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Hiring Across the Curriculum

Rebecca Moore Howard
Syracuse University

David J. Hess

Margaret Flanders Darby

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In 1983 Winifred Bryan Horner began her introduction to *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap* with a position statement:

> This book comes out of a deep concern about the widening gulf between research and teaching in literature and research and teaching in composition. Such a separation represents a fracturing of the language discipline that is detrimental to work in both areas, as unproductive as it is unwarranted. (1)

Two years later Maxine Hairston examined the same rift in her Chair's address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Instead of endorsing Horner's proposal to build bridges between composition and literature, however, Hairston took the opposite tack:

> I think that as rhetoricians and writing teachers we will come of age and become autonomous professionals with a discipline of our own only if we can make a psychological break with the literary critics who today dominate the profession of English studies. (273)

Myron Tuman's survey of the situation, published in 1986, gave the battle to the separatists: "Clearly, the historical compromise between composition and literary study that has for some one hundred years defined college English departments is in the process of unraveling. . ." (340).

Tuman's prediction, however, is far from being accomplished. On the contrary, the defense of the literature/composition connection has, if anything, accelerated. In the same year as the publication of Tuman's essay, Leslie E. Moore and Linda H. Peterson advanced "a legitimate rationale for linking writing instruction to the English curriculum" (467). And at the 1989 NTNW Conference on Writing Assessment, when Edward M. White, Harvey S. Wiener, and Michael C. Flanigan were asked where writing programs should be housed, all replied, "the English department."

The debate is still a lively one. Catherine Pastore Blair and Louise Z. Smith have focused it on ownership of writing-across-the-curriculum programs. Smith argues in favor of the literature/WAC union: "faculty in

other departments . . . however well-intentioned, may see composition theory and pedagogy as even more peripheral to their professional interests than do the English department's most 'hermetic' members" ("Why English" 393). Blair counters that the English department should have no special role in WAC programs and that a multi-disciplinary committee should extend shared ownership of writing instruction to faculty across the curriculum ("Only One").

Colgate University has developed a writing program that pioneers yet another possibility: a composition faculty staffed neither by literary critics nor by composition specialists, nor governed by a university-wide committee. The Colgate Interdisciplinary Writing Program has taken a step consonant with, yet new to WAC theory: hiring primary teachers of writing from the disciplines. Some hold their degrees in English and others in the natural and social sciences. They are expert writers and teachers *whose chief teaching responsibility is in composition* and who see themselves as professionals in interdisciplinary writing. Through a strong program of faculty development, all are versed in composition theory. While teaching composition, interdisciplinary core courses, and Freshman Seminars in their own disciplines, these Writing professors work together, exchanging expertise, ideas, and classroom experiences, while easily maintaining the enthusiasm that C.W. Griffin hopes WAC can sustain (403).

When we described the arrangement in a *College English* comment, (see Howard, Hess, and Darby), Blair and Smith each responded with their own criticisms and suggestions but concluded that our arrangement has merit (Blair, "Catherine Pastore Blair Responds"; Smith, "Louise Z. Smith Responds"). In the remainder of this article we will describe a writing program staffed by interdisciplinarians, the historical reasons for the innovation, the benefits accrued, the problems entailed, and recommendations for others who wish to consider interdisciplinary faculty for their own writing programs.

History of the Colgate IWP

In 1982, composition was removed from the Colgate English Department and delegated to adjuncts without departmental affiliation. When in 1984 the University gave the orphan composition courses the title "The Writing Program" and hired a full-time composition specialist, it was nevertheless clear that composition was to continue treading a path separate from English.

In the following year, an interdisciplinary search committee began interviewing candidates for a second full-time position. It quickly became

apparent, though, that while composition was not to be taught in the English Department, neither was it to become a program staffed by composition specialists. The search committee members were wary of the composition specialists who were interviewed; they were concerned that these candidates might not "fit into" a liberal-arts faculty. Instead, the committee advocated hiring someone trained in literature.

At that moment the Writing Program risked becoming, in the eyes of the University, either a band of technicians unsuited to the institution or a "shadow" English department staffed by unfortunates who could not secure jobs teaching literature. Nor was that the only horn of the dilemma: writing-across-the-curriculum initiatives, too, were meeting strong resistance, again for reasons rooted in the history of the institution. Through its ejection from the English Department, the teaching of composition had become deeply stigmatized; and faculty across the curriculum, turning a deaf ear to "writing as learning," wanted no part of the dirty work.

Our solution was a daring one: we began hiring from other disciplines, neither composition nor literature. The first two hirings were the result of regional searches: a widely published biologist with previous experience teaching composition at Colgate; then a research geologist who shared with his spouse a full-time position at a neighboring institution. Our third hiring came from a national search for a social scientist. From a substantial field of attractive candidates we hired an anthropologist experienced in teaching composition.

Some universities hire graduate students in departments other than English to teach writing classes in their own disciplines (Griffin 402). At Cornell University, for example, graduate students from a wide spectrum of disciplines are selected to take a seminar on composition theory and then later to teach freshman writing courses in their own disciplines. Because of such innovations, we have found little difficulty in hiring well-qualified, well-motivated faculty with specialties other than literature or composition: active academic writers who are trained and experienced in composition pedagogy. Only for a few might a composition position successfully compete with a good job offer in their disciplines of training. For many, though, interdisciplinary writing is an attractive second choice, and joint appointments between the writing program and the faculty member's discipline may create sufficiently attractive positions to encourage long-term commitments. How is this scenario inferior to that of the English-based writing program, staffed primarily by literature specialists diverted to composition?

We are not by any means denying the primacy of specialists in composition. Indeed, when in the spring of 1989 we advertised for a replacement

in our social science position, we worded our announcement so that both specialists and social scientists might respond, and we hired a composition specialist, even though that left our program, for the moment, without a social scientist. With a small faculty such as ours (six professors) and one which started with a core of English-trained professors, maintaining a balance of the disciplines while shoring up the contingent of composition specialists can be a difficult undertaking. We expect, however, that as our new program settles into a permanent structure, it will have positions designated for three groupings of disciplines—humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics—and for composition specialists.

Benefits

The Composition Discipline

Including social and natural scientists in interdisciplinary writing programs can support rather than deny their legitimacy. The arrangement may, in fact, bolster the claim of composition to a disciplinary status independent of the teaching of literature: in this broader definition, composition specialists become not second-class members of an English department, but pedagogical and scholarly leaders in an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary endeavor. Viewing the teaching of writing as a truly interdisciplinary enterprise, rather than the special prerogative of the English department and literature specialists, contributes to the definition of composition as a legitimate and independent profession.

The "Discipline-specific" Composition Course

Interdisciplinarians have a singular authority in the composition classroom. Given the WAC principle of "writings" instruction rather than "writing" instruction to measure the conventions of other disciplines with the yardstick of "literariness" would mean committing a kind of ethnocentrism of the disciplines. Even within disciplines one finds radically opposed genre conventions. For example, in anthropology the straightforward, common-sensical, matter-of-fact prose style of E. E. Evans-Pritchard, a member of the British school of social anthropology, marks his adherence to a model of anthropology as a science. This genre of writing contrasts sharply with the more literary and humanities-oriented writing of the American school of cultural interpretation, of which Clifford Geertz is perhaps the most outstanding exponent. Only an anthropologist is likely to be attuned to these differences in writing conventions. An anthropologist with special expertise in composition pedagogy, therefore, can teach a much richer course in ethnographic writing than can a literature or even composition specialist armed with a writing-across-the-curriculum textbook.

The "General" Composition Course

Anthropologists can, moreover, bring a wealth of disciplinary experience to the "general" composition classroom—perspectives on writing and language different from and just as important as those brought by the teacher trained in literature. Concern with "good writing" is an important theoretical issue in disciplines outside English and comparative literature, both in scholarship and pedagogy. In social anthropology, for example, attention to ethnography as text has become perhaps the central theoretical issue of the discipline (see Boon; Clifford and Marcus; Geertz; and Marcus and Fischer). The question of writing is attracting increasing attention, too, in the natural sciences: Jack Oliver, retiring President of the Geological Society of America, proposes, "It may be that the greatest need for innovation in science is the area of written communication" (159).

Cross-Disciplinary Relationships

In writing-across-the-curriculum efforts, the interdisciplinary composition faculty carries special authority. When a natural or social scientist calls our writing program asking for an *in situ* writing workshop for his class (see Howard), we can send not just a writing teacher but a writing teacher who is also a natural or social scientist—a person who is active in the scholarship of that discipline—to conduct the workshop. Similarly, when we are exhorting natural and social scientists to incorporate writing-as-learning techniques in their courses, the message is more persuasive because it comes from a natural or social scientist who has special expertise in writing.

Composition Scholarship

Not only can interdisciplinary composition faculty authoritatively teach writing across the curriculum, better understand the principles of discipline-specific composition, and bring fresh viewpoints to the general composition course, but they can also make important contributions to the field of composition. For example, *Writing in the Biological Sciences,* by Colgate Assistant Professor of Writing Victoria McMillan, is a discipline-specific textbook written by a biologist who is also sensitive to writing as a learning process and who understands, from experience in the general composition classroom, the development of writing skills. Likewise, in the review essay "Teaching Ethnographic Writing," Visiting Assistant Professor of Writing David J. Hess examines the relationship between

the practical problems of teaching ethnography and the theoretical issues regarding rhetoric and writing that anthropologists are currently debating.

Social and natural scientists in the writing program may also affect the scholarship of composition specialists. As she enters the third year of a four-year longitudinal study of the composing habits of undergraduate writers, composition specialist Rebecca Moore Howard has learned the value of having cross-disciplinarians as peers in the writing program: the natural scientists have pointed out shortcomings in statistical design, and the anthropologist has advised her on ethnographic methods. That these colleagues have been conversant not only with statistics and ethnography but also with composition has significantly increased the specificity and applicability of their suggestions.

Yet it is the problem of scholarship that remains unsolved for the Colgate IWP. As we move toward creating tenurable positions in our young program, we must designate the criteria upon which Writing faculty are to be evaluated. Clearly, the composition specialists will be evaluated on their composition scholarship, but what about the cross-disciplinarians? Will they be evaluated on their work in their disciplines, and if so, by whom? A number of political problems might arise were we to bring in members of other departments to evaluate the scholarship of cross-disciplinary Writing faculty. However, if these faculty were to be evaluated on their scholarship in composition, we would be encouraging them to desert the scholarship of their original discipline, whereas cross-disciplinary faculty are valuable to the Writing Program precisely *because* of their authority in their own fields. An ideal solution might be composition scholarship applied to the discipline of training, such as McMillan's textbook and Hess's article. However, this "ideal" in reality may not easily be realized: by asking faculty to be expert in not one but two disciplines simultaneously, we might be creating impossible demands.

Our program is now grappling with this difficult question of evaluation. The solution will probably involve a mixed strategy: (1) evaluation by peers in the Writing Program, but supported by peers in the home discipline; and (2) a requirement to show some scholarship in composition or rhetoric in addition to the main body of scholarship in the home discipline. In a situation where conventional disciplinary definitions are no longer sufficient, the writing program must nurture flexibility and imagination, both in individual professor's research plans and in the evaluative frameworks of those making tenure and promotion decisions. Although flexible evaluation criteria must be applied on a case-by-case basis, clearly defined expectations at the time of hiring will be essential.

Procedures

In both scholarship and teaching, the development of "special expertise" is essential to a successful interdisciplinary writing faculty. From our own trial-and-error experience we would offer the following recommendations for those interested in adopting or adapting our model. Some are already part of our own program structure; others we now realize we must add:

Disciplinary Support

(1) Cross-disciplinary writing professors need to teach not only composition but also courses in their own discipline. It is not through static knowledge but through active participation in their disciplines of training that these faculty are of value to the writing program. Such disciplinary activity should come not only in scholarship but also in teaching. Teaching in one's discipline of training keeps one fresh for the composition classroom and alert to the needs of students and to the demands upon them as they write in the disciplines. Moreover, not teaching in the discipline of training leads the cross-disciplinary professor to feel isolated, marooned in a strange land.

(2) While encouraging scholarship in composition, especially in interdisciplinary concerns in composition, the program and university administration must recognize the Writing professor's primary commitment to scholarship in his or her own field of training. As we have already discussed, however, negotiating the exact specifications of scholarly expectations is a difficult, painstaking business that must be undertaken with great care and with consideration to the academic ethos of the parent institution.

Travel Budget

In order to be valuable as authorities in their disciplines of training, the interdisciplinary writing faculty must be supported in their scholarship in those disciplines. Yet they must be supported, too, in their efforts to participate in the discipline of composition. This entails additional funds, over and above whatever institutional support may be available for faculty to attend and participate in conferences in their disciplines. Our program is fortunate in having a special travel budget that insures the director's annual attendance at the Conference of the Council of Writing Program Administrators and the faculty's annual attendance at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. In recognition of the dual commitments of Writing faculty, this budget is provided in

addition to the annual travel allocation that the institution designates for each of its professors.

Preliminary Training

Although intended for graduate students, many of the principles advocated in Bridges' *Training the New Teacher of College Composition* are helpful for the writing program administrator who is responsible for interdisciplinary faculty. We would suggest, though, certain measures specific to the situation of a WAC program staffed by mature professionals:

(1) Even if trained in English, the new member of the interdisciplinary writing faculty should be provided with some basic reading that introduces

(a) Composition teaching techniques, e.g., Connors and Glenn;

(b) Principles of writing-as-learning, e.g., Walvoord;

(c) Perspectives on teaching in special situations (e.g., Shaughnessy), to special populations (e.g., Brooks), or with special techniques (e.g., Harris).

(2) He or she should, moreover, have the opportunity to observe his or her new colleagues in their interdisciplinary composition teaching—even though the new member may already have experience in teaching composition.

Ongoing Training

The new member should have a guide, an already established member of the Writing faculty, who meets with him or her regularly to discuss pedagogy and who exchanges classroom visits. Attendance at a summer composition seminar would also be an important experience.

Most importantly, all the writing faculty need to meet together regularly to discuss philosophical and pedagogical issues in composition, and these meetings should be held in addition to regular administrative meetings. Our program has a weekly "Writing Faculty Seminar" that serves many purposes. Sometimes we meet with members of the University constituency in order to discuss common efforts; sometimes the meetings are conducted by one member of the writing faculty who is reporting on his or her research or pedagogy; sometimes they are sessions for which each of us has read articles on a common topic, such as testing writing; often they are practical sessions that negotiate philosophical tenets of composition with the realities of campus politics. These meetings are lively, invigorating, and absolutely essential to a sense of

common purpose and common knowledge. They are the most important "glue" for a diverse faculty engaged in a common task.

Though born of historical necessity, our interdisciplinary faculty is proving its merit. Ours is a model applicable to other programs—not necessarily as a replacement for existing procedures but as an accompaniment to or modification of them. Even the English-based writing program has room for non-English based composition professionals whose very presence could help to clarify the differences between literary scholarship and composition scholarship that are overlooked with notorious frequency when tenure and promotion decisions are being made by literature faculty. The discipline of composition stands to benefit from the participation of both types of scholars and programs.

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Writing Centers and Teacher Training

Peggy F. Broder

As writing centers come of age, we are seeing that they are not simply a kind of emergency room for treatment of students in dire need. We never stop learning to write and centers offer assistance to people at every level, from remedial to graduate students, from faculty to people in the business community. In fact, as Thom Hawkins points out in his introduction to Gary Olson's book on writing centers, "the teaching practices of writing centers are influencing the way writing is taught in the classroom" (xii).

Writing centers train their tutors to understand two important aspects of teaching composition: the need, first, for viewing writing as a process and second, for individualized and respectful attention to students' papers and ideas; in addition, the center alerts its tutors to the reasons for students' difficulties with writing. The center is thus as effective a practical training ground as we might devise for ensuring that prospective teachers gain this understanding. We might, indeed, almost justify the writing center's existence on these grounds alone; Robin Magnuson suggests that the "training we provide our tutors and the multifaceted experience to which tutors are exposed should be an integral part of the requirements for undergraduate English Ed majors and for graduate teaching assistants in composition" (12).

Today's new writing teacher is, it is true, for the most part well-schooled in various recent theories of how people learn to write. Indeed one of the most striking aspects of contemporary composition teaching is the shift in our attitude to the belief that writing can and should be taught well. Only a generation (or less) ago, no one thought much about how to teach writing or was concerned with methods for training people to teach writing.

Many fine graduate programs in composition and rhetoric now provide theoretical knowledge. But practical experience, equally essential for good teaching, is not so readily acquired before entering the classroom; as Donovan et al. assert, new teachers usually receive only a syllabus and a text: "whatever apprenticeship tutors may serve in composition is often to paper, not people" (139). And Magnuson makes the interesting argument that much of students' difficulty in writing is the result of poor instruction from teachers who have been themselves badly prepared. We can prevent such inadequate preparation. The college or university writing center can be an important resource for providing tutors with this