum, approaches that can be integrated in individual classrooms as well as in entire programs” (5). In other words, the WAC approaches “writing to learn” and “writing to communicate” are analogous to the two sides of a coin. By reflecting on how the two sides of the coin contribute to its value, we may find it easier to understand the synergistic value of using both approaches and to see how *not* using both concepts in WI courses might concern WAC practitioners because both approaches support student learning through writing.

This analogy proves true in Bean’s *Engaging Ideas*. Bean, in this self-proclaimed “owner’s manual” for WAC, aims to “advance the cause of curriculum-wide focus on writing” by developing comprehensive assignments for faculty and providing rationales for both ungraded writing-to-learn assignments and graded writing assignments. (xviii).

In with these exemplary assignments, Bean reframes the way WAC practitioners and faculty may view writing to communicate:

[W]riting instruction goes sour whenever writing is conceived primarily as a ‘communication skill’ rather than as a process and product of critical thought. If writing is merely a communication skill, then we primarily ask of it, ‘Is the writing clear?’ But if writing is critical thinking, we ask, ‘Is the writing interesting?’ Does it show a mind actively engaged with a problem? Does it show something new to readers? Does it make an argument? (4)

Although critical thinking is not a new concept to contemporary WAC practitioners and institutional faculty, Bean connects critical thinking to writing, and more importantly to teaching writing that does more than communicate, and as far as I can find, he is the first to articulate how critical thinking can be used to transform writing. While faculty and students can unquestionably benefit from Bean’s comprehensive WAC manual, it is best considered a complement to a WAC program, not a replacement for a full-fledged WAC program to liaison with administration, to train discipline tutors, and to work with faculty. Therefore, it stands to reason that a WAC program is the most experienced entity to support writing in all disciplines, but especially writing in WI courses.

Role of WAC in WI Courses

WAC’s Spurious Roles in WI Courses

It would be difficult for me to talk about WAC’s role in WI courses without first establishing that WAC’s role is sometimes viewed as unimportant in some educational institutions. When this happens, WI courses can become what I call quasi-WAC

programs, taking the place of an established WAC program. In this particular situation, WI courses may also become, borrowing words from Joan Mullin and Susan Schorn, “like the walking dead: present, operating, but not quite ‘there’” (5). For instance, I know from experience that these WI denoted courses often use in-class essay exams or assign end-of-term research papers to fulfill the WI requirement for assigned writing. The problem here is that neither of these can logically be revised. While it may be true that some feedback is provided on in-class essay exams and even on end-of-term research papers, this feedback does not inspire students to revise their writing and therefore enable their learning. Like me, most students will read the feedback and then forget about it because they do not have to grapple with revising before their work receives a final grade.

In *WAC for the New Millennium*, David Russell’s article “Where Do the Naturalistic Studies of WAC/WID Point?” addresses the issue of assigning writing that does not allow students time to build, refine, and reflect on their writing. Russell states, “Designing assignments and courses so that students engage in a process of learning to write and writing to learn over time, allowing them to build, refine, and reflect on their composing, seems to be more effective than assigning a paper and taking it up on the due date, with nothing in between—through what [should] comes in between [should] vary enormously” (289). To put Russell’s thought-provoking contention another way, WI courses focused on product rather than on process are neither steeped in WAC principles nor situated within a full-fledged WAC program, but may problematically represent WAC. While I see this situation as undoubtedly problematic, I want to make it clear that I am not arguing against faculty ownership of WI courses or against academic freedom in

the classroom. However, I am arguing that WI courses operating without the supporting infrastructure of a WAC program do not often engage students nor serve faculty's intended goals. As Young asserts, "writing assignments [should not be] 'add-ons' to fulfill a writing requirement or to generate [65] percent of the grade" (*Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum* 4th ed. 5).

In another situation, the writing center provides a campus-wide tutorial service and serves as a de facto WAC program. As a de facto WAC program, the writing center assumes responsibility for faculty development and tutor training for writing in all university disciplines, and more specifically in WI courses, although this role may not be "official" and, therefore, not given additional resources to support these additional functions. For some universities, a writing center serving as de facto WAC program would most likely seem a viable solution to a funding and personnel problem. But for growing universities, I would say, drawing from my experience working in Texas State's writing center, that WAC programs are necessary to fill gaps left by an overloaded and overstressed writing centers. As Muriel Harris points out,

For those who forecast the end of institutionalized WAC, a clearer sense of what a Writing Center cannot achieve alone is a strong argument for maintaining a WAC program where there is the commitment to its goals. Even if the WAC Program is situated in the Writing Center, as Waldo argues for, it has to be an institutionally supported WAC program, not a bottom-up attempt by the Writing Center to launch a WAC-like program of its own. (90)

To put it differently, writing centers and WAC programs work in tandem—one complementing the other—but neither entity can efficiently substitute for the other, and neither can perform efficiently without institutional support. Deborah H. Holdstein, in “‘Writing Across the Curriculum’ and the Paradoxes of Intuition Initiatives” published in *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, argues that scholars rarely address “the actual programs that serve students—[or] the effects on students themselves” (38). Holdstein also addresses WAC programs that do not have proper resources and do not hold “university-wide authority” to monitor WI courses and thus “embody merely the pretense of excellence” (44). As I have suggested, de facto WAC programs without the resources to conduct ongoing workshops and to train discipline-specific tutors as well as TAs and the authority to provide guidance to faculty in WI courses may become *spurious* WAC programs.

WAC’s Foundational Roles in WI Courses

As I have shown there are *spurious* interpretations of WAC’s role in WI Courses under the “WAC umbrella.” Thaiss uses this metaphor, in “The Future of Writing Across the Curriculum,” to consider the wide range of “ideas” that “fit” under this metaphoric cover. While I have already explored many of these ideas in this study, here I want to take up Thaiss’s notions about what WAC can mean because he not only covers the *spurious* interpretations of WAC’s role in WI courses, but he also situates WAC’s role in changing pedagogy in WI classrooms. Thaiss posits,

WAC [can mean] “writing-intensive. . . courses taught within a major. This can imply careful instruction in the phases of the writing process—

discovery, revision, and editing—or it can merely mean increasing the required word count in a course. . . . WAC [can also mean]. . .using writing-to-learn techniques, such as journals, reading response logs, systematic note making, impromptu exercises, role playing, field studies, I-search papers, collaborative research, informal and formal debates, process analyses, formative assessments, and so on. (91)

To be sure, in these various notions of what WAC can mean, we see which meanings of WAC inform a learning-centered pedagogy, a pedagogy in which word count is the least area for concern under Thaiss’s WAC umbrella. In essence, Thaiss encapsulates most of the WAC’s tenets, and in doing so, he also describes the methods used in a learning-centered pedagogy—using journals, reading response logs, systematic note making, impromptu exercises, role playing, field studies, I-search papers, collaborative research, informal and formal debates, process analyses, and formative assessments.

While Thaiss goes on to talk about the writing process phases and writing-to-learn techniques, he fails to talk about the value of WAC programs—full-fledged WAC programs with formal directors and staff to conduct on-going faculty development workshops, to train discipline-specific tutors to work with faculty, and importantly, to liaison with administration. Without this framework, I argue that WAC’s role within WI courses is dubious because WAC will most likely struggle against the “current” of faculty resistance and administration neglect until these courses become “token” in purpose and lose the power to disrupt] the traditional pattern of classroom instruction, “what Freire calls the ‘banking model,’ of education in which students passively received, record, and

return the teacher's deposit of knowledge" (Farris and Smith 72). Thus, one of WAC's roles, particularly in WI courses, is to guide faculty away from the banking model of education toward a new model based on the rationale that "[w]riting and learning are inseparable; learning to write effectively can be one of the most intellectually empowering components of a university education."³ While this new model may seem commonsensical, it is obviously one of the most difficult for WAC to infuse into the local context, especially if the local context is resistant to WAC's role in the first place.

To conclude this chapter, I want to return to Townsend's article, in *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-The-Curriculum Programs*, in which she considers the importance of local context in developing both successful WAC programs and successful WI course requirements. Townsend, an experienced WAC director, expresses the view that both must be "institutionally specific, but she indicates that "the guidelines for WI courses at most institutions are surprisingly similar" ("Writing Intensive" 234). Toward this end, Townsend summarizes these similar guidelines from an earlier overview by Christine Farris and Raymond Smith, in "Writing-Intensive Courses: Tools for Curricular Change." Conversely, I propose to turn these similar guidelines into guiding questions for developing WI requirements. In doing so, I borrow from Townsend's summary.

Guiding Questions for Developing WI Requirements

1. What instructor-student ratio best serves students as well as faculty?
2. Who teaches WI courses?

³ According to http://www.unca.edu/genedrev/curric_team_wac_report_04.htm

3. Will a certain number of papers or words be required? Should these guidelines stress a combination of formal and informal writing, in-class and out-of-class writing, and a variety of genres?
4. How many papers must undergo a complete revision process? Who will read students' drafts? Who will provide feedback? Will feedback indicate correcting surface errors or reflect substantive rethinking?
5. How will writing assignments affect the final grade?
6. What types of assignments qualify for WI courses? Will in-class essay exams and end-of-term papers qualify? If so, how will revision opportunities be offered for these types of assignments?
7. Will collaborative work be suggested or required? Should the guidelines suggest peer-reviews? If so, should the guidelines also suggest or require lessons on research techniques, checklists for feedback, and minimal marking?
8. What kinds of support services will be available for faculty and students? Will the guidelines suggest or require that WI instructors attend workshops or consult with WAC staff? Will discipline-specific tutors be linked to WI courses?
9. Will these guidelines be consistent across disciplines—or will they be flexible?
(234-235)

I propose these questions, drawn from Townsend's summary of similar guidelines, as guides for thoughtful consideration in developing WI requirements, knowing that these questions are not comprehensive by any means, but a starting place. Additionally, I want to stress that these questions are meant to reflect, as Townsend articulates, WAC's "interest in overall pedagogical change" (235). That is to say, one of WAC's role in WI

courses is to promote pedagogical change, change that confronts the “banking model of education,” change that reflects a new rationale in which writing and learning content are inseparable.

Although the research examined in this chapter is only a small representation of a more comprehensive body of work, it does shed light on WAC’s impetus in the United States and on WAC’s prevailing principles. Explicitly, the research indicates that WAC began with the conviction that writing belongs in all courses in every discipline. The research shows that WAC supports revision and feedback, social theories on learning, writing-to-learn assignments, and teaching discipline specific ways of writing. While the roles of WAC may not be specifically articulated in this research, I suggest that these roles are easily recognized.

Based on the research, I would argue six roles primarily define WAC’s role in WI courses:

- the first role of WAC is to serve as a guiding entity to help articulate a WI requirement that serves the interest of both students and faculty;
- the second role of WAC is to train discipline-specific writing tutors as well as IAs, and TAs;
- the third role is to collaborate with faculty on ways to use writing in their classrooms;
- the fourth role is to liaison with administration when necessary to keep the lines of communication open;
- the fifth role of WAC is to promote a culture of writing in which all disciplines collaborate to promote the activities of writing;

- the sixth role of WAC is to work toward pedagogical change, a change that confronts the “banking model of education,” a change that reflects a new rationale in which writing and learning content are inseparable.

Although there are many other inferred roles of WAC, these six stand out.

Conversely, the research shows that WI courses may wear many guises, but the guise most important to this study is the intended role of WI courses in WAC. Based on the research, I find that the first role of WI courses in WAC is to use writing in a substantial way to support the goals of the course, and the second role is to introduce students to writing-to-learn assignments and to discipline-specific ways of writing.

The Next Phase of Research

In the following chapter, I examine site-specific data to trace the devolution of both WAC and the WI requirement at Texas State, beginning in 1984 and culminating in 2010. My research for this history rich chapter includes library archive data and data acquired from the Office of Curriculum Services. Along with this data, five Texas State faculty articulate their purview of the WI initiative and of Young’s visit to Texas State to conduct the first WAC workshops. This history is further enriched by Young’s insights provided in an e-mail interview, which I intersperse throughout my discussion of the data.

CHAPTER III

EXAMINING SITE-SPECIFIC HISTORICAL DATA

The past can frequently inform the present—it can tell us where we have been, and it can provide information upon which to make decisions about where we might go in the future. It can also give us a clearer understanding of the present (how it came to be what it is).

_____Henrietta Nickels Shirk

In the previous chapters, I recounted my own experiences in WI courses, courses presently defined by a quantitative measure—65% graded writing—and uncovered the problematic position of such courses operating without the infrastructure of a full-fledged WAC program. I discussed WAC and WI foundations that support a WAC involvement in WI courses. The site-specific case history data I present in this chapter begins in 1984 and culminates in 2010. These site-specific data, while unique, speak to issues presented in previous chapters by capturing the devolution of WAC understanding embedded in the WI requirement at Texas State.

My data in this chapter show how both the presence and the absence of WAC inform the history of the WI requirement at Texas State. My reading of these data suggest that the current WI requirement needs revising because it has gradually lost any of its original footing in WAC philosophies and has devolved into a quantitatively defined entity that lacks a pedagogical infrastructure. Additionally, the data reflect the watering

down of the WI definition over time exists in tandem with the “culture of assessment” that has taken hold of institutions.

In this chapter, it is important to note early on that Young, recognized expert in “teaching others to teach writing”⁴ and in teaching WAC approaches and developing WAC programs, came to Texas State during the years 1984-86 to “[conduct] writing-across-the-curriculum workshops for interested faculty and to [work] with the General Studies Committee in planning a program for [Texas State].”⁵ While Young’s visit was certainly aimed at the new WI initiative that began in 1986, his visit did not result in a sustainable WAC program. As Dr. Ronald Brown, Dean of the University College at Texas State, notes during our interview, “When Art Young left Michigan Tech, I think there was some hope that [we] might be able to attract him to come here, but he took a position somewhere else. It is conceivable that things might have turned out differently, but there wasn’t anybody else who had quite the same passion for it.” In other words, there was no sustained WAC program or WAC leadership to help create a passion for writing in WI courses.

In the next sections of this chapter, I will first preview the data search and assess archive data. Next, I will establish the devolution of the WI designation and the WAC connection and present supporting interview data. I will then conclude the chapter by supporting Young’s view that writing is everybody’s business. I now turn to previewing the data search.

⁴ According to Dr. June Chase Hankins, in “Learning as a Community,” published in *Featuring Faculty*, March 1985, 2.

⁵ According to biographical information in “Writing Across the Curriculum: Preparing Students for Academic and Career Success” by Art Young, published in *Featuring Faculty*, October 1984, (1-6).

Previewing the Data Search

My site-specific data search began with a perusal of Texas State web site. Here I wanted to find a historical synopsis of Texas State. As I scanned through the web pages of this site, the historical objectives of this study came to mind, but I did not find even a hint of the shared history of the WI initiative and WAC at Texas State. To fill in this gap, I examined archived issues of *Featuring Faculty*, a publication produced by the Faculty Advancement Center throughout the 1980s. Next, I gleaned insights and drew facts from *Writing Is Thinking*, a resource guidebook prepared by the Department of English Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum for Texas State's College of General Studies in the Fall of 1988. Information from these sources is interspersed throughout this site-specific chapter.

After that, I examined WI data from the Texas State database and from undergraduate catalogs. Last, I conducted five interviews with Texas State current and retired faculty who were aware of or actively involved in workshops conducted by Young in the early 1980s. Adding depth to these interviews and to this study, Young consented to an e-mail interview in which he talks candidly about his time at Texas State and about the purpose for his visit.

Assessing Information Gleaned from Archive Data

Naively I thought I would have easy access to senate archived data that would help tell the WI story at Texas State. I thought there had to be documents that went back further than the 1995-1996 senate minutes posted on the Texas State web site. However, when I sought to examine rich data before 1995, I was directed to the Office of Curricular Services where I found large gaps in institutional history: documents from 1993 through

1999 had been saved, while documents from 1984 to 1993 were missing and documents from 1999 to 2009 were missing.

Still, the information found is valuable to this study because it clearly shows that even then faculty had concerns similar to my own: they were concerned about writing and about the WI designation fulfilling its intended purpose to adequately prepare students for workplace writing. For instances, one document titled “Assessment Plan: Writing Intensive Requirement,” dated 12/17/96, states, “There has been a growing interest in the academic affairs division to assess the impact and effectiveness of the writing intensive requirement.” This document also sets forth a plan to “gather writing samples from across the school” in order to assess the “writing proficiency of [Texas State’s] graduating seniors.” Most important to this study, however, this document clearly relates, “We have some evidence from alumni surveys, employer surveys, and faculty verbal reports that improvement is needed.” In other words, in 1996, there was data indicating that the quantitative defined WI requirement did not serve students well.

The surveys were not included in the documents that I was allowed to copy; however, the “Assessment Plan” is shown in Appendix C of this study. The last document (memo dated 9-14-99) in the file proved interesting as well because it references a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) ‘*must*’ statement: “The institution must demonstrate that its graduates of degree programs are competent in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills and the basic use of computers. The reading and writing competencies have been assessed by the writing intensive requirement.” Put another way, SACS considered the WI requirement evidence

that Texas State students have the *must* writing competencies. This *must* statement is shown in Appendix D of this study.

Assessing Data from the Texas State Database

While the above data proved interesting and beneficial, I still wanted to know how many approved WI courses were currently being taught. I wanted data to compare. I wanted to see if there was a decrease in approved WI courses. After careful consideration, I decided to contact the office of Curricular Services again—this time asking if it would be possible for me to see the data that shows the total number of WI courses in each school year beginning in the fall semester of 2002 and ending in the fall semester of 2009. From this request, I received data that show the approved WI classes and the non-duplicated courses in the Fall Semester of each requested semester. Although these data were not calculated in the database for me, I meticulously totaled each fall semester, and I found that there had been a steady increase in WI courses from 2002 to 2005, but an eight course decrease in 2006. Then an increase from 290 approved WI courses in 2006 to 310 in 2009. For purposes of this study, I reiterate that there were 310 approved WI courses at Texas State in the Fall semester of 2009. However, this number does not include multiple sections, which would show that there were 627 approved WI classes in 2009.

These numbers reinforce my argument that there is a need for a full-fledged WAC program at Texas State. I would argue that the increase in 2009 is large enough to suggest that Texas State needs to reconsider the value of a WAC program to its WI program and small enough to suggest perhaps there should be more WI courses in the undergraduate curriculum program. What appears to have happened, instead, is an increasing reliance on

quantification; as the number of courses designated WI has gone up, the definition of WI has become increasingly dependent on quantification. I now understand why researchers should keep following leads until these leads fill in data gaps, or in this case produce data that may help to tell a story that, as Connors previously suggested in this study, “may move us to actions” or “paint a picture of the past for us from which we can draw lessons.”

Establishing the Devolution of the WI Designation and the WAC Connection

I now turn to establishing the WI Designation through undergraduate catalog data, starting in 1984 and ending in 2009. This data shows the watering down of the WI definition at Texas State, which I argue coincides with the devolution of the WAC approaches that Young introduced to Texas State faculty during 1984 through 1986. I want to submit that dates are important to historical data because dates offer a way to chronologically arrange data and may be used to show significant connections. These connections should be clear as I examine excerpts from Texas State’s undergraduate catalogs. I want to acknowledge that it was not necessary to excerpt every catalog date change to support the historical significance or my arguments in this study because there was very little change from 2000 to 2009 and now to 2010.

In 1984, then Southwest Texas State began formally to signal its commitment to writing excellence by emphasizing writing proficiency. As I grappled with pedagogical measures taken back then, I became aware that teaching students to write competently was an important issue in 1984. In short, the University wanted students to graduate with proficient writing skills. As Young notes, “I spent the 1984-1985 academic year in residence at TSU and San Marcos as a Visiting Professor. My purpose was to strengthen

the university-wide writing program by working with the Writing Proficiency Committee and the General Studies program. . . .My main responsibility was to conduct several three-day interdisciplinary workshops in which I introduced WAC teaching strategies to TSU faculty” (E-mail Interview, dated May 21, 2009). Thus, Young articulates the WAC-WI connection that was solidly forged in 1984 and 1985.

The 1984-1986 undergraduate catalog gives four specific remediation policy points for faculty to follow to “ensure that graduates are proficient in writing. . . .” (49). These points are:

1. At the end of each course the instructor notes all students whose writing was deficient.
2. Every student noted as deficient in two courses during his or her academic career must take an examination administered by the Writing laboratory.
3. The student must pass the examination before graduation.
4. When a student passes a writing proficiency examination, all the student’s prior notations for deficiency in writing are disregarded. However, if the student is noted as deficient twice after passing the examination, the student must pass another examination before graduation. (49)

Whereas, in 1984, a writing examination and remediation seemed a viable answer to student writing problems, the 1986-88 undergraduate catalog reveals a new vision for achieving this goal, a vision that appears to reflect Young’s influence: “The College of General Studies designates many courses throughout the curriculum as ‘*writing intensive*’ (WI) (my emphasis). A minimum of 18 hours of writing intensive courses (excluding English 1310 and 1320) is required for graduation” (55). Thus, the WI is firmly

established with 18 hours of required WI course work. Undoubtedly, the guiding forces of the University believed that students taking 18 hours of WI courses, along with their mandatory English courses, would produce the desired writing proficiency. In sum, the 1986-1988 catalog establishes the first WI courses at Texas State and establishes the purpose for which the University enacted these courses, a purpose driven by perceived student-writing needs and steeped in WAC pedagogical approaches.

In the “History of the WAC Movement,” Bazerman et al. state that “as more people raised the bar of success for themselves and society, a new quest for literacy excellence began and with it increased scrutiny on writing quality” (19). President Robert Hardesty validated this assertion when he spoke to the Board of Regents on February 20, 1987, and he restated in an article title “Hard Times Reported,” published in the March 1986 issue of *Featuring Faculty*:

One of them most far-reaching education reforms ever initiated at Southwest Texas was our writing across the curriculum and our writing-intensive program. We made a deliberate decision to provide courses that would require our student to develop writing skills—not just in English classes but in every department of the university. That program has the full support of our faculty—every one of them knows the value and importance of writing. (3)

While Hardesty’s assertions give a clear indication of the University’s resolve to graduate competent writers, Hardesty goes on to ask some very disturbing questions, which most likely promoted the major changes in the 1988-1990 WI requirement: “[H]ow can a faculty member possibly conduct a writing-intensive course with 125

students? How can that faculty member be expected to grade and comment on those 125 students' papers with no assistance from graders?" (3). These are issues that WAC theorists such as Farris and Smith 1992, Bean 2001, and Townsend 2001, recognize and address. While these theorists do not offer definitive answers to such questions, they do suggest that small student enrollments work best in WI courses.

The 1988-1990 undergraduate catalog reflects major changes in the WI requirement. This revision not only established the 65% grade standard but it also mentioned tentative ways this percentage of writing might be achieved. For instance, this revision suggested writing genres such as essay tests, research papers, reports, and case studies—in which discipline faculty could reach the 65% graded writing criteria—as well as permitted faculty to assign a piece of extended writing to help reach this percentage. Nevertheless, these are all learning-to-write assignments. So while it might be said that the new definition did offer faculty ways of thinking about the kinds of writing they might assign (a vestige, perhaps of WAC philosophies), it also worked to limit “learning to write,” leaving out “writing to learn” altogether. Notably, however, this revision kept the 18 hour WI requirement for graduation.

However, what did not happen is just as important as what did: Texas State established WI courses, but it did not also establish an infrastructure designed to support faculty in their quest to develop WI courses that reflected WAC principles. In other words, faculty were encouraged to include writing in their courses and were even given ideas about what kinds of writing they might assign; they were not, however, provided with solid answers to the questions Hardesty posed in his commentary in *Featuring Faculty*. To address these questions, the University, at the very least, would have needed

to establish professional development programs designed to help faculty understand the myriad ways in which writing might be used to encourage learning and effective writing in the field. At best, the university might have hired a WAC specialist and several staff members to create a culture of writing and learning on campus that was ongoing.

With the 65% revision, I would argue that Texas State enacted a “curricular model” in which the WI courses assumed a WAC-like posture, but eliminated WAC approaches for using writing to learn and phased in an assessment model reflected in the new quantification of writing. As Young notes in our interview interaction, “It may be that TSU created a ‘curricular model’ for WAC, one in which certain courses are designated writing intensive, and assumed such courses would carry out the WAC role on campus.” Put another way, the WI initiative seemed to be losing sight of the pedagogical classroom changes that were the reason for the WI requirement in the first place. The 1988-1990 WI requirement is provided in its entirety below:

The College of General Studies designates many courses throughout the curriculum as ‘writing intensive’ (WI). To receive such a designation, at least 65% of the grade is based on the student’s writing. The required writing may be essay tests, research papers, reports, case studies, etc. Additionally, there will be a minimum of one piece of extended writing (500 + words). A minimum of 18 hours of writing intensive courses (excluding English 1310 and 1320) is required for graduation. Academic advisers and department chairs have a list of writing intensive courses.

(49)

Nevertheless, in 2000, in addition to cutting the number of WI required courses in half the WI guidelines become even more diffuse than before and allowed faculty to broadly interpret the ways they might comply with the WI guidelines. For instance, this version states written assignments, whereas the 1988-1990 WI requirement gives suggested assignment genres. While the language in the WI excerpt may be indicative of the University's broader agenda, I contend that this language is reflective of the devolving emphasis on writing in WI courses. Dean Brown concludes that "[o]nce we reduced it (the WI requirement) from eighteen hours to nine hours, there was no longer a general educational requirement, but rather an institutional requirement that there would be nine hours of writing-intensive courses, and there has been no effort in the last ten years to refine it or to do anything else with it."⁶ Put another way, change has not been considered necessary. WI courses exist on campus and writing is assigned in these courses; therefore, these courses fulfill their purpose. I provide the 2000-2002 WI guidelines below to provide a base for the claims I make:

Certain Texas State courses are designated as 'writing intensive' and are labeled as (WI) in this catalog and the schedule of classes. In order to achieve this status, at least 65% of the course grade must be based on written assignments and a minimum of one expended piece of writing must be required. Academic colleges require a minimum of 9 credit hours of these courses for graduation. In addition to certain major and elective courses, the two History and one Philosophy courses included in the general education core curriculum are writing intensive. (62)

⁶ According to interview transcription, dated March 11, 2009.

The 65% has remained constant even though, in 2008, the University Curriculum Committee proposed reducing the 65% graded writing to 50%. However, this change did not receive total consensus. (Appendix E of this study, titled Writing-Intensive Timeline, is a handout that indicates the move toward decreasing the WI requirement to 50% and the decision to keep the 65% writing requirement. Provost Moore presented this handout to Faculty Senate members and honored guests at a Faculty Senate meeting in May 2009). Therefore, the 65% remains in the 2008-2010 undergraduate catalog. The 2002-2004, the 2004-2006, the 2006-2008, and the 2008-2010 WI language does not change, except for the addition of the following sentence: “These courses as well as other courses appropriate for writing intensive credit must be taken at Texas State.” There has been no noticeable change in the WI guideline since 2000. That’s ten years of University growth and change, yet the WI requirement still stands alone without a sustained WAC program, without a vision for the future. In “Becoming Landscape Architects: A Postmodern Approach to WAC Sustainability,” Rebecca Jackson and Deborah Morton speculate on what has happened to WAC at Texas State: “As is the case in many institutions, WAC at [Texas] State University had a spotty history characterized by years of institutional support and intensity of faculty participation followed by years of benign neglect—times when you’d be hard pressed to find many faculty who knew what ‘WAC’ stood for” (45). Put another way, over time WAC was rarely mentioned at Texas State.

In the next section, I introduce the faculty participants in my study. In these introductions, I indicate each participant’s qualifications for being asked to participate in this study. I stipulate here that all of the participants were either involved in or aware of the WAC workshops that Young conducted in 1984-1986 and all have knowledge of the

WI initiative at Texas State. Following these introductions, I provide and analyze excerpts from the interview interactions.

Background Knowledge and Insights

Introducing the Faculty Participants

On February 5, 2009, I interviewed Dr. Nancy Grayson in her office at Texas State. According to Dr. Grayson, she has taught at Texas State for forty-one years and she is currently the Associate Dean of Liberal Arts. Because Dr. Grayson has had a long tenure in the English department at Texas State, I wanted to start my interview process with her. From her, as well as from the other participants, I wanted to hear an assessment of Young's visit to Texas State. I wanted to know if she participated in the workshops he conducted. I wanted to hear why she thought his visit did not promote a sustainable WAC program.

On February 13, 2009, I interviewed Dr. Susan Day in her office at Texas State, According to Dr. Day, she is the Professor/Chair of the Department of Sociology, and she came to Texas State in 1979. Dr. Day stated that she participated in Young's workshops and even led WAC workshops after Young left Texas State. While Dr. Grayson had lightly touched on these facts during our interview interactions, I became aware that Dr. Day had a richer past with WAC and with the WI requirement at Texas State than I had anticipated. Dr. Day shared that she had initially felt excited about using WAC approaches in her classrooms to help her students become better writers, and then she became disillusioned about the benefits of WAC.

The interview Dr. Day ran much longer than I had indicated to her it would, but I wanted and needed to explore how this discord had happened. And I felt that Dr. Day

wanted to explain why, in 1989, she published “Producing Better Writers in Sociology Classes: A Test of the Writing-Across-The-Curriculum Approach,” and, in 1994, she published “Learning in Large Sociology Classes: Journals and Attendance.” In both of these articles, Dr. Day asserted that certain aspects of the WAC approaches writing-to-learn and assigning writing do not work. This interview proved challenging because I believe that writing promotes learning; however, I had to agree that just assigning writing may not help students become better writers.

On February 23, 2009, I interviewed Dr. Lydia Blanchard in her home in Austin, Texas. According to Dr. Blanchard, she served on the Texas State English faculty for twenty-four years, twelve years of this time she served as Chair of the English department, and she retired in 2008. During the interview, Dr. Blanchard shared that she had participated in Young’s WAC workshops and that she had served on the Department of English Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum. Dr. Blanchard also indicated that she had helped develop *Writing Is Thinking*, a resource guidebook for discipline faculty. During the interview, Dr. Blanchard articulated that, in 1985, 1987, and 1988, she had presented conference papers titled “Writing Across the Curriculum in the Mainstream of Freshman Composition: Or, do ‘we beat on, boats against the current?’”; “Freshman English and the Academy: Preparing Students for Writing in the Disciplines”; “Writing-Thinking: The Historical Perspective for an Electronic World”; and “The Literate Citizen in an Electronic World.” Dr. Blanchard seemed enthusiastic about using WAC approaches in classrooms, and she willingly talked about Young’s visit to Texas State.

On February 24, 2009, I interviewed Dr. June Hankins. Dr. Hankins stated that she is an Associate Professor at Texas State. Although she did not state how long she has taught at Texas State, she indicated that she finished her dissertation in 1986 and was promoted in that same year. So at the time of the interview, I can safely say she has taught in the English Department at Texas State for twenty-three years. Dr. Hankins stated that she attended a series of workshops that Young conducted and she found Young's approaches to teaching writing beneficial in her classrooms.

On March 11, 2009, I interviewed Dr. Ronald C. Brown in his office at Texas State. According to Dr. Brown, he is currently the Dean of the University College. Dr. Brown offered that he was teaching at Texas State when Dr. Young conducted the first WAC workshops, but said that he did not attend. However, my interview with Dr. Brown provided useful observations about both WAC and the WI initiative (past and present) because the WI requirement from its beginning has been situated within the University College (according to information found in the undergraduate catalogs) and was initially part of the general studies curriculum. From Dr. Brown, I wanted to know how WI courses currently receive approval. I wanted to know about WI course oversight. I wanted to know if Dr. Brown perceives that the current WI requirement is beneficial to students. In the interview, Dean Brown candidly supplied information as well as offered his insights about the current WI requirement.

On May 21, 2009, I interviewed Young via e-mail. According to Xiaoli Li, "Over 70 colleges and universities in the United States and abroad have invited [Young] to conduct workshops and make presentations" ("A Conversation with a WAC Colleague: An Interview with Art Young" 63). From Young, I wanted to know about the underlying

support that was in place before his visit to Texas State. I wanted to know why he thought his workshops did not promote a sustainable WAC program at Texas State. Young, like Brown, supplied candid answers to my questions.

Because each of my interview participants had “background knowledge of the circumstances,” their responses to my interview questions proved to be an “an invaluable resource” for this thesis study. As Holstein and Gubrium point out, “Background knowledge of circumstances relevant to the research topic and/or the respondent’s experience can be an invaluable resource for the interviewer” (77). During the interviews, I asked the participants to talk about their involvement in the WAC workshops Young conducted at Texas State in 1984-1986. Along with this, I asked them to comment on why Young’s visit did not result in a sustainable WAC Program at Texas State. Although these questions were not the only questions I asked my interview participants, the thematic caption “Buying In—Or Not Buying In” emerged from these particular questions.

Buying In—Or Not Buying In

When Young came to then Southwest Texas State to introduce teaching strategies to the faculty, the faculty responded favorably. This favorable response was in part because Texas State President Robert L. Hardesty considered writing across the curriculum an important part of undergraduate education and wanted Southwest Texas State to provide the best undergraduate education possible. Day articulated this fact during our interview interactions: “Texas State President Robert L. Hardesty wanted the University to be the best undergraduate university in the State of Texas, so we had a clear mission.” This mission included the writing-intensive designation. As Brown observed,

“There was a lot of interest in writing across the curriculum when Bob Hardesty was President. I think they believed when they put the writing-intensive requirement in that’s what they were really supporting, but over time, it tended to erode.” In other words, the writing-intensive requirement and WAC somehow became connotatively equivalent. While this equivalency may be the “curricular model” that Young suggested is “one in which certain courses are designated writing-intensive, and assumed such courses would carry out the WAC role on campus,” I have called this curricular model a quasi-WAC program because I believe that such courses alone make fulfilling the roles of a WAC program difficult, if not impossible. However, when no one knows what these roles are, then it is easy for some to assume WI is WAC. Nevertheless, Brown indicated that the WI/WAC tended to erode, and I want to suggest that it eroded precisely because no sustainable program resulted from Young’s workshops.

In 1984, most faculty who attended the WAC workshops recognized the benefits of the WAC approaches Young taught. As Day stipulated, “I liked and I believed what Art said, and I was eager to help my students become better writers and to become an acolyte of writing across the curriculum, so it was a good several years. I know Art was very well received—doubters came and left believing.” In fact, the Department of English believed enough to form a Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum and published *Writing Is Thinking*, a resource guidebook that was distributed across the curriculum to help faculty incorporate writing in their classrooms. Blanchard emphasized that “Art being here opened up the English department to the importance of writing as much as it opened up the rest of the University to writing across the curriculum.” However, these efforts in the English department soon collapsed.

After Young left, interest in WAC slowly waned because there was no invested cross-curriculum WAC leadership or administrative support on campus. Hankins pointed out this fact: “I remember that there was a plan to have a writing-across-the-curriculum interdisciplinary committee that would work to keep it going. But that didn’t happen that I recall anyway. President Hardesty was extremely enthusiastic about writing across the curriculum. He felt that improving students’ writing was very important. So he put a lot of money into it. . . .After he left, there was no upper-level administrator invested in it, so the money wasn’t going into it anymore.”

While money seems a defining factor for almost any pursuit—educational or otherwise—it may also be a “catch all” reason for shifting priorities. Blanchard articulated this point: “The nature of any institution is that its priorities shift. I would say that the emphasis on research was only one part of the overall change in the culture of the University; another was to build the graduate program. And what followed was, for a number of reasons, less focus on the undergraduate program.” Unfortunately, Blanchard may have established one reason that a sustainable WAC program is not currently on Texas State’s campus—less focus on the undergraduate program. As disconcerting as Blanchard’s observation may be, Day argued that this supplanting of the undergraduate program may be also happening on many other campuses as well:

I think we are like campuses all over the country. I don’t really know what we are doing in the University anymore, but it’s not teaching students to write. It’s a happy accident if our students come out of here being able to write. Writing isn’t the University’s first priority. As far as I can tell, it is

not their first priority. I don't see any emphasis on it. They want us to educate our students, whatever that means.

While my research confirms Day's observation that writing is not currently the University's first priority, it must be acknowledged that writing is still a part of the official language of the University, a language that students as well as faculty need to develop and understand. From the outset in 1984, however, Young focused on ways to use writing to help students learn and ways for faculty to help students improve their writing. Hankins, in the interview, was quick to say that she still uses many of the approaches that Young advocated and, as she indicated in the following excerpt, thinks about what Young was trying to do:

Art Young was trying to teach people how to make writing assignments so that students understand what they are being asked to do. And he stressed being transparent about grading criteria. He was advocating using writing in order to learn. I think he believed and implied and maybe even asserted that a result of using writing to learn across the curriculum would be improvement in students' writing.

In 1984, the University's concern about students' writing provided the impetus for Young's workshops. But when Young left Texas State, faculty like Day, who once embraced WAC approaches, became disillusioned about the benefits of using these approaches. Put another way, when the University neglected to sponsor another WAC person or better yet supported a full-fledged WAC program to address faculty's concerns, some faculty lost faith in the tenets of WAC. As Day asserted, "[T]he major tenet of writing across the curriculum was just have your students write—if they write, they will

get better—but this is just not true.” While Day found that just assigning writing does not help students’ become better writers, the current WI requirement implicitly suggests that students will become better writers if 65% of their grade reflects assigned writing. In essence, Day touched on the problematic position of WI courses without a full-fledged WAC program to help faculty find ways to do more than just assign writing. As I see it, if they write, students should become better writers, but I argue that WAC promotes a richer environment for students while they write, while they engage faculty feedback, while they collaborate with fellow students, while they receive peer comments on their work.

In these excerpts taken from lengthy interview transcriptions, I have attempted to strengthen archive data with corroborating perception data. In doing so, I find that these data support my arguments that WI guidelines—defined only quantitatively—prove deficient in preparing competent writers and in fulfilling the promise of a quality undergraduate education that most postsecondary institutions proclaim. Repeatedly interview respondents tell us that the current quantitative-defined WI at Texas State is not designed to prepare students to write well. They tell us that there has not been any emphasis placed on writing at Texas State since the 1980s, that there has been no effort to update the WI guidelines in the last ten years, and that teaching students to write is not a priority of the University. By considering the compliancy that these observations reveal, I find that my study is more relevant than I conceived it would be, and I find that my discussion of these data should move us closer to finding what is still possible in WI courses, possible with a full-fledged WAC program. While we must consider that implementing a full-fledged WAC program may be complex work and perhaps more

difficult than my study reflects, as McLeod stresses, “Before we can change the world, we must study it” (“Translating Enthusiasm into Curricular Change” 8).

This study indicates that the WAC approaches that Young brought to Texas State resonated with faculty and with the University during the early years of the WI initiative; however, neither WAC nor WI currently receive institutional attention. As I see it, the current ease of the WI approval process is one example of the lack of attention the WI designation receives. In e-mail dated June 02, 2009, Dr. David Nelson, Associate Dean of the University College at Texas State, states, “My primary responsibility is to approve or deny writing intensive status for courses, not to keep a record of them.” Put another way, the authority to approve or deny an application for the WI course designation rests solely with Dr. Nelson.

The way I understand it, faculty—who want the WI course designation—submit the Writing Intensive Request (also known as PPS 2.01 attachment D) and their syllabus, both reflecting how “the 65% graded-writing” will be achieved in their course, to Dr. Nelson. If Nelson approves the request, then this information is sent to the Director of Curriculum Services and she makes sure the course is denoted WI. This notation links to the WI database, the Texas State web listing of courses for students, and the undergraduate catalog. While this process seems adequate and certainly not complicated, it would seem more comprehensive and equitable for a writing committee to review and approve each request. After faculty receive committee approval, then I stress that faculty need a sustained WAC program to provide theoretical as well as practical assistance. In other words, writing should be everybody’s business.

In the next section of this chapter, I offer Young's premise that writing should be everybody's business, and I use the parable of the seed falling on fallow ground to discuss why writing may not be a priority for postsecondary institutions like Texas State.

Writing is Everybody's Business

In "Writing Across the Curriculum: Preparing Students for Academic and Career Success," Young says he believes that "writing is everybody's business" and he shares four writing across the curriculum principles that inform his thinking, which are offered below:

- Writing is a learning activity as well as a communication activity
- In the learning situation, the writing process is as important as the written product
- Writing and reading are interrelated learning skills
- 'Good writing' is nurtured and matures in a community which values written language (2-3)

As I see it, the WAC principles offered in Chapter two of this study and these four principles underlie most or all successful WAC programs. These are not the principles that necessarily underlie the WI-intensive courses at Texas State, although without a WAC community, professional development, and oversight and assessment measures it would be difficult to make this determination. I suspect that without institutional support and faculty involvement, these principles, which inform WAC practice, will and have fallen on fallow ground. Fallow ground will not sustain growth, nor will it prepare students for academic and career success. In other words, through this parable, we can begin to understand why WAC is not a vital presence in the numerous WI courses on Texas State's campus and perhaps other campuses as well. We can understand how the

fertile ground that once grew the philosophical seeds of WAC praxis can become fallow, fallow because institutional support has turned toward attracting more students and cultivating an athletic program in lieu of a rich undergraduate writing program, fallow because faculty interest has turned toward research agendas in lieu of focusing on ways to teach writing in classrooms with large student enrollments.

Leaving Evidence of What is Still Possible in WI Courses

In the next chapter, I will conclude my site-specific study of WAC and the WI designation at Texas State. In this final chapter of this study, I will offer the views of WAC program experts as I attempt to leave evidence of what is still possible for WAC and in WI courses. Because I believe these two entities are destined to be intertwined, destined to promote the uses of writing, I will argue that WAC programs and WI courses should be a valued part of undergraduate education.

CHAPTER IV

LEAVING EVIDENCE OF WHAT IS STILL POSSIBLE IN WI COURSES WITH THE SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE OF A WAC PROGRAM

In this final chapter, I again take up Strachan's challenge to leave evidence of what is still possible in WI courses with the supporting infrastructure that a WAC program can provide. In taking up this challenge, I support the premise that full-fledged WAC programs promote successful writing outcomes in WI courses. Then, I offer and reflect on the important features that Strachan emphasizes most successful WAC and WI programs share, and I offer and reflect on the abilities that she asserts successful WI courses promote. Next, I propose implications of my study and reaffirm the aims of this study. Ultimately, I envision a future in which Texas State values writing enough to bring a full-fledged WAC program to campus to assist WI faculty, to train discipline-specific tutors, to promote the uses of writing that benefit students, and to develop comprehensive WI guidelines.

Earlier in this study, Brown (Dean of the University College at Texas State) emphasized that Texas State's WI guidelines have not changed since 2000; that's ten years, but he is talking about the articulation of the WI requirement, not what is actually happening in many WI classrooms. With the growing student population (30,803 in

2009), these courses have increased enrollments that may make it seem almost impossible to do anything in them but assign writing and assess a percentage grade based upon completion of an assignment. As Hankins (Professor in the English department at Texas State) observes, “If we didn’t have so many huge classes, I think there would be more implementation of the writing-intensive designation than there is.”

Although WAC advocates may accept the logic that large WI course enrollments are necessary to support the increased student populations of many universities, I want to point out that some decisions are labeled *necessary* to forestall conversations about alternatives. I want to also make it clear that neither WAC nor I advocate large WI sections. But if we *must* consider large WI classrooms the norm, then it stands to reason that educational institutions will certainly need a WAC program to help manage this overload of students and to promote a classroom environment where “writing is frequently and purposely assigned, instructor feedback is provided and explained, and revision is offered and expected” (my words--this study 7). While not ideal, these huge courses can still be sites where students, as Townsend notes in “Writing Across the Curriculum,” are seen “as makers and discoverers of meaning,” and instructors can be perceived “as coaches and learners along with students rather than as the center of authority” (3). When student-laden WI courses are fully embedded within a larger WAC program, I argue that engaging environments and synergic relationships are still possible.

While it is not my goal here to elaborate on the varied ways in which student-laden classrooms might be made more conducive to the teaching of writing, I offer that course-linked peer tutors to mentor students and to assist faculty seems a viable solution to this problematic situation, although other approaches may exist as well. As Margot

Soven asserts, “The faculty workshop that used to be the mainstay of WAC no longer exists at many institutions with established programs even at schools about to start WAC programs. . . . Enter peer tutoring as the new mainstay of many WAC programs” (200). Knowing that there may be doubters who would suggest that course-specific peer tutors do not need a WAC infrastructure, I maintain that a WAC program is necessary to train peer tutors in ways to assist faculty with incorporating writing into WI classrooms as well as to work with students during writing activities. As I have shown, a WAC structure shoulders tremendous responsibility that other programs, like Writing Centers, cannot be expected to assume; therefore, successful WAC programs require leadership, adequate funding, institutional support, long-term commitment, and departmental involvement.

Let me be clear—administrations, faculty, and WAC practitioners must carefully consider these factors before any real change can take place. To cover these factors more thoroughly, I offer Strachan’s compilation of features that successful WAC and WI programs share.

- They are adequately funded.
- They are widely supported by faculty, students, and administrators.
- They are phased in relatively slowly, over a period of at least 3 years.
- There are no quick fixes; a long-term commitment is necessary.
- Participation by faculty is voluntary.
- The distinctiveness of writing in different disciplines is respected.
- Departments are actively involved in the process, deciding how great an emphasis to place on the acquisition of critical thinking and writing

abilities in their disciplines and whether to focus on the development of such abilities in lower or upper division courses.

- The effectiveness of [the program] is assessed at appropriate times. (236)

Although these features collectively can promote success, Strachan fails to mention the role leadership plays in successful programs. The site-specific data examined in this study show that leadership is a key feature for WAC success. These data also indicate that there are detrimental effects when leadership withdraws from both the WAC initiative and the WI initiative, and more specifically, from the faculty teaching WI courses. In WI courses that lack WAC leadership, Young says that “many teachers [may] think a WAC approach or a writing-intensive course approach is to teach a course the same way they always have, but “add on” a research paper or “add on” the keeping of a journal.”⁷ In other words, without WAC leadership WI faculty may believe these “add on” written assignments fulfill their WI obligation and therefore the WI course is considered successful.

Conversely, I argue that successful WI courses promote critical thinking, problem solving, multiple drafts, and adequate feedback. While these features may seem only desired outcomes, let me again be clear—if WI courses that have become “token” in form and purpose are to become fully WAC infused sites, then we must consider features that promote successful WI courses. To do so, I again offer Strachan’s compilation:

- Writing is associated with critical thinking, inquiry/problem-posing and problem solving through assignments that require arguments.
- Students write multiple drafts and receive feedback on each draft.

⁷ According to Interview with Art Young via e-mail, dated May 21, 2009

- Students are trained in critical reading.
- Students are encouraged to write in a variety of forms and lengths, to a variety of audiences.
- Samples of target genre are available for discourse analysis; recognition of typical structures, modes of reasoning, use of evidence and technical language, modes of audience address.
- Resources such as journal articles are made available to instructor to illustrate alternative approaches to, and applications of, writing in the discipline.
- Writing-intensive courses or tutorials [peer tutors in large classrooms] to permit adequate feedback. (239-240)

While these features collectively show a correlation to WAC informed teaching, they are evidence of what is still possible in WI courses with the supporting infrastructure that a full-fledged WAC program can provide. This infrastructure, as I have argued previously in this study, needs its own director, office, staff, and, as Russell suggests, “[a] place in the complex organizational structure of the university” (“Writing Across the Curriculum and the Communications Movement: Some Lessons from the Past” 191). In other words, if we desire successful outcomes, we must have dedicated WAC practitioners; we must have institutional support; we must plan for success; we must understand the consequences of complacency and neglect; and we must consider that there may be positive implications to research investigating the connection between full-fledged WAC programs and successful WI initiatives.

Implications of this Study

For WAC advocates, this study may provide a touchstone for examining the vital partnership between full-fledged WAC programs and successful WI initiatives. For Texas State curriculum developers, this study may offer a frame of reference for a critical assessment of the current WI initiative and the current WI guidelines that influence the pedagogy in WI courses. Just as important for both WAC and Texas State, this study may also promote research that informs interdisciplinary conversations and may stimulate a renewed conviction about the value of writing in WI courses.

To affirm or disaffirm the value of writing in WI courses, an online survey of Texas State alumni (modeled after the survey that Mullin and Schorn conducted at the University of Texas) to see if Texas State's graduates feel prepared for the writing they are required to do in their professions should be beneficial research. In "Enlivening WAC Programs Old and New," Mullin and Schorn discuss the implications of the online alumni survey they conducted to see "whether [the] 20-year-old SWC (aka WI) requirement was worth the investment" (11). Specifically, these researchers wondered if the SWC prepared students for workplace writing. While a survey modeled after Mullin and Schorn's may seem extensive and time-consuming, I want to suggest that an online alumni survey could provide interesting results. My study should serve as a touchstone for researchers at Texas State to conduct this type of research.

Research not only informs scholarship, but as I have suggested, it can also inform interdisciplinary conversations. Charlotte Brammer et al., in "Culture Shock: Teaching Writing Within Interdisciplinary Contact Zones," argue that [WAC] faculty may need to rethink the way they interact with discipline faculty. To examine this premise, these

researchers conducted interviews with faculty in which the dialogue focused on the writing performed in particular disciplines rather than on the characteristics of good writing. Brammer et al. found that a “more productive dialog emerged” when the conversation focused on discipline-specific writing (1). While their research, like mine, involves one university, still this type of research may provide an impetus for other researchers to “create spaces for real dialogue” (11).

These spaces for real dialogue may also open up when we become actively involved in sustaining conversations about the work that matters to us. In *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*, Linda Adler-Hassner advises that we should initiate conversations “with our department chairs, our provosts, our university press officers, assessment coordinators, and presidents. Working bottom-up from our programs and top-down with our administrators, we can hope to provide alternative frames for these conversations that reflect our values and interests” (184). Put another way, we must sustain these conversations until a renewed conviction about writing emerges and a new story that “reflects out values and interests” unfolds.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, I advocated for WI courses as components of a full-fledged WAC program. I argued that WI courses without the supporting infrastructure that a WAC program can provide often become “token” in form and purpose. Moreover, I re-conceived full-fledged WAC programs as viable entities that assist educational institutions in meeting the current demand for competent writers. In previous chapters, I demonstrated WAC’s viability by establishing the key roles WAC programs fill in WI courses, and I examined site-specific data that established the devolving history between

WAC and the WI initiative at Texas State. My reading of this site-specific data has led me to conclude that Texas State has progressively lost sight of its initial reason for implementing WI courses with WAC footings and has lost sight of its mission to promote writing in its undergraduate curriculum.

The aim of this study has been to promote a renewed interest in the WAC and WI partnership that Young encouraged in 1984 when he conducted faculty workshops at Texas State, and he introduced again in 2010 when he participated in my site-specific case history. In essence, this study acknowledges the insights that Young and Strachan offer about WAC programs that work: programs that promote successful outcomes for students and faculty. In sum, this study encourages others to produce story-changing work that motivates postsecondary institutions, like Texas State, to once again return to their mission to promote the uses of writing in undergraduate education, and more specifically in WI courses.

Epilogue

In her book *Writing-Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum*, Strachan described story-changing work as she assists Simon Fraser University in preparing faculty to implement a WI component. Like Strachan, I hope my study is story-changing work. In story-changing work, WAC theorists and practitioners envision a different type of WI classroom, a classroom where interactive discussions easily take place, and as Young envisioned in our interview, “where students are writing, talking, collaborating, creating, researching, and critically thinking on nearly a daily basis, not just listening to lectures and taking tests.” However, WAC advocates know that

these types of classrooms do not happen by chance; they happen by design. I want to end this study by affirming that full-fledged WAC programs not only work toward designing these types of classrooms but also work toward transforming campuses, transforming teaching pedagogy, and transforming students.

APPENDIX A

From: ospirb@txstate.edu [ospirb@txstate.edu]
Sent: Monday, November 03, 2008 5:56 AM
To: Templin, Gwen A
Subject: Exemption Request EXP2008H8508 - Approval

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Based on the information in IRB Exemption Request EXP2008H8508 which you submitted on 10/23/08 13:38:59, your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

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APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Writing-Intensive Designation: A Quasi-Writing-Across-The-Curriculum Program

Gwen Templin, graduate student in the Rhetoric and Composition Master's program at Texas State University-San Marcos, is conducting a thesis study to explore the relationship between writing-intensive initiatives and full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) programs. To assist in my study, I request your participation in an interview via e-mail. Your participation in my thesis project will be appreciated.

Initially, this study will be submitted to my thesis committee, Dr. Rebecca Jackson, Chair; Dr. Deborah Morton; and Dr. Charise Pimentel; Texas State University-San Marcos, as a final thesis project in the Rhetoric and Composition Master's program at Texas State University-San Marcos. However, I seek permission to publish your interview commentary or portions of it for scholarly purposes. If requested in writing, a review copy of the final project can be submitted to you before publication.

Risks: I anticipate minimal or no risk to you as result of your participation in this study beyond those of expressing your opinions about this topic publicly, as you already do in your profession. **Benefits:** Although you may not receive direct benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study. Specifically, I anticipate that I may gain valuable information about the benefits of Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs as well as about corresponding pedagogy and effects on student writing abilities. These insights may also benefit actual WAC programs or WI initiatives.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Rebecca Jackson, Director - MA major in Rhetoric and Composition, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616; 512.245.8975.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Texas State University-San Marcos, Texas. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep. **You are making a decision about whether or not to participate in this interview. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate.**

Signature of Participant

Date

Contact Information of Participant

Signature of Investigator

Date

9112 Taylorcrest Cove, Austin, Texas 78749; Ph: 512.394.9137

Email: gt1014@txstate.edu - or - gtemplin43@aol.com

Contact Information of Investigator

APPENDIX C

Assessment Plan

Writing Intensive Requirement

There has been a growing interest in the academic affairs division to assess the impact and effectiveness of the writing intensive requirement.

Last spring we administered a survey to faculty who taught writing intensive classes and were able to draw some very general conclusions concerning the nature of the writing activities assigned to students and the impact those requirements have in improving the students' writing.

Given that every native graduating senior must have 18 hours of writing intensive course work, it would not be possible, at this time, to investigate the effects of these courses. That is, we have no way to comparatively investigate writing proficiency.

But we can begin the process of determining the writing proficiency of our graduating seniors. If we find that our students do not write up to some defined standard, it should be clear evidence that our writing intensive efforts are not as effective as we might wish.

We have some evidence from alumni surveys, employer surveys, and faculty verbal reports that improvement is needed, but we have not systematically collected and evaluated exemplars under reasonably controlled circumstances.

We have in mind collecting writing samples from a representative group of students across academic schools. We will want those examples to include both in-class and out-of-class assignments. We will arrange for the examples to be holistically graded according to an agreed upon scoring rubric to be defined by a group of experts.

If this strategy is generally acceptable, we will go forward with designing a research plan that will detail the specifics (e.g., sampling procedures, exemplar in-class prompts, scoring procedures, data analysis procedures, etc.). We will then submit this research plan to the Council of Deans for their suggested improvements prior to implementation. The purpose of this memo is to seek your endorsement for proceeding with the development of this research plan as generally described.

APPENDIX D

Off-Agenda:

Dr. Passty updated the deans on the writing intensive requirement as it relates to the SACS "must" statement. The General Studies Council recommended that continuation of 9 hour writing intensive requirement.

The recommendation will be discussed by the Council of Chairs.
RTA to CAD 9/14/99

D. Writing Intensive Requirement

(RTA'd from CAD 8/31/99 Off-Agenda)

Dr. Brown discussed the SACS "must" statement. (The institution must demonstrate that its graduates of degree programs are competent in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills and the basic use of computers.) The reading and writing competencies have been assessed by the writing intensive requirement. with the implementation of the core curriculum transfer students may not be required to take 9 hours of SWT's writing intensive courses.

The council discussed alternative methods to monitor writing competency of graduates. It was suggested that the assessment could be included in the Departmental Assessment Review cycle.

Deans recommended that we keep the 9 hour minimum writing intensive requirement to be reflected in the catalog. A review of this requirement will be included in the the department assessment plan to review a better method to meet the SACS "must" statement. Dr. Gratz approved this recommendation.

EXHIBIT E

Writing Intensive Timeline

Define minimum percentage of course grade based on written exams or assignments published in PPS 2.01 and PPS 4.01.

<u>Circulation to/Reviewed by:</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Actions</u>
Deans	8/88	Approved 65% in PPS 2.01 and 4.01

In courses identified as Writing Intensive (WI), a minimum of 65 percent of the course grade must be based on written exams or assignments, and at least one assignment must be 500 words or more in length.

Faculty Committee	2/08	Approved 50% in PPS 4.01
-------------------	------	--------------------------

In courses identified as Writing Intensive (WI), a minimum of 50 percent of the course grade must be based on written exams or assignments, and at least one assignment must be 500 words or more in length.

Chairs & Deans	4/08	Approved 50% in PPS 4.01
----------------	------	--------------------------

In courses identified as Writing Intensive (WI), a minimum of 50 percent of the course grade must be based on written exams or assignments, and at least one assignment must be 500 words or more in length.

University Curriculum Committee	1/09	Approved 50% in PPS 2.01
---------------------------------	------	--------------------------

Writing Intensive courses are those undergraduate courses for which at least 50% of the student's grade must be based on written exams or assignments, and at least one assignment must be 500 words or more in length. Writing intensive is a designation intended to address the writing policy for undergraduate degree programs.

APPENDIX F

Interview with Dr. Nancy Grayson on February 5, 2009
Associate Dean of Liberal Arts
Texas State University-San Marcos

Interactive Interview Transcription

Gwen:

Thank you so much for taking your time to talk with me today.

I am conducting a thesis study to explore the relationship between writing-intensive initiatives and full-fledged writing-across-the curriculum (WAC) programs.

For my record, would you please state how long you have taught at Texas State as well as your current position and your responsibilities in this position?

Dr. Grayson:

I've taught here since September of 1968, so that's 41 years, and I am currently the Associate Dean of Liberal Arts three-quarter time, and I have a variety of duties. Mainly, I represent the Dean in student matters, and a lot of my time is taken up with students who have been suspended and are coming back for a reinstatement contract. I monitor their progress when they are reinstated. I am also one-quarter time in the English Department, and I teach a class, which is usually a graduate class or an upper-division course.

Gwen:

Would you share your thoughts about when Art Young came to Texas State to introduce WAC to our campus?

Dr. Grayson:

He did, and I think he was on leave from his university. I think he was still at Michigan Tech when he came here, but he was on leave that year. Art conducted workshops at a resort in New Braunfels. I know there were two workshops or perhaps three, and there were usually about twenty-five people there. There were always people from the English Department of course. There were also people from other departments that got interested. One was Don Tuft from the Biology Department. He is retired now, but he still lives in the area you may want to contact him. Another was Paul Fontaine also from the Biology Department. He has gone on to be a vice president at a university in New England somewhere. Another person who is still on campus and was very interested in this is Susan Day, the Chair of the Sociology Department. You might want to talk with her, and

she would probably be glad to talk with you because she got very interested in the program. Another person who was in the Sociology Department at the time was David Watts—he went on to be an upper-level administrator somewhere in Louisiana. Some really good people got interested in this. Many times, these people gathered in the faculty lounge and talked about things that they were going to do.

Art also served as a consultant to our English department writing program. Jack Gravit was the Chair, and Mike Hennessy was the Director of Composition—they called it director of composition then. Paul Cohen was, from time-to-time, the Director of Composition. Art served as consultant to the freshman program.

Gwen:

Why do you think his visit didn't promote a sustainable WAC program?

Dr. Grayson:

For one thing, you need money anytime you set up a program. If there had been money to give people, and more release time to plan courses or to do some of the heavy load grading that they would have to do with writing across the curriculum—well that's a number of things. Some of the departments felt like (and they will be nameless) they had a lot to teach already, and they did not want to learn how to integrate the teaching of writing into the teaching of their subject matter. So people were too busy, and we did not have any funds.

Are you familiar with the booklet that Lydia Blanchard edited for the faculty? Anyway, I'm going to give you her email address so she can let you know what the title of it is. I may have it down in my other office somewhere, but it would take some time to find it. Anyway, Lydia Blanchard's email address is lb08@txstate.edu. You know Dr. Blanchard because she was the Chair of the English Department when you started here. She was very active in writing across the curriculum here, and she has published some articles on it. At any rate, the University Studies used to be called General Studies. De Sellers was the Dean of the University Studies at that time, and she gave some money to have this booklet published. It was distributed to the faculty to encourage them to use writing across the curriculum.

Gwen:

Some current studies indicate that employers give college graduates low scores in their preparedness to write well, and I am wondering why this might be true. I am concerned about courses in which writing is assigned but writing is not taught.

Dr. Grayson:

I'm not sure. Are you aware of the fact that Dean Ellis had different people go around and give presentations to the different departments in the College of Liberal Arts? Sue Beebe gave a presentation on plagiarism. Libby Allison also made a presentation, and I thought Becky gave a presentations as well. Anyway, this was year before last. They went at the invitation of different departments of Liberal Arts to talk to the faculty. I think they also presented in scheduled faculty meetings. I think this was year before last,

but you might get Becky to tell you more about that. Have you talked with Sue Beebe? You should talk with her.

Gwen:

Do you foresee the teaching of writing becoming a more important issue at Texas State in light of these studies?

Dr. Grayson:

The problem with writing is that even when people are taught to write they sometimes lose their writing abilities if they don't continue to write. Are you familiar with the Dartmouth study? It was a study conducted at Dartmouth University in the 50s. In this study, they tested students when they came in as freshmen and their writing was awful, but after their freshmen English course, their writing was fine. Then, they tested them again at the end of their senior year, and they found that the students were almost back to where they had been when they entered as freshmen. This was Dartmouth where you know they would be doing a lot of writing. You can probably Google that and find it. Writing is exciting to teach. I have not taught writing in a few years.

Gwen:

Thank you for allowing me to talk with you today. I look forward to contacting the faculty that you have recommended.

APPENDIX G

Interview with Dr. Lydia Blanchard on February 12, 2009
Retired Chair of the English Department, Texas State University-San Marcos
Texas State English Faculty from 1984 to 2008

Interactive Interview Transcription

Gwen:

I am conducting a thesis study to explore the relationship between writing-intensive initiatives and full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) programs.

Some current studies indicate that employers give college graduates low scores in their preparedness to write well, and I am wondering why this might be true. I am concerned about courses in which writing is assigned but writing is not taught.

Would you share your thoughts about when Art Young came to Southwest Texas State to introduce WAC to our campus? I'm a little fuzzy about when he was actually here—could you clear this up for me? Someone mentioned 1984.

Dr. Blanchard:

I am relatively certain it was while Rollo Newsom was Dean of General Studies that the writing-across-the-curriculum initiative began. Rollo's successor as Dean of General Studies was De Sellars. It was either Rollo or De Sellars who introduced the idea of writing-intensive courses and got that added to the curriculum, which meant that a certain number of course hours in a major had to be writing intensive. So those are two people I think are essential for you to talk to. It depends on how much history you are going to put in—you know there is overkill—but they were the people who started the writing-across-the-curriculum movement and the writing-intensive initiative. They both live in Austin and their numbers are in the faculty directory. They are in the current Austin directory. I think this is right. I thought they had moved to San Marcos, but I guess they are living in Austin.

You are welcome to tell both of them that I urged you to call them.

Gwen:

Thank you.

Dr. Blanchard:

I think I wrote about Art Young's visit for a publication called *Featuring Faculty*, and I cannot find a copy of it—I thought maybe I had given it to Becky. You might ask Becky if she has it. I am sure I gave her a copy of the writing-across-the-curriculum handbook we did. Has she given you any materials?

Gwen:

No, she hasn't.

Dr. Blanchard:

Well, that's fine. Now in 1988—I'm just trying to get some basic dates for you. De Sellars funded a handbook that I edited with June Hankins and Mimi Tangum, who is no longer here. She is in Washington. It was a resource guidebook for faculty called *Writing is Thinking*. At that time, I think the trend had shifted from writing across the curriculum to writing across the disciplines as a name. Do you have the year that Art came?

Gwen:

Becky thinks it was 1984, but I have not found anything that tells me the exact date or dates.

Dr. Blanchard:

Well, Rollo could probably tell you. I have on my resume that I participated in a writing-across-the-curriculum workshop in 1984-1985 that Art Young ran--so that was the year he was here. He may have been here two years.

Gwen:

Do you think the writing-intensive initiative began before or after Art Young's visit.

Dr. Blanchard:

I can't tell you when the general studies curriculum was being revised—I don't have that. It seems they were part of the same initiative and developed together. I think the writing-intensive courses were first because that provided an impetus—I'm assuming that you are distinguishing between the two and that writing across the curriculum is an attempt to acquaint faculty with how to incorporate writing into their classes and that better writing intensive classes are the result.

Gwen:

That's fairly accurate:

Dr. Blanchard:

My understanding is that Rollo was concerned about the writing skills of students, as were many other people at Southwest Texas. Writing-intensive courses were one way to reinforce what had been taught in Freshman English, and so there was the desire to establish certain courses as writing intensive. There was some resistance, however. Obviously, especially in the larger classes, faculty who were not in English felt they were not trained; they weren't able to incorporate writing into their testing or whatever, and so

the writing-across-the-curriculum response was an attempt to help educate faculty about how to use writing in the classroom without making it burdensome. My sense is that the writing-intensive initiative led to writing across the curriculum. But as far as I know, there is no one now specifically encouraging writing across the curriculum. The English department from the outset was involved. Jack Gravitt was Chair of the department at the time. I think it was Jack who recommended bringing in Art Young, but the English department felt, and I think rightly so, that the impetus for writing across the curriculum should not come only from the English department. It should reflect the general culture of the university.

After Art left, General Studies ran a few more training sessions for faculty as I recall. I think Claudia Cabaniss helped with some. These are some papers that I wrote after Art Young came, and you can look at them if you want.

I think I wrote an article while Art Young was at Texas State for a publication called *Featuring Faculty* through the Faculty Advancement Center. I don't even know if we have a Faculty Advancement Center anymore. Have you talked to Jerry Farr?

Gwen:

No—I've not heard his name before.

Dr. Blanchard:

This is an article about what Art was doing, and I can't find my copy of it. That's why I think maybe I gave it to Becky. It would have been the year that Art was here because Art worked with me on it, and it talks about what he was doing. As I remember it, this was twenty something years ago—it's just that it's been so long ago.

One of the things that happened as a result of Art Young coming is that a number of faculty got interested in writing about writing across the curriculum. These papers I wrote are not very sophisticated because I was not trained in rhetoric and composition.

Anyway, why don't I stop talking and you start asking questions.

Gwen:

Why do you think his visit did not promote a sustainable WAC program?

Dr. Blanchard:

Ron Brown is Dean of General Studies now, and he is the one you need to talk to. The reason you need to talk to him is that writing across the curriculum had been under General Studies. Ron is a former History professor, and the History department probably is second only to English in their commitment to the teaching of writing. I know Ron participated in the early writing across the curriculum workshops. And it might be better to ask him why General Studies isn't conducting writing-across-the-curriculum workshops anymore.

Art Young conducted writing across-the-curriculum workshops which I thought were very successful and really got faculty energized about teaching writing, but there was no sustainable follow-up after Art left. There needed to be some campus-wide person to help create advocates. There were a number of faculty who came out of those workshops, like Susan Day who is Chair of the Sociology department now, who were really committed to writing across the curriculum. But I think the number of faculty interested just did not grow.

Gwen:

I think this is the gap that I see. I think writing is important to Texas State, but I also see that the mission statement, which at one time (I think about 1986) the mission statement stated a commitment to oral and written communications, and after that the mission statement reflected a broader agenda.

Gwen:

Maybe that's just reflecting the growth of the University, and the move from the teaching focus to research.

Dr. Blanchard:

Well, of course, one of the things that happened in the English department was that some faculty, I guess I would say diversified and were publishing or giving papers on composition, on writing. And these were faculty who had been trained in traditional literature programs. But I think the emphasis on research had a beneficial effect on writing across the curriculum as well because some faculty found themselves writing about their experiences. But it is true that the commitment to research often means that the commitment to teaching is not as strong; however, I think the commitment to research has positive benefits as well.

Gwen:

I think Dr. Grayson mentioned you edited a booklet that went out to faculty.

Dr. Blanchard:

Yes, *Writing is Thinking*. That's what I gave Becky, and I believe I gave extra copies to June Hankins.

Dr. Blanchard:

Ask Becky or June Hankins if they have an extra copy you can keep.

Dr. Blanchard:

I have given you all these names of other people to talk to about writing across the curriculum outside the English department, but for several years, I chaired the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum committee in the English department, and I don't know if you have any interest in talking about that. That was more about hands on experience. I was Chair from 1984 to 1988.

Those papers I gave you resulted from a Merrick grant I got to teach writing across the disciplines in freshman English. I thought it was pretty successful. However, as you pointed out, a lot of these things kind of died out. You might want to ask some of the people who wrote articles in *Writing is Thinking* if they are continuing Art's techniques in their classroom.

Gwen:

I have been told that most courses incorporate some writing in their course work whether these courses are denoted WI or not.

Dr. Blanchard:

Right. The University's definition for writing intensive was not very rigorous. I think there was a committee set up to review syllabi for WI courses that were to meet that requirement. But you heard complaints about WI faculty who were not meeting the requirements—or at least their colleagues thought they were not.

Dr. Blanchard:

Part of the shift in the General Studies curriculum that came with Rollo included having two tests--the General Studies exams in writing and in math. To move from sophomore to junior status, students had to pass exams to demonstrate their skills in writing and math, and I think while we had these exams there was more pressure, more interest in the writing skills of students. They had to demonstrate that they could write. When the University dropped those exams, I think some of the pressure dropped. Of course, all of this is speculative.

The history of how exactly those exams got dropped--Ron Brown might be able to reconstruct this better for you. I think it happened while De Sellers was dean. She had a strong commitment to writing, but too many of the colleges were finding that too many of their students were not passing, and the English department had a class on the junior level that was a kind of remedial class to get better prepared. Dropping the exams was in part political.

There is a long, very complex history about WAC. I was thinking about this knowing that you were coming. A lot of people involved; lots of strong commitment to writing; and lots of uncertainty about the role of individual departments in teaching writing or helping students develop writing skills. In the 80s, the University had a lot of curricular ferment that was very positive but people went on to do other things. The nature of any institution is that its priorities shift. I would say that the emphasis on research was only one part of the overall change in the culture of the University; another was to build the graduate program. And what followed was, for a number of reasons, less focus on the undergraduate program. It was an interesting time in the 80s.

One of the demographic shifts in the English department occurred before I became Chair. It was really very critical for the department while I was Chair. The student population dropped in first-year English by almost 50%. That meant that the department had to rethink its role in teaching writing—and one of the changes that we made was to shift

faculty who were teaching freshman English to upper-division writing courses. That was the start of the growth of the Technical Writing program. It was a choice of moving to the advanced level or losing faculty.

I do think it is the role of the English department to teach writing, and through writing across the curriculum, other disciplines reinforce writing.

Gwen:

I would really like to see more emphasis on writing at Texas State, and I don't know if my thesis will influence that, but maybe my questions will help.

Dr. Blanchard:

Well, just your going around and asking questions will help. For example, if you were to talk to Ron Brown it might spark something no one has been thinking about for quite a while.

I think Art's being here opened up the English department to the importance of writing as much as it opened up the rest of the University to writing across the curriculum. What I mean by that is it became more common to find faculty going to 4Cs and writing about rhetorical issues.

One of the things that happened in writing-across-the-curriculum committee in the English department is the Chair asked the committee to write a grant proposal to seek funding to bring high school teachers onto campus for a conference on writing across the curriculum, and for a lot of reasons, we went to the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding. There was a lot going on in many different ways.

It's enough to say that scholarship in rhetoric increased in the English department because of Art's work on campus. The department actively sought out Art Young, actively supported writing across the curriculum, actively supported writing in upper-level courses and at the graduate level. I think there was enormous support within the department for writing-intensive courses, writing across the disciplines, teaching writing in technical and other areas. The department actively sought out writing across the curriculum—that includes the literature program. But writing in all of its forms today is more important than when I came to the University. It may be that it's cyclical; a renewed focus on writing across the curriculum will be very healthy.

Gwen:

Thank you for taking your time to talk with me today. You have given me a lot to think about.

Projects of the WAC committee in the English department:

- *Writing Is Thinking*, guidebook
- Grant proposal to NEH for WAC Summer Institute for high school teachers
- *Writing Is Thinking* handbook distributed to all academic offices

APPENDIX H

Interview with Dr. Susan Day on February 13, 2009
Chair, Sociology Department
Texas State University-San Marcos

Interactive Interview Transcription

Gwen:

Thank you for taking your time to talk with me today.

I am conducting a thesis study to explore the relationship between writing-intensive initiatives and full-fledged writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) programs.

For my record, would you please state how long have you have taught at Texas State as well as your current position and your responsibilities in this position?

Dr. Day

I am a professor/chair in the Department of Sociology. I came here in 1979, so that makes me teaching full time at Texas State for about twenty-eight or twenty-nine years, somewhere in there.

Gwen:

Would you share your thoughts about when Art Young came to Texas State to introduce WAC to our campus?

Dr. Day:

For me, those were exciting times. I'm a sociologist. Part of what attracts people to sociology is that we want things to be better, and we believe in social movements—people coming together as a group and changing things. At that time, Bob Hardesty [Robert L. Hardesty, President of SWT (TSU) 1981-1988⁸] said that our goal was to be the best undergraduate university in the State of Texas, so we had a clear mission.

When Art came here [1984-1986⁹], he conducted several workshops. At some point, I was in a group of people who started leading some of the writing-across-the-curriculum workshops, and the first one I did was with Meg Grant and Claudia Cabaniss. Maybe that

⁸ According to "Oral History Project brings LBJ's San Marcos—Texas State connection to life" by Pat Murdock.

⁹ According to *Writing Is Thinking* prepared by the Department of English Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum in the Fall of 1988.

was the second year, but we were down at the T-Bar Ranch. I remember that we had a bunch of people for a day and a half. It was really an exciting time. I liked and I believed what Art said, and I was eager to help my students become better writers and to become an acolyte of writing across the curriculum, so it was a good several years. I know Art was very well received—doubters came and left believing. I think this was about 1984.

Gwen:

Why do you think his visit didn't promote a sustainable WAC program?

Dr. Day:

Well, social movements or revolutions don't sustain themselves. They have to have powerful leaders, and they have to have support from powerful people. Writing across the curriculum didn't have either of those. It wasn't attacked, but it didn't have support either. It was just one of those things—if people wanted to do it, that was fine, and if people didn't, that too was fine. There would have had to be structures in place to keep people focused and to reinforce strategies. Also, there would have had to be a designated time and place for believers to talk about how this worked and how that didn't work. In other words, believers needed to get together and profess their faith in order to continue the movement.

However, I think there is a certain amount of writing across the curriculum that doesn't work—it isn't enough to just get students to write. I think to some extent, whether it was dishonesty or simplification, it just isn't enough to just get students to write. I did a couple of research articles about writing across the curriculum, and I remember quoting one guy who said just have the students write—write lists, write paragraphs, write anything. I remember that the lists idea didn't work. Students didn't get to be better writers by just writing.

Dr. Hennessy relates that writing teachers know that you can teach students to write better if they write and rewrite the same paper over several times and if they get clear instructions about how to get better. So, according to Dr. Hennessy, this is a way to teach students to be better writers. Ultimately, however, the way to teach students to be better writers is to have small classes of eighteen to twenty-two students and to emphasize it in every single class.

This university is never going to be able to do that, so people who require their students to write do it at their own costs. Along with that, the emphasis on publication for professors just gets greater and greater. Therefore, people who want to spend a lot of time in their classes and want to be tenured may find that these two goals do not necessarily coalesce.

In short, the reason it (writing across the curriculum) didn't continue was structural, size of our classes, and because to some extent it didn't work.

Gwen:

I think actions come out of sustained conversations. I want my thesis to begin a sustained conversation about WAC at TSU.

Dr. Day:

Sociologists would say action emerges from those sustained conversations. You can see the social movements that have been successful—religions for instance. These are people who have sustained conversations. You just can't do it for a few weeks and expect your religion or your church to continue.

Gwen:

Would you say that the writing-intensive initiative began at Texas State about the same time as Art Young's work here?

Dr. Day:

The writing-intensive initiative began before Art Young came or David Watts was our chair. Writing intensive began when we got our new general studies curriculum and that would have been in the mid 80s. It was a two- or three-year process. Rollo Newsom was the Dean then—he was a sociologist. That would have been 1984 or 1985, so it all happened about the same time. I want to say that when they put together the new general studies curriculum they included a writing-intensive requirement.

Gwen:

What prompted this new writing-intensive requirement?

Dr. Day:

Now you are talking to an outsider. I wasn't involved in that process, so I don't really know.

Gwen:

In what ways does your department participate in the writing-intensive initiative at Texas State?

Dr. Day:

We have several classes that are required for all of our majors, and they are writing intensive. These courses are our two research classes, our theory class, and our internship class. We have at least fifteen hours of required writing-intensive courses.

Talking about this reminds me that, in the 90s, the University required departments to increase their student credit hours per each faculty member. On an average, we had to have over six hundred student credit hours, so our classes had on average sixty to seventy students, and we couldn't make our writing intensive classes because students did not want writing intensive. That is when we changed a lot of our classes; we took off the writing-intensive designation so we could get more students in them. The classes that are now writing intensive have an upper limit of thirty students, but we try to keep them

under twenty-five, but we only have fifteen hours like that—fifteen out of many possibilities.

Gwen:

Would you say that there is a way to teach writing as well as assign writing in WI courses? If you think there is a way, please offer your insights. If not, please explain why not.

Dr. Day:

No, I don't think there is a way to teach writing in WI courses. In many cases, the professors do not have the expertise to teach writing. They don't have the expertise about punctuation; they don't have the expertise to teach grammar. You have to remember that the major tenet of writing across the curriculum was just have your students write—if they write, they will get better—but this is just not true; it is just not true. Our professors may mark-up, and one of my professors has a sheet that talks about common errors and that sort of thing. But, by and large, they do not teach writing. They teach the subject matter and half of the grade is a result of writing.

Gwen:

Are you aware of the proposed change to reduce the percentage of graded writing from 65 percent to 50 percent in writing-intensive courses?

Dr. Day:

I don't think it is proposed; I think it is a done deal. I actually chaired a committee that approved a couple of PPSs—4.02 and 4.03 I think—and one place in that PPS refers to writing intensive. The committee reduced the writing intensive requirement from 65 percent to 50 percent. It wasn't my idea, but I was the chair of the committee. I said I don't know if we have the right to do this, and Ted Hindson, who was on the general studies committee, emphatically said that we could do this and that he would take it to general studies. This PPS was accepted more than a year ago, so I think it is a done deal. It could be changed back, but I think it is done.

Gwen:

How does this change benefit students?

Dr. Day:

I don't know that it does. Sixty-five percent was an impossible calculation. When you sit down to say okay students get this many points from writing, 65 percent was almost impossible. It was just very difficult, and I think what this change does primarily is it gives professors an easier way to calculate writing intensive. I believe 50 percent is a more realistic standard. While I don't know that this change will benefit students, I don't know that it will hurt them either. For sure, students do not benefit from writing a term paper that is turned in at the end of the semester and is not returned to the students. This paper is a large portion of the grade, so I don't know if this benefits students. I also don't know if this benefits them learning how to write.

Gwen:

Do you think this change will encourage more professors to apply for the writing-intensive designation?

Dr. Day:

No. I suppose professors might apply who are already requiring writing and who are tired of hearing their students say that this is not a writing-intensive course so why do we have to write.

The problem is that if five professors teach a course like Intro to Sociology or Social Deviance, it can't be just writing intensive in just one professor's course. The course itself has to be writing intensive. Therefore, anyone who teaches it has to teach it in a writing-intensive manner, and I don't think more professors will do that.

In fact, if you want to know the truth, more than once I have argued that we should do away with the writing intensive designation; we do not need it. College courses are supposed to contain writing. If professors don't do it, they just don't do it. We should just call it courses then students don't pick courses based on whether they are writing intensive or not, and professors do not have to hear students complain that there is too much writing in a course that is not writing intensive. I have argued that publicly in a number of places, and I didn't get anywhere because it just sounds good to have a writing-intensive component.

Gwen:

It puzzles me that there is not more emphasis on writing at Texas State, and it bothers me that students leave Texas State with undergraduate degrees and many cannot write well enough to meet their employer's expectations. Do you find that these are legitimate concerns?

Dr. Day:

The problem is that these students' bosses came to the workplace five years ago, and their bosses came out of a university ten years ago, and none of them know how to write. Furthermore, they can't recognize bad writing anyway. I am appalled at the writing I get back from the workplaces. They don't know what good writing is; they don't know what good spelling is. Consequently, I'm not nearly so concerned anymore about bosses thinking my students can't write because their bosses can't write either.

Gwen:

Sadly, this seems like a perpetual cycle.

Gwen:

In the Sociology Department, how is WI course oversight provided or monitored for compliance?

Dr. Day:

Not at all—it falls under professionalism. I think the assumption is that my faculty members follow the rules. In fact, I only know of one time when we were changing a required course that I saw a syllabus that didn't have 65 percent, and this was because a professor didn't know what the rules were. She thought it was 50 percent, and now it would be fine.

But I don't think writing intensive was ever overseen. The only time I ever saw anybody paying attention to whether a particular course met the writing-intensive requirement was when the course was being proposed at the curriculum stage. At that point, professors turn in syllabi with a curriculum proposal and people look at it then. That is the only time I ever saw anyone looking at it.

Gwen:

In what ways does the Sociology Department promote a culture of writing within the department and perhaps with other disciplines?

Dr. Day:

We assess our students using a portfolio method. We collect all of the students' papers that are written in the department and keep them in a portfolio. Then, once a year, we pull out some of them and assess. I think for the first four or five years we did that we were most critical and most concerned about our students' ability to write, and each year we talked about how we could improve their writing skills.

My average class size in sociology is now over sixty students, and it can't be done. We can't monitor; we can't teach our students to write; we can't do what Dr. Hennessy says; we can't take a project and rewrite and rewrite. Every year that I can, I discourage my faculty from taking on writing as their problem. And I encourage them to look at something else—critical thinking or something.

To be perfectly honest, (Dr. Grayson won't like it if she hears me say this) I'm not convinced that we can teach people to write, even though Dr. Hennessy thinks good writing can be taught. I have heard him say it. We have had this conversation before. I am just not sure we can teach people to write or teach people to think if they are not interested in learning. I'm sure they can teach themselves without help if they are interested. But I don't know that we can teach it to people who are not interested in learning it.

I think we can teach them a few facts, and I think we can teach them a few theories. However, with a student/faculty ratio like the one we have at Texas State, I don't see that we have the person power to emphasize writing. We have the highest student-faculty ratio in Texas public schools. It's a happy accident if our students come out of here being able to write. Writing isn't the University's first priority. As far as I can tell, it's not their first priority. I don't see any emphasis on it. They want us to educate our students, whatever that means.

If the University said that somehow we have to do a pretest and a posttest because our students have to have better writing skills at the end than they did at the beginning, the University would have to make so many changes in class size that it boggles the imagination. I think we are like campuses all over the country. I don't really know what we are doing in the University anymore, but it's not teaching students to write.

Gwen:

If you have time, you might look at the University of Washington's web site. The University of Washington has implemented a writing program that is woven into their institutional fabric, starting with their mission statement.

Dr. Day:

I would like to see what happens at the University of Washington five years from now.

Gwen:

I hope their program will be sustainable.

Dr. Day:

If it is sustained, it will be on the backs of lecturers. It's not professors; it's not tenured track people because their primary job is publication and their secondary job is teaching.

The University is not going in that direction; we are not. It will not happen. It's not going in that direction because in part the legislature will not fund universities. We are going in the direction of more students and getting them out faster. The 128 hour requirement to graduate has been reduced to 120 hours. The writing intensive requirement has been significantly reduced at Texas State, too. I can't put my finger on exactly when it was, but it has been reduced. You know many of us learned to write in high school. I had wonderful teachers. They were smart women who had no other opportunity to make a living. They could be nurses, social workers, or public school teachers. Now, women are becoming college professors, engineers, and doctors. They don't have to become public school teachers, so public school teachers are not often those kinds of dedicated people. Therefore, education is not happening in public schools either.

The change does not come at the University level; it comes at the state legislative level. If you want to change universities, you get legislators to emphasize something and then universities will. But left to our own devices, we are going to emphasize what gives us prestige, and it's not whether our students can write. There is really no good measure for that, so we pay lip service to writing and move on to what can be counted.

Gwen:

I agree with Dr. Hennessy when he says that writing can be taught through the revision process, but I think this process needs to be used in conjunction with one-on-one conferences with students.

Dr. Day:

Then, you have to carry the conversation forward, and you have to have writing in the next class and the next class after that—it has to be reinforced and reinforced.

Gwen:

And it can't really always come out of the English department.

Dr. Day:

That was probably the greatest lesson I learned in writing across the curriculum. It wasn't fair. It wasn't fair that the teaching of writing was done just in English courses. The whole idea that we expect our students to be able to write after their English courses is unfair. If our students haven't had more statistics, we don't expect them to be able to do statistics even three months after their statistic's course. No, it's not on the backs of the English department.

Gwen:

I know that I have taken up too much of your time, but I want you to know that I appreciate your thoughtful insights. You have given me a lot to think about.

APPENDIX I

Interview with Dr. June Hankins on February 24, 2009
Professor of English
Texas State University-San Marcos

Interactive Interview Transcription

Gwen:

Dr. Hankins, I am conducting a thesis study to explore the relationship between writing-intensive initiatives and full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) programs. In doing so, I plan to include a historical account of both the writing-across-the-curriculum initiative and the writing-intensive designation at Texas State.

Gwen:

Would you please share your memories of when Art Young came to Texas State to introduce writing across the curriculum to the faculty?

Dr. Hankins:

Yes, I believe I was still a lecturer then. Do you know what the years were?

Gwen:

I believe that was 1984 through 1986.

Dr. Hankins:

I finished my dissertation and was promoted in 1986. I did go to one of the workshops. Actually, it must have been a series of meetings because I remember going to an off-campus day-long workshop at a tennis camp in Wimberley, and I also remember being at the Old President's residence, the Hill House it is called, where he was presenting. But, I don't exactly remember how the training he did was structured, but those workshops were very effective. They were interdisciplinary, so they were useful in that sense. You heard people from other disciplines talking about using writing in their discipline. What I particularly remember is Art Young's concept of writing to learn. He wasn't focusing on writing in which the end was to produce polished writing. He was advocating using writing in order to learn. I think he believed and implied and maybe even asserted that a result of using writing to learn across the curriculum would be improvement in students' writing.

Susan Day did a study from which she concluded that it did not improve the quality of writing. I didn't think highly of the research design. I thought it was skewed because she

compared writing in a sociology class that used writing to learn to an English student's improvement in writing. I thought my goodness you are comparing results of a writing teacher to results of somebody who is not a writing teacher and students know that English teachers care about the quality of their writing. It is kind of a given. Anyway, I do know that I am ignorant about research design in sociology, and her design may have been perfectly acceptable in sociology. But I was kind of disappointed because for one thing I didn't think it was a good research design, and for another, it wasn't Art Young's emphasis—his emphasis was sociology students will benefit; they will learn the concepts they are writing about in class. So, I remember that about it.

I also remember that there was a plan to have a writing-across-the-curriculum interdisciplinary committee that would work to keep it going. But that didn't happen that I recall anyway. The other thing was that President Hardesty was extremely enthusiastic about writing across the curriculum. He felt that improving students' writing was very important, so he put a lot of money into it. Of course, it was expensive to get Art Young here. After he left, there was no upper-level administrator extremely invested in it, so the money wasn't going into it anymore. I just saw there being less and less interest.

Gwen:

In what ways would you say that you currently incorporate Art Young's techniques in your classroom teaching?

I use writing to learn. It is a way of getting discussion going. I often have students write about a passage in a literary work, or I will ask them a question about literary work, and I will ask them to write for a little while and then we will discuss it. I think this is very helpful. I think I get a lot better ideas out of the students. And, I also have my first-year English students do a lot of writing that is not for a grade. I would say that I learned to do that in the Rhetoric and Composition program I was in for my PhD program. It's writing as invention, and it was also something Art Young was interested in.

Gwen:

Why would you think his visit did not promote a sustainable WAC program?

Dr. Hankins:

I guess you have given me a reason it never became a program. There was never a person who directed it to make sure it happened. Of course, that would have taken a good deal of money.

Dr. Hankins:

You made me remember that Art Young was also trying to teach people how to make writing assignments so that students understand what they are being asked to do. He did spend a lot of time on that, and he would give lots of examples. And he stressed being transparent about grading criteria.

It is one thing to identify that something needs more development, and it is another thing to be able to articulate how to do that. I do think writing centers and English faculty probably can do a better job of that than faculty in other disciplines.

Gwen:

I am interested in the initial purpose for the writing-intensive designation and the process through which it became implemented. Would you share what you remember about the writing-intensive initiative?

Dr. Hankins:

I think that it came out of those years when Art Young was here. I can't remember the process. I remember that it was a fairly lengthy process to get consensus. We had to have consensus among all the departments of what it would constitute and how many writing-intensive courses there should be.

Gwen:

In early February, Director of Curriculum Services Micky Autrey told me that graded writing in WI courses would be reduced from 65% to 50%, and I understand that the Faculty Senate approved this reduction on February 18, 2009.

Dr. Hankins:

If it were a requirement that the departments really adhered to, I think it would be wonderful. I think 50% would be great if that amount of writing was actually done.

Gwen:

In what ways do you think this reduction serves or benefits students?

Dr. Hankins:

I do think a great problem with this university is the large number of large classes. I think the President periodically refers to that. The faculty/student ratio is a way too low. We should have much more faculty. It's nothing to be proud of at all. I don't think the President is proud of it at all. If we didn't have so many of those huge classes, I think there would be more implementation of the writing-intensive designation than there is. You really can't unless you have a tremendous amount of graduate student support per class. I don't think you can make it writing intensive.

Gwen:

Thank you so much for participating in this interview. The information you provided will be invaluable to me as I write my thesis.

APPENDIX J

Interview with Dr. Ronald C. Brown on March 11, 2009
Dean of The University College
Texas State University-San Marcos

Interactive Interview Transcription

Gwen:

Dean Brown, thank you for taking your time to talk with me today.

I am conducting a thesis study to explore the relationship between writing-intensive initiatives and full-fledged Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) programs. In my thesis, I will argue that writing-intensive courses alone do not constitute a full-fledged writing-across-curriculum program. This argument will hinge on the premise that WAC programs address the exigencies of student writing through campus-wide cultural involvement—involvement that WI courses alone would find difficult or impossible to accomplish. In other words, WI courses, when fully integrated within a larger WAC program and with solid institutional support, *can* create an atmosphere for students to learn how to write well in their chosen field and other fields as well. In an attempt to strengthen my argument, I want to include a historical account of the writing-intensive initiative at Texas State University (TSU).

Gwen:

From other interviewees, I understand that you were teaching at Texas State in 1984 when Art Young came to Texas State to introduce writing across the curriculum to the faculty. Would you share your memories of that time?

Dean Brown:

I was here when Art Young was here, although I never participated in any of Art Young's workshops. I was going to, but that was about the time he left. As a historian, I have always taught all writing-intensive classes, even my University seminar is mostly writing-intensive.

In the beginning, I was more concerned with grammar, but over time, I have become familiar with the English 1310 and 1320 syllabus, and I use their rubric in my classes so that there is some consistency between what I try to do and what the English department tries to advance in their syllabus and with the rubric they developed.

Gwen:

So, are you saying that you not only assign writing, but you also teach writing as well?

Dean Brown:

Well, I don't know that I teach it. I talk about it with the students, but I don't formally teach writing. Now, in graduate classes or upper-level history classes, I do spend a little bit more time. I familiarize students with the elements of style. I remind students that they should have a handbook because these types of books are useful for several reasons. One is that, as they go through college, these handbooks are the standard that institution's composition courses have adopted, and the second thing is that it's interesting years later to see how language has changed in fundamental ways over the course of a life time. So I bring in my 1963 Harbrace comp book. There are certain things that have changed dramatically. In the big picture not, but like the whole notion of *I shall* and *we shall* has disappeared from writing except as an imperative. Students now would never say this. A student actually brought this to my attention. He said, "Why are you making things so emphatic?" And I said, "Well, that was the way I was taught." Then he said, "Well, they are not teaching it that way anymore." After this interaction, I went out and got a contemporary handbook, and I saw that *I will* and *we will* is preferred and that *shall* is only used for emphasis.

I certainly do talk about bibliographies in my history classes, but in my seminar courses, I just want them to reference the source. Typically, I don't have them do formal research papers, but I have them write a reaction to something they have read or to a couple of things I have given them to read. In these types of papers, I accept a parenthetical reference. That's perfectly fine by my standards. But if I publish something, I use Turabian because it is expected. However, some places want Chicago style, which I had never really known until I was doing some oral interview transcriptions, and these were supposed to be done in Chicago style. But the new Turabian is what I mostly use for my own work, and what I want history students to use.

Gwen:

Why do you think Art Young's visit did not promote a sustainable WAC program?

Dean Brown:

You know that is an excellent question, and I don't know. His visit occurred about the same time we were going through some curricular revisions, which resulted in the adoption of the general studies curriculum. As part of that, they put in the writing-intensive requirement. Although, I will be the first to admit it was very light. A course was writing intensive if sixty-five percent of the graded assignments were written, and it had one outside writing assignment that was at least five hundred words, which is two pages. This is probably not enough to determine whether students have any writing skill or not. It lends itself conveniently to the four or five paragraph method of writing that they teach in the public schools. Normally, I don't ever specify the minimum number of pages, but typically, it takes ten or fifteen pages to satisfactorily write or answer as the case may be.

There was a lot of interest in writing across the curriculum when Bob Hardesty was the President. I think they believed when they put the writing-intensive requirement in that's

what they were really supporting, but over time, it tended to erode. Therefore, departments had some writing-intensive classes but they didn't actually adopt it.

I think, simultaneously, it was probably related to institutional growth, and it was probably also related to the rising expectations for faculty to do more research and grant writing. Those things tended to work against having writing-intensive or writing-across-the-curriculum assignments. But, I know some people who participated in it, and they found it a very valuable kind of experience because Art talked about using other kinds of writing other than formal papers—journaling, short prompts, and things like that. I have used a lot of them myself, but they are not the sort of thing that people put in writing-intensive courses. They tended to be bound by the fact that it was sixty-five percent writing. And over time, I think departments began to pull their writing-intensive courses. So now you have English, history, and philosophy I would guess, which are nearly one hundred percent writing. After that, a student picks and chooses nine hours of writing-intensive undergraduate courses, which can include the core courses of history and philosophy. I know that they write identifications in history and some short essay exams, but I don't think other people use other kinds of prompts because I think with classes getting as large as they have they have not maintained any of the initiatives of the broader vision that Art Young brought to the campus.

Gwen:

Other interviewees have indicated that funding is the reason TSU does not have a full-time writing- across-the-curriculum person to conduct workshops and to work with writing tutors or graduate assistants. What do you think?

Dean Brown:

When Art Young left Michigan Tech, I think there was some hope that they might be able to attract him to come here, but he took a position somewhere else. It is conceivable that things might have turned out differently, but there wasn't anybody else who had quite the same passion for it. I think he conducted four or five writing-across-the-curriculum workshops for faculty.

Gwen:

When was the writing-intensive designation originally conceived?

Dean Brown:

It came out of the curriculum revisions of the mid-1980s. It was part of the Hardesty curricular reforms. They increased the number of hours for the philosophy and the fine arts requirement from two hours to three hours. And all the students, as part of the coordinating board reforms, were expected to take the core curriculum classes. The writing-intensive requirement was a separate add on, and the role of this office has only really been to verify that faculty submitted proposals to have sixty-five percent of their grade based upon written work and that there was one out of class assignment.

I wasn't on the curricular reform committees at the time. Rollo Newsom, who is still in the area, was the first dean of general studies, and he was very involved in it. He might be

able to tell you something about what actually happened. I assume it was a type of academic horse-trading requirement that was distilled from writing across the curriculum to what can we really accomplish. They decided that the eighteen hour requirement was the one that would make sense. And they thought nine of the eighteen hours should be writing intensive in the core curriculum classes. English 1310 and 1320 were explicitly excluded because these were the courses in which students were going to learn the skills of collegiate-level writing. In those days, a junior-level exam in writing and mathematics was supposed to verify the competence of the students. But that disappeared pretty quickly once President Supple came here in 1989. Under his administration, there wasn't much emphasis on writing.

Then, the requirement was reduced to nine hours, and that came out of when the core curriculum revisions of 1999 were adopted at the state level. The question came as to whether or not we would actually retain the eighteen hour requirement. Some of the other deans were complaining about it, and I said, "Well, it really isn't, in the technical sense, a general education or core curriculum requirement that there be writing." It was just something that this office verified that people developed assignments that depended on sixty-five percent written work. I said, "We are simply enforcing this on the basis of what is presented to us in the syllabus." It wasn't in our purview at the time to check on what people's writing assignments looked like. Dr. Nelson, who is my associate dean, has dealt with most of the proposals over the years for additional writing-intensive classes. It is totally mechanistic. He makes sure that there is sixty-five percent of graded writing assignments. Now, I guess it is fifty percent of the graded written work, and there is at least one out-of-class paper.

So in the aftermath of the last SACS visit, which was in 1999, there was some thought that they would abolish the writing-intensive requirement entirely, and I said, "It is my opinion that the SACS representatives are pleased that we have this requirement. It is clearly part of what the State expects the students to be able to do."

Therefore, it seemed to me that it would be better to preserve some part of it. If they preserved nine hours of it, then that would be the part of the core courses that students who transferred in would have to pick up somewhere else in the curriculum. We never allowed written course work from other institutions to satisfy the nine or the earlier eighteen hours of writing-intensive work, so those hours had to be earned at Texas State.

Gwen:

Would you explain what SACS is and why it is important?

Dean Brown:

It's the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools—it's the regional accrediting body. All institutions of higher education have to be re-accredited at periodic intervals. Since the last one was in 1998 or 1999, we are on the verge of another SACS visit this fall. They come around every ten years and look at what we are doing. When you go to the SACS web site, you can type in core curriculum and you will see that they don't

actually have any particular requirement stipulating that so many hours of course work have writing assignments.

Gwen:

Is there a current stated purpose for the WI designation?

Dean Brown:

I don't think so. I mean you can read what is in the catalog, and I guess that would come as close to a stated purpose as there is. Once we reduced it from eighteen to nine hours, there was no longer a general educational but rather an institutional requirement that there would be nine hours of writing-intensive courses, and there has been no effort in the last ten years to refine it or to do anything else with it.

Gwen:

So would you say it is up to the particular departments or colleges to teach the students to write like say an engineer or to write like a biologist?

Dean Brown:

That would be writing across the curriculum, but it may or may not be true. Yes, it could theoretically be true that a writing-intensive course in say biology might include writing lab reports or something that might be analogous to the kinds of writing that might be required for certain articles for publication, but that probably occurs at the graduate level. The extent to which that occurs at the undergraduate level, I honestly don't know. I am assuming that they use lab assignments in the sciences where there are writing-intensive courses. However, if you look through the catalog, you can quickly see that there are very few writing-intensive courses in the entire curriculum. They tend, in some cases, to be capstone courses. Of course, that would be in the major. Now there are many courses that include writing that are not designated writing intensive, and I don't know how many of those there are because the method for determining if courses are writing intensive or not depends on a submitted syllabus. When a syllabus is submitted, Dr. Nelson looks at it and sends it on to Micky Autrey, and she puts the designation on the course based upon Dr. Nelson conveying to her the fact that it meets the expectations.

Gwen:

How are WI courses currently monitored for compliance?

Dean Brown:

Well, they are not. It is self-monitoring by the faculty that teach them or by the departments that offer them. If these courses are monitored, they are not monitored at this level, and so far as I know, they never really have been—other than that the syllabus meets the minimal expectations. And, even in that case, it's probably the syllabus that was submitted at point A.

Gwen:

So it's kind of a token compliance that relies on the professionalism of the faculty.

Dean Brown:

That's right.

Gwen:

I am curious about the reduction to fifty percent of graded writing, and I wonder how this reduction serves or benefits students.

Dean Brown:

I have no idea. I know the people you could ask who were involved in it: Susan Day, Ted Hindson, and Dr. Bourglois, the associate provost. There was a committee that was looking at the policy of those courses, and so they simply reduced it from sixty-five percent to fifty percent. Now I heard through the grapevine that part of the rationale was that it is easier for faculty to calculate fifty percent than sixty-five percent, but I don't know if that is true. And whether it is fifty percent or sixty-five percent is probably meaningless in the big picture. Seventy-five percent would be another option that would be easy to calculate, but they opted for fifty percent. And I don't know what the latest word on this is.

Gwen:

What do you think the future holds for the writing-intensive designation at TSU?

Dean Brown:

Well, it is my opinion that we will probably keep the writing-intensive requirement because it is something we should be doing. However, as we have more large classes, I think it could erode. When you have three hundred students in a class and you have graduate assistants doing the grading, especially graduate assistants who are not trained in writing, there is the likelihood that writing will not be adequately assessed— unless there is someone who is training graduate assistants and faculty in the development of good writing assignments and in the evaluation of these assignments. That's one reason I use the English 1310 and 1320 syllabus. It seems to me it is an appropriate way to think about the quality of the writing holistically. I think that writing across the curriculum looks at writing holistically whether it is appropriate for the discipline or appropriate for the course.

I think we probably won't get rid of it because we are supposed to be doing it. Everybody says we are supposed to be doing it. If we were going to place a greater emphasis on writing, it would take an institutional commitment to do so. I know we have the Writing Center, and I know they are very helpful to students. Students come in for undergraduate and graduate work, as well as for scholarship applications. They don't care what it is. Students that I have referred there over the years have been very satisfied with the help they have received. I know that SLAC also has a writing lab, and they help students as well. Many of their tutors are English majors or minors. I think it would take a commitment of funds and a commitment to deal with alternate class size for there to be something transformational.

Dr. Hennessy, Sue Beebe, Steve Wilson, and Nancy Wilson from the English department, remind me all the time that classes that are writing intensive should not have more than 20 students, 25 at the outside, so that they could properly evaluate writing assignments. And I know there has always been some tension between what the English department intends to do in English 1310 and 1320 and what some faculty expect students to do in advanced courses. They are particularly concerned with grammar and punctuation, as I once was myself. But I have always placed an emphasis on the holistic piece of the writing. I also give some attention to grammar and punctuation, and while it is true that grammar and punctuation are important, a lot of faculty obsess over this. Unfortunately, many of them don't know themselves what is actually current usage with regards to grammar and punctuation. That is one reason why you will never come into my office and not find a style manual. I just think you have to have them.

Gwen:

Would you say that Texas State graduates are prepared to meet the current and increasing demand for better writers in the workplace?

Dean Brown:

I think it is sort of a two-edged sword because, on one the one hand, there is the critique that students are not prepared to write, but do you remember the US Air crash into the Hudson River? Well, I flew US Air to a conference in Georgia, and one of the things I did on that flight was to look at a US Air publication in which the president of the company had allegedly composed a document. Not only was there a blatant typo, but it also was poorly constructed in the most fundamental way. There were clauses that were misplaced. It was horrible. Yet we talk about students having poor writing skills, and then the president of a corporation writes so poorly. So, if he really wrote it, which he probably did because that would be the only way he could get something like this published. Moreover, who in the company would have the temerity to review it? And, if he didn't have someone look it over, it would probably go in the way he wrote it. It was just awful. I wish I had a copy of it. It was a one-page letter to US Air customers stating that they have great pilots and that their pilot who landed in the Hudson River is evidence of this. I can't get over how terribly written it was.

When I write something, I usually give it to Dr. Nelson. I think I am a pretty good writer, but he is a journalist, and he is an excellent critic of writing. I tend to think about things from the beginning and that may not be the best approach. I probably put too much background information. It may be better to get to the point and make the argument right away. I have learned that from him rather than start with the background.

Gwen:

Dean Brown, thank you for participating in this interview. I believe the information you have provided about the writing-intensive initiative at TSU and about Art Young's writing-across-the-curriculum workshops will be invaluable to me as I write my thesis. I now have a better understanding of why the writing-intensive initiative at TSU coincided with Art Young's time here.

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