

NARRATIVE 11.

WORTH

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I am in my final semester of a Ph.D. program in rhetoric and writing studies. I am a continuing assistant director (AD) in the first-year composition program, a TA teaching an upper-level professional writing course for the first time, and I am finalizing my dissertation. I am waiting on feedback from my committee, scheduling defenses, grading my students' work, planning new lessons that I must deliver through Zoom, and mentoring fellow graduate students. I am developing workshop ideas, working with colleagues across campus to develop new writing courses, and connecting with community organizations that will work with my students this semester. I am sending out papers and writing new ones because I need more publications, and I'm working on conference proposals because I need more for my CV. My son is a second-year university student trying to learn online at home, which sometimes feels like I am in constant office hours. My parents and sisters don't understand what I do. My husband is the only person holding everything together, and I have to rely on him more than is fair. It's a lot.

But that is only my usual workload and situation. I am also graduating this semester. I won't be able to work over the summer since my TAship will end, so I have to figure out how to save money for those months or locate a temporary job. I am also filling out applications for full-time positions that start in the fall. I need to submit as many as possible since the market is limited due to the ongoing global pandemic. I need to revise my CV, write a new cover letter, request recommendations and/or actual letters, write a diversity statement, provide a sample syllabus. I need to help my son enroll. I need to convince my parents to cancel family gatherings so no one gets sick. I need to grade. I still need to revise my dissertation.

I wish the application process were simpler. I wish I didn't have to create an account with each university in order to upload documents and that I didn't have to fill out an application that asks me for information that is already on my CV. How many hours am I wasting on jobs I won't get? I wish the pandemic were finished and that I could see people in person. I wish I got paid a living wage and that there was a smoother transition from Ph.D. programs to "real" jobs. I wish I knew whether all this work and sacrifice will actually be worth it.