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LOCATING WRITING PROGRAMS IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

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Typically those of us in higher education expect writing programs, particularly first-year composition programs, to be located within universities' English departments. At large research universities, there is a stereotype about writing programs: they are run by English faculty members with the first-year writing courses staffed by English graduate students (most of whom are earning literature degrees) and adjunct instructors, who experience substandard material conditions (not enough office space, little pay, poor access to technology, not enough support staff, etc.).

Unfortunately, this stereotype seems to be an accurate description of many programs. The Modern Language Association reported that in a sample of Ph.D.-granting English departments, 63 percent of the first-year writing sections are taught by graduate students, 19 percent by part-timers, and 14 percent by full-time non-tenure-track faculty (1997, 8). As James Sledd (2000) recently argued, many of these programs are run by "boss compositionists"—tenure-track faculty reaping rewards that include higher wages, smaller classes, bigger offices, and more advanced undergraduate and graduate courses. However, while this stereotype may describe the state of composition at a number of institutions, it doesn't accurately represent individual programs, which are much more complex, locally situated, and diverse, as Carol Hartzog found in her survey of writing programs at member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU).

Hartzog explains that she investigated the writing programs of this elite group of research universities because they are a small, definable group, yet very diverse; many of the writing programs have gained national recognition; and her home institution was a member of the organization. Another reason Hartzog cites for choosing to research AAU member institutions—and the primary rationale for our follow-up with them—is that

“questions about the status and identity of composition have to do not only with teaching but also with research.” She asks, “Is it possible to do substantial work in this field—and earn traditional academic rewards for that work?” (x). By examining the position of writing programs at these elite research institutions, Hartzog reasoned, we can get a sense of the value of composition within the academy and contribute to the debates about composition’s academic status and disciplinarity. Hartzog described composition as a “field in transition” with writing programs “struggling not just for security but for dignity” (xii). Although composition studies has matured as a discipline since Hartzog’s study was published and now includes over sixty doctoral programs, a strong job market, more tenured composition specialists, more peer-reviewed journals, and more work coming out in scholarly presses, its position within the university has not been completely defined and secured. With all these changes since Hartzog conducted her study, we wanted to find out what has changed or stayed the same in writing programs at premier research universities—and what, by implication, these changes might mean for composition as a discipline.

Although we have not embarked on a project as ambitious as Hartzog’s, we did set out to explore the status of writing programs fifteen years after she conducted her survey to see if changes had occurred at elite research universities since the burgeoning of composition studies.¹ We began by looking at university websites, then sent email questionnaires to the AAU writing program directors or departmental chairs (usually in English departments), following up on some questionnaires with telephone calls or email interviews. Our focus was narrower than Hartzog’s since we were focusing only on the institutional structure of writing programs—where they are located, who directs them, who controls the hiring and budget, and what courses/programs they offer. We were most interested in finding out how many writing programs at these elite research universities were housed within English departments and how many were independent units. We were also interested in determining what kinds of courses the writing programs offered: first-year, required composition courses and/or upper-level courses or even minors or majors in writing.

Based on our initial results—and the topic this volume addresses—we provide an overview of what we found and then focus on two independent writing programs: Harvard’s Expository Writing Program and Syracuse’s Writing Program. We chose to highlight the program at Harvard because it has always been an independent writing program, has been influential in the history of composition, and was one of Hartzog’s

case studies. We decided to highlight Syracuse's program for very different reasons: it was not an independent program when Hartzog conducted her research, and it contains a doctoral program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric. We begin with some general observations from the survey before turning to the descriptions of these specific programs.

THE BIG PICTURE: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

We sent out sixty-one questionnaires via email, inquiring about the structures and curricula of the writing programs at AAU member universities. Of the sixty-one questionnaires we sent, we received responses from forty-one universities, for a response rate of 67 percent (see appendices for the survey and the list of AAU member schools we contacted). Of those forty-one responses, two were from writing program administrators who declined to answer our survey questions (it is against one university's policy to participate in such surveys, and the writing program administrator at the other university simply preferred not to participate). An additional four responses indicated that the questions we asked were too difficult to answer at that point in time, either because the writing program was undergoing major structural and curricular changes (in the case of three schools) or because the writing program was so unconventional that it was not easily described through the questions we asked. In these cases, survey participants wrote brief summary answers to our survey questions. When possible, we incorporated information from those summary answers into our tabulation of results.²

Our survey questions addressed a number of issues, including the size of the programs and their administrative and budgetary structures, teacher education opportunities for the people teaching writing courses, and the professional interests and qualifications of the administrators of such programs. What we found, while not surprising, was quite interesting: writing programs vary so much by institution that it is nearly impossible to present a clear summary of the answers to our questionnaire. Just to illustrate the wide differences among writing programs, we have chosen to highlight findings from four of the questions we asked on the survey.

1. *What unit (or units) directs or administers most of the writing classes on your campus?*

Of the thirty-five respondents who directly answered our questions (that is, respondents who did not provide us with summary answers), eight said that their writing programs were independent and administered by

faculty or staff who reported directly to a division head or dean. The majority of respondents, a total of nineteen, reported that their writing programs were located within English departments, while four reported that their programs were located in a unit other than an English department (such as a rhetoric department or a teaching and learning center). Four respondents indicated that two or more departments shared in the administration of the writing program. In these cases, first-year writing courses were taught by faculty in many disciplines across the university; or English and another department shared in constructing and directing four-year writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) programs, in which there may or may not be a first-year writing component.

2. *Who administers the unit and what is his or her academic degree, area(s) of expertise, and professional rank? If tenured, what department is the administrator tenured in?*

The information about who administers writing programs is just as diverse as the information about where programs are housed. Of the thirty-five respondents who directly answered our questions, twenty indicated that the persons administering their program were rhetoric and composition specialists or were specialists in other areas (such as literature) with rhetoric and composition training, experience, and/or interests. Other participants reported that the administrators of their programs are specialists in cultural studies (one response), linguistics or ESL or TESOL (two responses), or another area, such as literature (twelve responses). The majority of writing program administrators, twenty-six in all, are tenured or tenure-track faculty in their departments. Two additional respondents said that the writing program administrator was a senior lecturer, someone who was either “tenured” or granted renewable appointments that are in some way different from tenured/tenure-track faculty positions. Six respondents reported that the director of the writing program was not on the tenure track, but was an adjunct faculty member, a lecturer, or a postdoctoral fellow.

3. *What is the administrative structure of this unit? Is it a department, program, interdisciplinary center, or some other kind of unit?*

From the survey responses, we identified the following independent writing programs that are not departments:

- Columbia’s Composition Program (formed in the mid-1990s)
- Cornell’s John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines (formed 1982)

- Duke's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Writing (formed in 2000 out of the University Writing Program, which was created in 1994)
- Harvard's Expository Writing Program (formed in 1872)
- The Princeton Writing Program (formed in 1991)
- The University of Colorado's Writing Program (formed in 1987)
- The University of Rochester's College Writing Program (formed in 1997)
- The Yale-Bass Writing Program (formed in 1977)

Besides these independent programs, we also identified several full-fledged departments—other than English—with tenured faculty and other signs of departmental status, as well as institutional recognition as a department that administered most of the writing courses:

- The University of Iowa's Department of Rhetoric (achieved departmental status in 1988)
- Michigan State's Department of American Thought and Language (formed in 1946)
- The University of Minnesota, St. Paul's Department of Rhetoric
- Syracuse University's Writing Program (formed in 1986)

All of these departments administer core, required composition programs as well as other courses or programs. Through our web searches, we also identified other writing units independent of English, such as the University of California-Berkeley's College Writing Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Writing Program, and the University of Texas-Austin's Division of Rhetoric (none of which responded to our survey).

These independent or interdisciplinary units responsible for teaching writing all have very different histories and reasons for coming into being. One respondent noted that the independent writing program at her university was formed because of "the desirability to have one department responsible for first-year writing instruction." Other respondents indicated that their independent programs were formed as interdisciplinary units because there was widespread resistance on those campuses to one department being solely responsible for the teaching of writing. One respondent, for example, wrote that her program began because "College faculty felt that writing should belong to all programs, all departments, and that this could not happen if the program were located in only one department." Another respondent wrote that her program "is stand-alone because it was not effective for the English department to try to run a large, interdisciplinary program. A decentralized-center was required." Moreover,

The structural development (administrative and operating) [of the program] has been determined by the university's and the [program's] wish to make the teaching of writing an interdisciplinary and integrated effort throughout the university. [The program] has wished to emphasize writing as an integral part of learning and of effective teaching. The developments have been greatly aided by successful endowment-seeking efforts.

Still another respondent listed a number of reasons why her university's writing program is independent, reporting directly to the dean of arts and sciences. Her response illustrates a number of complexities leading to the campus's formation of an independent writing program:

- The politics of teaching courses satisfying graduation requirements in several different colleges, while being funded through only one (A&S);
- Administrators' consistent refusal to allocate any tenure-track lines or roster any tenured faculty in the program, even to provide for eventual replacement of founding co-directors;
- (In earlier years) perpetual pressure from administrators to increase class sizes and add sections at the last minute;
- (In recent years) the university's increasing tendency to move long-time part-timers into contract instructorships;
- The increasing pool of adjuncts nationwide; partly as a result, increasing professionalization (or at least credentialization): a rise in the percentage of writing program teachers with a Ph.D. (from seventeen percent in 1986 to forty-six percent in 1996 and still rising), a fall in percentage of writing program teachers having the B. A. as highest degree (from thirty-six percent to five percent over the same period, and now almost zero), and a fall in annual teacher turnover (from forty-nine percent to fourteen percent over the same ten years);
- The politics of student evaluations and grade inflation (a serious concern here, with PR repercussions);
- The politics of operating under state higher ed commission (indirectly affecting colleges' design of requirements and the design of courses, therefore student "demand");
- (Very recently) pressure from various administrators to return to a somewhat more traditional structure, teaching mainly freshmen and staffing much more with graduate students.

Yet another respondent explained that the university's writing program came into being because

Previously, when under the English Department, increasingly the Composition Program was ignored. English faculty did not teach our courses and had little or nothing to do with our program. Getting action or support or advice was difficult, if not impossible. . . . Our primary connection with the English department was (and remains) through the grad students in English, all of whom (with very few exceptions) teach for 2-3 years in our program.

Clearly, there are a number of ways in which independent and interdisciplinary writing units came into being, namely, a need to centralize writing instruction; a need to build a base of interdisciplinary support for writing across the university; and administrative, structural, and logistical problems in working with a department fundamentally disinterested in the teaching of writing.

4. *Who teaches most of the courses within that unit (TAs, adjuncts, full-time instructors, tenure-track faculty)?*

Also varying from institution to institution is the makeup of the writing program faculty. All but one of the thirty-five respondents who directly answered all of our questions reported that their programs employ adjuncts, fellows, lecturers, or graduate teaching assistants to teach in their program. Of these thirty-four, all but one reported that *most* core courses in the writing program are taught by adjuncts, fellows, lecturers, or graduate teaching assistants. Only fourteen, or 40 percent of the thirty-five respondents who answered our questions, reported that tenured or tenure-track faculty teach core writing courses in the program. However, twelve respondents made the following stipulations about faculty involvement in the writing program:

- Tenured/tenure-track faculty teach honors courses only
- Tenured/tenure-track faculty teach freshman seminar courses only (with other instructors teaching “regular” first-year writing classes)
- Tenured/tenure-track faculty teach writing-intensive courses other than first-year writing
- Only “a few” courses a year are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty (two respondents noted this)
- One percent of all writing program courses are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty
- Five percent of all writing program courses are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty
- Forty percent of all writing program courses are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty

- Fewer than ten percent of all writing program courses are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty
- “Some” writing courses are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty

Based on the results of this survey and our reading of information located at these universities' websites, we drew several conclusions. First, what “counts” as a writing program is very different from institution to institution. For many universities, a writing program is synonymous with “first-year composition program,” while at other institutions a writing program might include upper-level courses in composition, professional writing, and creative writing, or it might indicate interdisciplinary ties with departments other than English or writing. In other words, writing programs are contextually defined according to institutional mission, university goals for writing, graduate programs, WAC programs, and many other factors. Second, the teaching of writing takes place in many different locations, from English and writing departments to science and history departments. Third, composition research and the administration of writing programs seem to be valued, since the majority of directors are tenured/tenure-track; however, the teaching of writing, especially first-year composition, is still often relegated to part-time faculty, graduate students, or instructors who have little power in the programs/departments in which they teach or who are “passing through” and therefore have little investment in the writing program. And fourth, composition studies is still in transition, both within local settings and the field as a whole. That four of our survey respondents indicated their programs were undergoing major changes surprised us; the changes in writing programs since Hartzog first published the results of her study indicate that universities and faculty who teach writing are engaged in finding better, more contextual ways to respond to student needs.

Responding to student needs in the classroom, however, is not necessarily distinct from participating in the research and scholarship of composition studies. Robert Connors argued in favor of keeping the teaching of writing as an essential part of composition studies' identity, as he suggested possible directions for the field: “Most centrally, teaching writing and working with writing teachers are and remain the fundamental functions for specialists in composition studies. . . . working rhetorically in the world with writers is the continuing key to defining the field” (1999, 20). Writing programs that exist outside of the departmental structure, with few if any tenure/tenure-track faculty are essentially outside of the knowledge-making community valued by the research university. Professionals

working in these programs can still be active members in the scholarly community of composition (and many are), but how does their status affect the way the scholarship is valued by the larger academic community? And, more importantly, is recognition and acceptance by the academic community something composition studies needs?

Of course, being outside the tenure system without departmental status can make programs and instructors much more vulnerable to institutional politics. Two of the independent programs that Hartzog identified—the University of Michigan’s Composition Board and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis’s Communication and Composition Program—are now defunct, having been reappropriated by the English departments at their institutions (see Anson this volume for the Minnesota story). Tenure, although it is under attack and revision at many institutions, still confers privilege, status, resources, and benefits on those who receive it. Not having tenure clearly marks writing instructors, administrators, and scholars as somehow outside the academic mainstream of the university hierarchy.

To more concretely discuss issues associated with independent writing programs, we profile two independent programs: Harvard’s, which is interdisciplinary, and Syracuse’s, which has recently established a doctoral program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric.

THE EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM AT HARVARD

Expos 20, Harvard’s first-year writing course, is described as one of that university’s oldest traditions: “A one semester course in expository writing has been the one academic experience required of every Harvard student since the writing program was founded in 1872” (Harvard Expository Writing Program, n.d.). The Expository Writing Program, which is independent and interdisciplinary, is also one of the oldest and most influential writing programs in the history of American universities. English composition was first introduced into the undergraduate curriculum at Harvard, according to most scholars, by Harvard president Charles Eliot in order to achieve several purposes, including promoting English as the language of learning and pressuring preparatory schools to teach English composition.³

Composition quickly moved from a second-year course to a first-year requirement, and it spread to other Ivy League colleges, to elite private and public universities, and eventually into the general education curriculum of almost all American postsecondary institutions, where, for

the most part, it has stayed firmly rooted. With the spread of the first-year writing requirement, Harvard's composition teachers also enjoyed a measure of influence through the development of textbooks and pedagogy. What didn't spread so rapidly, however, was the administrative structure of its writing program, which has remained interdisciplinary and independent from a department since its inception, according to a pamphlet published by the program, although it has been closely aligned with the English department at times.

In 1984–85, according to Hartzog, Harvard's program was directed by Richard Marius, a Ph.D. in history and an accomplished writer, who was a senior lecturer (which is a yearly renewable faculty rank, not a tenured position). As director, Marius handled the day-to-day activities, reporting to the dean of undergraduate education and a standing committee comprised of interdisciplinary faculty. Besides offering the required first-year course and an advanced expository writing elective, the program also included a writing center that tutored students and offered workshops for faculty across campus.

Based on her survey, site visit, interviews, and review of materials, Hartzog concluded that the program was "successful in these ways":

it is based on a clearly formulated philosophy that writing should be taught by writers and that students in writing classes should learn "how to observe sharply and think clearly" (Marius, Informal Notes 1); it is directed by a forceful leader and recognized scholar committed to his teachers, to his program, and to writing; it is staffed by articulate, intelligent, and energetic writers committed to teaching; and it has been carefully evaluated by those responsible for teaching in it. (126)

Although Hartzog applauded the program's independent and interdisciplinary status and its philosophy that writers should teach writing, she expressed concerns about its future, especially in terms of its staff. The teachers were adjunct faculty who could be renewed only up to five years, compromising the evolution of the program and making the instructors—and in some ways, the program itself—marginal to Harvard's academic community.

Today the Harvard Expository Writing Program is thriving, having survived some difficult years after Hartzog's visit. Although it retains many of the same basic features since its inception, the program has developed and grown under the leadership of Sosland director Nancy Sommers and her assistant directors. Sommers, who joined the writing program in

1987 as Marius's assistant director and took over as director in 1993, is an accomplished composition scholar. In recent interviews, Sommers and Gordon Harvey, associate director of the program (who joined the program in 1986), identified several major changes that have occurred in the program over the last seven years:

1. Instead of six different courses that satisfied the requirement, there is just one course, *Expos 20*, with a variety of special topics for students to select from. The courses are designed by the instructors on a topic of their choosing (jazz and literature, famous trials, and the culture of consumption were three of the more than thirty different topics offered in fall 2000), but all focus on academic writing and preparing students for the types of writing they will encounter in their careers at Harvard. Students write four essays, between five and ten pages long, that require the writer to make an argument using different strategies and sources. There is also a "basic" writing course for students who need more practice before taking *Expos 20*, and an advanced expository writing elective is offered every other year.
2. The instructors in the program are still temporary appointments (with the exception of four permanent assistant directors). However, instead of being teaching assistants (TAs), they are all hired as preceptors, which is a faculty appointment with a higher pay scale. Along with the change in title, the hiring philosophy changed: today most preceptors are accomplished *academic* writers, either Ph.D.'s or doctoral candidates, although they represent a wide range of disciplines. According to Harvey, the program has rigorous standards for hiring instructors and devotes much time and many resources to professional development. For example, every year he goes to the Modern Language Association convention to interview candidates.
3. The program has developed an official WAC program, the Harvard Writing Project, which was founded by Sommers in the spring of 1995 "in an effort to make writing a more vigorous part of Harvard's undergraduate education" (Harvard Writing Project website). The WAC program, which has a writing-in-the-disciplines (WID) emphasis, offers workshops and individual faculty consultations, sponsors a lecture series, publishes student and faculty resources, and offers other services across the campus.
4. The program has become more research based and more research oriented. Research, according to Sommers, is at the heart of a university, so she feels compelled to be knowledgeable and active in the research community. For example, Sommers explained that, shortly after taking over the program, she did a preliminary study that involved interviewing faculty across campus and examining the types of writing required in their courses. This preliminary research, along with other factors, has influenced the

direction of the program in recent years, contributing to a more academic focus in the courses and pointing to a need for a WAC/WID program. The Harvard Study of Undergraduate Writing, currently being conducted by Sommers, is following 25 percent of the Harvard Class of 2001, or about 420 students, “through their college years in an attempt to draw a portrait of the undergraduate writing experience” (Harvard Study of Undergraduate Writing). This large, longitudinal study is supported by the writing program as well as through the office of the president and a Mellon Foundation grant.

5. The physical facilities for the program have been upgraded and consolidated. In 1997, the program moved into its own building, a renovated, three-story Victorian house in the center of campus. All forty staff members are housed there, and although Sommers admitted that space is still at a premium, she sees the “beautiful, warm, friendly Victorian house” as a sign of “gratitude and respect” by the Harvard administration, especially since there is such limited room on campus.

According to Sommers, most of the changes have been made with students’ best interests in mind. In the interview we conducted, Sommers repeatedly focused on how the program better serves students now than it did in the past. These changes, explained Sommers, have also contributed to the development of a more professional, more academic program that is integrated into the Harvard community. For example, Sommers described the program as “a virtual publishing house,” generating high-quality, professional documents for students and teachers, including the *Harvard Writing Project Bulletin*, *Exposé*, and *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Harvard Students*, all of which are used across the campus. She also noted that the writing center has a solid reputation, with many professors linking directly to its online resources. According to Harvey and Professor Patrick Ford, a member of the standing committee that oversees the Expository Writing Program, Sommers’s leadership style has made a substantial contribution to the program’s development. While Sommers downplayed her own role and praised her staff’s dedication and hard work, noting that she sees herself as a low-key delegator who has worked to build alliances, Ford identified Sommers as “a person of tremendous energy and ability,” whose appointment as director is the single biggest change in the program over the last ten years. He also noted that the Harvard Writing Project initiated by Sommers “has changed the face of writing at Harvard.”

Sommers also attributed her ability to enact so many changes in such a short time to the program's independent, interdisciplinary status. Because it is not aligned with an academic department, it is not directly involved in the departmental politics that are familiar in academic communities. And, because the expository writing courses are staffed completely with non-tenured instructors with five-year renewable appointments, the program administrators are able to maintain consistency of writing pedagogy across sections. As Sommers said, and Harvey confirmed, people "are not hired if not with the program," and she admitted that it would have been impossible to accomplish such a consistent program if they were dealing with tenured/tenure-track faculty. Harvey noted, however, that one can't help feeling somewhat marginal since none of the staff are professors and therefore have no real voice in the university's decision-making process. Another benefit associated with their independent status, explained Sommers, is that the program operates its own budget and can engage directly in fundraising. It has, in fact, secured several endowments and grants during Sommers's tenure. For example, the Harvard Writing Project has its own endowed faculty grants and an endowed lecture series that focuses on professors as writers; and the study of undergraduate writing has been able to obtain grants from the Mellon Foundation for research. Sommers's position is also an endowed directorship although not a professorial chair.

Overall, Sommers said that she thinks that advantages of being an independent program, even though not a full-fledged department, far outweigh the disadvantages. She sees several ways that Harvard's program can contribute to the discipline of composition studies. The research she is conducting, for which she already has support for a full-year sabbatical in 2002, is the largest longitudinal study conducted on undergraduate writing, and Sommers believes it will make a significant contribution to the field's understanding of the role of writing in undergraduate education. She also mentioned that the program's publications—which she sends to people across the country—are influential in what happens in writing programs on other campuses. She noted, however, that perhaps their most important contribution is in the preparation and training of writing instructors, who often leave Harvard and enter departments and programs at other universities or colleges, taking with them knowledge about effective writing pedagogy. Although they might be informed writing instructors, the preceptors are not necessarily members of the scholarly community of composition studies or

active contributors to the field. The program's influence will also be extended to secondary education teachers through an outreach program that Sommers and her staff are developing. This summer program will provide Cambridge and Boston public school teachers with fellowships to take two courses at Harvard over the summer, one of which will be a course on teaching writing.

Although Harvard's Expository Writing Program is flourishing, it is telling that Sommers, the winner of two Braddock awards and an important voice in composition studies for over twenty years, is not tenured and is not a member of the professorial faculty. As Ford said,

In one respect, Expos is not unlike the situation of writing in many universities. It is not a department and its faculty are called by the strange name 'preceptor.' I support changing this to 'lecturer,' but that doesn't seem likely to happen. Fortunately, salaries have improved somewhat for preceptors but are still below that of lecturer. Teachers of writing have been professionals for some years now, but there remains almost everywhere a suspicion on the part of 'real' scholars that writing and writing pedagogy lie outside of the main preoccupations of the academy. This is not likely to change, in my view. The best defense for writing programs are strong directors and a core of faculty who care.

Sommers is by all accounts a strong director, and she has built a solid program grounded in composition research and theory that has much to offer the field. She has also learned how to work within a university structure in savvy ways, garnering endowments and grants to finance research and services that the program sponsors.

THE WRITING PROGRAM AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

The freestanding Writing Program at Syracuse University began in the fall 1986 "in response to internal and external evaluations of the freshman English program," according to Faith Pivan, Deborah Saldo, and Beth Wagner, all full-time staff of the Writing Program. The internal evaluation consisted of the investigations of the 1985 Ad Hoc Committee to Review Writing Instruction, which reviewed current scholarship about composition theory and pedagogy, along with samples of writing by Syracuse students. The committee also surveyed faculty about their opinions of student writing instruction at Syracuse. In addition to conducting its internal investigation of writing, the committee consulted James Slevin and Donald McQuade of the Council of Writing Program Administrators.

The recommendation the committee made, based on these internal and external evaluations of the then current writing program, was the establishment of a “broader program more clearly informed by current theories about how students learn to write,” as well as the formation of “a four-year writing curriculum with students taking a ‘studio’ in writing” in each of their first two years and one at the upper-division level, explained Plvan, Saldo, and Wagner. The university then conducted a search for a scholar in composition and rhetoric to develop and direct the Writing Program; ever since its formation as an independent program, it has been administered by a tenured faculty member with a specialization in the field. Three of the program’s directors have been full professors.

The new Writing Program at Syracuse evolved rapidly toward departmental status, acquiring its own jointly appointed tenure-track faculty in the first year. Although budgetary and managerial autonomy came with the founding of the program and the administration soon recognized the director as a department chair in the College of Arts and Sciences, in practice becoming “departmentalized” was a more gradual process. Today, while still called “the Writing Program,” the department has built up a tenure-track faculty of ten (one choosing to remain jointly appointed in English) and has tenured several junior faculty. The faculty offers a freestanding doctoral degree program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric (approved in 1997) and in 2001 began implementing an expanded upper-division curriculum, with plans for building a writing minor.

In its first year, the Writing Program initiated what was conceived as a multiyear developmental curriculum, although its early focus was on the lower-division writing studios. Shortly after it began, by moving one semester of the previous first-year course to the sophomore year, the program created a two-year sequence, Writing Studios 1 and 2 (WRT 105 and 205), required by most schools and colleges, while offering two upper-division courses. Recently, the writing program has reformed and expanded its upper-division curriculum, including four studio courses and four content electives, which give students the opportunity to investigate the kinds of writing done in the workplace and community and to explore writing and rhetoric as it pertains to technology, identity, and literacy. The program has therefore achieved its original goal to have course offerings available at all levels, so that an interested student could take writing classes throughout his or her four years at Syracuse.

The Writing Program also administers a campus writing center staffed by professional writing consultants (although a small number of peer consultants also tutor in the center). Even though the writing center has always been a part of the Writing Program, it has recently become “very visible” on campus, according to Plvan, Saldo, and Wagner. The open physical structure and location of the writing center, which is housed in a glassed-in building in the middle of an academic quad, gives it a “real presence” on campus. At the inception of the Writing Program, when the program lacked space for a writing center, the director created a new teaching role of “writing consultant” and invited the teaching staff to explore its possibilities inventively in various forms of “consultative teaching.” Many teachers have since rotated through this role as part of their teaching loads, forming a corps of experienced consultants, who developed an array of extracurricular services. Such services include not only one-on-one tutoring for individual students, but also consultative teaching and professional development for faculty, teaching assistants, student groups, and other disciplines, carried out in classrooms, computer clusters, and sites across campus, as well as through interdisciplinary projects. Undergraduate peer writing consultants, trained in a practicum course, later joined the consulting staff. These functions are now being centralized and reimaged in the new writing center.

The Writing Program’s courses have always been taught by part-time, professional writing instructors, teaching assistants (until recently, drawn largely from the Department of English), and full-time, tenured and tenure-track faculty. In recent years, with the establishment of a doctoral program in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric (CCR), there has been an influx of graduate teaching assistants, who are wholly invested in the program’s activities.

To discuss the benefits and drawbacks to the program’s status as an independent unit, we have gathered the views of experienced staff members and the personal perspectives of several faculty administrators, past and present. The following points represent a range of perspectives about the Writing Program, expressed by Plvan, Saldo, Wagner, Eileen Schell (a recently tenured faculty member of the program as well as the director of graduate studies) and Louise Wetherbee Phelps (professor and founding director of the Writing Program). As their administrative responsibilities and histories within the program are very different, each staff and faculty member articulated different benefits of the program’s status as an independent unit.

A hiring process aimed at finding the best teachers for undergraduates has been established. The program is in charge of all program-related personnel decisions. There is an established process for hiring graduate teaching assistants and part-time professional writing instructors: applicants must submit teaching statements along with evidence of their other qualifications. The English department's and CCR program's graduate committees recommend graduate students for positions in the Writing Program, but the Writing Program's director has final approval for awarding such assistantships.

An independent budget allows full-time staff to help administer the Writing Program. The three staff members we interviewed work with the Writing Program in a number of ways. As the assistant director of the Writing Program, Faith Plvan oversees the professional development of instructors in the program. Among her many duties, she coordinates both online and face-to-face discussion and teaching groups and organizes two teaching conferences a year. As the program's financial coordinator, Deborah Saldo works with every aspect of the program's budget. Beth Wagner works to schedule teachers and classes and handles registration and grading issues related to the program. Two administrative staff meetings a month are held to oversee the smooth functioning of the program and a very large teaching community; the Writing Program currently includes eleven full-time faculty, fifty-one teaching assistants, and forty-three professional-writing instructors. Over half of the administrative staff teaches in the program.

The program has attained a respected position within the campus community. Phelps believes that the program is more visible and better able to function effectively on campus because it is situated as a department in arts and sciences and reports directly to its dean. Within that framework, it exercises autonomy in budget, hiring, and curricular decisions. Its departmental status, tenure-track scholarly faculty, discipline-based curriculum, and now the doctoral program have opened the way to playing a role alongside other academic units in the intellectual life of the college and campus.

There exists a commitment to viewing the work of the Writing Program as scholarship. Because the tenure-track faculty within the program are invested in producing scholarship in composition studies, rhetoric, and literacy, because part-time faculty practice teaching as a form of scholarship, and because the doctoral students in the CCR program also share these scholarly commitments, the Writing Program is able to foster and benefit from a sense of teaching as scholarship. Eileen Schell cites this focus on

making knowledge in the classroom as the primary benefit of being an independent writing program: there is a focus on truly understanding students and student writing and an assumption about teaching writing that is not based on a deficit model. Students are not in a writing class to be “fixed,” purged of bad writing habits. Rather, the focus of teaching and scholarship within the Writing Program is based on a fundamental respect for all writers. Schell believes this concentrated focus on the professional and intellectual issues of writing and language can, at times, be lost if writing is housed within another department (such as English).

The ambiguity of being both a program and a department gives the Writing Program flexibility. Phelps believes there are advantages to keeping the ambiguity between a program and a department that arose from the unit’s historical evolution and mission. She argues that the Writing Program can operate on multiple levels in these two modes. The programmatic nature of the unit allows for a focused mission that has encouraged the formation of a teaching community out of a diverse group of instructors. The departmental status gives the faculty a voice in campus governance, control over the tenure and promotion process, and membership in the research community. She thinks that at a research institution like Syracuse, only a unit with a tenure-track faculty can “have full access to all that the university offers and be part of the academic mainstream.” She sees the Writing Program as having the potential to work with colleagues across the institution “to help students make sense of their undergraduate education.”

The Writing Program is positioned to make significant contributions to the field. According to Phelps, the unique structure of Syracuse’s program provides one strong model—not the only one—for how rhetoric and composition can work in the university structure. It also increases the visibility of the discipline because it has attained departmental status and a doctoral program at a private research university. When instructors who teach in the undergraduate curriculum leave (whether they be graduates of the doctoral program, professional-writing instructors, or teaching assistants from other departments), they take with them “the customs of being part of a teaching community and the practice of talking and writing about their teaching,” which contributes to the culture at their new institution. Finally, Phelps sees the doctoral program as having real potential to influence the field because it “strategically focuses” on composition as a discipline through a very diverse group of scholars.

Phelps and Schell, who frequently collaborate with each other, expressed different personal views regarding potential drawbacks to housing writing within an independent unit.

A smaller, more focused tenure-track faculty makes for fewer cross-overs among the many fields of English and can reduce the power that collective bargaining of a large faculty can enjoy. Schell herself completed her Ph.D. in English with a concentration in rhetoric and composition. She has come to value and enjoy talking with colleagues in literature and theory whose professional interests intersect with hers. As a faculty member in a writing program, she must work harder to maintain those professional ties with members of the English department. As the director of graduate studies, Schell is also concerned that CCR doctoral students may not be completely prepared to work in English departments. She and other faculty—and the doctoral students themselves—are always conscious of the fact that the majority of CCR program graduates will work in English departments and will need to be prepared to interact with (and present tenure cases to) fellow colleagues who may not understand their work. Although, within the program, the formation of an intellectual community focused on writing and language is a very positive element of being a stand-alone unit, the novelty of writing as separate from English can be confusing to people outside of the program. Many people—students and faculty alike—do not understand why writing should be separated from English.

Phelps, however, doesn't believe "that composition and rhetoric is intrinsically part of English Studies"; rather it is an "interdisciplinary mélange" with roots in several different fields, and it was "a historical accident" that it was located with literary study in English departments. She thinks that its relations to the many parts of English studies remain conceptually and politically important, but not exclusively so. She also explained that by being separate from English, the unique needs of the writing program are not subordinated to competing concerns and needs of a large English department.

Separating from English departments does not mean that the resulting Writing Program will be free of the same "problems" facing composition within English departments. One of Schell's own scholarly interests is the position of part-time faculty within composition programs. By separating into a freestanding department, the working conditions for part-time faculty are still an issue. Moreover, with the addition of the CCR doctoral program in 1997, there have been other tensions that have arisen, as yet

another constituency was added to part-timers, tenured/tenure-track faculty, and English department graduate TAs.

Tensions exist between the benefits that are associated with being independent and maintaining our non-traditional disciplinary features. Phelps explained that in working to fit within the traditional expectations of a discipline and department in a research university, there has been a struggle to maintain the nontraditional aspects that we value in composition, such as an emphasis on teaching and the scholarship of teaching.

What is clear from our discussions with Plvan, Saldo, Wagner, Phelps, and Schell is that the writing program is still changing. Rebecca Moore Howard, the current director, plans to continue developing the Writing Program in four key areas, according to Plvan, Saldo, and Wagner:

- coordinating the program with the American rhetoric and African American studies programs
- sponsoring a diversity speakers series;
- recruiting more minority faculty; and
- developing support for non-native teaching assistants.

The features that most distinguish the Writing Program at Syracuse from the Expository Writing Program at Harvard are the inclusion of a doctoral program dedicated to composition and rhetoric and the tenured/tenure-track faculty. The CCR program, according to Schell, shifted the culture of the unit. There is certainly the addition of another constituency—that of graduate students—vying for resources and recognition within the department, and that has been a complication. Doctoral students “pass through” the program in four years. The professional-writing instructors often stay much longer and are concerned that their teaching assignments will shift as the program attempts to give doctoral students the opportunity to teach a variety of courses and take administrative roles within the program. At the same time, beneficial partnerships have emerged among the different constituencies around programmatic and curricular projects like the new upper-division writing curriculum, which was recently revised, and the service-learning collective, which is a group of faculty, graduate students, and professional writing instructors.

The Syracuse Writing Program has had a long history of forming a community of scholars and writers dedicated to the study of language, learning, and literacy; the establishment of the doctoral program continues the development of that community in a new direction.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although the results of our exploratory study indicated that there has been an increase in the number of independent writing units in these research universities, it doesn't mean that composition studies is becoming more of a mainstream academic discipline. The fact that most of the independent units are programs, employing contingent labor, with an emphasis on teaching, seems to locate them outside the primary mission of their institution. Thomas Miller articulated this recently in an electronic discussion:

A political reality check: the "elite" universities that have been cited in this context—Duke, Princeton, Cornell, etc—have writing programs that are basic service units, right? None is connected to an English or another academic unit that has a research mission or is in other ways connected to the intellectual work that is generally identified with that mission, right? The units tend to be run by non-tenure-track administrators, and the courses are taught by adjuncts or grad students, and in the latter case there is far less relationship between that teaching and the grad students' other work than there might be if the teaching was done in their own departments, right? (2001)

Katy Gottschalk, director of Cornell's independent, interdisciplinary writing program, responded that

locating the teaching of writing outside the traditional structure of an academic department doesn't relegate it to second-class status. An independent writing program that draws its major resources (faculty and courses) from a wide range of disciplines can play a significant role in fostering the attitude that teaching of writing is the responsibility of the college or university, not just one department . . . So the Knight Institute has benefited, I believe, from having been separated, administratively, from the English Department back in 1982, because it is now more than ever part of over 30 departments who think of their writing seminars and writing in the majors courses as very much their own curricula. (2001)

In her response, Gottschalk doesn't address Miller's critique that these types of programs are not part of the knowledge-making structure of the university. In the excerpt above, Miller is not criticizing the teaching of writing that these programs do, but rather, questioning how they participate in the scholarly community as producers of academic knowledge. In other words, Miller highlights the marginal position that independent programs occupy at research universities when they are outside the research agenda that distinguishes these universities from other post-secondary institutions. And, although Gottschalk detailed the quality,

professionalism, and status of instructors in Cornell's first-year seminars (and Rebecca Howard from Syracuse University testified to it), most instructors of freestanding composition programs are non-tenure-track, according to a recent survey conducted by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (in conjunction with the Coalition on the Academic Workforce). In fact, freestanding composition programs have the lowest percent of tenured/tenure-track instructors out of all the academic fields participating in the survey:

Composition programs, and English departments, which teach large numbers of required introductory writing courses, have the smallest proportion of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members. Freestanding composition programs (those outside of English departments) report that only 14.6 percent of their teaching staff is full-time tenured and tenure-track, while English departments report that 36.3 % of the faculty is full-time tenured and tenure track. (Coalition on the Academic Workforce)

Although this survey is not specific to AAU institutions, it does accurately represent what we found, especially at Harvard and Syracuse. Harvard's program has no tenured/tenure-track faculty, and while Syracuse does have ten tenure lines (and one joint line), most of the writing studios are taught by graduate students. In both of these programs, however, there are composition scholars making substantial contributions to the field of composition studies (Sommers at Harvard and Phelps, Howard, Schell, and others at Syracuse) even if the majority of teachers aren't. Richard E. Miller sees this situation as part of the corporatization of the university, in which adjunct and graduate student labor is increasingly responsible for moving students through the first two years of coursework and where most people earning a Ph.D. in composition and rhetoric will be required to manage a writing program—performing such managerial tasks as overseeing labor, interacting diplomatically with chairs and deans, handling budgetary concerns, and writing grant proposals (1999, 98–99). Miller argues that writing programs should embrace their service role by staffing their courses with instructors who “demonstrate a commitment to learning how to read and respond to student work with care, to assisting in the revisionary process, and to applying local assessment practices evenly” (102). Instead of advocating that all courses need to be taught by tenured/tenure-track Ph.D.'s in composition and rhetoric (in other words, certified knowledge-makers), Miller contends that we should focus on improving the material conditions of the instructors. The traditional structure of the university, according to

Miller's argument, is already breaking down, and composition is positioned to take advantage of the corporate structure—much as Sommers seems to have done at Harvard. He explains that

it is a mistake to abandon the ethic of service that defines the field in the hope that doing so will bring about broader respect for the intellectual work done in the discipline. While it is certainly true that composition can replicate the very kinds of research that one finds being pursued in other disciplines . . . the record shows quite clearly that work of this kind, no matter how skillfully executed, is generally judged to be derivative by those not involved with writing instruction. . . . in attempting to achieve the signs of disciplinary success that accrued in the past to those who labored in the University of Culture, composition will be preparing itself only to live in some bygone era, when no one questioned the merits of researching the history of the paragraph or of building a superconducting supercollider. In the University of Excellence, however, all research projects, from the use of the comma to the makeup of subatomic particles, are increasingly scrutinized, assessed and frequently funded on the basis of their utility—on the basis, in other words, of the service they perform for society. (103–4)

As Miller argues, composition can be a preeminent force in the future if it embraces the new university structure and capitalizes on its service mission. Miller's colleague at Rutgers, Kurt Spellmeyer, makes a similar point, arguing that writing programs' marginal status affords opportunities to make a real difference in students'—and by extension the community's—lives. According to Spellmeyer, in all of their classes, students are required to “play a familiar and enervating role—as dutiful consumers of expert knowledge.” But, he continues, “Only in writing class, so far as I know, might they [students] have the chance to discover what it feels like to be the maker of one's own truth, the maker of one's own life” (180). If we give up our marginal position in pursuit of traditional notions of disciplinarity, argues Spellmeyer, we run the risk of reproducing the same structures and values as other disciplines. Sledd also endorses a rejection of the traditional disciplinary rewards in favor of strengthening the commitment to serving students and improving the working conditions for teachers and learners. He proposes abolishing rank and tenure, forming militant unions that include faculty and staff, and “serious teaching of general purpose prose” instead of continuing “compositionists' struggle for upward mobility in the academic pecking order” (2000, 11). In short, Sledd, Spellmeyer, and Richard E.

Miller advocate resisting the seduction of traditional disciplinary trappings in favor of the potential inherent in working with students and working to improve the conditions for teaching and learning.⁴

In response to the initial question that Hartzog posed and that we have pursued, “Is it possible to do substantial work in this field—and earn traditional academic rewards for that work?” (x) the answer seem to be “It depends.” At Syracuse several professionals are indeed reaping traditional academic rewards—tenure, promotion, graduate programs and courses—but in many other places, such as Harvard, they are not, which in itself might not be a bad thing, according to Spellmeyer and Miller. If the university is changing, as many people argue, focusing on traditional academic rewards may not best serve compositionists or their students.

NOTES

1. We are most interested in the administrative structures of writing programs at these institutions. In her “Administrative Structures” chapter, Hartzog reports that four universities, out of the forty-one who responded to her question about the administrative home of English composition, had independent writing programs: (1) Harvard University’s Program in Expository Writing, (2) the University of Minnesota’s Program in Composition and Communication on the Minneapolis campus and the Department of Rhetoric on the St. Paul campus, (3) Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Writing Program, and 4) the University of Southern California’s Freshman Writing Program (14). She also noted that the University of Texas at Austin had just formed the Division of Rhetoric, which split the writing program from the English department, but, as Hartzog explains, they did not participate in her study. She also noted that there were many programs not housed within English departments. For example, at the University of California, San Diego, independent writing programs exist in each of the university’s four residential colleges (14). At twelve institutions, including the University of California-Berkeley, Michigan State, the University of Iowa, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, more than one unit was responsible for coordinating composition (15). Over twenty universities, however, identified the English department as the unit responsible for instruction in composition, with great variation in the structures of these programs (14).

2. Although we are pleased with the response rate, we realize that mitigating factors may have decreased the number of responses we received: (1) We were not always sure to whom the survey should be sent. Because writing program structures vary greatly from institution to institution and because a writing program's administration can change from year to year, we often could not find a name associated with the writing program through a university catalog or website. In these cases, we sent survey questions to the chair of the English department, the director of the campus writing center, or the head of the arts and sciences (or humanities) division—whoever *seemed* to be someone who either administered writing courses or worked closely with the writing program director. (2) Although email is an efficient and inexpensive method of administering a survey, it may not yield as strong a response rate as telephone surveys or even mass mailings. (3) WPAs or department chairs may choose not to participate in such a study for fear of being identified in an article that portrays their schools or writing programs in a negative light. (4) It is certainly not our intention to point out “bad models” of writing programs or critique structures or curricula in place at specific universities, but the people who received our email inquiry may have felt some anxiety about releasing information about their program to researchers they did not know personally. As the results of our survey indicate, the WPAs at some universities are untenured or not on the tenure track. Therefore, they may be especially concerned about participating in a survey without knowing exactly how the results would be used.
3. Kitzhaber argued that although Eliot did succeed in making English the language of learning, Harvard's composition program—and more specifically A. S. Hill—overall had a negative influence on writing instruction during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kitzhaber, Donald Stewart, and other historians conclude that Harvard's program and its people reduced writing instruction to a concern for mechanical and superficial correctness promoting a fixation with error, dissociated writing instruction from the meaningful social context, and contributed to the split between composition and literature and the subsequent privileging of literary scholarship and teaching.
4. Of course, all of these are speaking from a position of privilege as tenured faculty—or in the case of Sledd, emeritus faculty—at prestigious research universities; this fact does not discount their arguments, but does need to be acknowledged.

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

1. What unit (or units) directs or administers most of the writing classes on your campus?
2. List all the courses and programs administered by this unit and the approximate number of sections taught of each per academic year.
3. Who administers the unit and what is his or her academic degree, area(s) of expertise and professional rank? If tenured, what department is the administrator(s) tenured in?
4. What is the administrative structure of this unit? Is it a department, program, interdisciplinary center, or some other kind of unit?
5. Who teaches most of the courses within that unit (TAs, adjuncts, full-time instructors, tenure-track faculty)? What kind of preparation/education do those teachers have or receive?
Who makes decisions about hiring and teaching assignments?
6. What is the mission or philosophy of your writing program?
7. Who (or what university agency) does the unit report to?
8. Who allocates the funding for the unit and who controls the budget?
9. If your writing program is a stand-alone unit (not part of another academic unit), how long has it been independent?
Why is it a stand-alone unit?
What factors have influenced the development of this unit's administrative and operating structure?
10. Name, title, and email address of person completing this survey.
11. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up phone interview? If so, please include your telephone number.

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX B

List of the members of the Association of American Universities

Brandeis University	University of California, Davis
Brown University	University of California, Irvine
California Institute of Technology	University of California, Los Angeles
Carnegie Mellon University	University of California, San Diego
Case Western Reserve University	University of California, Santa Barbara
The Catholic University of America	University of Chicago
Columbia University	University of Colorado, Boulder
Cornell University	University of Florida
Duke University	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Emory University	University of Iowa
Harvard University	University of Kansas
Indiana University	University of Maryland, College Park
Iowa State University	University of Michigan
The Johns Hopkins University	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of Missouri, Columbia
McGill University	University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Michigan State University	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
New York University	University of Oregon
Northwestern University	University of Pennsylvania
The Ohio State University	University of Pittsburgh
The Pennsylvania State University	University of Rochester
Princeton University	University of Southern California
Purdue University	University of Texas, Austin
Rice University	University of Toronto
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	University of Virginia
Stanford University	University of Washington
Syracuse University	The University of Wisconsin, Madison
Tulane University	Vanderbilt University
University of Arizona	Washington University in St. Louis
University at Buffalo-State University of New York	Yale University
University of California, Berkeley	