

## INTRODUCTION

*Cautionary Tales about Change*

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This volume, like so many texts, grew out of lived experiences. When the idea for this book took hold, the three of us were working in a newly constructed writing and linguistics department at Georgia Southern University (see Agnew and Dallas, this volume, for more information). Larry was chair of the department (after serving as acting chair), and Angela and Peggy were assistant professors fresh from graduate school. Like the rest of the department, we didn't have any experience working in a freestanding writing unit—most of us had come through English departments and expected to spend our professional lives in English departments—but we were committed to the possibilities we envisioned in a writing department separated from traditions of literature scholarship. As the three of us struggled—along with the rest of the department—to figure out life in a writing department, we looked to the literature about the formation of writing as an academic field to help us define and legitimize ourselves in the campus community. We found a selection of scholarly texts on the disciplinary formation of English and the history and formation of composition studies; however, we didn't find much discussion about stand-alone—i.e., independent—writing departments.

We knew, though, about several stand-alones through informal sources such as conferences, listservs, or an occasional article, but we needed scholarly work. We wanted to learn from others, to resist making the same mistakes others may have made, and to situate our department in the disciplinary field of composition and rhetoric; but it was difficult to find resources—especially scholarly publications, the form of research most valued by the larger campus community. So in the midst of working to build a viable department, we decided to create a book that would collect stories of the formation of independent writing programs—writing programs or departments that are institutionally separated from literary studies and English departments—not only to document various institutional

changes related to composition but also to provide information to others who may find themselves in similar circumstances.

The focus on independent writing programs and departments highlights trends that are distinctly different from other configurations the discipline has taken or might take. A variety of types of institutions—four-year public comprehensive universities, smaller regional colleges, private liberal arts schools, Research I universities—are included. These institutions, in most cases, have only one thing in common: a writing program that is not part of a department but rather stands apart as an independent program or department. Because of this focus, we haven't included stories of writing housed in multidisciplinary departments such as humanities or communications departments, structures not unusual at two-year schools, technical colleges, even small private institutions. While the discoveries and experiences of such multidiscipline departments are also important, we wanted a book that would speak to the unique issues facing composition and rhetoric specialists working in a separate (usually newly formed) disciplinary space devoted exclusively to writing. And we wanted essays that would address the conversations compositionists often hear, even participate in—conversations that are often framed by “what-ifs” and “if-onlys,” in which compositionists imagine professional lives institutionally separate from an English department.

Debates about composition studies' disciplinarity and institutional positioning have long preoccupied composition scholars, whether through conference presentations, scholarly publications, or more informal venues. These conversations can take different forms and draw on different analogies, but all seem to recognize at some level the wrenching apart or the dissolution that separation requires. For example, in the past two years' discussions on Victor Vitanza's moderated *Pre/Text* listserv, some participants have suggested that composition and rhetoric “divorce” from literature departments. The suggestion is by no means new and certainly has legitimate cause in the view of many compositionists. After all, in the early twentieth century Fred Newton Scott formed a separate rhetoric department at the University of Michigan, which was dissolved and absorbed back into the English department upon his retirement. In more recent history, Maxine Hairston, in her 1985 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Chair's Address, called for composition and rhetoric to “establish our psychological and intellectual independence from literary critics who are at the center of power in most English departments” (179). While

Hairston called for intellectual independence only, many writing professionals have found that without structurally separating from English it is impossible to realize the independence that Hairston and others have called for. The decision to relocate, away from literature, has often been seen as an option because of the historical relationship between composition and rhetoric faculty and their English department colleagues. As Theresa Enos has argued, “Survey comments, narratives, and conversations made it clear that we in composition and rhetoric studies face a number of problems that seem unique to our position in English departments” (38). And this position is rooted in the traditions of English departments and in our field’s history with them:

Lower division writing courses in colleges and universities are staffed primarily by women who receive low pay, low prestige, and lessened job security in comparison to their male counterparts. Male writing faculty, however, are affected by factors like salary compression and the undervaluation of a field now considered “feminized.” (vii)

Stories of these conflicts are chronicled in a variety of texts (for example, Haswell and Lu; Roen, Brown, and Enos), and these tensions are also present in the experiences of composition specialists and writing program directors. In the *Pre/Text* discussion (fall 2001), using the metaphor of divorce, participants argued about whether we should split with English or opt for marriage counseling, but as readers of that discussion, we three had a much thicker sense of how complicated the move can be. In such discussions, we as a field need a fuller understanding of what happens when literature and rhetoric and composition are housed in two separate departments.

From our experience in compiling this book and developing a department, we would argue that any “divorce” requires a certain attentiveness, rhetorical savvy, counseling, and models for “how to” avoid simply shacking up with another “oppressor.” Our experiences, and the experiences gathered here, tell us that it’s a matter of family systems, of the local situation, of the institutional system in which one attempts a shift. For example, at Georgia Southern University, the main difficulties emerged in the politics of gaining approval for a major; in hiring, staffing, and other personnel decisions; and in the unique hierarchies and structures of the new department. At other institutions, as readers will see in this text, other concerns have been central. This collection of essays reveals the complications involved in figuring out how to move

towards the possibilities for change. We have learned much in backward glances, in rethinking, in analyzing structures, in deciding which academic structures we wanted to replicate, in figuring out ways around structures we cannot yet replicate; and we have learned from working with other independent writing programs. The labor on this book allowed us to mark our other work and also enabled us to be more thoughtful in our negotiations at the local setting.

But this book also raises important issues that have yet to be settled. In many ways, the independent writing department becomes extremely careful, even conservative, in order to gain acceptance within the larger institution. As many in independent writing departments would like to be creating the department of the future, these moves towards independence often feel like a catch-22 situation. In order to separate and gather creative momentum, independence is necessary; however, independence within the university is illusory; thus the independence requires a caution contradictory to the initial ideals.

Independence, of course, is an ideal that North Americans have often championed; but independence, particularly within the traditional institution of the university, is perhaps a fantasy, as we always function in dependent ways within institutional systems. The concept of independence from literary studies, of somehow emerging out from under the auspices of English studies or literature, demands a discussion about how change occurs. Whether one follows the traditions of English departments and tries to change from within or one ventures outside that particular paradigm, other traditions are often adopted. An independent writing department moves away from literature traditions and then aligns itself with communications, which calls forth another set of traditions; or, an independent writing program announces itself and evokes the traditions of programs and disciplines in formation, such as women's studies programs. If astute, we learn from the experiences of others as we work to form new structures, new traditions, and new identities; but often, having the time and distance necessary for such reflection and research eludes us as we are caught up in immediate events, daily obligations. The essays collected here, then, are not only narratives of change, but also an opportunity for the contributors to reflect and inquire into their local circumstances and to situate the local within a larger community.

The essays, as well as the larger discussion of university-wide change, demand that we ask ourselves hard questions: How should we as writing professionals—with specialties such as professional writing, technical

writing, composition, rhetoric, creative writing, writing center, and writing in the disciplines—respond to and create change in the shifting landscape of the university? How do we define our discipline? How are we positioned in relation to other academic scholars, departments, disciplines? What are our values, our traditions? What do we want for the future? These questions are difficult for any field to address, but our responses seem complicated by our differences. For example, composition and rhetoric professionals have different positions on first-year composition. Some believe it should remain a universal requirement; others campaign for making it an elective. Some believe only trained compositionists should teach it; others argue that the pool of qualified composition teachers should include those from other disciplines. Some believe that first-year composition should introduce students to academic discourse; some argue that it should focus on broader texts; and others think it should be an introductory course to writing in the disciplines. And, of course, in all of these discussions (and more) there are interested, informed compositionists representing a spectrum of positions. As a field, we even debate issues such as the relationship between rhetoric and composition, between literary theory and composition, between “applied” specialties (such as technical and professional writing) and more “theoretical” work (for example, cultural studies). We even disagree on what to call our discipline: composition studies, composition and rhetoric, or rhetoric and composition. We argue about how we should articulate our relations to corporations, which increasingly donate the necessary funds for research and resources. These debates influence others, such as discussions of tenure and how best to create the conditions in which qualified, talented composition and rhetoric scholars routinely gain tenure. All of these differences, however, seem to stem from a desire to create reasonable working conditions as well as the best learning experiences for our students. We have a fundamental hope that our contribution to the university will be valued, that our labor will extend beyond limited and constrained definitions of service. While differences and debates are not new or necessarily bad, they are complicated by the changing nature of the university and higher education, changes that are most noticeably manifest through funding and decision making.

As a field, we are inundated by difficult issues that require action. Identifying these issues is a first step, and readers will see all of these issues surface throughout the essays collected here. The impetus for

change, however, occurs locally, often resulting from institutional crises or conflicts over issues such as funding, staffing, tenure and promotion, curriculum, or administration. How best to address change, how best to act, how best to confront the issues that we face as composition and rhetoric scholars—these procedures remain unclear, as the essays here confirm. Choosing to develop an independent program, instead of a department, can be a matter of local context. In elite institutions, the separation of writing “programs” from literature has a certain agenda that seems different from the formation of separate writing departments (see O’Neill and Schendel). Departments can typically be found at regional institutions or at research institutions where the strategies for staffing first-year composition courses aren’t exclusively controlled by the English department through the funding of English graduate students (for example, see Royer and Gilles; Agnew and Dallas). There are exceptions, however, and we have a small sampling of these types of independent units represented. These programs and departments have much to teach us about the complex issues involved in attempting change, but also, more specifically, about our field’s location within academe and the department’s location within its institution.

Some moves toward independence set in motion a repetition of the familiar structures in the traditional English department, where a few composition specialists oversee a large pool of contingent labor, where only the few senior faculty teach upper-division and graduate courses exclusively. Some programs exist within English departments that have such skewed power relations that the composition and rhetoric professionals have little or no control over administrative, pedagogical, and staffing issues—a situation that compromises the ability to create a viable writing program. To avoid re-creating the dynamics of this type of English department, skillful negotiations are needed among all stakeholders—upper administration, chairs, faculty members—if a full-fledged, free-standing writing department is to emerge. However, the hierarchical structures in the university often limit what can be accomplished when a new group of colleagues is brought in to shape a department or when established faculty have to create new identities outside of English.

Because the formation of independent writing departments is one possibility in the movement toward change, these departments become rich sites for analysis. For example, the essays in this volume demonstrate multiple responses to a need for change: Should the decree come from upper administration as it did at Georgia Southern (Agnew and

Dallas)? Should the movement be one of consensus by both the literature faculty and the writing faculty as it was at Grand Valley State University (Royer and Gilles)? Should we start as a small program and move toward departmental status gradually (Turner and Kearns) or remain a program focused on a limited mission (Rehling)? In institutions just getting established, is it possible to create the ideal (Maid)? Although we want easy answers to how to begin, the situations are complicated and are determined by local variables.

In places such as Hampden-Sydney and Harvard, where programs exist, one sees the complexities of opting for program instead of department status. Harvard's program seems to come from a compromise—no tenure, few permanent positions, limited course offerings (O'Neill and Schendel). Although Harvard's program appears to thrive and Elizabeth Deis, Lowell Frye and Kathy Weese argue that Hampden-Sydney's program fits within the local institutional culture, these programs raise important questions about the decision to split off the core writing courses. Do they thrive because of or despite their marginal status? Only with expertise and financial support present in programs such as Harvard's is it possible to shape a writing curriculum founded on the required first-year course. However, the working conditions at Harvard are troubling. Placed within the institution but not within the familiar framework of tenure, independent writing programs such as Harvard's face complicated issues. Given the limited and constrained histories of composition and the accompanying assumptions about service, this move toward program—rather than departmental—status doesn't seem a change for which to advocate.

In responding to local conditions, then, composition and rhetoric scholars can learn from the experiences chronicled here. If the option is to create an independent program founded on providing the first-year required course, we should consider issues of staffing, workload, promotion and tenure, administration, and institutional support. However, if the option is to create a department, one that can function within the existing structures of the university system, we need to consider not only these same issues but also the ability to develop a vertical curriculum, an undergraduate major or graduate program, as well as the institutional location of the department. Given typical university structures, a department seems to be the better option, but creating a viable department requires the ability to gain administrative support and an awareness of the work required to make change happen in positive and productive ways. Faculty also need

to be realistic about the time line for implementing change and for determining success. Syracuse University's Writing Program has been developing into a full-fledged department since the late 1980s, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's Department of Rhetoric and Writing, which split from English in 1993, already has strong undergraduate and graduate programs in place, while San Diego State University's Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies seems to be still under construction after seven years. Each of these departments had different beginnings determined by the local conditions. However, their experiences, as well as others', highlight several issues that affect the ability of the department to function: the number of faculty who are on tenure tracks and can be promoted to associate/full professors; the number of existing faculty at senior levels; the local institutional culture; and the degree to which upper administration gives concrete support. Complicating the situation even more is the fact that change occurs for most state and private institutions in the midst of shifting finances, goals, or opportunities. Funding and personnel are always in flux; upper-level administration changes; budget priorities vary; and multiple uncontrollable local factors—enrollment, state mandates, and capital projects—fluctuate.

In the midst of such flux, the actual work of creating a department with a major becomes challenging, as questions about curricula can emphasize disciplinary differences among composition and rhetoric specialists. But change can be accomplished and can be positive. The possibilities for community, for new kinds of collaborations, for radical changes in writing instruction, for rearticulations of disciplinary boundaries emerge. New opportunities for research, especially regarding the effect on curricula, pedagogy, and student writing, also surface and can contribute to our disciplinary knowledge. The essays included here also raise powerful questions about where community happens, how it happens, what the boundaries of our field actually are, and how one sets up the situation so that the politics, the financial support, can best address the students' and the faculty's needs. The difficulty, throughout, is figuring a way through the inclinations to replicate the "family systems," the histories established in the traditional literature department, where most composition and rhetoric specialists received their educations. In the midst of disciplinary debates about fundamental concerns, attempting a move away from literature doesn't necessarily create the panacea for which writing specialists long. Nonetheless, the creation of stand-alone writing units—whether programs or departments—provides us with an



opportunity to define ourselves in new ways instead of against literature and literary scholarship. It is a chance to begin new and better academic traditions where we can enact what we value instead of spending our energy defending it.

## CONTENTS

This volume, then, is part of the larger discussion about where writing programs—as well as the composition and rhetoric professionals that staff them—belong in postsecondary institutions. It collects stories and discussions about what happens when a writing faculty or an administration decides to separate from the field of literature or from the English department. While the content includes diverse voices and experiences (from research I and comprehensive state universities and from a Canadian university), we recognize that it is a limited sample of postsecondary institutions. Many different kinds of configurations for departments exist, but we are primarily interested in writing departments that have split off from their English departments and formed some semblance of independence, either as a program or as a department invested in a four-year degree and graduate programs. This kind of focus provides very different information than if we were to look, for example, at two-year colleges, which have very different agendas. Two-year schools, such as community colleges, prepare students to matriculate to a four-year school, and thus the majority of their course and programs focus on general education. Or, two-year schools offer technical training and certification programs that have more narrowly specified curricula. In either case, departments usually offer only lower-level undergraduate courses, and multidisciplinary units are common. Besides the absence of two-year schools, institutions that define themselves as serving the needs of underrepresented groups or minorities, such as historically Black colleges and universities, are also missing from this volume. This is not surprising, however, since we found no stand-alone writing departments in reviewing material from scores of historically Black, Native American, and Hispanic colleges.

While more independent writing programs exist than are represented in this collection, the twelve different institutions described here offer a look at the multifarious routes available. Although many of the essays tell local stories of independent writing programs and departments, we have divided them into three sections: Section I, “Local Scenes: Stories of Independent Writing Programs”; Section II, “Beyond

the Local: Connections among Communities”; and Section III, “The Big Picture: Implications for Composition, English Studies, and Literacy Education.” The first section tells six stories of departments or programs that are independent of literature departments. We decided to start with descriptions from independent writing programs and departments in order to emphasize the differences among institutions and their strategies for gaining independent status. Interestingly, in this first section, we were struck, as we read through the stories, by the enthusiasm and optimism of the authors, even when the situation, as viewed by an outsider, does not seem to warrant such a response. We do not know exactly why the authors opt for this type of spin to their story but there could be many reasons: because they are still at the institution and have a real investment in the program/department, because of the politics of revealing ugly details, or because the experience was actually positive. However, we read this section with an attentiveness to what remains unspoken. For example, the emotional toll—especially to those whose voices aren’t included—may be hard to convey.

The section opens with Dan Royer and Roger Gilles of Grand Valley State University, who use discussions and decisions made in faculty meetings to tell the story of the transformation from a literature-focused department to a separate writing department. They describe a composition community that came to realize the positive implications of staffing composition courses with faculty who wanted to teach and share the labor of writing-intensive classes. While they emphasize the connections they see between their literary and speech communications roots, they also articulate the distinct difference they perceive between their function and English studies traditionally based in literature: “Obviously, writing studies and traditional English studies share quite a bit of common ground. But unlike those in literary studies, who use writing as a way to deepen their primary art of reading, those in writing studies use reading to deepen their primary art of writing.” Their story includes strategies they used to negotiate the changes. In contrast to Royer and Gilles’s story of almost a bottom-up transformation, with faculty making significant moves to establish a separate stand-alone department, Eleanor Agnew and Phyllis Dallas, at Georgia Southern University, explore the consequences when upper administration determines the division between literature and composition faculty. According to Agnew and Dallas, the upper administrators concluded that the Department of Writing and Linguistics would be a welcome addition, and faculty were placed in the

department. Although both Grand Valley and Georgia Southern share similar characteristics in terms of size and population of students and the location of the university within the state system, the local traditions and the participants involved create important contrasts for how independent writing departments can come into being.

The first two stories contribute “start-up” processes, while the third essay, the Metropolitan State University narrative, indicates what can happen once the split has occurred. As Anne Aronson and Craig Hansen suggest, a department separate from literature can imagine and establish alternate interdisciplinary arrangements. Metropolitan State has aligned more with communication studies than with English. While the article discusses the positives, it also raises the larger and important question of how writing is viewed across departments and suggests issues for tenure and promotion. Similar to Metropolitan State, which established a program that emphasizes professional writing, in the next essay Louise Rehling describes the Technical and Professional Writing Program at San Francisco State University, how it emerged separately from the English department, how it handled its initial struggles, and how it currently functions. Questions of tenure and funding become the underlying text within Rehling’s story. She not only tells the history of how the department came into being, but also discusses the economic issues at stake in keeping such a program afloat. A certain number of large courses, taught primarily by adjuncts, affords the hiring of one full-time faculty member, who must also negotiate a department—in which she is the only full-time tenure track member—with the dean’s office. From such a precarious place, Rehling celebrates the successes of the program and raises key concerns.

According to Rehling, her program thrives because it makes its way under the radar, while the rhetoric program at Hampden-Sydney College, described in the essay that follows Rehling’s, succeeds because of its high profile and ubiquity. In this unique program, the experts on writing seem to emerge from every field, with the program administered by the composition faculty, but with input from many departments. Interestingly, Hampden-Sydney’s story articulates some of the tensions that emerge when many voices have input into the program. Service remains the mark of distinction for composition within this program, but service is expanded from preparing students for literature courses to preparing students for a multitude of majors and for writing beyond the academy. Like Hampden-Sydney, the University of Winnipeg has an

independent program, not a department. Brian Turner and Judith Kearns, whose essay closes the section, explicitly discuss the means by which they have moved their colleagues' perceptions away from service and technicians into a broader understanding of the potential for composition and rhetoric studies. They explore the tenure and promotion consequences of participating in a new writing program, and they discuss the pros and cons of program versus department.

Each of these stories in Section I tells of the problems and possibilities for composition studies if we pursue "independence" including the successes and difficulties involved in attempting to create a space in which the full possibilities of the field may emerge, outside the service mentality and the shadow of the literature department. Independence takes on multiple meanings, none of which may accurately reflect individuals' ideals and all of which demonstrate the complexities of attempting to establish a department or program. What these first stories indicate is that change can take multiple routes, and much is dependent on the local traditions, histories, and systems. Authors in the second section, "Beyond the Local: Connections among Communities," contribute their stories as well, creating the opportunity for readers to see seven additional institutions. Besides describing particular stories, authors in this section make a more explicit move to connect their local experiences to larger issues in the field. They contribute theories about what makes for successful moves to independence, what complications arise in those moves, and the difficulties encountered in desiring to mark independence.

The second section opens with Jane Hindman, who describes the move to independence at San Diego State University and reminds idealists who might long for independence of the real dangers of working within the frameworks of late capitalism, where independence is used as a ruse for more labor. Her story reminds us of the tenuous relation faculty have to administrative decisions and of the role established power plays in negotiation within late capitalist cultures. By delineating the enormous work involved in creating an independent writing department (work which, by the way, is typically unfamiliar to tenure and promotion committees), Hindman's essay explores the consequences of signing on to an independent writing structure.

After Hindman brings us into the labor dilemmas, Barry Maid's and Chris Anson's pieces discuss the complications of establishing independence within larger universities. Maid considers the challenges he faced at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and how, in his current post,

he is using those experiences to establish an independent writing department from the ground up. His advice provides us with the kinds of cautionary tales that make us think twice about the desire for independence but that also offer hope as he theorizes about how independence can be shaped. Anson's story also sounds a cautionary note. He describes the fate of the composition and communication program at the University of Minnesota and reminds readers that funding often shapes how learning occurs. In corporate university systems, in which access to institutionalized support depends on numbers of students served, the bread and butter courses of composition are up for contestation. And as a result, the curriculum is also driven by those who gain the power. Anson's story warns us that we should be careful, when creating independent departments, to play within the system in such a way that we establish access to power for those in the writing department/program. He reminds us to be careful about establishing the kinds of structures that fit within the university system.

Anson's tale also acknowledges the profound consequences these power struggles have on students; but Jessica Yood, who earned her Ph.D. from the State University of New York (SUNY) Stony Brook when the writing program was splitting from English, tells the story of her own experience. Her experience emphasizes the effects such splits can have on graduate students who learn in the midst of these turf battles, for they are often the most profoundly affected. For Yood, the battle is marked in her thinking, in her peers' writing, in her sense of "work." Through her experience and research, we discover the effects of shifting values and structures. While there are positive spins, the more troubling consequence of this kind of disruption is that graduate students lose their ability to participate, they hear schizophrenic messages, or they understand that the family system is in disrepair and decide not to contribute their important voices to our discussion.

From San Diego State University, the University of Arkansas, Arizona State University East, the University of Minnesota, and SUNY Stony Brook, we learn about the independence movements at larger—or more comprehensive—institutions from those personally involved in the movement. Peggy O'Neill and Ellen Schendel, on the other hand, add information about an established program (Harvard University) and department (Syracuse University) from an outsider's point of view. After documenting the increase in the number of independent programs in institutions that belong to the Association of American Universities

(AAU), O'Neill and Schendel explore two different manifestations of independence at two universities—Harvard and Syracuse. Each suggests the complications of playing within the university structure and the consequences of choosing the route of program versus department. Where Maid, Hindman, and Yood tell us about the formation of departments, O'Neill and Schendel discuss well established programs and think out the implications of following either model.

Many of the articles address tenure and promotion concerns, and the section ends with Angela Crow's discussion of these issues, especially in deciding to participate in an independent writing program. While all composition faculty need to consider general climate questions, labor issues, and the means of evaluation, scholars who work within independent writing programs, particularly in their infancy, must understand how the general climate may affect the department's or program's ability to meet its goals and support newly hired faculty. In addition, much of the labor that is required to start a program is often not recognized in ways that make it possible for junior and senior faculty to be compared to colleagues across the college and the university, so each department/program must establish the means by which it can protect its faculty.

From reports and discussions of writing units at particular places, the third section turns to a larger discussion of composition and rhetoric's location within the university, with an eye toward the future of the discipline. This section raises questions about the viability of independence as a response to current tensions in the field. Are we, as participants within the university, inevitably doomed to "making theoretical sophistication, specialized expertise, and sheer scholarly output the prime criteria of success" (Connors 1999, 19)? Is an independent writing program simply, to quote Richard E. Miller, "preparing itself only to live in some bygone era" (1999, 103)? Is the move to independence on par with Andrea Lunsford's notion of interdisciplinary centers (Strain 65–66), or is it simply a replication of tired disciplinarity? In other words, is this change foolish for the ways that it inevitably replicates the traditions of the university? Or are independent writing departments more able to address changing conceptions of disciplinarity because they are separated from English departments? Is it possible to create more radical change than we would have heretofore imagined because we are situated outside English departments?

Connors's image of "scholars who embrace their teaching and service as indispensable parts of the world of their research, and [put] scholarly

research in the service of action in colleges and universities” (1999, 20) raises the debates within the field regarding service, teaching, and research. In independent departments, the question remains: what should we be trying to create? The first two sections of this book explore the issues at stake in establishing independent writing departments, the tensions that make for some conservative proposals of identity. While these sections may create a sense of caution in readers, they also may aid them in examining the possibilities for and the consequences of independence by gathering together the voices of different communities and revealing different choices and situations. The third section moves from examining local situations and discussions grounded in particular institutions or issues to looking at the future of composition and rhetoric. Respondents take up the issues, patterns, and questions echoed throughout the first two sections and put them in dialogue with larger concerns of the field. In constructing this section, we deliberately sought scholars who came from varied experiences and specialties but who have established a record of scholarly work in the field. None of them currently work in a stand-alone department, however, and we didn’t know when we invited them if they favored independent writing programs or not. We didn’t want them to champion the independence movement, but rather to offer a critical, thoughtful response to it, not a detailed critique of the individual stories. What we found was that they gave thoughtful advice about how to further shape independent writing programs. We anticipate that programs deciding on independent status might gather the stories, the cautions, and the enthusiasms and integrate the critiques and suggestions of the respondents to create new models of independent writing programs or departments.

One of the issues for a remodeling is the relationship to service. Wendy Bishop, whose essay opens this section, begins by evoking this familiar conversation about divorcing from English by admitting the following: “I was always (and in one chamber of my heart still am) unable to imagine divorce, no matter how hard the marriage so far had been. Finally, I can imagine it—change, separation, divorce,” but then she goes on to raise very important questions that she gathers by comparing her situation to those in the collection. She reminds us that compositionists—and composition programs—are a tricky lot and that uniting “all writing instruction” is extremely complicated. We don’t necessarily make good bedfellows on our own, separated from the literature people. The question of what is lost, what is gained, in the move away leaves us much as many divorces

would, entangled with few easy answers. The move to autonomy threatens issues of tenure, but the decision to stay in English departments also threatens tenure. The impact of a split on adjuncts and graduate students (or the faculty who predominantly teach composition courses) can be devastating, but remaining in an English department can be as well. Despite the worries and hopes, Bishop reminds us that we play within corporate management structures that threaten our ability to pursue the ideals Connors advocates: “scholars who embrace their teaching and service as indispensable parts of the world of their research, and [put] scholarly research in the service of action in colleges and universities” (1999, 20). In the midst of a corporate university climate not prone to rewarding the intertwining of service, research, and teaching, Bishop concludes by suggesting that a knowledge of independent writing department/program experiences gives her fodder for arguing for her own agendas within a structure that as yet has not proven to be sympathetic or adequately supportive of composition and rhetoric. If nothing else, independent writing programs—because they make the very threat of divorce a very real possibility—might be useful to improving the lives of those who live within English departments that are frequently fueled by the first-year composition program. The high cost of divorce might be the only language this corporate partner could understand.

Like Wendy Bishop, Theresa Enos questions the value of splitting from English, and also worries over the role of service. If she were to embrace an independent writing department, one would imagine that it would need to create a different relation to rhetoric than she finds in the descriptions given here. Bishop points out that we have among ourselves adequate diversity that translates into our own conflicts, and Enos highlights one of those areas. The role of rhetoric—a heavier emphasis on theory—she sees as slipping away as the field emphasizes composition and, by extension, for her, service. She sees what is happening to the field at large as replicated in the stories told within this collection of essays: the loss of an emphasis on rhetoric, the needed emphasis on “history, theory, research, and pedagogy—not just text production.” She also worries about the issues that have always concerned her: what our jobs look like (what kind of curriculum); what kind of funding we can gain, particularly if the emphasis remains on service, a traditionally underfunded aspect of universities; what work load senior faculty are assigned; what numbers of senior faculty exist (which help to enable the gaining of funds/resources for a department); what role the independent status has in an individual’s



ability to gain tenure; what impact, on the field at large, these independent writing programs make when they are housed in a particular sector of universities; and finally what impact these independent writing programs will have on graduate study, particularly on the study of rhetoric.

Enos and Bishop raise a mighty voice of concern over changes—in terms of corporate evaluations and in terms of directions the discipline takes. Enos suggests an important cautionary note; if we are not careful in our enthusiasm to build a major, create a viable department, we will lose the very history that makes our research and study possible. To lose rhetoric, in her opinion, is to lose our theories. As if hearing Enos's concerns, Thomas Miller suggests that independent writing programs not lose sight of rhetoric as a means of bringing together the trinity of research, teaching, and service: "Rhetoric's traditional concern for the situated, purposeful, and dialectical dynamics of communication maps out a field of study that can help us reorient ourselves as we move beyond the traditional boundaries of English departments." The study of rhetoric, the tradition of our teaching ("learning by doing"), has the power, according to Miller, to present "a potentially radical critique of the scientism that has dominated higher education in the modern period." The challenge for independent writing departments is to attempt to address the needs of teachers and students in their institutions while at the same time drawing on "the disciplinary trends that are transforming literacy studies." Miller calls for grounding our research in other areas—labor organizing, social movements, state educational systems, and institutional reforms—to help us improve the experiences of faculty and students.

Miller's emphasis on rhetoric, on the work of literacy and learning, and his call to rhetoric become even more challenging if seen through the recommendations of Cynthia Selfe, Gail Hawisher, and Patricia Ericsson. They imagine a model of independence that allows for a radical reorientation to alphabet literacy in the midst of always evolving technologies. If Miller sees the answer in rhetoric, Selfe, Hawisher, and Ericsson remind us to look steadfastly at the future and to create, in the independent writing department, a different relation to print and alphabet literacy. Selfe, Hawisher, and Ericsson begin by suggesting that a "rapid pace of change has been driven—at least in part—by the rise of computers and the linking of institutions, groups, and individuals through an interconnected network of communication technologies." Our emphasis on alphabet literacy, our reticence to address the role of the visual, has meant that our conceptions of composition have remained narrow and, more

troubling, may not actually address the kinds of “writing” our students will need to create. Our inability to accumulate the necessary literacies, they argue, may well result in our inability to be responsive to the needs of the changing audience. How change occurs and how radically we can transform ourselves may have something to do with our traditions; and Selfe, Hawisher, and Ericsson suggest that in the independent writing department, we might just have the location needed to respond more quickly, more fully, to the shifting nature of necessary literacies. They emphasize the future and the role of the visual and the necessity of understanding multimedia contributions to shifting definitions of literacy.

In the midst of these stories of migration out of literature departments, with conventional allegiances established to communications departments and with emphases on technical and professional writing, the respondents in the third section challenge composition and rhetoric theorists to actually imagine independence, to move further outside the traditions, to find other means of hybridity in department formation. Is it possible for independent writing departments to play a more significant role? Could these departments lead the humanities and the discipline in terms of rearticulating what it means to participate in composition and rhetoric? Kurt Spellmeyer believes that they should. According to him, we need more public voices, to connect ourselves with the powerful not the powerless. We need to address change instead of slowing it down, and our knowledge base should be relevant to public situations. “What this means for us as compositionists is that the teaching of writing unconditionally demands a working knowledge of economics, science, politics, history, and any other disciplines impinging on matters of broad public concern.” Spellmeyer, then closes the third section with a notion that separating from English isn’t enough; he challenges us to do more, to break free from the confines of the academy and its traditions.

Selfe, Hawisher, and Ericsson, together with Miller and with Spellmeyer, urge us to move further outside the frames under which we were trained, to expand our imaginary domain so that we participate in the communication age that is already evolving. Our ability to contribute requires even larger leaps away from our traditions, requires new ways of listening, seeing, and writing, new literacies that allow us to do more than participate in the antiquated structures of the university but that demands we contribute to the inevitable shifts already occurring within it. Can we, as independent writing programs, shift our gaze toward the future in such a way that we are able to participate in the university that is emerging?