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NO LONGER DISCOURSE TECHNICIANS

Redefining Place and Purpose in an Independent Canadian Writing Program

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In a recent, often brilliant, reading of the *Rhetoric*, Eugene Garver revisits a central distinction in Aristotle's thinking: the difference between professional and civic rhetorics. Like other noble arts, says Garver, rhetoric has both a given (external) end and guiding (internal) ends. Its given end, persuasion, can be achieved by any professional rhetor with the appropriate technical skills or "know-how"; it doesn't require honesty or breadth of vision. Yet the rhetor whose sole aim is suasive victory will eventually raise doubts about his character, and he may bring disrepute to his entire profession, occupation, or discipline. Indeed, his unethical approach can do even greater damage: it can make suasion itself, and by association the whole art of rhetoric, seem less than noble. Still, it would be a mistake to treat the given end of rhetoric scornfully simply because some practitioners abuse the art. The failing of the fast-buck lawyer—his ignobility, if you like—is not that he concerns himself with persuasion, but that he concentrates on it exclusively. By contrast, Aristotle's civic rhetorician never makes persuasion an end in itself. Guided as much by rhetoric's "internal standards of completion and perfection" (Garver 28) as by its given ends, he practices his art responsibly, aware that his rhetorical choices will have consequences not only for himself but also for his auditors and for the community they both inhabit.

The relevance of Aristotle's ancient distinction may seem obscure in an anthology such as this, focused as it is on narratives about contemporary writing programs. Yet in the process of articulating our story of the University of Winnipeg's Centre for Academic Writing (CAW), the authors have come to see the distinction as something of a touchstone and guide, useful in our dual roles as narrators of a program's past and as actors in its ongoing present. Like the histories of many writing programs,

the history of CAW has largely been played out from the margins. It has been a story about trying, simultaneously, to accommodate colleagues and administrators who misunderstood our work, to convince them that we deserve a place in the academy and in our institution, and to become a better program according to the “internal standards” of our discipline. During the course of these efforts, CAW faculty have certainly engaged in acts of professional rhetoric, as academics fighting territorial battles must. But what has been more important than any particular act of persuasion, we see in retrospect, is the sense of purpose that directed our efforts to create a stronger program. We were determined not to become what others seemed to think we should, mere discourse technicians or, worse, tenured remediators. That sort of profile and program—the stereotype held by those who see writing as a basic skill, unworthy of academic research—is one that every writing teacher resists, whether she considers herself a compositionist or a rhetorician. What we were not so clear about was how to define ourselves otherwise and how to make the alternative a reality. This is how Aristotle helps us. His distinction between civic and professional rhetoric reminds us not only of what we want to avoid becoming but of what we want to be.¹

The following narrative is in two parts, punctuated by occasional returns to Aristotle. In the first, we recount the process by which our program, originally situated in the English department, became an independent center, and we explain how CAW faculty dealt with and continue to deal with some of the difficulties resulting from separation.² The second part then describes our recent successes, focusing particularly on our role in the development of a new joint communications program but also outlining our plans for still further development.

At times, we realize, the narrative may suggest that CAW faculty knew precisely what we wanted and how to get there or that we were always aware of the distinction between professional and civic rhetoric and conducted ourselves accordingly. Such implications are quite unintended. The fact is that we often fumbled along, trying to win small battles, sometimes with anything but rhetoric’s internal standards of completion and perfection foremost in our minds. Even now, as far as we know, the authors of this article are the only CAW faculty to speak of the program’s goals and practices in terms of “civic” and “professional.” Yet something like a sense of civic rhetoric—we thought of it as a vision of what “the best” writing program should be, for our students, for our institution, for ourselves, and for our discipline—has, we believe, motivated many of our

faculty's efforts and been responsible for the continual improvement in our public profile.

WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE GOT HERE

The University of Winnipeg is an undergraduate liberal arts institution (seventy-five hundred students) located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, a city of about 650,000 that also includes a larger research university. Its Writing Program, as the current Centre for Academic Writing was first called, was established in 1987 as a subdivision of the English department, mandated to meet the needs of the university's heterogeneous population of first-year students, many of them considered academically at risk. At first, a faculty of eight full-time instructors taught only two courses (both of them collaboratively designed and based on predominantly expressivist assumptions); but by 1992, several upper-level rhetoric courses had been designed and three tenure-track assistant professors had been hired. (We would remain a faculty of eleven, but our proportions would gradually shift to our present balance of four instructors, three assistant professors, and four associate professors.) To our delight, the program was even beginning to garner national attention. According to Canada's most popular news magazine, *Maclean's*, "Winnipeg's *writing-skills* program for entering students ha[d] become a model for universities across the country" (78, emphasis added).³

In the same year, however, a review of the program exposed increasingly serious theoretical differences about writing pedagogy.⁴ The very possibility of such differences, much less the expression and resolution of them, had been suppressed by our administrative structure; as our external reviewers would note, "[A] system of governance designed for flexibility [had] become rigid" (Paré and Segal 7). Both the internal and external sets of reviewers therefore agreed on the need for administrative change. Both recommended autonomy. But it was indicative of attitudes within the university that our internal reviewers recommended we become a center rather than a department. The recommendation seemed to be based on concerns about empire building, fear that upper-level courses would proliferate at the expense of our first-year mandate. Further and quite different "status" concerns were strongly implied by the language of their report. Program faculty should, it said, "focus on the expressive, stylistic and technical aspects of the writing" and "disciplinary faculty [should] concentrate on the disciplinary content" (De Long et al. 35). With such language, the internal report formalized what program

faculty had long suspected: that our colleagues saw us as discourse technicians rather than full-fledged academics with subject matter of their own. The external committee, on the other hand, seemed to assume that departmental status was appropriate, perhaps because they understood that an emerging discipline such as ours could ill afford to be treated differently from other disciplines.

This disagreement over whether we should become a center or a department marked a pivotal point in our history. At stake was not only our institutional status but also, we now realize, our pedagogical function in the university—in other words, whether we were to remain discourse technicians or have the opportunity to become something more. No one understood this fully at the time, of course, at least not in these terms. Relieved by the Internal Review Committee's well-meant efforts to remove some of the conditions that had made us second-class academics, pleased that both committees recommended independence, we failed to see what now seems obvious: without departmental status, we would be less free to pursue rhetoric's own guiding ends, that is, the standards of our discipline, but would instead be compelled by institutional restraints to concentrate on utility, to focus on what nonrhetoricians think writing is and how it should be taught, and to adjust our courses to the ends of other disciplines. We were in danger of becoming professional rhetors, always persuading, compromising, and accommodating, rather than rhetoricians who could follow their discipline's internal standards.

In 1995, more immediate dangers occupied our attention. It did not take us long after separation from the English department to discover just how vulnerable a new academic unit can be, especially when it lacks the prestige of a strong and *known* disciplinary tradition, as is the case with composition and rhetoric (especially in Canadian universities). Within months of becoming independent, CAW submitted its first tenure applications to the university's Faculty Personnel Committee, a little uncertain of the politics involved but confident that our own personnel committee had done all it could in giving both candidates strong, unanimous recommendations. We had not, however, anticipated the consequences of having no senior faculty, no one with enough institutional clout to counteract the Faculty Personnel Committee's emphasis on traditional research. We were quickly, and painfully, taught a political lesson (as many compositionists before us have been).⁵ The candidates did ultimately receive tenure, but only after a great deal of lobbying from our director and from such senior, respected faculty as the dean, the

chair of the English department, and the university's grievance officer. Not long after, we faced another obstacle—though admittedly one far less traumatic in its impact and not at all political in its origins—when a sabbatical application encountered difficulties with the university's Research Leave Committee. The reason for the difficulties was clear: not one member of CAW's personnel committee, which had given its stamp of approval, had had experience with the standards and procedures of the university's committee for judging such applications.

The lack of senior faculty also retarded our progress with committee work. We had been right to see the elimination of our committee service to the English department as an advantage of separation (we now carried a single committee load), but it was one that would not be realized for at least a year or two, because the administrative learning curve was so steep. Where once we had been members of committees guided by experienced faculty, we were now forced to do everything on our own as we got our committees up and running. Moreover, since half of CAW faculty were at this time still instructors, neither required to do research nor allowed to sit on major university-level committees, the bulk of the work fell on the shoulders of the very people who needed more time to do research. Yet another complication was that few CAW faculty had graduate training in rhetoric and composition, so our committees wasted time struggling to find common terms and concepts as we discussed internal issues. Even fewer faculty could speak from experience about the unspoken institutional requirements for achieving tenure and promotion or about the labyrinthine processes of guiding a curriculum proposal through the university's various planning committees.

That we were a new academic unit staffed with junior faculty was not something that we could alter immediately or by sheer effort. But what we could and must do, several of us realized, was to expand our first-hand experience of the institution's protocols and politics as quickly as possible. Not only would such insider knowledge make us less vulnerable to the tacit norms of important committees, it might also give CAW a higher profile within the university and confer at least some of the advantages associated with seniority. We began to nominate one another for service on those standing committees that might have the greatest impact on our operations and/or that might give us the broadest perspective on the workings of the university: Personnel, Curriculum, Research Leave, Academic Standards. When the opportunity arose for our director to serve on other ad hoc or senate committees that might

“teach us” something—a committee on Prior Learning Assessment, a committee to select a new university president, and, subsequently, the new president’s committee on enrollment strategies—she did so. (Indeed, the election of our director to the Presidential Search Committee was in itself a clear indication that our status was improving.) One of our faculty became the university’s grievance officer.

Many readers will see little that is unusual in all of this. Administrative service is, after all, a given in the life of an academic; and few directors of any program would turn down the opportunity to help choose a new university president. But what made our voluntarism special was the context in which it occurred. In addition to managing the heavy teaching and marking loads normally faced by compositionists, CAW faculty had just come through an extraordinarily time-consuming review and were still climbing a steep learning curve; the time available to research and publish was therefore still very limited. Yet time for research and publication had been one goal of separation, and we had learned by experience that publication was what the university’s traditionalist personnel committee demanded. Committee voluntarism therefore involved risk: gaining procedural knowledge that would, for example, obviate difficulties in promotion might mean sacrificing the time needed to strengthen *curricula vitae*.

All the same, we made the commitment. Indeed, we did more. When the opportunity arose to write reports or to serve on editing subcommittees, we did so, because such work showed our colleagues from other departments what we could do. Academics generally assume, unless given strong evidence to the contrary, that the historian can “do history,” the mathematician “do math,” and the philosopher reason well; and they assume, moreover, that these things are worth doing. On the other hand, writing teachers know from personal experience and disciplinary lore that other academics don’t always make these assumptions about what we do. We are often seen as marginal members of the academy, neophytes who must justify our place and demonstrate our expertise. One can rue or rebel against this fact, or one can work with it. We chose (or perhaps, guided by political instincts, eased towards) the latter path, and we have not regretted it. Indeed, working with the stubborn facts of our status over the last five years has altered them more than we could have imagined was possible. Demonstrating our ability to define a rhetorical problem or to revise a report or to distinguish among degrees of mechanical error has given us a certain cachet among our colleagues. Much remains a mystery to them—how we improve our students’ writing without concentrating on

“grammar” and what we mean by and do with “rhetoric”—but they have at least acknowledged that we “do” some things well and have accordingly given us *some* degree of academic respect.

Admittedly, we were casting ourselves as discourse technicians, but in this case the role has been well worth playing. Performing as technicians on committees will in no way bind us more tightly to a technical curriculum. Indeed, in pursuing the given end of rhetoric by appealing to what is valued by our colleagues, we have persuaded them of our worth; we have improved our ethos and elicited an attitude of assent, smoothing the path for the kind of program *we* value—a broader, more rhetorically based curriculum. We could therefore argue that, in our committee efforts, we have not only acted professionally but also been guided by our civic sense of what is right by the standards of our discipline and of what is good for the community.

Improvement in our institutional status probably owed as much to the very fact of independence as it did to our committee voluntarism. Placement within the English department had created some damaging misperceptions about the writing program’s philosophy and pedagogy. Our courses were never belletristic, as colleagues from other departments seemed to assume, but many sections were firmly rooted in the expressive paradigm. From the point of view of physicists and geographers and sociologists who were dismayed by their students’ writing, it all amounted to the same thing: we were encouraging “voice,” concentrating on invention, doing what English professors have long done—teaching a disciplinary way of writing as though it were “the” correct way to write. Granting the program independence strengthened the university’s claim that writing was central in *every* discipline; naming it the Centre for *Academic* Writing and concurrently endorsing our new curriculum, grounded in writing-in-the-disciplines (WID) principles, made the claim a reality.⁶ Colleagues from the natural and social sciences, we soon found, welcomed our questions about their specialized discourses and were not at all xenophobic about the idea of compositionists’ entering their domains.⁷

To the extent that it allowed us to do teaching that calls for and feeds on challenging research, the new curriculum made CAW faculty feel for a time just a little less like discourse technicians. But only a little: although a WID approach opens up exciting opportunities to investigate disciplinary rhetorics, it also places severe constraints on “outsiders.” It is, at best, a chance to work on what Robert Schwegler calls “marginally contestable”

discourse (Shamoon et al. 13). Nevertheless, it was all we had at this stage, since the decision to make us a center rather than a department had left us without the freedom to develop a major. Without this freedom, we would have few conventional opportunities to move beyond the study of academic discourse into the province of civic rhetoric.

MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

Eager for new challenges and lacking conventional avenues, CAW was ready to entertain unusual options. We were primed to think laterally. When an opportunity arose to help construct a combined degree/diploma in communications, to be offered jointly between our university and a local community college, we seized it. Our efforts in this venture, as it turns out, have been doubly rewarding: they have further enhanced our professional status by showing that we can take initiatives and secure advantages for our institution; and they have established a stronger toehold for us as academics—as teachers and scholars whose discipline involves much more than technical expertise in composition.

The idea of joint programs was not a new one for our university. In a province with a small population base, cooperative ventures between local postsecondary institutions made good economic sense. The provincial government certainly favored such partnerships. The University of Winnipeg was particularly well suited to a partnership of this kind; as the smaller of the city's universities, it can adapt more easily to experimentation, and in fact, our colleagues in biology, chemistry, and environmental studies had already developed successful joint programs with Red River College. CAW certainly recognized the political wisdom of linking with an award-winning program highly regarded by local employers, as is the case with Red River's diploma program in creative communications. But acting on such indications was not mere opportunism. We also believed that we could strengthen the program by adding courses with a theoretical and rhetorical perspective, courses that would encourage students to think deliberately, analytically, and critically about the practical skills they were learning to apply in the college's journalism, advertising, and public relations streams. One might say, in short, that we saw collaboration with Red River as a rare opportunity to make apprentice professionals in communications think more like civic rhetoricians.

But there were risks involved. The first, admittedly minor, was to perceptions of our professional competence: what if, having initiated such a project, we failed to design a program that would meet the standards of

the university's senate and of the appropriate government bodies? The models available were, after all, applied scientific programs, which could help us avoid certain logistical problems but were of less use in curriculum and program design. Given that we were stepping up to the plate for the first time, would we be considered minor-leaguers if we struck out, unable to deal with problems solved by our colleagues in the sciences? More important, partnership with an applied program posed a risk to CAW's evolving academic ethos. The science departments that had set up joint programs faced no risk of this sort, possibly because they were well established within the institution and possibly (though of this we, as outsiders, can't be sure) because applied studies have always been an accepted part of scientific disciplines. Those teaching in the humanities, though, view applied programs with some suspicion; the assumption seems to be that a college's narrow vocational orientation undermines the rigor required of an academic program. As a new, unproven academic unit, already vulnerable to misperceptions about the remedial and mechanical dimensions of the instruction it offers, CAW was especially susceptible to these assumptions. Partnership with an applied program might confirm the perception that we are not a real discipline but a service.

We overcame both of these risks in part because we collaborated with our university's English department. Just as membership in the department had once made the Writing Program, if not quite academically respectable, more acceptable to other faculty, CAW's partnership with English now seemed to buffer us and the new Joint Communications Program from traditionalist, ivory tower criticism. Since English, an established humanity, was equally involved, no one could argue that CAW's involvement with an applied program demonstrated that we weren't "real academics." Indeed, during negotiations, CAW proved its worth to the university in unexpected ways, confirming the wisdom of having made us an independent academic unit. With two of its academic stakeholders involved—two stakeholders, moreover, whose members had worked together closely in the past—the university enjoyed much stronger representation. The result was the birth of a cost-efficient program that had immediate public relations value for the university and soon proved popular with students.

Our work on the joint program has helped make the center more than a halfway house for discourse technicians. Our senior courses are flourishing. Two of them, designated as requirements in the program, now have a steady supplemental enrollment; the others, designated as

electives, have a reliable pool of students from which to draw.⁸ These increases come on top of consistently high enrollment in upper-level courses, so high, in fact, that our requests to deliver existing rhetoric courses and our proposals for new courses have been routinely granted. Perhaps the most important benefits from developing the joint program have been those we couldn't have anticipated. For one thing, the appetite for communications courses seems to have grown with the feeding; rather than satisfying demand, as we had expected, the new program has stimulated further interest. Applications have increased each year, as have inquiries, not just from high school students interested in the joint program but from Red River graduates who want to supplement their diplomas and from white-collar workers eager to develop their communicative abilities and upgrade their credentials. This last group is far more likely to come to us than they once were—evidence of the second unexpected benefit of our involvement in the joint program: we now have a strong identity. CAW may offer only a small portion of a degree, but from the students' point of view, we now seem much like other departments. The expanding interest in communications has something to fasten itself to.

As the focus of such enthusiasm, we are now taking the next logical step: an appeal for both departmental status and a major in rhetoric and communications. The most recent draft of our proposed curriculum includes a range of general and specialized writing courses, designed mainly to strengthen students' abilities to generate, revise, and edit text for various audiences. Balanced with these are courses grounded in broader perspectives—in rhetorical criticism, theory, and history, for example, and in literary nonfiction, visual rhetorics, and orality and literacy. The blend, we believe, will meet the given end of rhetoric; we know we have to construct a major that will persuade colleagues and students of its value; and a curriculum that addresses the endemic shortage of strong technical skills will do so (far from abandoning our mandate to first-year students, as colleagues feared, we have extended it). At the same time, this balanced design heeds rhetoric's guiding ends; it keeps faculty from becoming discourse technicians, and it reduces the likelihood that graduates will become fast-buck professionals of the sort described in our introduction. The argument we will make this fall is that such a major would not only draw students but enhance the university's liberal arts focus.

We don't want to paint too rosy a picture of our future—there's no guarantee that we'll attain departmental status or that a rhetoric and

communications degree will materialize—but we are now secure enough within the institution to explore such possibilities with little anxiety about repercussions and even with considerable optimism. We are, in short, doing very well and are gradually becoming the kind of program we would like to be.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It has become common practice to conclude narratives such as this with a few words of advice, offered in the hope that a young, marginalized discipline might strengthen itself by sharing its stories. Such advice is, however, often generalized and carefully qualified, largely because the lessons one learns from the history of one's own writing program are not easily transferable. As Timothy Donovan observes, "no single writing program, no matter how artfully conceived in theory, could survive in practice without being adapted to the given institution" (176). Inevitably, writing programs are a product of local exigencies and conditions.

As Canadians writing for a largely American audience, the authors of this narrative feel a particular need to be cautious about giving advice. Our program has emerged not only from unique local conditions, but also from national traditions quite different from those shared by Americans. First-year composition, for instance, has never been the norm in Canadian universities, a fact that reverberates throughout our history. When the University of Winnipeg set a writing requirement, it provoked some hostility (much of it directed at Writing Program faculty), not because the requirement was a bad idea, but because it was a new idea. Even now, we suspect, the students who resist our mandatory course do so mainly because first-year composition is not embedded in Canadian university culture. At the same time, the absence of program models may have offered CAW more freedom to develop our curricula, as well as more flexibility when the opportunity arrived to redefine ourselves in response to changing circumstances.

With these qualifications in mind, we believe that writing administrators and teachers may benefit from some of the strategies we've used—first instinctively, then more deliberately—to strengthen the Centre for Academic Writing. We would argue, for instance, that administrative voluntarism not only teaches faculty how their institutions operate, but also raises a program's profile and creates good will. Clearly, though, faculty need to be judicious about this service, and not only in terms of how much they take on. Those best suited by temperament and ability for

such service should be encouraged to work on committees with the greatest impact on a program's success; as ambassadors for a program with no clear disciplinary identity, their performance matters as representation of an established department rarely does. Moreover, our experience suggests that writing teachers should, when the opportunity arises to compose or edit a committee report, university calendar copy, or policy statement, voluntarily extend their commitment. Such work does cut into valuable research time and may play into narrow stereotypes about the grammar skills of writing teachers, but our experience suggests that it benefits one's program in the long run. By demonstrating abilities that colleagues appreciate, a persuasive, well-crafted report may win their professional respect. Also important is the fostering of alliances, not just with the English department but with those who may misunderstand the writing program's goals and methods. In addition to widening the constituency of potential supporters for new initiatives, such alliances create opportunities for program faculty to educate colleagues about what we do, how we do it, and why.

To some of our readers, this advice may sound painfully naive. After all, members of our own profession have referred to us, with some justification, as the workhorse of the academy, toiling "tirelessly, selflessly," until "his strength gives out" and he "collapses" (Schuster 1991, 86). To recommend more committee service for people already overloaded with grading and student conferences might well seem perverse. Yet if we are to become, and to be perceived as, more than discourse technicians, we may simply have to make such extra efforts. To return to Garver and the distinction between civic and professional rhetoric: at one point in *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character*, Garver recounts a discussion in Plato's *Laws* of the various demands made on one's character by civil and foreign wars and analogizes rhetoric with war:

[F]or professional rhetoric a professional skill analogous to the courage of a professional warrior is all that is needed, and so one can hire someone else to do the fighting, or pleading. . . . Are there rhetorical situations where hiring a professional to do the job just won't work? A civic rhetoric is one in which more than the external goal is at stake. The audience is not an enemy, and the civic rhetorician must construct a civic relation between himself and his audience. (46)

As writing teachers in the academy, we are not only in the professional business of developing technical skills but also, whether or not we

wish it, in the political business of representing values. We all want opportunities to do more than teach technical skills. Conducting ourselves as civic rhetors—willing to make some compromises for the good of the institution and doing what we can to persuade doubters rather than treating them as the enemy—seems to these authors one satisfying way to create such opportunities.

NOTES

1. In identifying ourselves with civic rhetoric in this way, we were mindful of Charles Schuster's words of caution to those in composition studies: not only should they avoid "the temptation" to conceive of themselves "within narrow, rigid, or oppositional terms," they should also favor "a contested disciplinary definition, one that cannot be satisfactorily located, specified, articulated." On the other hand, Schuster concedes just how "dangerous" such a position is: "the undefinable is often marginalized and misunderstood" (1991, 47).

Though we do believe that identification with civic rhetoric will ensure that our self-definition is both broad and flexible, we do not wish to argue that this identification is some sort of universal panacea for the fields of rhetoric and composition. Indeed, it clearly won't solve all the problems in our own Centre for Academic Writing. Nevertheless, we believe that defining ourselves and our purposes is better than avoiding definition. Schuster's concession about the dangers of the undefinable is what rings truest for us: if we do not define ourselves, we will inevitably be defined by others.

2. A fuller account of this process can be found in the authors' 1997 article, "Negotiated Independence: How a Canadian Writing Program Became a Centre," in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 21: 31–43.
3. All writing teachers reading this, we expect, can readily imagine both our pleasure at being singled out for such recognition and our chagrin at the language in which it was couched, which reinforces the narrowest stereotypes about writing instruction. The problem was one that we have often encountered, within as well as outside the university. Even those who praise us most highly have caricatured us as discourse technicians.
4. Of the range of positions identified by Slevin, the main lines of debate among our faculty were drawn between those who argued "for a freshman curriculum that focuses on expressive writing and the development of students' individual voices" and those who maintained "that

freshman English should afford students a critical perception of the constraints and genuine intellectual possibilities of academic discourse, providing them with the opportunity to use for their own purposes, and not just simulate for the purposes of the institution, the genres of the academy” (1991, *Politics of the Profession*). As Bizzell has noted, such a debate is politically charged, especially when it comes to the needs of students perceived to be “at risk” in an unfamiliar academic environment: “Teaching academic discourse to basic writers has become a particularly sensitive issue because their difficulties with academic writing tend to be a function of the social distance between the academy and their home communities” (64). One of our goals, then, was to move from a “common curriculum” to a program that accommodated divergent, yet deeply held, convictions about writing instruction.

5. See, for instance, Charles Altieri, Edward Corbett, Stephen North, and Charles Schuster.
6. Our offerings now allow students to choose a course that teaches writing in their discipline area (“Academic Writing in the Humanities, Social Sciences, or Natural Sciences”); a writing course linked with introductory courses in departments like biology, environmental studies, or administrative studies; or a more broadly based introduction to the norms of academic discourse (“Academic Writing: Multidisciplinary”).
7. Our statement about the advantages of separation from the English department might be taken to imply that they held us back. In fact, it would be unfair of us not to acknowledge the positive role that the University of Winnipeg’s English department has played in our history. Studies of writing programs are, we know, full of stories of their marginalization within departments of English. (“Literature and Composition: Not Separate but Certainly Unequal,” the title of a chapter in Crowley’s 1998 *Composition in the University*, says it all.) By contrast, it was our good fortune to be members of an English department in which we were treated as near equal.
8. English department courses have almost exactly the same weight as CAW courses in the degree structure, and we have shared responsibilities for administering the program and for advising students. Especially for communications students, but also more generally, these facts in and of themselves mark CAW’s status as a separate unit academically as important as English.