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This dissertation examines how nomenclature and the act of naming shapes disciplinary identities for scholars and teachers of rhetoric and composition. The discipline is named differently by many of its members, sometimes called *composition studies*, *writing studies*, *composition and rhetoric*, *rhetorical studies*, or *rhetoric and writing*. The different conceptualizations of the discipline invoked by the names point to a sense that the field is unstable, although this instability is not inherently negative. I argue that the differences in how we articulate our understanding of the discipline through the names we choose for it show that the disciplinary ground remains unstable and that our disciplinary identities continue to require further (re)defining. However, this disciplinary instability may be the chief strength of rhetoric and composition, making it a field that adapts to changes in epistemological and institutional circumstances.

The project, a contemporary disciplinary history, engages in metadisciplinary inquiry by focusing on the development and progression of rhetoric and composition as an intellectual endeavor from the mid-twentieth century to the present. I rely on textual analysis of scholarly and curricular materials such as conference programs, academic journals, program descriptions, and dissertations; these sources enable me to examine how the discipline is articulated in both implicit and explicit ways. Descriptions of doctoral programs, for instance, illustrate different methods of privileging certain perspectives of the field, usually through the core curriculum that program architects have agreed are vital training for incoming members of the discipline.

The multitude of disciplinary names suggests a lack of consensus among members of the discipline regarding how the boundaries of the discipline are defined, generating what I call disciplinary identity discomfort, a revision of Massey's notion that our identities are in crisis. I posit that disciplines, and thus disciplinary identity, are formed by a tension between two forces: epistemological and institutional. Epistemological pressure is exerted within the discipline by scholars whose work establishes or challenges the boundaries of research deemed legible to other members of the community. External groups, such as university administrations, accreditation organizations, and legislative bodies, exert institutional pressure that shapes disciplines as well. Institutional pressure is especially important to the historical development of rhetoric and composition because of the continuing perception of literacy in crisis, leading to popular and legislative calls for increased instruction in reading and writing (and to what Mike Rose calls "the myth of transience"). Decisions about the institutional placement of rhetoric and composition (within English departments, independent writing programs, or communications departments, for instance) also inform disciplinary identity, as well as legislation about literacy or funding for research in the humanities. A discipline is thus the product of a complex interaction between scholars and teachers who attempt to create coherent, if varied, intellectual spaces for their work and social and political influences, both local and national.

DISCIPLINARY ARTICULATION IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

by

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CHAPTER I  
TERMINISTIC SCREENS WE LIVE BY

The first discipline  
of a discipline is, or  
should be, not to forget  
that it has not always been  
a discipline.  
-- Jonathan Monroe, "As It Is"

When I was applying to doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, I visited a handful of campuses to meet a few faculty members and graduate students, hoping to get a sense of the programs that would then help me to decide which offer of admission I would accept. At one of these institutions, while I was at lunch with two graduate students, one of them asked me, "So are you rhetoric or are you composition?" I sensed that how I answered this question would determine how these two grad students identified me in relation to their understanding of the discipline. These grad students expected me to declare an allegiance to one side or the other. I am sure I feigned a confidence in my choice that I did not then possess, but my feeling then, as it is now, was that rhetoric and composition are not discrete fields of study. Certainly, scholars inevitably work more in one side of the field than other, but I resisted the pressure to define the two as separate spheres of scholarly activity. Despite the clear presence of the conjunctive "and" in the discipline's title, I did not think of rhetoric and composition as distinctly separate intellectual fields. Indeed, throughout this dissertation, I use *rhetoric*



*and composition* as a singular noun cluster to emphasize what I see as the inseparableness of the two interrelated fields.

For these two graduate students, who were themselves still trying to understand how they identified with the discipline, the question seemed to come down to whether one privileges research or teaching: Whether one is a serious scholar, engaged in academic inquiry in order to contribute to the growth of knowledge or whether one is a teacher, destined for a small outpost at a state university or a community college burdened with a heavy teaching load and stressful service commitments. One of the students identified with rhetoric, and he emphasized the importance of research to his academic persona, while the other identified with composition, and she accepted what she viewed as the inevitability of that choice with a shrug. For these students, the question was the ultimate expression of insecurity, based in part on a view that composition is not scholarly work, while rhetoric, because of its theoretical roots, is fundamentally oriented toward the production of knowledge.

The ways in which these two graduate students identified with rhetoric and composition were based on an artificial separation between research and pedagogy and a feeling that the two must be differentiated from one another in some way in order to make sense. Their distinctions were, as I argue throughout this dissertation, wrong, but the need felt by these two graduate students to seek ways of identifying with the community of scholar-teachers they were training to join illustrates their efforts to construct their understanding of the disciplinary boundaries and parameters of rhetoric

and composition. To paraphrase David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University," these graduate students were inventing an academic discipline.

The insecurity expressed in that question points to a central problem in rhetoric and composition: What is it that we do as a discipline? What kinds of knowledge and models of inquiry lend us stability? How do we identify ourselves as members of a discipline whose material covers anything from the definition of truth in ancient rhetoric to the cognitive effects of computers on writing? This dissertation addresses the discomfort that undergirded the question those two graduate students asked me in those early days when I was still trying to understand the intellectual community that I was joining: How do we construct a disciplinary identity? In order to do so, I examine the variations of nomenclature attributed to the discipline. Each time a new name emerges, a new way of imagining the discipline emerges with it. And each time a new way of imagining the discipline occurs, it privileges some areas of the discipline and marginalizes others. Disciplinary names function as terministic screens, Kenneth Burke's term for language that directs our attention in certain directions and away from others, leading us to understand the field differently than we did before. And these terministic screens then direct the shape of our intellectual contributions to the field of knowledge that we mark off with those disciplinary names: They become terministic screens we live by.

The disciplinary names that we choose are terministic screens that direct us toward certain kinds of work and knowledge formation, but the names also display a general unease regarding the disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition. One of the

most important acts for defining a discipline is naming it, as a name provides some notion of the boundaries of the discipline, some concept of how the discipline fits into the academic community as a whole. The authors in Gary Olson's edited collection *Rhetoric and Composition as Intellectual Work*, for example, continuously return to the question of disciplinary identity. The book forwards the argument that rhetoric and composition is a discipline in the sense that it engages in knowledge making, one of the major markers of an academic discipline. In an essay that argues for rhetoric and composition as a coherent discipline, C. Jan Swearingen writes, "the discipline as a whole seems never to have quite settled down" (13), and for that reason, it remains difficult to define in concrete and stable terms what the discipline is and does. Olson writes, "Since the beginnings of composition as a field, we all have been struggling over how to define it, over its heart and soul" (30). In *Introducing English*, James Slevin comparatively bemoans the lack of clarity for rhetoric and composition, arguing that "we have lost the power to name what we do" (44). Slevin means that we cannot easily define the boundaries of rhetoric and composition because it branches in numerous, seemingly disparate directions, often away from the discipline's roots in pedagogy, where Slevin argues the discipline should continue to dwell. What all of these writers have in common is the understanding that how we name the discipline establishes how we identify with—and against—the work that we do.

In this chapter, I examine various trends that have emerged in the past thirty years of scholarship in rhetoric and composition. First, I assert that members of the discipline of rhetoric and composition continuously feel a distinct discomfort with how they

identify with the discipline. After looking at two recent examples of identity discomfort, I turn to Kenneth Burke's notion of identification to help clarify the problem of disciplinary identification. Second, I look at multiple definitions of disciplinarity, most of which hold in common the production of new knowledge, and its relationship to the modern American university. I argue that disciplinarity is shaped in response to pressures from within the discipline and without, which I call respectively epistemological and institutional pressures. Third, I focus on rhetoric and composition, examining several arguments about its troubled disciplinary status. Finally, I turn once more to Kenneth Burke, this time looking to his notion of terministic screens, as well as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's metaphorical concepts, as a lens for examining how the name chosen to delimit the work of the discipline shapes how we conceptualize the discipline as a whole.

### **Disciplinary Identity Discomfort**

In a recent review essay entitled "Resisting Entropy" in *College Composition and Communication*, Geoffrey Sirc launches right into the fray with a blunt and bold assertion: "Teaching writing is impossible" (508). Such a statement tends to polarize potential responses immediately. It seems evident that Sirc intends his statement to have this effect. His review essay is a polemic, using a review of four texts<sup>1</sup> that would probably not normally be combined for a single review essay as a vehicle to make broad claims about the state of the discipline as he sees it. Whether Sirc celebrates or assaults each of the texts he reviews—there is no middle road for him in this particular essay—he

uses his comments as a springboard to contemplate the disciplinary identity of scholars and teachers of writing. Due to the diverse material covered in these four texts, Sirc's choice to constellate these particular books only makes sense because of his comments regarding the state of the discipline as he sees it. Following a celebration of the breadth of texts represented in Byron Hawk's *A Counter-History of Composition*, he states: "What depresses me about composition (or comp studies or comp/rhet or writing studies or college composition or FYC or FYW—it has as many aliases as a career criminal) is how unflinchingly narrow it is [...]" (513). Referring to composition as a "career criminal" firmly positions Sirc in a long tradition—a tradition almost as old as the discipline itself—of assaulting the status of composition as a universal service course.

Yet the root of his concern is not particularly clear. Sirc does not seem to be taking the stance that composition is a career criminal because of its long and not particularly proud historical association with exploitative labor practices. Nor does Sirc argue to abolish first-year writing, which would seem the likely conclusion of declaring a course and a discipline a career criminal. Instead, his argument is that composition is an empty course, devoid of content, because as he asserts in the first line of his essay, he believes that "[t]eaching writing is impossible" (508). He argues that the void should be filled with literature, hip-hop lyrics, and popular blogs like *Failblog* and *FMyLife*. Sirc's implied course would be more of a popular culture course that employs writing as a central component for constructing knowledge.

I am less interested in the validity of Sirc's claims than I am in the way his statements illustrate a sense of uncertainty about the teaching of writing and thus the

discipline founded on that pedagogical mission. His uncertainty extends to the point that he cannot pinpoint an appropriate name for the course and its accompanying discipline. Sirc's list of titles illustrates a conflation in his thinking: Contextually, he is referring to the first-year writing course that is still a prominent element of undergraduate education in American universities. But his alternate titles, which include composition studies, rhet/comp, and writing studies, refer not to the course but to the academic discipline that grew out of the first year writing course. This conflation of course and discipline reveals a general uncertainty: If teaching writing is impossible, then what is the work of our discipline? Sirc's conflation suggests that he believes rhetoric and composition exists only because of the first year writing course. A discipline rooted only in the teaching of a single course would indeed be thin. Yet the title of the essay—"Resisting Entropy"—provides a lens for reading Sirc's essay as a more hopeful argument than it would otherwise seem. Sirc's polemic is intended to encourage readers to continually rethink composition courses and thus, following his logic, the entire discipline. His urgent cry to resist entropy places him among the ranks of others in the discourse community of the discipline who argue for continual revision, reinvigoration, and restatement of what rhetoric and composition is and does as an academic discipline.

Geoffrey Sirc's review is an illustration of what I have come to think of as disciplinary identity discomfort. I choose the term "discomfort" to denote a broad range of responses to the problem of disciplinarity, from minor irritation to serious frustration that eventually leads to proposals for drastic changes in the shape and boundaries of the discipline. Scholars in rhetoric and composition routinely display a general sense of

unease regarding their status—whether that refers to prestige or to their very existence—in the academic community. This discomfort frequently manifests itself throughout scholarship in rhetoric and composition, whether it is the central focus of a scholar’s argument or not, whether that scholarship focuses on discussions of methodological approaches; sources of evidence and material for analysis; the balance of teaching, research, and service; disciplinary history; or the discipline’s long history of inequitable labor practices.

Although the term “discomfort” inevitably carries a negative connotation, I encourage readers not to view the phenomenon as inherently negative. Instead, I think of this habitual state of discomfort as a more ambivalent state, one that exhibits in both positive and negative ways. I would argue, for instance, that one of the strengths of rhetoric and composition is its capacity for self-reflexivity. To “resist entropy,” as Geoffrey Sirc urges members of the discipline, is to renew our disciplinary drive and invigorate our pedagogies and methodological approaches. Those of us in rhetoric and composition must be able to respond to challenges and shifts in order to provide for the continued existence and relevance of the field. If research in rhetoric and composition had followed only certain methodological pathways, or if scholars and teachers had not attempted to create new approaches to teaching that incorporate technology and new media, then the discipline would have atrophied away. Instead, even if the field is difficult to define and demarcate today, there is no denying that it is a vibrant discipline. The slippery boundaries of its disciplinary endeavors make rhetoric and composition an inclusive field that is open to interdisciplinary methodologies, with room for qualitative

and quantitative research, pedagogical theory, rhetorical theory and analysis, genre studies, ethnography, and historiography, to name just a few. As Gwendolyn D. Pough asserts in her 2011 CCCC Chair's Address, "comp/rhet is bigger than we are allowing it to be" (306).

Another example of identity discomfort can be seen in a recent thread on WPA-L, a listserv dedicated to issues related to writing program administration. The thread, entitled "very unwelcome trend," starts with Mary Jean Braun raising the concern that many job listings for non-tenure track positions in rhetoric and composition call for a PhD, or at best specify that they will privilege applicants with completed PhDs. Braun's post is brief because the problem with this trend is clear to most listserv readers: individuals who hold PhDs in rhetoric and composition should not be taking non-tenure track jobs. Instead, the unspoken argument goes, they should be earning tenure-track positions that grant them the time, space, and job security to pursue their research as well as their teaching and service obligations. Braun writes: "The field *used to be looked down on* because so many MAs taught in it. Is this a trend which will further disparage our field by marginalizing PhDs?" (Italics mine). Braun's remarks engage the question of labor practices in rhetoric and composition, an issue that rhetoric and composition finds itself continuously embroiled in. The problem of ethical labor practices—a major source of disciplinary identity discomfort for rhetoric and composition—is positioned as the primary concern in this statement. The problem used to be that too many MAs taught composition courses and held contingent, non-tenure track positions. Braun suggests that perhaps the field is beginning to see a significant shift in the opposite direction, that as



graduate programs in rhetoric and composition continue to proliferate and replicate, more PhDs must fight for jobs that do not come with the support structure offered by tenure-track positions.

What makes Braun's post a compelling example is how she frames her observation. Braun invokes an unnamed perspective that is located outside of the disciplinary domain of rhetoric and composition, a voice that occupies a privileged position of judgment. Implicit in her comment is the idea that the disciplinary prestige of rhetoric and composition is particularly vulnerable to external critique, and by extension that the disciplinary identity associated with that prestige is called into question. Braun is correct that a common point of contention with universities is the number of lecturers and adjuncts who teach composition courses. Braun's post elicited fifty-eight responses, a number indicating that listserv members found this to be an important post to answer. One response of note comes from Melissa Ianetta, who draws attention to the problem of identity discomfort: "I find it interesting how this conversation is shifting from things that we could, theoretically count—positions, applications, job offers—to things that we can't count—people feeling valued by their colleagues or (more often, it seems) the field." Ianetta's remarks then move to identify a sense of internal critique that is related to disciplinary identity discomfort. She comments that since most people who earn PhDs end up working at institutions less prestigious than where they earned their PhDs, they build that lack of prestige into a growing sense of inferiority.

My work in this dissertation contributes to the pattern of self-reflection that I characterize as a significant component of disciplinary identity discomfort. The

discipline's tendency to tell its stories to itself in a multitude of forms suggests a desire among its members to justify the discipline, to argue that rhetoric and composition represents a legitimate area of inquiry worthy of being considered an academic discipline. Many of the works that I cite in this chapter, as well as many in the chapters that follow, construct a significant corpus that either argues for disciplinarity as grounds for legitimacy or for legitimacy to come through other means, such as interdisciplinarity. But this habit of scholarship in rhetoric and composition, this tendency to employ history and self-reflection as a means to seek out a disciplinary identity, has been challenged by some within the field as a distraction from the real work of rhetoric and composition. Most notably, in her 2008 article, "Sp(1)itting Images; or, Back to the Future of (Rhetoric and?) Composition," Karen Kopelson writes that those of us in rhetoric and composition studies are "unrivaled in our proclivity for self-examination." She notes that while self-examination is common among academic disciplines, "composition studies has paid and is paying the price for our *disciplinary self-indulgence*, and that the time has come to forge a disciplinary identity by leaving our identity crisis behind" (775, emphasis added). Kopelson's notion of disciplinary self-indulgence depends on the idea that rhetoric and composition scholars have expended so much research energy defining the parameters of our disciplinarity that we have neglected other areas of research that build more varied forms of knowledge about writing, rhetoric, and pedagogy.

I agree with Kopelson that rhetoric and composition scholars have generated a significant number of publications that focus on the historical development of rhetoric and composition and on defining the intellectual work of the discipline. Yet I question

her assertion that such investigations are detrimental to the discipline, especially considering the healthy and robust research agenda pursued by many scholars in our field. There can be no doubt that as a field, we are fascinated with our own origin story, but the very reason that Kopelson argues that we should leave our self-reflexive work behind—to get beyond our identity crisis—is the best reason to continue the work of interrogating our disciplinary identity. We should not attempt to resolve our identity crisis: we should view our self-reflexive impulse as an expression of our drive to revise the discipline continually—to reshape the boundaries of our field and to adapt our research methodologies and pedagogical approaches perpetually. Additionally, the term “identity crisis” seems too emphatic for the present disciplinary state of rhetoric and composition. The term would have been much more accurate in the last few decades of the twentieth century, but I would assert that rhetoric and composition has achieved most of the markers of disciplinarity, and that the self-reflexivity that Kopelson urges the discipline to abandon is in fact something of a lingering habit from that period. Yet the self-reflexivity that characterizes much of the work of the discipline still retains its generative and revisionary powers, which is why I have offered disciplinary identity discomfort as a potential replacement for identity crisis.

In order to clarify the concept of disciplinary identity discomfort that is evident in Geoffrey Sirc’s review essay and the listserv thread, I turn to Kenneth Burke’s notion of rhetorical identification. Burke offers identification as a counterpart to persuasion as the primary work of rhetoric. Burke defines identity as a “thing’s...uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself, a demarcated unit having its own particular structure” (*A Rhetoric of*

*Motives* 21). We identify something, in other words, by recognizing the differences between it and things surrounding it; we make something identifiable by marking the limits of its structure, by making it finite and separable from things around it. A person's identity, then, is based on the specific characteristics of that person, whether those characteristics are physical traits, such as size, sex, and hair or eye color, or personality traits, such as a quick temper or a tendency toward humor, that allow others to identify a person. It is important here to note the rhetorical aspect of this definition of identity: a person is not so much defined in absolute terms by these traits as they are identified by them. In other words, the identity of someone who possesses blue eyes is not defined by those blue eyes; rather, that eye color helps others to identify that person. Definition is to make finite and separate; to define something is a cognitive act that renders identification possible, but the act of definition establishes separation as its goal, while rhetorical identification is not limited to recognizing things as separate units. The act of identification also means that we can identify groupings of separate units.

While Burke notes that a thing which is identifiable is "a demarcated unit," there is also the need for being able to consider identification in a more collective sense. Burke proposes *consubstantiality* as a philosophical means for considering the overlapping and blurring of identities between separate things: "To identify A with B is to make A 'consubstantial' with B" (21). Both A and B in this scenario retain their individual identifications, but they are consubstantial with one another in that they may be identified in relation to one another as being part of the same identification. The concept of consubstantiality is especially important for thinking through disciplinary identity (or any

form of community identification, actually) because such an identity is necessarily collective, based in communal definitions of what a discipline is and what it does. Conceptually, individuals must be able to identify with others in order to make common cause with them. This is the key argument that Benedict Anderson makes regarding imagined communities: that individuals must be able to identify with others whom they will never meet, who by all accounts are actually strangers, in order to construct senses of community that extend beyond any immediately observable group. Anderson's argument refers specifically to the nation-state, but his notion of imagined communities implies the need for humans to be able to identify themselves as part of groups even as they retain the ability to identify themselves as separate beings. Likewise, Kenneth Burke argues that consubstantiality "may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (21, italics original). To identify with a group is to identify consubstantially, to act together by recognizing commonalities. Academic disciplines are groups that require just such a consubstantial imagining of identification.

Burke theorizes rhetoric as inducement to action, and his conception of identification can help to clarify why human agents—to borrow from his dramatic terminology—are motivated to take certain actions. Humans identify themselves with certain groups and ideas, allying themselves with the goals and problems that come with that identification. Burke's rhetorical identification is particularly useful to understanding rhetoric and composition's disciplinary identity discomfort because his concept depends

on the presence of conflict. He calls identification “compensatory to division,” meaning that the act of identifying with one group or concept necessitates recognizing a division from other groups or concepts. Burke writes, “In pure identification, there would be no strife [...] But put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric” (25). Here we see why Burke figures identification as such a prominent aspect of rhetoric: Identification occurs in the same ambiguous discursive space as persuasion. Burke develops his theory of identification with academic specialization in mind as a prime example, although he pays specific attention to the role of the scientific disciplines and their identification with the advancement of military technology. For Burke, identification with scientific research carries with it identification with efforts to develop the nation’s capacity for war. He asserts that specialized activity—what I would call disciplinarity—occurs in a broader context than just the realm of that activity. Hence why he finds the sciences culpable for advances in military technology. Such an identification *should* create discomfort.

In regards to rhetoric and composition, we can think of identification first as identification with disciplinary goals: the advancement of knowledge through the proliferation of scholarship and innovations in pedagogy. Those who participate in the specialized activity of rhetoric and composition are thus identified as members of the discipline. Second, we can think about the contextual identification of the discipline. To be a member of an academic discipline is to function within the contextual framework of the university.<sup>2</sup> In other words, to identify with the discipline is also to identify with the

university, and these are not always identifications that work smoothly with one another. For example, writing program administrators (WPAs) are often put in the difficult position of having to run writing programs that depend on contingent labor to teach courses. Scholarship in rhetoric and composition rightly rails against the practice of using contingent labor, but WPAs are often required to do so for practical reasons that are generally beyond their control. In this sense, the way these members identify with the discipline is complicated by the contextual local conditions of their institution.

### **Disciplinary as Institutional and Epistemological**

Establishing an understanding of disciplinary identity is important for two reasons. First, the modern structure of higher education uses disciplinary as a model for establishing academic units and for funding those units. In other words, disciplinary functions as a form of currency in colleges and universities, enabling academic communities who can construct coherent disciplinary identities to work within the fragmentation of academic departments can also secure tenure lines for faculty, resources to fund research and scholarship, and undergraduate and graduate programs to train potential new members of the discipline. Second, disciplinary identity is important to the formation of lines of inquiry and evolving research methodologies. Higher education historian Roger Geiger argues that a discipline is “a community based on inquiry and centered on competent investigators. It consists of individuals who associate in order to facilitate intercommunication and to establish some degree of authority over the standards of the inquiry” (25-26). Disciplines are thus framed as communities of scholars

that exist beyond the local limits of universities, necessitating the publication of research so that the members of the discipline can remain in communication with one another. Defining disciplines as communities of scholars emphasizes the social nature of the production of knowledge associated with contemporary disciplinarity.

However useful it may be to conceive disciplines as communal endeavors, as systems that depend on interaction between members of the community to sustain the health of a discipline, there is another aspect of disciplinarity that results from the training and credentialing of academics who compose a discipline: Disciplines are necessarily exclusive communities, made up of members who, through extensive graduate education, are inculcated in the research methods, scholarly canons, and discursive practices that have emerged from the practices of the disciplines. While most of my work in this dissertation focuses on the internal workings of disciplinarity, it is helpful to remember that disciplines are, in a sense, gated communities. They are, in the British sociologist Anthony Giddens' term, *expert systems*. Giddens articulates the concept of expert systems in his 1990 book, *The Consequences of Modernity*, in which he contends that as a system for organizing society, modernity is an out-of-control juggernaut, generated from the clash of military-industrial nation-states and the advancement of capitalism, which collectively result in the disembedding of social relations.

Expert systems depend on a trust in what he calls "abstract capacities" (26), such as money, law, and government, a form of trust that he characterizes as faith in the institutions of modernity. He defines expert systems as "systems of technical



accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today” (27). Giddens argues that individuals only come into contact with these expert systems periodically—an interaction he refers to as facetime, an eerie similarity to the Apple application that bears the same name—through contact with experts such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and architects.

Although individuals rarely encounter the people in these expert systems, those systems are omnipresent, because the “systems in which the knowledge of experts is integrated influence many aspects of what we do in a *continuous* way” (27, italics original). Airplanes, for example, represent a confluence of expert systems: engineers design the planes, manufacturers build them, mechanics perform routine maintenance, and pilots fly them, to name only a few of the expert systems involved. Those who wish to travel by plane must invest their trust in these expert systems, because they will never encounter the experts who make such travel possible, save the occasional brief exchange of words with the pilot at the end of a flight. Thus, as Giddens defines the concept, expert systems “remove social relations from the immediacies of context” (28), creating a social distance between individuals and making expert systems more like abstractions than human communities.

The modern academy in general is a massive expert system, composed of a multitude of academic disciplines that are their own expert systems. Individuals, whether they are students attending college, parents investing in their children’s education, donors contributing funds to institutions, or federal and state legislatures who provide significant funding for colleges and universities, place trust in the modern academy to fulfill a

number of narratives that have grown common in public views about higher education. Students believe, for instance, the narrative that earning a bachelor's degree will lead to prosperity, while governments believe that research universities will produce scholarship with economic applications that will likewise lead to general prosperity; research produced by academic disciplines (at least STEM-related disciplines) is believed to be critical to the good of society through advancements in medicine, computer science, automobiles, manufacturing, and construction, to name a few. Disciplines are expected to produce knowledge that can then be used by the public; even the humanities produce knowledge that is then expected to contribute to the advancement of society, such as literacy, civic awareness, and critical thinking skills. But as expert systems, academic disciplines are abstractions to those who are not members of the discourse communities: They are disembodied mechanisms that produce knowledge that individuals then depend on, whether they realize it or not.

I find Giddens' notion of expert systems useful for this argument because for most of this dissertation, I describe the disciplinary origins, development, and articulation of rhetoric and composition as a member of that discourse community, but it is easy to lose sight of the fact that disciplines are gated communities. The term *community* tends to carry a positive connotation, but it is important to keep in mind that inclusion for some in a community implies outsider status for others.<sup>3</sup> It is again useful to note that Kenneth Burke's identification depends on the presence of separation between groups: communities are formed through individuals' identification with some groups and not with others. Disciplines are characterized by strongly drawn but fluid boundaries, even

when the methods and subjects intersect with other disciplines. In institutional terms, modern academic disciplines are areas of study that may be quantified in some way and made into departments or programs by universities and colleges as well as larger accrediting organizations such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), massive expert systems that verify the trustworthiness of institutions.

In general, the way a field confirms its status as a discipline is through its scholarly work in the form of publications: disciplinarity depends on knowledge making. The most cutting edge scholarship is showcased in journals dedicated to the discipline, making the proliferation of discipline-specific journals an indicator of disciplinary growth. An area of study that cannot draw enough members to maintain several academic journals is not likely to be deemed a discipline, but it will perhaps instead be defined as a sub-field of another existing discipline. Monographs and edited collections then prove the ability of faculty within a discipline to carry out sustained studies and arguments, a crucial element of the tenure and promotion process at research universities, and increasingly at smaller, more teaching-oriented universities as well. Scholars publish articles, book chapters, and monographs as a means of communicating with members of their discipline, but they also do so because the modern university sets the guidelines for job security according to a faculty member's ability to publish original research.

Within the modern university, disciplinarity is a goal to be strived for, because achieving status as a discipline ensures that members of that community will be able to seek out and secure tenure-track positions. In order to stay at the forefront of research, universities will create and maintain tenure-track lines for those disciplines that

consistently produce scholarship. We should think of disciplinarity not as stable and static, but instead as a recursive process: Scholars must produce work of considerable merit in order to generate the boundaries of a discipline. Consistent inquiry into certain questions or through the use of certain methodological approaches defines those boundaries. Once universities begin to recognize the relevance and quality of such scholarship, they dedicate faculty lines, curricular design, and programmatic or departmental structure in order to incorporate a discipline into the hierarchy of the university. Then, scholars must continue to generate scholarship in order to preserve their status as a discipline within the university.

So that we can map out this recursive process of disciplinary formation and preservation, I point to two kinds of pressure placed on members of a discipline: internal and external. I refer to these as epistemological and institutional pressures. Scholars generate the first type, epistemological pressure, by challenging ways of articulating the discipline even as they offer new ways that may replace the forms they have challenged. They may not overtly seek to articulate the discipline differently, but any innovations in their work, whether through new argumentative processes, research methodologies, or uses of evidence, shift the boundaries of the discipline. The second type, institutional pressure, does not come merely from colleges and universities, although those institutions form the primary external pressure to shape disciplines as they press the disciplines to define themselves and justify why they deserve institutional recognition. Other external pressures can come from legislatures, politicians, and sociopolitical movements. Rhetoric and composition is frequently affected by such non-academic pressures, when

newspapers or legislators declare that younger generations no longer know how to read or write as well as their predecessors. These literacy crises, for better or worse, remain a compelling argument for maintaining rhetoric and composition as a discipline. I bundle these non-academic sources of pressure together under the category of institutional pressure because institutions must act on any of these sources of pressure in order to enact change in disciplinary validity and structure.

Disciplines exist at the confluence of epistemological and institutional pressures. A discipline's recursive responses to these pressures provides a sort of fluid stability, with the boundaries of the discipline always shifting, but the core protected by the discipline's ability to survive the combined pressure from within and without. One of the prime results of this confluence is that disciplines revisit and reconsider their boundaries. In *Writing and Revising the Disciplines*, edited in 2002 by literary scholar Jonathan Monroe,<sup>4</sup> Monroe compares disciplines to nations, a comparison that I have also found useful at times because of the fluidity of national boundaries and the collective construction of national identity. In his introduction, Monroe asserts:

If nationality is one kind of glove through which we reach out to the universe, disciplines and departments are the academic equivalent within the pluriverse of the university, territorial entities shaped by internal divisions and border disputes, intra- and interdepartmental diplomacy. (4)

Monroe's references to territorial entities and border disputes suggest the kinds of conflicts that arise within disciplines and within broader settings, whether they are institutional or public. These conflicts result in what Monroe identifies as the one constant behavior of academic disciplines: "[N]othing is more certain in the lives of

disciplines, whatever the field, whatever the institutional setting, than that they are forever changing” (2).

Such revision should be considered healthy and productive. In some disciplines, it creates a strong sense of self-reflexivity that enables disciplines to question their own methods and forms and fields of inquiry in ways that lead to new and exciting directions in scholarship. Pierre Bourdieu characterizes this self-reflexivity as a form of epistemological vigilance: “When research comes to study the very realm within which it operates, the results which it obtains can be immediately reinvested in scientific work as instruments of reflexive knowledge of the conditions and the social limits of this work, which is one of the principal weapons of epistemological vigilance” (15). For rhetoric and composition in particular, self-reflexivity becomes a constantly circular pattern in which scholars examine the field and the scholarship it produces in order to decide what work the field accomplishes. The work produced based on this research becomes part of the body of work that makes up the discipline, making those self-reflexive works part of the scholarly corpus that stabilizes the boundaries of disciplinary identity.

Due to the modern university’s emphasis on research as the primary intellectual work of the disciplines—the confluence of institutional and epistemological pressures—we can primarily define disciplinarity by acknowledging the importance of scholarship. Without active scholarship, a discipline simply does not have a reason to exist. In his study of early twentieth-century research universities, Roger Geiger writes, “A discipline is, above all, a community based on inquiry and centered on competent investigators. It consists of individuals who associate in order to facilitate intercommunication and to

establish some degree of authority over the standards of the inquiry” (25-26). Disciplines are thus framed as communities of scholars that exist beyond the local limits of universities, thus necessitating the publication of research so that the members of the discipline can remain in communication with one another. His definition also points to a commonality of methodology, which he phrases as “the standards of the inquiry.” His definition becomes problematic for framing rhetoric and composition as a discipline if one takes to heart the charges made by Stephen North that rhetoric and composition has no unifying methodology, which I will address further below. However, Geiger’s definition does not indicate that a discipline must cluster itself around a single methodological approach, but instead that members of the discipline control the means of inquiry.

Such a definition makes room for a broad definition of disciplinarity. Geiger argues that in the late nineteenth century, the disciplines formed separately from, but in conjunction with, universities, which became the logical location to house members of the new disciplinary communities. Within an institutional framework, disciplines can only be accredited as such if they provide advances in knowledge. Disciplinary journals and monographs are the empirical evidence that a discipline constructs and advances a body of knowledge. In most disciplines, the advancement of knowledge—scholarly work—takes the highest priority. The other aspects of academic work—teaching, service, and administration—are frequently undervalued because they are viewed as distractions from the primary purpose of academic work. Disciplines are responsible for making plain how they constitute themselves in order to justify receiving funding, physical space for

offices, and course sections for undergraduate and graduate education. Scholars in disciplines are thus held accountable on the basis of the quality and quantity of their research and publications.

However, disciplines must pay attention to teaching in order to sustain their own existence. This point is perhaps more important for rhetoric and composition than other disciplines because of the discipline's historical roots in pedagogy. Although the discipline has grown to the extent that its fate is not wholly intertwined with freshman writing courses, it nevertheless remains a discipline whose members maintain the prominence of teaching, to the extent that many members would prefer to be called scholar-teachers than just scholars. In broader institutional terms, scholars must retain some emphasis on teaching because they must worry about the proliferation of their own discipline. Professors instruct undergraduates, who then go on to engage in graduate study, thus enabling their own entry into a discipline. Scholars must construct those graduate programs to enable future members of the discipline to be trained in the core traditions of a discipline.

In *Save the World on Your Own Time*, Stanley Fish, who has his own conflicted history of defining his academic identity both with and against rhetoric and composition, states that institutions of higher learning are supposed to “introduce students to bodies of knowledge and traditions of inquiry” and “equip those same students with the analytical skills...that will enable them to move confidently within those traditions and to engage in independent research” (12-13). Although Fish's interpretation of the role of colleges and universities first focuses on teaching—which is appropriate, since that is the focus of his



book—we must note where Fish’s definition concludes. If we follow the logic of Fish’s argument, we see students are first exposed to the topics and methods of the disciplines as a means of incorporation into a discipline. Only after this crucial introduction can a student transition toward independent research. If Fish is interested in teaching, it seems by this definition to be teaching in service of the university’s role in generating more academics, meaning that Fish’s interest in teaching is still as an institutional role subordinated to research. Rhetoric and composition has an added layer: faculty members are training graduate students not only to contribute to the discipline’s scholarship, but also to train other teachers as WPAs.

Many disciplines, including rhetoric and composition, have found a different model of disciplinarity useful in defining their work. Ernest L. Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered* provides a useful way to think of scholarship as a more inclusive term, a concept that extends beyond research. He offers a four-part definition of scholarship that creates an interdependent whole. The parts are scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. The scholarship of discovery covers what we usually mean when we talk about research. Boyer argues that discovery lies at the heart of academic life, and that even as he argues for a broader conceptualization of scholarship, that discovery must be further cultivated and defended. The scholarship of integration is synthesis, placing the work of discovery in context outside of academic specialization. In this way, integration encourages interdisciplinarity by blurring traditional boundaries between specializations. The scholarship of application is engagement with scholarship outside of the academy. Boyer emphasizes the importance of service outside the academy

because scholarship must at one point or another be relevant to the outside world. He asserts that theory and practice interact with and renew one another through application.

The scholarship of teaching is not only about transmitting established knowledge, but also about transforming and extending it. Boyer also points out that if scholars de-emphasize teaching for the sake of original research, they endanger the future of their discipline because new students may not take an active enough interest in the discipline to pursue graduate study. Scholars must train more scholars: “Without the teaching function, the continuity of knowledge will be broken and the store of human knowledge dangerously diminished” (24). Boyer’s broader definition of scholarship seems especially useful for rhetoric and composition because as a discipline it does not privilege only research as its primary *raison d’etre*. However, Boyer’s model situates discovery as the first of his taxonomy of scholarship, which serves as a useful reminder that research remains a benchmark for disciplinary status. Boyer’s model offers an increased emphasis on the importance of teaching in scholarship that is appealing to a discipline like rhetoric and composition, but it does not remove or inhibit the need for research. His model still upholds the vital role original research plays in the establishment and maintenance of disciplines.

Before moving to an examination of rhetoric and composition’s conflicted sense of its own disciplinarity, I will briefly turn to an example of an emerging field that helps to bring into focus the key concerns of disciplinarity. In an article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jeffrey J. Williams, an English professor at Carnegie Mellon University, outlines the emergence of a new field of study that he and Heather

Steffen have labeled “critical university studies.” In brief, this field is an interdisciplinary approach to researching and critiquing the university that is based in both academic and activist principles. Williams marks territory for this particular instantiation of historical research into the university by distinguishing it from earlier works on the university that took a less explicitly critical stance (hence his addition of “critical” to the field’s title), citing examples of texts published over the last two decades—the lifespan of critical university studies thus far by his reckoning—that question the increasing corporatization and privatization of the university, such as Lawrence C. Soley’s *Leasing the Ivory Tower* and Jennifer Washburn’s *University, Inc.*, as well as texts that examine the subsequent problems of labor that result from that corporatization, such as Joe Berry’s *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower* and Marc Bousquet’s *How the University Works*.

Williams configures critical university studies as a field rather than a discipline. Much like cultural studies, his envisioned field draws from disciplines across the university, providing an interdisciplinary space for scholarship that is otherwise difficult to classify according to individual disciplines. Indeed, he contemplates briefly that the disciplinary space may be education, but he finds that discipline lacking because of its attention to primary and secondary education. He fails to point out higher education—often a distinct program from education—as a potential space for this work, but it seems clear that he would still seek an interdisciplinary base for critical university studies. Such a field suggests a potential negation of the tightly structured and often hermetically sealed boundaries of disciplinarity—a negation that seems appropriate for a field that critiques university practices.

Williams' article indirectly highlights the problem of disciplinarity through its challenge to the conventional boundaries within the university. One would be hard pressed to imagine what a department of critical university studies would look like (although, if one follows the undercurrent of Williams' argument when he states that his emerging field has "succeeded literary theory as a nexus of intellectual energy," it seems possible that he may think that English *is* such a department despite his championing of interdisciplinarity), and the inability to imagine how the field would fit into an academic unit indicates how we think disciplines function. Critical university studies draws from methodologies found in social sciences, the humanities, and legal studies, making it difficult to assemble a faculty that could be sufficiently conversant in the broad research practices of such a field.

To think about critical university studies within my frame of epistemological and institutional pressures, it seems clear that it could not survive the institutional pressures—especially considering that it would always take a de facto oppositional stance to the institution—of disciplinarity. Disseminating scholarship through conferences, journals, and book-length works is obviously possible, since this scholarship already appears in those avenues, even if not under the unifying moniker that Williams provides. Yet the methodological divide proclaimed as a strength in the article seems like an unbridgeable gap between the status of field and discipline. Epistemologically, the field will self-reflexively examine its own practices and boundaries because that is in essence what the field does to begin with. It seems obvious that as an academic discipline, critical university studies would inhabit a constant state of identity discomfort. But it seems

impossible to think of a structure that could give programmatic and curricular shape (these being institutional pressures) to a discipline of critical university studies. Williams is not calling for disciplinarity, indicating his awareness to some degree that these problems exist. But seeing how these problems exhibit in relation to critical university studies points out what allows the shaping of a discipline through institutional and epistemological pressures. Thinking about these problems concerning disciplinarity now allows us to turn to rhetoric and composition and examine its troubled status as a discipline.

### **Rhetoric and Composition's Troubled Disciplinary Status**

Since the late 1980s, members of the discipline have published a significant number of essays and monographs reflecting on whether or not rhetoric and composition should be considered a discipline. This section seeks to represent only a few of those voices precisely because it is difficult to attempt to represent all the voices that have challenged or supported disciplinarity for rhetoric and composition over the past several decades. However, one of the most influential of these texts has also been one of the most controversial interpretations of the disciplinary future of rhetoric and composition: Stephen North's 1987 *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*. The book took a decidedly firm stance on the question of disciplinarity, and it was not one favorable for what was unarguably then a fledgling discipline. The subtitle of his book refers to rhetoric and composition (which he calls only composition, a significant difference in usage that I will explore below) as an "emerging field." North's assertion that rhetoric

and composition was still a fledgling field in 1987 is not as problematic as his assertion that composition possessed no disciplinary cohesion. In most cases, field and discipline are used interchangeably, a practice I embrace throughout this dissertation, although the two carry slightly different connotations, since a field can exist within a broader discipline: For instance, writing assessment is a field of study within the broader discipline of rhetoric and composition.

North parses out the differences between discipline and field, arguing composition was not yet a discipline because it lacked a unifying methodology. His book charts eight types of scholars in rhetoric and composition, using divisions that many scholars since have seen as deliberately artificial, such as *practitioners*, *historians*, and *ethnographers* to demonstrate the methodological inconsistency within rhetoric and composition. Instead of coalescing into a coherent discipline, North argues that composition suffers from a “methodological land rush,” that composition is “virgin territory,” territory in which new research practices must emerge to replace “the dominance of practice and sloppy research” (17). North’s definition of a discipline is narrower than suits the methodological variety found in rhetoric and composition today, which exceeds the variety that North surveyed in the 1980s. He acknowledges that it would be beneficial to declare composition a discipline because of the status that is associated with disciplinarity in the university structure, but he cannot make his definition of disciplinarity square with the field as he surveys it.

It would be one thing for North to acknowledge that composition is a field and not a discipline, but he pursues an even more apocalyptic conclusion. He argues that

composition is not likely to survive even as a field because the different methodologies will eventually rip the field apart from within. As he saw the field in 1987, there was no way to provide unity for the field because there was no way to synthesize the field in any coherent fashion. He begins his book with a brief narrative of a doctoral student who failed his comprehensive exams because, even though he had read widely in composition—as widely as North himself had read, he rather modestly posits—the doctoral student could not answer questions about the field as a whole.

North extrapolates his view that the field will eventually fall into chaotic ruin from this initial event. In his conclusion, he remarks that “It might not be much to claim, in fact, that for all the rhetoric about unity in pursuit of one or another goal, Composition as a knowledge-making society is gradually pulling itself apart” (364). He argues that what he perceives as completely incompatible methodological approaches to research generate oppositional camps that cannot help but rip each other apart. He then concludes that composition, which he figures as one-third of the “tripod” of English studies—literary studies, linguistics, and composition—cannot bear an equal share of the knowledge-making responsibility, meaning that composition will remain a subservient, sub-standard field of study within English departments.

This thought leads him to a final word on composition that continues to resound in scholarship that examines rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary status: either composition must become full partners with literary studies in English departments or it needs to declare independence, to secede and seek out disciplinary legitimacy through a unified approach to methodology. He is not particularly optimistic that either is possible

in the long term. His only note of hope for the survival of composition comes from the idea that the literacy crisis, so clearly demonstrated in the 1975 article “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” will provide legislative and public support for continuing writing instruction.

In other words, North does not believe epistemological pressure can adequately give shape to rhetoric and composition, but instead that only institutional pressure can do so. However, the maintenance of disciplinarity requires the continual recursive interaction of epistemological and institutional pressure. If North was right that the rival tribes tenuously housed under the disciplinary banner of composition would eventually devour and destroy one another, then no amount of institutional pressure would have been able to sustain composition as a discipline. In many ways, Stephen North’s study was prophetic. Since 1987, many writing programs have sought independence from English departments, leading to a number of independent writing programs that have built undergraduate and graduate degrees in writing outside of disciplinary association with English departments. And even for those faculty and departments who have not broken away from English departments, the continued institutional association of literary studies and composition studies remains problematic.

However, North’s prediction that rhetoric and composition would die out was frankly wrong. The discipline continues to grow and thrive in ways that North could not imagine when he published his book. In the introduction to *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition*, a collection of contemporary perspectives on North’s book and its influence, Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt write that North’s book arrived at a



pivotal moment in composition, as it transitioned into disciplinary status. They argue that their book, published in 2011, comes at an equally important moment for the discipline: “we hear ever more calls to replace traditional composition and the pedagogical imperative that term has long implied with a writing studies model devoted to the study of writing as a fundamental tool of and force within all realms of human society” (1-2). The move from composition to writing studies is far from a done deal, although it is one persuasive way of reckoning with the problem of a discipline founded in a single course. However, the calls that Massey and Gebhardt note indicate continued discomfort with the disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition.

In a reflection on how the field has changed and evolved since Stephen M. North’s landmark *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, Lance Massey argues in the concluding essay of *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition* that “we still face something like a disciplinary identity crisis...At the very least, who we are and what we do remain fuzzy, contestable categories” (“The (Dis)Order of Composition” 306). Massey argues that as rhetoric and composition continues to grow and develop, it needs to retain its self-reflexive habit in order to construct itself as an interdisciplinary field, following the writing studies model suggested by Charles Bazerman, Susan Miller, and Sid Dobrin, among others. Like Kopelson, Massey acknowledges that our disciplinary identity remains in flux, shifting to accommodate new lines of inquiry and new methodologies.

However, his suggestion that we embrace the fluidity of the discipline means that he finds value in the instability of disciplinary identity. The protean nature of the

discipline, which leads many scholars to contemplate what the discipline is and what it does, is not a flaw; instead, it is one of the chief strengths of rhetoric and composition, a quality that enables the discipline to adapt to meet the demands of new and more diverse student populations and to address broader concepts of composing (i.e., visual, aural, and digital texts). Massey characterizes the instability of disciplinary identity as a crisis while I contend that the discipline experiences discomfort, a word I favor because it does not imply the state of emergency that crisis suggests, but we agree that the discipline's boundaries remain difficult to define, and that this difficulty is ultimately good for rhetoric and composition.

In *The End of Composition Studies*, published in 2004, David W. Smit extends North's argument that composition studies lacks the methodological consistency to provide the justification for claiming disciplinarity. He argues that the divergent interests brought together under composition studies detract from the implied purpose of composition studies: the study of writing. He further proposes that most of the work necessary to understand how we write has been exhausted. This does not mean that he believes we can learn nothing more about writing, but rather that composition studies is not the appropriate academic field for continuing studies of writing. With this move, Smit removes the strand of hope identified at the end of North's book—that institutional pressures may maintain composition even if epistemological pressures are not sufficiently present—leaving instead the notion that not only is composition studies not a discipline, but that it is unethical to continue work in the field unless we identify precisely what work we are doing and separate that work from the study of writing.

A similar attack on the ethics of composition studies can be seen in Sharon Crowley's *Composition in the University*. However, Crowley's critique is rooted in the field's dependence on the first-year writing course and the subsequent dependence on exploited labor. She applauds composition studies for its "unusual professional practices and attitudes" as a potential model of institutional change (4). Crowley is referring to the privileged role of teaching in the discipline, and the attention that teaching receives from scholars. She also praises the vast array of scholarship in the field, which distinguishes her argument from those made by North and Smit that the variety of methodological approaches deems composition ineligible to claim a disciplinary identity. Her criticism comes in the form of an attack on labor practices. She refers to those who teach composition as "intellectual proles" who can expect to teach without adequate compensation (130). Crowley follows the logic of her criticism and calls for an end to the requirement of first-year writing courses, proposing instead that students receive instruction in rhetoric from tenured or tenure-track professors who reside not in English departments, but in free-standing rhetoric departments, and that composition become an elective within the curriculum. Crowley does not reject composition; rather, Crowley rejects unethical labor practices that are associated with the implementation of composition as a service course. Her position then moves away from North's call for composition to become a partner with literary studies to a call for independence from English studies altogether.

Some scholars in rhetoric and composition find that examining the disciplinarity of the field is less beneficial than examining the set of teaching practices that, although

they have changed, have defined the work of composition for decades. Joseph Harris, for example, makes a case for reexamining composition as a site that privileges teaching in his 1997 monograph, *A Teaching Subject*.<sup>5</sup> He argues that it is the only field in the university where the subject material is situated within the university rather than without, placing emphasis on the controversial first-year writing course as the unifying feature.

Harris calls his book a “sympathetic counterstatement” to other works about knowledge making in composition. In other words, he is less interested in the argument about disciplinarity than he is about how composition works as a pedagogical endeavor: “I have looked here instead at composition as a teaching subject—as a loose set of practices, concerns, issues, and problems having to do with how writing gets taught” (xvi). Harris considers his book to be an effort to reinvigorate the value of teaching in the discipline rather than a study of how the discipline functions as such. Yet even while we take to heart Harris’ effort to remind us that teaching lives at the heart of the discipline, it is noteworthy that *A Teaching Subject* was the book Harris wrote to receive tenure at the University of Pittsburgh, just as Stephen North’s *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* secured him tenure at SUNY-Albany.<sup>6</sup> This fact does not undermine the importance of Harris’ work; rather, it serves as a reminder that disciplinarity is not just the outcome of epistemological pressures: The institutional demands of tenure require the production of scholarship as well. So even as Harris writes to reassert the importance of teaching, he does so in response to the institutional pressures that contribute to the shaping of disciplinarity.

Like Harris, David Bartholomae has expressed concern over the urge toward disciplinarity in rhetoric and composition. In an essay that he contributed to Bloom, Daiker, and White's *Composition in the Twenty-First Century*, entitled "What is Composition and (If You Know What That Is) Why Do We Teach It?", Bartholomae seeks to define precisely what he means by the term composition, explicitly stating that he does not mean that he is attempting to define the discipline:

I need to be clear: the composition I am talking about is not a consensus or a specific professional (or "disciplinary") agenda; it is not in the control of composition professionals; it is not represented by the conflicts that take place at meetings or in journals. It is, rather, a set of problems produced by a wider, more diffuse set of practices and desires, usually brought into play by instances of language choice or variety (or by the possibility that writing might change or be various). ("What is Composition," 11)

Bartholomae's statement does not dismiss the notion of disciplinarity, but he makes plain his desire to talk about "a set of problems" that address the practical concerns of writers. Like Harris, Bartholomae finds it more vital to focus on what occurs when writers face new challenges in dealing with language. To be certain that he makes his assertion clear, at the end of his introduction, he reinforces the idea that the kind of composition he focuses on is not disciplinary: "Composition is not...the same thing as the combined desires and practices of the members of [CCCC] on any given day. It is not summed up in the journals, and it has an off-and-on again relationship with the 'key figures' in the field" (12). Bartholomae, then, wants to shift attention away from attempts to assert a disciplinary history for rhetoric and composition—although, intriguingly, a significant segment of his CCCC Chairs' Address in 1988 focuses on that history, which I discuss at

greater length in Chapter Two—and move the attention of the field back to the problems and practices of writers. His call for such a shift resonates with Harris’ attention to composition as a teaching subject the following year, as well as Kopelson’s call in 2008 for the field of rhetoric and composition to move away from its efforts to define itself for disciplinary purposes and to focus its attention on the study of writing.

While Harris, Bartholomae, and Kopelson all suggest a healthy suspicion for the field’s omnipresent urge to examine its own disciplinary boundaries and legitimacy, other scholars have argued that disciplinarity is simply not a practical measure of a field to begin with, or that disciplinary work does not accurately reflect what they see as the fundamentally interdisciplinary work of the field. In *Introducing English*, James F. Slevin attacks the very notion of disciplinarity as a whole, asserting that the modern university misconceives of disciplines entirely. He argues that disciplines are currently defined as bodies of knowledge to be learned and mastered. By this definition, disciplines become exclusionary bodies that require extensive expertise before members can fully participate. Slevin’s definition points to the extensive graduate education required of individuals before they can join the community of scholars that defines a discipline.

In this sense, Slevin’s interpretation of disciplinarity does not distinguish him from others. What does separate him is what tends to separate rhetoric and composition from other disciplines more generally: his interest in teaching. He challenges the conventional privileging of research in disciplinarity by examining the etymological roots of *discipline*, drawing attention to *discere*, which is Latin for “to learn.” Through this move, he privileges pedagogy over research as the basis of a discipline. Disciplines are

co-authored by interaction between students and teachers. Research becomes subordinate to the interests of this interactive authorship. His point allies him in sentiment to Joe Harris' attention to teaching, although Harris does not balk at the research-oriented basis for disciplinarity. Slevin urges a complete move away from the university's focus on research, pushing faculty members instead to place primary emphasis on teaching. Slevin's argument seems to be something of a sleight of hand, considering his own engagement with scholarship and research in his book, in which he focuses a great deal of his attention on formation of English as an area of study in colonial America. In other words, his book does not seem to seek to move attention away from research to teaching. Instead, his attack on disciplinarity seems more like an attack on the direction of the field rather than on disciplinarity itself.

Like Slevin, Karen Burke LeFevre argues that disciplinarity can in fact be damaging for the production of knowledge. In her 1986 book *Invention as a Social Act*, LeFevre seeks to refute the idea that invention can be separated from social contexts, building on the work of early collaboration scholars in rhetoric and composition such as Kenneth Bruffee and Martin Buber. She asserts that the disciplines should focus their attention more on language as the center of the study and production of knowledge, because language mediates knowledge. She pushes for a model of interdisciplinary interaction that centers on the sustained study of language, which she sees as a subject well beyond the expertise of particular disciplines.

Through this focus on the social force of language, LeFevre urges universities to embrace interdisciplinary study, to work toward "a possible synthesis of the

fragmentation of knowledge existing in the academic disciplines” (136). Regarding rhetoric and composition more specifically, LeFevre argues that composition theorists and teachers should “concern ourselves less with defining our separate [disciplinary] territory and more with expanding our role as interdisciplinary agents” (137). Ultimately, LeFevre does not oppose the development of specialized knowledge within different disciplines, but rather she opposes the habit in academia for the disciplines to pull away from one another. She urges writing specialists to embrace Writing Across the Curriculum, a curricular model that was still quite young in 1986. So while LeFevre cautions readers against the fragmenting tendencies of disciplinarity, she does not, as Slevin does, contend that disciplinarity is itself somehow wrong. Instead, LeFevre urges readers to embrace the social aspects of the production of knowledge, to work with others both in and out of their areas of specialization.

I end this section with a brief discussion of a text that both complicates the disciplinary views expressed above and that offers a means of interpreting disciplinary identities that matches well with the ways that I have defined disciplinarity thus far. In his 2006 book, *Disciplinary Identities: Rhetorical Paths of English, Speech, and Composition*, Steven Mailloux examines the question of identification with disciplines from a broader perspective than many of the authors discussed above because he focuses his attention not on composition, as most of the scholars above do, but instead on rhetoric, which he positions as a master discipline within which the disciplinary work of many fields work with and against one another to define their particular spaces for producing knowledge and teaching. The beginning of his first chapter establishes the



disciplinary power of rhetoric and the anxiety that produces: “The intellectual imperialism of rhetoric often provokes disciplinary anxiety these days. In some human sciences, this anxiety takes the form of a general epistemological worry over whether everything we can know is ‘only’ rhetorical, constituted entirely by language” (9). He presses the argument that if we conceive of rhetoric as something so large that we can only understand things through rhetoric, that the very notion of rhetoric becomes useless, encompassing too much to mean anything.

His book traces that anxiety through the particular fields that he enumerates in his title—English studies, speech, and composition—and focuses on how individuals who self-identify as rhetoricians seek to define their professional identities. He argues that the construction of these disciplinary identities is itself one of the most important rhetorical activities in the contemporary university:

Identifications with scholarly professions, placing oneself in a specialized field as one speaks, writes, publishes, teaches, hires, and engages in other rhetorical practices: such disciplinary-identified praxis constitutes perhaps the most powerful conditions of academic work, both constraining and enabling intellectual accomplishment, closing down and opening up possibilities for thinking. (125)

Mailloux presents the construction of disciplinary identity as fundamentally rhetorical, a point which is vital to this project, because I likewise assert that the construction of a disciplinary identity represents the confluence of numerous rhetorical activities for members of a disciplinary community.

The work of these scholars clearly demonstrates that there are many perspectives on the disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition. For some of these authors,

disciplinary status is simply not something worth worrying about, while for others, disciplinarity provides a means for conceiving of fields of inquiry that tend toward the fracturing of knowledge. That there are so many perspectives indicates that it continues to be worthwhile to ask how and whether rhetoric and composition constitutes a discipline, or at least to ask what disciplinary status actually means for rhetoric and composition. For the writers above, the key question tends to follow one of two dominant threads: 1) whether or not rhetoric and composition can be considered a discipline, because its research methodologies are too varied or because it is not a research discipline, but instead a teaching-oriented endeavor; or 2) whether rhetoric and composition benefits from retaining disciplinary status, either because of a shift toward privileging research over teaching or because the very existence of the discipline creates ethical dilemmas such as the continued exploitation of non-tenure-track faculty.

In all cases, what is clear is that a certain amount of discomfort accompanies discussion of disciplinary status for rhetoric and composition. My focus on disciplinary identity in this dissertation takes it as a given that rhetoric and composition is a discipline, defined by the markers that have developed to indicate academic disciplines, such as active scholarly journals, professional organizations and conferences, and a presence in the curricula of colleges and universities. I am less concerned with arguing that rhetoric and composition is a discipline than examining how members of the field seek to construct their identities with or against that discipline, and the authors above demonstrate that for several decades, scholars have found it uncomfortable to define their work in ways that indicate disciplinarity.

## **Terministic Screens We Live By**

A brief return to Geoffrey Sirc's review essay can bring us to the problem at the heart of this dissertation. In his parenthetical comment about the "career criminal" composition, Sirc conflates the name of the composition course with the name of the discipline that grew from that course. Although Sirc's conflation is at times understandable, since rhetoric and composition holds central to its disciplinary work the teaching of writing, it is nonetheless both a dangerous and an informative conflation. He lists off several possible names for the course, including composition, FYC (first-year composition), and FYW (first-year writing). There are even more possible terms for the first-year writing course, including college writing, freshman English, and writing and rhetoric. He also drops in three terms that do not indicate the course, but instead the discipline: composition studies, comp/rhet, and writing studies. In both cases—course and discipline—Sirc elides the differences expressed by the multiple names, combining them into a litany of titles associated with a course he considers fatally problematic. His elision is illustrative of a central difficulty in the discipline: What do we call our discipline? And what implications come with the choices we make?

Until now in this chapter, I have joined Sirc and numerous other scholars in casually exchanging the names we use to demarcate our discipline, playing fast and loose with the name that defines our work. I usually do so contextually, temporarily adopting and working with a name as provided by a scholar. But now is the moment to make overt my own preference: The name that I use most often is rhetoric and composition. I choose this term most often for two reasons. First, I find the term to be more inclusive than other

terms like composition studies or writing studies. Second, this is the term ascribed to the discipline by my graduate program. The second reason is important to note because it points to a tendency that I will find vital throughout this dissertation: a person's educational background shapes how he or she perceives the boundaries of the discipline. It happens that the graduate program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro seeks to establish a balance between rhetoric and composition. In other words, even as I use the term "rhetoric and composition" to indicate the discipline, I acknowledge a separation between rhetorical studies and composition studies. As Burke points out, the counterpart of identification is division. Within my preferred term is a division, but my combination of the two forges a connection that I find fruitful. Rhetorical theory informs composition studies and vice versa. To separate the two is to separate two fields of study that I believe complement one another.

However, it is not my goal here to argue for a single term that defines our discipline and subsequently what we do as members of our discipline. While it could be useful from an institutional perspective to solidify the name of our discipline, it would not be useful from an epistemological perspective. To adapt another Burkean term, each name functions as a terministic screen, directing our attention in one direction through contextual associations while diverting our attention away from other possible associations. Every name carries different connotations—different ways of seeing the work of the discipline—and this is a positive attribute to what may seem like a cacophonous array of names. It is also a useful way to understand how different authors position themselves within the discipline. Different names imply different primary

allegiances and different understandings of where the boundaries of the discipline rest. Thinking about the name of the discipline employed helps us to understand the limitations of certain studies.

In addition to Kenneth Burke's terministic screens, I find George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's metaphorical concepts a useful way to think about disciplinary names as significant to shaping disciplinary identity. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that the way we relate to the world, our conceptual system that defines our daily lives, is fundamentally metaphorical. They state emphatically that metaphors are not only matters of language, but also of thought and action. To help differentiate the commonplace association of metaphor with extraordinary or literary language, Lakoff and Johnson use the term metaphorical concepts to remind readers that metaphors shape how we think. Disciplinary names are obviously not metaphors in the traditional sense, but they do fit within the category of metaphorical concepts because they are crucial to shaping our thinking about the discipline. Different names suggest different association with the university—which is, of course, itself a metaphorical concept—and different arrangements within the space implied by the university.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that understanding metaphorical concepts helps us to understand how we think about concepts: “human thought processes are largely metaphorical” (6). Their metaphor theory leads to different kinds of understanding, from mutual understanding between individuals from either the same or different cultures to self-understanding, because being able to understand how metaphorical concepts shape our thinking is crucial for understanding ourselves. Lakoff and Johnson's description of

how metaphorical concepts work sounds remarkably like Burke's description of terministic screens: "In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept [...] a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor" (10). The two terms—metaphorical concepts and terministic screens—both point to how language can direct attention to or from certain ideas.

For instance, Stephen North's *Making of Knowledge in Composition* uses the term "composition" to mark the boundaries of the discipline—or field, as he saw it. Early in the formation and solidification of the discipline, it was a common name to indicate those scholars who study student processes of writing and use those studies to theorize about writing. He does not make space at the disciplinary table for rhetoric, which removes a considerable area of study. Following the publication of Edward Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* in 1963, rhetoric became an increasingly important field of scholarship, which makes it puzzling that rhetoric is not included in North's text. However, some leniency must be given to North. After all, his monograph was the first full-length book to assess methodology in a field that was only beginning to build graduate programs and a consistent body of scholarship.

Composition is no longer prominently used to name the discipline. Many scholars now employ the term composition studies, which was not yet in vogue when North published his monograph. The addition of "studies" does indicate a separation between the course and the discipline, allowing composition then to indicate the first-year writing course. It also goes some length to contributing a sense of legitimacy to the discipline.

Composition studies indicates a discipline that makes a study of the act of composing. The term is limited by the notion that composition is specifically an academic activity. Indeed, composition carries connotations of the original writing assignments associated with early first-year writing courses, the weekly themes. This term suffers from the same lack of recognition of association with rhetoric.

Krista Ratcliffe makes note of the absence of rhetoric from the term, recounting an experience with a journal editor in which her phrase rhetoric and composition studies was shortened simply to composition studies. She decided that the reduction was made to save space, but she continued noting the absence of her phrase in articles and books. She writes, “I find it odd that, if one term had to drop out of the phrase rhetoric and composition studies, that the term was rhetoric and not composition. [...] I’ve always seen rhetoric as the larger category of the two.” She goes on to argue for rhetoric and composition studies—a phrase similar to my own preferred phrase—because it provides a large umbrella for the discipline, providing space for research in such areas as writing centers, writing across the curriculum, and the history of rhetoric.

What becomes clear quickly is that the association of rhetoric and composition is problematic. The terms are not interchangeable parts, nor do they point to the same research interests and methodologies. Rhetoric is not solely the domain of English departments. Many scholars in communication studies, for example, produce scholarship on rhetoric. Those scholars do not work with composition studies at all—composition is simply not in their disciplinary space. Yet rhetoric and composition are frequently attached to one another as a single entity. The tenuous and curious connection between

the two fields was the subject of a 2003 special issue of *Enculturation*, with contributions from scholars in rhetoric such as Sharon Crowley, David Bleich, Susan Jarratt, and Krista Radcliffe (whose above comments on rhetoric and composition studies come from those pages). The positions taken concerning the relationship between rhetoric and composition vary from arguments for the productive interaction between the two—the position taken by Krista Radcliffe and Cynthia Haynes, for example—and for the stark separation of the two—the position taken by Sharon Crowley and Peter Vandenberg. Radcliffe’s position has mostly already been presented above. The subtitle of her essay does express some ambivalence regarding the continued association of rhetoric and composition: “Is Rhetoric Gone or Just Hiding Out?” Radcliffe is not arguing for a division between the two. Rather, she is concerned that the two are separating from one another, especially through the preferential use of disciplinary names such as composition studies. Cynthia Haynes argues for the term rhetoric/composition, removing the conjunctive “and” in favor of a slash. She argues that the slash represents a continuing connection between rhetoric and composition through pedagogy, in this sense calling rhetoric/composition “a mutually beneficial tautology.” The tautological becomes positive because it perpetuates exchange between the two sides of the slash. She concludes that the slash preserves a lack of resolution concerning the tension between rhetoric and composition, a tension that allows each to grow in multiple directions while continuing to feed into and complement one another.

While Haynes and Radcliffe take the view that the connection of rhetoric and composition can be beneficial to both sides of the blurry divide, Sharon Crowley states



emphatically that rhetoric is not composition—so emphatically that this is what she titles her essay. Crowley argues that the “disciplinary yoking” of rhetoric to composition has two causes, one historical and one political. The historical cause is that composition was a part of rhetoric in the classical tradition. The political cause is that associating the fledgling field of composition to rhetoric in the 1960s was a way of attaining status for composition teachers. She then briefly traces what she marks as the decline of rhetoric in composition scholarship, to the point that doctoral students can earn degrees in composition studies without encountering rhetorical studies. Crowley then notes that there is no reason that the two fields cannot work with one another—as long as composition courses place emphasis on invention in service to civic engagement—but that she does not think it likely because those who teaching first-year writing are “scandalously low-paid and contingently-hired faculty” (“Rhetoric is Not Composition”).

Crowley makes the same claim in *Composition in the University*, as I have already discussed. She then takes an apocalyptic turn that seems to be an inversion of Stephen North’s claim that composition could not last as an academic field of study: “I am very concerned about the very survival of the academic study of rhetoric.” Peter Vandenberg does not pursue the same despairing note. Rather, he sketches what he confesses to be a “too-brief” history of rhetoric and composition, arguing that rhetoric and composition were conjoined through a “simple, benign coordination of degraded elements in the new English department of the late-nineteenth century.” He points toward what he considers an increasing disciplinary divide between rhetoric and composition, but he ultimately determines that rhetoric—like English studies—depends on college

writing instruction for its institutional stability, even if the work of rhetoricians goes far beyond writing pedagogy. Vandenberg offers a solution that many scholars reach when considering the complexities and instabilities of rhetoric and composition as a discipline: an undergraduate major. For Vandenberg, resolution of the stark divide between the scholarly endeavors of rhetoricians and compositionists lies in curriculum building.

An increasingly prominent name, as Massey and Gebhardt point to in *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition*, is writing studies, a title that completely erases the question of how to balance rhetoric and composition. Further, it removes the assumption that college composition is the disciplinary limit of research in writing. The term suggests a discipline that is interested in theories and pedagogies of writing writ large, opening research avenues beyond the institutional limits of postsecondary writing. Charles Bazerman asks why inquiry into writing is a “dispersed enterprise,” taken up in fragmented pockets of disciplines. He asserts that the study of writing has no home of its own. He calls for the new disciplinary space that he envisions under the banner of writing studies to grow from composition as its starting point: “Of all disciplines, composition is best positioned to begin to put together the large, important, and multidimensional story of writing” (33). He states that initiatives in writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines (initiatives that disciplinarily tend to live in composition but institutionally are frequently separate from the disciplinary home of rhetoric and composition) demonstrate that a focus on first-year writing—which he implies is the domain of composition studies—is not a broad enough field to examine the complexities of writing. From an institutional perspective, a call for writing studies can quickly become a call for

independence from English studies, with writing departments that construct undergraduate majors and graduate programs of their own.

In “Writing Studies as a Mode of Inquiry,” Susan Miller situates writing studies as a name that provides space for disciplinary growth: “...as a still emerging field matures, its particular methods and goals need a strategically calculated descriptor that can assure its future development, as well as general agreement over the particular set of intellectual questions that such a descriptor entails” (41). She points to the need for agreement that contributes to disciplinary coherence. She frames disciplinary identification as a common set of intellectual questions—as opposed to a common methodology. For Miller, other names for the discipline do not provide the potential space for growth that the name writing studies allows.

She spends the remainder of her essay defending archival studies as a legitimate method of inquiry, arguing that a discipline called writing studies creates a broad space for historical studies of texts in addition to other approaches to inquiry. She also argues that moving away from composition as the name of our discipline, even if we do not move away from teaching composition, enables the problem of labor to be dealt with more decisively because the new discipline of writing studies would not have the same association with exploited labor that rhetoric and composition continues to possess: “The title names our work as a discrete academic undertaking in which teaching, specifically teaching composing, is a cultural action that embodies hegemony, not a demeaned labor around which a field sprang up opportunistically” (43). Miller’s argument points to how vital the name of the discipline is: A new name can fundamentally change how the

discipline is positioned in the university, meaning that the shift can solve some of the most crucial crises rhetoric and composition continues to face.

Like Miller and Bazerman, Douglas Hesse offers *writing* as nomenclature that may provide rhetoric and composition with the breadth that many of its members want to see it gain. In “The Place for Creative Writing in Composition Studies,” an article published in *CCC*’s 2010 special issue on disciplinarity in rhetoric and composition, Hesse asserts that a broader conceptualization of writing enables the field to grow in ways that will allow it to continue pursuing its lines of inquiry. He writes:

Although *composition studies* has emerged in the past thirty years as a capacious discipline with an increasingly vertical curriculum, and although many have aptly critiqued the narrow equation of *composition* with *first year comp*, to my mind the term has borne an undertow of service to schooling. In contrast, *writing* has seemed a large extra-academic gaze... (“A Place for Creative Writing,” 33)

Hesse’s assertion that composition, through its association with the first-year course that gave the field its name, suggests “service to schooling” places Hesse in the same tradition of disciplinary interpretation as Sharon Crowley. Hesse contends that naming the discipline in a different way is a means of helping to change the profile of the discipline, shifting it away from being seen as having a singular focus on teaching writing in undergraduate courses to broadening the areas in which members of the discipline can work if the focus of the discipline is instead on writing, more broadly construed. It is worth bearing in mind the place in which Hesse makes this argument, because he is urging those who identify themselves with composition studies to reconsider the place of creative writing in relation to composition studies. He urges the discipline to see itself as

something larger than a discipline that is rooted in the teaching of academic writing, and as he also suggests in his 2005 CCCC Chair's Address, "Who Owns Writing," taking disciplinary ownership of writing in a broader sense will help the discipline to thrive.

What quickly becomes clear is that the name associated with the discipline has the power to drastically reshape the work of the discipline—its epistemological imperative—and how the discipline fits into the university—its institutional imperative. Thinking of these names as terministic screens illustrates how the preference for one term demarcates the boundaries in different ways. Composition studies as a terministic screen has serious ramifications for the place of rhetoric in the discipline, even if scholars using the term do not endeavor to limit rhetoric as a participant in the discipline. Rhetoric and composition preserves a relationship between the two and suggests a mutually beneficial alliance while simultaneously declaring that they are in fact two fields—two intellectual endeavors rather tenuously connected by an overburdened conjunction. Writing studies points to a discipline that takes the last forty years of composition's disciplinary history as the beginning of its endeavor to examine the role of writing in every aspect of society rather than the admittedly limited role of writing in postsecondary education. And these particular titles are only a small sample of titles tossed about casually or proposed seriously in order to give shape and meaning to the work of our discipline. Every time we choose and employ a name for the discipline, we direct attention toward certain aspects of the discipline that we privilege, and the version of the discipline that we call into being by naming it affects our identification with rhetoric and composition.

## **Overview of Project**

The chapters that follow continue to examine how the name given to the discipline shapes what the discipline looks like and how the act of naming exhibits disciplinary identification and identity discomfort. This chapter has taken a historical perspective on disciplinarity, dealing mostly with texts that explicitly question the disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition. As many scholars have noted, rhetoric and composition remains fascinated by the question of its own disciplinarity, exploring its history for evidence of the progression of the discipline and for better understanding the concerns that have contributed to the shaping of the discipline as we now envision it.

The epigraph that opens this dissertation, the first stanza of Jonathan Monroe's poem on disciplinarity, "As It Is," reminds readers that disciplinarity is not a stable state: Disciplines have not always been disciplines, nor will they remain the same disciplines that they are at present. Academic disciplines remain fluid, adapting new methodological approaches when needed to examine new problems that arise as members of those communities contribute new scholarship and ask new questions or revisit old questions, seeking new answers. To state that disciplines are unstable should be a given, as there is no way that a discipline can be a stable area of scholarly activity. Disciplines must remain flexible and adaptable, and in fact are profoundly impacted by their ability to retain that flexibility and adaptability. The discipline of rhetoric and composition is by all accounts young when compared to most academic discipline, but it is not unique in its tendency to change; indeed, the discipline is not unique in its tendency to question its own legitimacy either. But rhetoric and composition provides a fascinating example of how academic

disciplines grow and change, a history that is complicated by rhetoric and composition's roots in pedagogy and the ways in which members of the field then had to contend for the benefits of disciplinary status in response to an academy that privileges research as the primary indicator of disciplinarity.

From here, the chapters focus on more specific disciplinary sites, examining how disciplinary names shape the work of those sites. I explore the idea that disciplinary identification occurs at multiple levels, so the chapters examine some of these various levels. In Chapter Two, "Professional Constructions of Disciplinary Identity: The Conference on College Composition and Communication and Disciplinary Articulation," I address the ways in which professional organizations function as critical disciplinary sites that contribute to the formation of disciplinary identity, focusing specifically on the history of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The chapter explores the founding of the organization in 1949, an organization that was established because the founders felt that college writing teachers needed a professional organization that addressed their specific concerns. I then examine the historical development of the organization, through the establishment of its chief periodical publication, *College Composition and Communication*, and the tradition of the Chairs' Addresses, speeches given by chairs of the conference starting in 1977 that have at times both reflected and influenced how members of the field envision their disciplinary identities. The chapter ultimately asserts that professional organizations function as one of the chief means of forming disciplinary identities because they provide the means for members of the discipline to communicate and identify with one another.

In Chapter Three, “Doctoral Programs as Sites of Disciplinary Identity Construction,” I explore the role of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition in shaping disciplinary identity, using *Rhetoric Review*’s periodic surveys of doctoral programs and the Doctoral Consortium’s Visibility Project as a means to discuss ways in which doctoral programs implicitly and explicitly advocate for the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. Then, I analyze curricular artifacts, including program descriptions, mission statements, core curricula, and dissertations, from five doctoral programs that exhibit different instantiations of disciplinary identity. Since doctoral programs are the sites where members of the discipline receive their major training and begin to construct their scholarly identities (and thus their identification with rhetoric and composition), examining the curricula and the dissertations produced demonstrates how different programs produce different understandings of the discipline. Doctoral programs act as crucial sites of forming identification with the discipline, for both the graduate faculty who design and teach in the courses and the students who are trained and credentialed in those programs.

In Chapter Four, “The Expanding Curricular Horizon of Rhetoric and Composition,” I examine the separate but related phenomena of undergraduate writing majors as well as independent writing programs, which I group together because the proliferation of writing majors and the growth of independent writing departments (admittedly a much slower growth than the growth in writing majors) both represent a desire among members of the discipline to expand the curricular gap between first-year writing and graduate education that characterized rhetoric and composition until only the



past couple of decades. I examine how *advanced composition* as a description for the only effort to bridge that gap has evolved into undergraduate writing majors, and how independent writing departments shed light on the tensions that exist between rhetoric and composition and what is often interpreted as its disciplinary umbrella home, English Studies. I then analyze five undergraduate writing majors, three from independent writing departments and two from English departments, that further demonstrate how the members of the discipline identify themselves in different ways depending on their specific institutional settings.

In Chapter Five, “First-Year Writing and Disciplinary Legitimacy,” I end the dissertation by examining the site of the discipline’s birth: first-year writing. These courses remain the most common curricular site for the disciplinary development of rhetoric and composition because of the near ubiquity of first-year writing in American institutions, making first-year writing a vital site for exploring how the discipline has shifted over the nearly century and a half since the establishment of English A at Harvard University. In this chapter, I trace two significant debates in the recent past of the discipline (the Bartholomae/Elbow debate and the Lindemann/Tate debate) that all point to the same dilemma regarding the first-year course: do writing classes have content? I then examine the development of Writing about Writing, a phenomenon that seeks to make disciplinary knowledge of rhetoric and composition the content of writing as a means of resolving that dilemma. Finally, I conclude the chapter and the dissertation by speculating on the future of the discipline in light of recent calls for higher education to shift its priorities away from its traditional focus on knowledge *qua* knowledge toward

giving students tools and skills that make them immediately employable, a focus on careers that, should it follow its current trend in attacking higher education, will have profound ramifications for all of the academic disciplines and individuals who identify with them.

CHAPTER II  
PROFESSIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF DISCIPLINARY IDENTITY: CCCC AND  
DISCIPLINARY ARTICULATION

For academic disciplines, professional organizations are a critical component for constructing their status as legitimate fields of inquiry. Professional organizations house publications from newsletters and member directories to scholarly journals and book series, making them an important component of the research-driven aspect of academic life. Rhetoric and composition has seen the number of professional organizations, with their attached publications and conferences, proliferate during the past century. Numerous organizations have provided important spaces for the professionalization and articulation of rhetoric and composition. Such organizations include the Rhetoric Society of America (RSA, founded in 1968), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA, founded in 1976), the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA, founded as the National Writing Centers Association in 1982), Two-Year College English Association (TYCA, founded in 1996), and the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE, founded in 1911)<sup>7</sup>, all of which bring to light different aspects of the discipline, whether those differences are based in scope, with CCCC being the discipline's largest, most encompassing organization, or in focus, such as CWPA and IWCA, which address more specific concerns within the broader field. The most

prominent and arguably the most crucial conference for the development of rhetoric and composition as a discipline is the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). With the exception of NCTE, whose membership extends beyond higher education to include teachers of English at every curricular level, CCCC is the largest conference of those listed above, representing the most diverse field of research and pedagogical interests in the discipline. As a subsidiary organization of NCTE, CCCC's chief objective is to address the professional needs of postsecondary teachers and scholars of writing.

This chapter focuses on the articulation of disciplinary identity at the level of professional organizations. Professional organizations are particularly relevant sites of disciplinary construction because part of their explicit purpose is to foster growth in the professional lives of their members. For academic disciplines, these professional organizations are one of the more visible indicators of disciplinary status. This chapter will focus exclusively on CCCC precisely because the organization acts as an extrainstitutional home to scholar-teachers with incredibly diverse interests and agendas. As the body that best represents rhetoric and composition as a unified whole and as an organization whose mission is to advance the professional identity of the discipline, CCCC is a prime organization to examine for differences in how the discipline is articulated and how the members of the organization articulate their identities in relation to the organization—and by extension, their relation to the discipline as a whole.

This chapter works a little differently than the other chapters in this dissertation. While the main focus of the dissertation is on disciplinary nomenclature and how that

nomenclature expresses disciplinary identity discomfort, this chapter focuses instead on how a professional organization seeks strategies to build a disciplinary identity to begin with. Subsequent chapters will comparatively focus on how the discipline is envisioned and articulated at the curricular level.

While the multiple voices that make up the organization certainly express anxiety and discomfort about rhetoric and composition's disciplinary identity—and I do note some of those voices in the chapter—I find it useful to examine the role of the discipline's largest professional organization in the development and articulation of a disciplinary identity for rhetoric and composition. First, I examine the early history of the organization as a means of addressing the atypical nature of rhetoric and composition as a disciplinary venture that traces its origins to pedagogy rather than a research agenda. Second, I note a particularly vital transitional period in CCCC's primary publishing venue, *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*, as an important marker in rhetoric and composition's development as a modern discipline, albeit still an atypical one. Third and finally, I provide a reading of a representative sample of the CCCC Chairs' Addresses, establishing a flexible taxonomy for understanding how the conference chairs have articulated the discipline's boundaries and goals.

### **A Brief History of CCCC**

The Conference for College Composition and Communication was formed in 1948 as a temporary conference to give college educators in NCTE more room to discuss issues particular to college-level writing and public speaking instruction. The Committee

on Freshman English Conference, established by NCTE and composed of college writing and speech instructors—including the first chair of CCCC, John C. Gerber—established a two-day conference that focused solely on issues of college instruction. The first conference, originally called the Conference on College Freshman Courses in Composition and Communication, was held in Chicago on April 1-2, 1949. At the next NCTE Annual Convention in Buffalo, CCCC was established as a three-year temporary conference. The conference was then ratified as a permanent organization within the umbrella of NCTE, with its own constitution, bylaws, officers (excluding the treasurer, who was also the treasurer of NCTE), and Executive Committee members.

In the first issue of *CCC*, John C. Gerber published a one-page statement that explained the structure of CCCC—its intertwined relationship with NCTE as well as its autonomy for electing officers, setting dues, and creating the conference program—and its agenda, which at that time was to hold the fall business meeting at NCTE, publish a quarterly bulletin, and hold the spring meeting. Gerber cites as cause for creating the organization that there were “at least nine thousand of us teaching in college courses in composition and communication. Faced with many of the same problems, concerned certainly with the same general objectives, we have for the most part gone our separate ways” (12). Thus Gerber establishes the chief purpose of the conference to be to provide a place and publication for aiding those nine thousand isolated teachers in finding common ground with one another outside their home institutions. Gerber concludes by pointing to the necessity of an organization that prioritizes the practical needs of its members: “We believe that the activities of this new organization are aimed at practical

needs in the profession, that the standards of the profession will be raised because of them” (12).

The first constitution and bylaws for CCCC was published in *CCC* in 1952.

Article 1 sets the objective of CCCC:

Section 2. The broad object of the CCCC is to unite teachers of college composition and communication in an organization which can consider all matters relevant to their teaching, including teachers, subject matter, administration, methods, and students. The specific objects are: (1) to provide an opportunity for discussion of problems relating to the organization and teaching of college composition and communications sources, (2) to encourages studies and research in the field, and (3) to publish a bulletin containing reports of conferences and articles of interest to teachers of composition and communication. (“Constitution” 19)

The objective, or “broad object” as it is phrased in the constitution, places a clear emphasis on pedagogical concerns. This emphasis reflects the immediate and pressing needs of the organization. The Conference began because those who taught freshman English wanted a space to discuss the numerous difficulties they faced on a regular basis. Richard Lloyd-Jones, who became a member of CCCC in the late 1950s, characterizes the early members of CCCC as “ad hoc problem solvers looking for survival.” He writes that “not high theory, but practical need brought them together” (“Who We Were” 487).

The early pages of *CCC* reflect a similar focus on the practical needs of writing teachers and administrators rather than a focus on research, especially since the initial standard practice of the journal was to publish reports on meetings from the Conference. Gordon Wilson writes in a 1967 retrospective on CCCC that for the first time, teachers of writing were able to gather and talk at length about common issues. After listing the

kinds of issues discussed at the conferences—teachers’ professional status, teaching load, problems with placement tests, teacher training, and cooperation with high schools— Wilson indicates that the conference gave its members a sense of professional identity: “For many of us the conference gave us the first sense of being professionals. It seems to me that the spirit of those meetings continues in the CCCC and accounts for the loyalty and the perseverance of its members” (128).

Although CCCC continues to function as a space for teachers to discuss issues of practical concern, the organization has evolved to include a stronger focus on research and scholarship. The Constitution and Bylaws have been revised many times since the first Constitution was ratified by members in 1951. The revisions reflect the changes in the scope and mission of the organization, thus making it worthwhile to consider the most recent update, made in August 2011:

Section 2. CCCC, as a conference of NCTE, supports and promotes the teaching and study of college composition and communication by 1) sponsoring meetings and publishing scholarly materials for the exchange of knowledge about composition, composition pedagogy, and rhetoric; 2) supporting a wide range of research on composition, communication, and rhetoric; 3) working to enhance the conditions for learning and teaching college composition and to promote professional development; and 4) acting as an advocate for language and literacy education nationally and internationally. (“Constitution of the Conference on College Composition and Communication”)

The initial statement puts equal weight on the “teaching and study” of composition, a distinct move toward elaborating a research agenda that was much more subdued in the original Constitution. By placing teaching as the first word in the phrase, the Constitution retains the organization’s original emphasis on pedagogy, but the first specific object



refers directly to the research-based mission of the contemporary CCCC; the initial language of “provid[ing] an opportunity for discussion of problems” is replaced by “the exchange of knowledge,” a much more scholarly intention than the original practically aimed discussion of problems. The current Constitution also places greater emphasis on the organization’s role in disseminating knowledge by placing “publishing scholarly materials” in the first object. The original Constitution sets that as the last object of the organization, and even then it refers specifically to *CCC*, whereas the current language does not explicitly name its scholarly journal, referring to CCCC’s ability to publish scholarship in more than one venue, even if *CCC* remains the organization’s chief print outlet.

The current Constitution is also an interesting glimpse into the shifting nomenclature of the discipline. The original Constitution does not name a discipline at all: composition and communication are two branches of the typical freshman course. The language of that section does not point toward growth into a discipline, but instead into an organization that advocates on behalf of teachers. The current Constitution retains the reference to college composition and communication; it would be astonishing if the Constitution abandoned that language while leaving the organization’s name unchanged. But it also refers to rhetoric and literacy, two words entirely absent from the original Constitution. Both terms reflect the discipline’s growth into territory that the original Committee on Freshman English Conference could not have anticipated.

Any statement as brief as a Section of the Constitution must necessarily exclude many of the numerous subfields of rhetoric and composition. The current constitution, for

example, does not mention historiography, reading studies, writing studies, new media, technical writing, or ethnography, to name only a few. A glance at any recent Convention Program will demonstrate that members of CCCC maintain a scholarly interest in literacy and countless other areas that fit loosely within the disciplinary space generated by the organization. Yet the Section does articulate a particular view of the discipline that continues to privilege composition, which remains a context-based form of writing specific to postsecondary institution. Even so, the current language provides a differentiation between “composition” and “composition pedagogy,” a distinction that likely would not have made sense to the founders and early members of CCCC. The separation of these terms implies different kinds of knowledge. The latter obviously refers to the teaching of writing. What then does the former refer to? As I just defined it, composition is a specific kind of writing activity. But the language here suggests that composition is perceived more broadly, perhaps as writing in general. Kathleen Blake Yancey calls for just such a broad definition of composition in her 2004 Chair’s Address, “Composing in a New Key,” in which she urges the field to think of composing as a term that includes visual and digital texts.<sup>8</sup> The broadness of the term would be particularly useful for CCCC as it continues to grow and sponsor scholarship in composition that branches out in new and unexpected directions.

Yet composition is not the only disciplinary area named in the title of the organization. Most disciplinary histories of rhetoric and composition pay more attention to the teachers of writing who have since received the greatest benefits from the professional organization. Yet the fourth C still remains: the disciplinary concept of

communication remains intertwined with CCCC, even if it is the neglected component. The continued presence of communication in the organization's name provides a sort of instability in the identity of the organization. Communication studies began the steps toward establishing itself as an academic discipline even before rhetoric and composition. As CCCC grew out of the College Section of NCTE, so the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS) grew out of the Public Speaking Section of NCTE, established in 1915, nearly thirty-five years prior to the formation of CCCC.<sup>9</sup> Steven Mailloux notes that teachers and scholars in public speech embraced the scientific study of rhetoric as a means of establishing a firm separation between English studies and what would eventually become communication studies. As he notes, "The establishment of a separate disciplinary identity was driven by speech teachers' desire to leave behind their subordinate status in English departments as they attained intellectual acceptance in the research university more generally" (11). But even as communication studies took root as an accepted academic discipline, with the establishment of departments of speech at numerous universities, English departments continued teaching speech as well, conflated in the Freshman English courses that gave instruction in both written and oral communication. It thus makes sense that the founders of CCCC included communication as one of the two areas the organization was meant to focus on.

David Bartholomae's brief history of CCCC, which he presented as part of his chair's address in 1988, notes some of the reasons that communication was made an integral part of the organization in the early years. He refers to freshman English classes

that had already integrated speech and writing as part of their curricula. He also refers to the “communications” movement led by Harold Allen, the third chair of CCCC. Perhaps most important—although Bartholomae does not place much emphasis on it—is the Navy V-12 program, which “forced colleges and universities during the war to combine instruction in speech and written communication in freshman courses in officer training programs” (“Freshman English” 176). World War II and its aftermath generated many of the material conditions necessary for the creation of CCCC, with the government’s need for officers trained in speech and writing and with the vast expansion of freshman English courses as veterans and other members of a society increasingly driven by the need to build scientific knowledge (as best illustrated by the space race in the 1950s and 1960s, especially following the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik). The growth of the student population and the eventual efforts of the humanities to capitalize on federal investment in postsecondary education led to the drastic increase in the need for teachers of speech and writing.

However, from the beginning communication did not fit smoothly with the new organization. By the 1951 meeting, four years before CCCC was even established as a permanent subsidiary organization of NCTE, there was a panel discussion about the relationship between CCCC and the National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC), which was formed in 1949 (only a year after CCCC) as an affiliate of the National Speech Association. John C. Gerber spoke on behalf of CCCC and James I. Brown on behalf of the NSSC. The purpose of the panel was to determine potential overlap and opportunities for cooperation between the two organizations. The report

published in *College Composition and Communication (CCC)* demonstrates an important point concerning the formation of disciplinary identity by drawing explicit attention to the key differences between communication studies and composition at that time. The report refers to a significant separation in primary interests: “Further discussion made the point that many of the studies currently being conducted by the NSSC are in the nature of research, whereas the CCCC concerns itself primarily with the teaching of the communication skills” (14). CCCC’s emphasis on pedagogical concerns became a barrier for cooperation between the two organizations, since NSSC saw itself primarily as a professional organization that promoted and supported research.

Although the suggestion was made that a committee made of members of both organizations be commissioned to explore the possibility of future cooperation, this committee was not established; nor was progress made to establish joint conferences, workshops, or publications. Instead, the report ends by stating that “there was too much difference between the two organizations to make a merger practical and desirable,” although the representatives of both organizations expressed interest in continued friendly relations between them (15). As rhetoric and composition and communication studies have both continued to grow into discrete disciplines, the two organizations, CCCC and the National Communication Association (NCA)—the descendant of NAATPS—generally do not interact with one another. While there are occasional attempts to revive the fourth C, communication has not remained a focus in CCCC. But when the organization was founded, oral communication was still a vital part of many freshman

English courses, making it a logical move to include communication in the organization's pedagogical mission.

The Conference was founded as the number of students enrolled in colleges and universities skyrocketed due in part to the GI Bill. No matter how much the curricula of colleges and universities differed at that time, Freshman English was a normal required course. So much of the initial business of CCCC focused on meeting the needs of a student population that was growing in number and variety of backgrounds. Within Erika Lindemann's framework for the moves a professional organization makes, CCCC's most pressing move initially was professionalizing its members, a need that the comments of Gerber, Lloyd-Jones and Wilson reflect. Developing a research agenda was not the most pressing need for CCCC, although any academic organization that pushes for increased professionalization and professional standing for its members in the contemporary university landscape must eventually make research a bigger part of its agenda. Although the broad object set forth by the original CCCC constitution emphasizes pedagogy over research, the specific objects indicate a clear interest in research. Parts 2 and 3 point to a need for the organization to sponsor and support research, by encouraging studies and by giving scholars a venue for publishing their work. Over the years, CCCC has created multiple venues for publication, such as the noteworthy Series on Writing and Rhetoric (SWR), but its most vital publishing component has always been *CCC*, rhetoric and composition's flagship journal.

### **CCC as a Site of Disciplinary Growth**

*College Composition and Communication* is the official journal of the organization. First published in 1950, the journal was the first periodical dedicated specifically to the pedagogical interests of postsecondary writing. The rationale for beginning CCCC—that NCTE did not provide sufficient journal space for discussing college-level writing—also provided the justification for publishing the journal, making *College Composition and Communication* a new venue in addition to *College English*, the NCTE journal whose focus since 1939 was literary studies, even if the journal also published work in linguistics and composition.<sup>10</sup> For much of its early run, *CCC* served quite clearly as a way to disseminate information about and reports from the conference: the early editors published reports on the Annual Meeting and unrevised conference papers. This was in keeping with CCCC’s original constitution, which indicated that one of the three purposes of the organization was to publish a bulletin for distributing relevant news and articles of interest to members.

The first issue was only sixteen pages long, containing John C. Gerber’s explanation of the organization referred to above as well as an Editorial Comment from Charles W. Roberts, the first *CCC* editor, a report on survey results,<sup>11</sup> and a brief page of excerpted freshman writing entitled “Bona Fide Boners.”<sup>12</sup> In his note, Roberts remarks that he can promise only sixteen pages per quarter because the “bulletin is starting modestly and with limited means” (13). With the exception of one issue a year dedicated to Workshop Reports from the conference, Roberts’ prediction of brief issues holds true throughout his editorship. The volumes edited by George S. Wykoff, starting in 1952,<sup>13</sup>

become consistently longer as the organization's membership grew and consequently its resources grew as well. By the time Francis E. Bowman became editor in 1956, issues ran an average of forty pages.

Over the past sixty years, the journal has grown from a small bulletin reporting the business of the conference into the flagship scholarly journal for rhetoric and composition. For scholars in the discipline, being published in *CCC* is one marker of a successful and productive scholarly career. Under the current editor, Kathleen Blake Yancey, the journal maintains a six percent acceptance rate, making it a highly competitive—and thus in terms of academic prestige, a highly desirable—journal for showcasing scholarly activity. Its low acceptance rate is due in part to the institution of blind peer review in 1987, when Richard C. Gebhardt was the editor.<sup>14</sup> For the first thirty-seven years in the periodical's history, the journal did not depend on the blind peer review system. Until the late 1960s, the editors tended to solicit material from authors because the submission rates were so low and editors found it difficult to fill the journal's pages without solicited manuscripts. For the first twenty years in the publication's history, those solicited manuscripts were usually either papers presented at the conference, printed as they were presented, or presentations that were then expanded into longer articles. Now, however, according to the most recent information posted in the MLA Directory of Periodicals—which is at least four years old, since it still lists Deborah Holstein as editor—*CCC* receives over two hundred submissions a year.

Rather than attempting to survey scholarship from the entire publication history of *CCC*, a project far beyond the scope of one section of a chapter, I focus primarily on the



transitional years for the journal during 1960s.<sup>15</sup> The mid 1960s offer glimpses into the experiments in methodology that will eventually erupt into broader epistemological conflicts in the 1980s, discussed at length in overviews of the field like Stephen North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* (1987), James Berlin's *Rhetoric and Reality* (1987), and Louise Wetherbee Phelps' *Composition as a Human Science* (1988). This period covers an overlap in the editorships of Ken Macrorie and William F. Irmischer, two men who took the journal in startlingly different directions.

There are numerous arguments for when to chart the emergence of rhetoric and composition as a modern discipline, several of which I mapped in the previous chapter. The establishment of CCCC serves as one marker of disciplinary emergence. Another marker places the emergence at 1963—a date I favor because it sees the establishment of a clear research agenda, which I elaborated on in Chapter One—with the publication of *Research in Written Communication*, usually called the Braddock report, an NCTE-sponsored report that ultimately pointed out what the authors characterized as the disappointing state of research in composition. The study surveyed articles, dissertations, and monographs to determine that state of knowledge about composition. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the report is a list of questions that could be seen as a projected research agenda for the discipline. The report calls this list “Unexplored Territory” and describes the questions as “fundamental in the teaching and learning of written composition [which seem to] apparently have gone almost untouched by *careful* research” (Braddock et al. 52, italics mine). The authors go to great lengths to clarify what they mean by careful research, which is based primarily in empirical, quantitative

research, the kind of research that most early scholars in composition were not trained to undertake considering their roots in the humanist traditions of English studies, and the kind of research that would later be valued in favor of other methods in and approaches to rhetoric and composition by Stephen North in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*.

In 1962, Ken Macrorie became the editor of *CCC*, and the journal underwent a number a changes that illustrate the shifts in disciplinary identity that occurred in the 1960s. One of the most noticeable novelties to appear was the now-famous sunburst logo drawn by Arnold N. Fujita, which first appeared on the cover of the February 1962 issue. The graphic appears now on the journal's cover, and it has also become associated with the organization as a whole, appearing on CCCC's website, in each year's Conference Program, and on other publications associated with CCCC, such as the covers of the *Studies in Writing and Rhetoric* series books. Visually, the sunburst graphic is one of the most recognizable symbols associated with the organization.<sup>16</sup> Macrorie introduced the graphic to differentiate the journal from other academic publications that employed—and in many cases continue to employ—plain, non-descript covers. At first blush, such a change seems at best superficial, but the graphic served as a signal for the kinds of changes Macrorie was going to bring to the journal. Under his editorship, *CCC* began to evolve from its primary role as a bulletin for the Annual Convention into a journal that, while retaining clear and strong ties with the conference, stood alone as a periodical.<sup>17</sup>

A comparative look at the December 1961 Table of Contents, the last issue edited by Cecil B. Williams, and Ken Macrorie's first Table of Contents is illuminating. Williams' last issue includes essays on revision, grading, the rhetoric program at the

University of Iowa, a brief list of new texts in composition, and the Staffroom Interchange, a long-standing feature of the journal. The issue also includes two essays on communication and one on technical writing,<sup>18</sup> suggesting that the journal more fully embraced the discipline's complex relationship with communication studies at that time. The kinds of materials published in that issue of the journal covered the practical elements of pedagogical concerns, administrative business with an article by George S. Wykoff on the financial burden of running sections of "Subfreshman English," and an article by Robert D. Stevick about the uniquely American identity of English Composition. In many ways, this single issue of *CCC* illustrates many of the long-term interests of the field, before and after Macrorie's editorship.

Macrorie's first issue, published in February 1962, is most striking because of how different the titles are from the previous issue, which we can take as a reasonably representative issue for the journal prior to 1962. While commonalities exist, such as the continuation of the Staffroom Interchange and the obligatory report on the Annual Conference, the Table of Contents alone is startling in its difference. Titles appear such as "Notes on an Old Dame" and "On Not Sitting Like a Frog." But the starkest difference comes with the contribution of two poems by John Woods. Until Macrorie took over the journal, *CCC* did not publish poetry. Macrorie's editorship took the journal in an unexpected direction by widening the kinds of material that would be considered for publication. At the bottom of the page, Macrorie includes the following call for submissions: "Contributors submitting *articles, fiction, or poetry* to this journal are requested to double-space all typewritten material and to enclose a self-addressed return

envelope with sufficient postage” (ii, italics mine). Other than providing contact information for the journal, the previous issue includes no indicator of what kinds of material the journal seeks to publish. Ken Macrorie’s note indicates a desire to direct the journal away from being a strictly scholarly venue. The journal becomes open to creative publications as well as scholarly and pedagogical articles, a big transition from the journal’s previous kinds of publications. Most of the issues under Macrorie’s editorship include poems. Macrorie also includes publications submitted by undergraduates, a decision which drew criticism from members. He also encouraged and attempted to solicit submissions about the writing process, a subject that would not be studied in depth for several more years.

In many ways, Macrorie was about a decade ahead of his time. He sought to diminish the journal’s role as a vehicle for publishing unrevised conference papers, instead seeking to increase the number of original submissions. He also sought to publish articles that fit his epistemological view of composition, which he saw as an art. His views placed him in conflict with the forms of quantitative research being done in linguistics at the time, forms that would be increasingly privileged following the Braddock report. In an effort to explain his call for creative texts, Macrorie positions his epistemological views about writing as art:

[N]either can more objective studies finally decide the matter of how to teach freshmen. The personal accounts here, like novels or poems, simply witness to the truth felt by individuals. Perhaps the fictive method of reporting is more competent to comprehend the whole experience than the statistical, which may be more competent to generalize individuals. Neither has a monopoly on truth or representativeness. (“Miscellany” 57)

Despite his closing conciliatory words, Macrorie demonstrates a preference for what would later be called subjective epistemology. In *Rhetoric and Reality*, his landmark work on the trajectory of pedagogical theories in rhetoric and composition, James Berlin characterizes epistemologies by how they define truth. Macrorie places greater value on truths gained through personal accounts, explaining his broadening of the kinds of materials published in *CCC*.

Commenting on Macrorie's focus on composition as art, Maureen Daly Goggin writes, "Macrorie served as editor during a transitional period of vigorous questioning with the CCCC concerning the directions of the nascent field" (*Authoring* 65). All of the changes Macrorie initiated reflected a field attempting to find its place in the increasingly demarcated disciplinary boundaries of academia. The kinds of decisions Macrorie made for the editorial direction of the journal do not necessarily illustrate what the discipline would become; instead, his decisions illustrate both a resistance to the demarcation of disciplinary territory, through the blurring of the boundaries that even then were growing between creative writing, literature, and rhetoric and composition, and the negotiation of those same boundaries. One of the most important issues of *CCC* demonstrates the blurring of boundaries that characterize Macrorie's editorship and led to the revival of rhetorical theory in writing, a blurring that enabled the usage of such nomenclature as *rhetoric and composition*.

One of the most historically important issues published during Ken Macrorie's editorship serves as a crucial marker for the advancement of rhetoric and composition as a discipline. The October 1963 issue, entitled "Toward a New Rhetoric," marks the

reinvigoration of the study of rhetoric, which serves as a vital connection to the humanist traditions of the discipline's work at a time when the call for more empiricist work dominated the discipline, following the publication of the Braddock report. The issue includes articles by Edward P. J. Corbett, whose benchmark textbook *Classical Rhetoric for Modern Students* would be published shortly thereafter, and Francis Christensen, whose grammar-based generative rhetoric of the sentence pointed the discipline in the direction of grammar and linguistics for some time. Its publication shortly after the release of the Braddock report is coincidental, although it is indicative of the epistemological struggles to determine what kinds of scholarship would be valued in the emergent discipline. Francis Christensen's "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence," for instance, illustrates a desire to invigorate rhetorical study in the same way that linguistics was being revitalized.

At the time, linguistics was one of the great hopes of the young discipline—although that optimistic hope in linguistics did not last the decade—making Christensen's call for a "modern rhetoric" to accompany the "new grammar" an important move. In his piece, Christensen also makes a crucial statement that exposes the field's vulnerability: "In composition courses we do not really teach our captive charges to write better—we merely *expect* them to. And we do not teach them how to write better because we do not know how to teach them to write better" (155, italics original). Christensen then offers his "generative rhetoric" as a means of making writing teachable. His article indicates a conclusion similar to that of the Braddock report: the field did not know enough about teaching writing and more research was necessary. His article offers optimism that

research in rhetoric can lead to the making of knowledge necessary to continue the enterprise of teaching writing.

In addition to seeking out ways to create new approaches to rhetoric that subsequently create new approaches to teaching writing, the special issue offers ways to connect the ancient art to the discipline. Edward P. J. Corbett's "The Usefulness of Classical Rhetoric" offers a quick overview of rhetoric that reads as familiar territory to a contemporary reader, but likely would have been a revelation to many readers in 1963. Corbett frames his article as an offering of aspects of classical rhetoric that can be useful to composition with brief explanations of how those connections can be made. Corbett briefly explains, for instance, the three rhetorical appeals, rhetoric's emphasis on audience, stasis theory, and imitation. Corbett concludes by using the need for teachers to learn more about classical rhetoric to call for more education for teachers and more publications about rhetoric. He also responds to anticipated objections: "I do not claim that classical rhetoric will solve, once and for all, the manifold problems of the composition course, and I will not be trapped into the *non sequitur* that because classical rhetoric had a long and honorable tradition it must be the best system ever devised for teaching students how to compose a discourse. But perhaps it deserves a chance to prove what it can do for our students" (164). Like Christensen, Corbett acknowledges that the teaching of writing faced "manifold problems" that needed solutions, such as the shift in student populations associated with the rise of open admissions. He clearly indicates that classical rhetoric may not be *the* solution, but that it could aid teachers of writing in finding solutions to problems.

Christensen and Corbett represent the spectrum of the issue within which that the other submissions fall: from using the old rhetoric as a platform to invigorate pedagogy to creating a new rhetoric to making teaching rhetoric a venture that teachers can understand. In general, the issue represents a call for more scholarly work on rhetoric to complement the work being done in linguistics and grammar at the time. The issue inspired another special issue two years later called “Further Toward a New Rhetoric” which included another article by Francis Christensen (this time about the paragraph) and an article by Richard E. Hughes about the “contemporaneity” of classical rhetoric, building on the earlier contributions of Edward P. J. Corbett. The 1963 issue spurred a conversation that led to continued work on rhetoric, and was arguably a crucial step toward the establishment of *rhetoric* and composition as a discipline. The irony is that the issue emerged under Macrorie’s editorship, since it pushes the field more toward the kinds of intellectual work that Macrorie seems to resist as he seeks to rearticulate the journal as something more akin to a literary magazine than an academic journal. The issue seems to be something of an aberration in the pattern of his editorship, which may in part be explained because it was a special issue, dedicated to the sustained exploration of a single concept rather than the publication of articles on a range of concerns in the field.

While the October 1963 issue may seem like an oddity under Macrorie’s editorship, it set the tone for the changes that the journal would undergo when it changed hands in 1965. After Ken Macrorie’s departure from the journal, the CCCC Executive Committee appointed William Irscher as editor in 1965. In a brief comment on the



transition from Macrorie to his editorship, Irmscher writes, “*CCC* is a journal that catches the eye...It’s a good periodical to inherit. My one hope at this moment is that Ken Macrorie doesn’t cringe as he reads through the first Irmscher issue” (“A Page for Macrorie” 2). While acknowledging Macrorie’s role in increasing the appeal of the journal, Irmscher makes it clear in this comment that he intends to institute substantive changes in the way *CCC* was edited.

Irmscher’s editorial practices revolutionized the journal just as drastically as Macrorie’s practices had in 1962, because for the first time in the journal’s history, the editor supplied submission guidelines that aimed to focus the kinds of manuscripts authors submitted for *CCC*. These were unlike Macrorie’s suggestions for submissions that equally solicited creative writing and scholarly and pedagogical submissions. Irmscher’s guidelines broaden the scope of scholarly submissions he wanted to see in the journal while cutting the creative submissions completely, a practice that holds through current issues of the journal. And rather than staking a claim in the epistemological conflict of the 1960s, Irmscher opens the journal to submissions of all kinds, within four sub-categories of submissions:

1. Articles pertaining to the theory, practice, and teaching of composition or communication at all college levels; interrelationships between literature, language, and composition;
2. Reports of research or notes on usage, grammar, rhetoric, and the logic of composition;
3. Studies in linguistics of interest to the generalist;
4. Rhetorical, stylistic, thematic, or critical analyses of nonfiction prose commonly studied in composition courses. (“Front Matter”)

These submission guidelines provide a vision for the journal that moves away from the journal's role as a bulletin for CCCC, the primary role it filled until 1962 when Ken Macrorie took over, and away from the less scholarly outlet that Macrorie envisioned. The guidelines indicate a preference for scholarly and research-based work without moving away from the pedagogical focus of the journal. The order of "theory, practice, and teaching" in the first item demonstrates Irmischer's preference for scholarly work, as well as his desire to see submissions that investigate the "interrelationships" between literature, language, and composition. While the guidelines retain a clear focus on pedagogy, Irmischer's guidelines mark an important transition for *CCC* toward the journal that it is today.

Irmischer's submission guidelines also point to the breadth of the journal, with interests in pedagogy, composition theory, grammar, rhetoric, linguistics, and reading (although the latter term is not used, instead implied in the fourth item). When Irmischer became editor, *CCC* was still really the only disciplinary space for publishing scholarship in rhetoric and composition. But just as his submission guidelines reflect a clarity of disciplinary boundaries and a sense of openness within those boundaries to work from other disciplines, so too did the discipline itself begin to grow at a rate that demanded more than one journal venue for publishing scholarship. By the time William Irmischer stepped down as editor in 1973, rhetoric and composition had gained three more important disciplinary journals: *Research in the Teaching of English* in 1967, *Rhetoric Society Newsletter* in 1968, and *Freshman English Newsletter* in 1972.<sup>19</sup> Each journal

contributed not only increased space for publications in the growing discipline, but also space for different aspects of rhetoric and composition.

*Research in the Teaching of English (RTE)*, an NCTE journal, began under the editorial leadership of Richard Braddock. The journal privileges empirical research of the kind that Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer found lacking in their 1963 report. *Rhetoric Society Newsletter* (renamed *Rhetoric Society Quarterly (RSQ)* in 1976) began as a journal dedicated specifically to interdisciplinary study of rhetoric—despite having begun because of a panel discussion at the 1968 CCCC. Under the first editor George Yoos, professor of philosophy at St. Cloud State University, the policy was set that the editorial board should be made up of scholars representing different disciplines in order to deter attempts to claim the journal for any single discipline. The early board seats were divided between English studies, communication studies, and a seat to represent other disciplines, such as philosophy (Goggin 87). The interdisciplinary practices of *RSQ* continue to this day. *Freshman English Newsletter* (renamed *Composition Studies* in 1992) was launched in 1972 by Gary Tate to provide a venue for news and pedagogical exchanges that were focused specifically on the first-year classroom. Tate's vision for his periodical seems in many ways to be aligned with Ken Macrorie's vision for *CCC*. Although it started as a newsletter specifically designed to skirt the edges of academic scholarship, *Composition Studies* is now a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal.

Taken together, the three journals continue to reflect the instability of disciplinary boundaries in rhetoric and composition. *RTE* focuses on teaching, but not specifically postsecondary writing instruction. While the journal provides space for rhetoric and

composition publications, like *College English*, it does not limit its interests to writing instruction. Also, it is not limited to college-level instruction, making its pages available to scholarly and pedagogical submissions from all levels of instruction in English studies. To encompass the whole of English studies as its space, the journal also describes itself as “multidisciplinary.” *RSQ* continues to maintain a distinctly multidisciplinary identity as well, publishing work in history, composition, communication, and philosophy. Of the three, *Composition Studies* may be identified most closely with the disciplinary interests of *CCC*. As the title suggests, the journal focuses on issues related to composition studies.

The disciplinary identity envisioned by *Composition Studies*, however, is smaller than that constructed by *CCC*, which continues to publish scholarship on rhetoric, composition, and literacy. The current submission guidelines for *CCC* call for submissions in composition studies, but then lists the areas of interest that pertain to composition studies:

The field of composition studies draws on research and theories from a broad range of humanistic disciplines—English studies, linguistics, literacy studies, rhetoric, cultural studies, gay studies, gender studies, critical theory, education, technology studies, race studies, communication, philosophy of language, anthropology, sociology, and others—and within composition studies, a number of subfields have also developed, such as technical communication, computers and composition, writing across the curriculum, research practices, history of composition, assessment, and writing center work.

Such a list suggests that *CCC*, as the field’s flagship journal, envisions the disciplinary boundaries to be vast and permeable. Recent issues of *CCC* reflect the magnitude of disciplinary interests that the journal showcases, from special issues such as “The Future

of Rhetoric and Composition” to “Indigenous and Ethnic Rhetorics” and individual articles pertaining to students’ voices, lay reader programs, and genre theory. The areas of interest to *CCC* readers has grown as the discipline of rhetoric and composition has grown and expanded, and in doing so, it has also formed intellectual and scholarly relationships with other disciplines.

The next section, which focuses on how past chairs of CCCC have articulated their visions of the disciplinary past, present, and future for rhetoric and composition, serves as a bridge between the conference and the journal because, while the addresses are delivered at the annual convention, they are published in the journal each year, making them both an oral event that marks the opening of the convention each year, but also a published record of what prominent members of the discipline see as possible directions the field may take.

### **Disciplinary Articulation in the CCCC Chairs’ Addresses**

Although the CCCC began meeting in 1949, the tradition of the Chair’s Address was not firmly established as a standard part of the Opening Session until 1977, when Vivian I. Davis, then the Program Chair, suggested that the Chair take on a more prominent speaking role. In response to Davis’ suggestion, Richard Lloyd-Jones delivered the first Chair’s Address at the Annual Convention in 1977.<sup>20</sup> Lloyd-Jones used the opportunity to reflect on the state of the discipline as he saw it, an opportunity that many Chairs have since seized as well, making the Chairs’ addresses when taken collectively a catalogue of differing views on the past, present, and future of rhetoric and

composition studies. The audience of the addresses has been widened to include the full membership of CCCC because Edward P. J. Corbett, the editor of *CCC* in 1977, published Lloyd-Jones' address. With only a few exceptions,<sup>21</sup> the Chairs' Addresses have subsequently been published in *CCC* within the next year, making the addresses a significant part of the record of scholarship in rhetoric and composition studies.

Neither strictly academic argument or self-reflective personal narrative, the Chairs' Addresses have formed a genre of their own, comprised most commonly of a self-reflexive tendency to focus on the state of the discipline, often invoking previous Chairs' Addresses in the process, as perhaps best exemplified by Kathleen Blake Yancey's 2004 multimodal presentation—or as she refers to it in a sidebar note in the published version, a “dramatic performance” (“Made Not Only in Words” 430). While Yancey delivered her address, two large screens projected quotes and images designed to enrich her address; many of those quotes were explicitly borrowed from previous Chairs' Addresses.

The self-reflexivity of the genre, coupled with its common focus on possible directions rhetoric and composition studies may take as it continues to grow and develop as a discipline, make the Chairs' Addresses useful markers for examining rhetoric and composition studies' efforts to articulate its disciplinary identity. In her reflection on her Chairs' Address, Yancey writes, “...one *value* of the Chair's address is that it provides the Chair with a moment, and the opportunity to connect this moment, intentionally, to other moments past, other moments future; to find in that nexus a place to reflect upon who we are, and who we might become” (456, emphasis original). For Yancey, as well as

many of the Chairs, the address is the best moment to articulate how they see the discipline shifting and growing and to use their address to direct, to some extent, that growth. This chapter highlights the attention the CCCC Chairs have paid to articulating the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and composition studies, focusing especially on the tensions revealed by comparing the positions different Chairs have taken on disciplinary identity. The Chairs' Addresses are especially helpful from an archival perspective because they are roughly congruent with the development of rhetoric and composition into an academic discipline in the late twentieth century. Through a close reading of select addresses, I argue that the addresses highlight the tension between rhetoric and composition studies in relation to other disciplines, most notably literary studies. The addresses collectively suggest that one of the discipline's most difficult problems to confront is in fact its own disciplinary identity.

Despite the wealth of material provided by the Chairs' Addresses, remarkably few scholars have written about them systematically.<sup>22</sup> Most work has focused on generating different models of clustering the addresses together thematically. Ellen Barton was the first scholar to attempt such categorization, arguing that the addresses articulate "broad concerns in the field," characterizing the addresses as evocative gestures (235). In his critical introduction to *Views from the Center*, a collection of the Chairs' Addresses from 1977 to 2005, Duane Roen adapts Barton's work into a more fluid, overlapping model of categories that include scholarship on teaching; giving voice to marginalized groups, such as minorities, women, and community college professionals and students; views of CCCC as an organization; an amorphous collection of "vexing issues" such as public

perceptions of writing instruction, the uses of technology, and social, political, and economic realities of teachers and students; autobiographical narratives (Donald McQuade's 1991 address, for example, is almost wholly autobiographical); and Chairs' memories of addresses (their own, recorded in brief reflections in his collection, and of other addresses).

In the most recent treatment of the Chairs' Addresses, Derek Mueller organizes the addresses into a "nephological model," word clouds that emphasize the most prominent words and phrases from each address. Mueller's word clouds are incredibly useful for taking a distant look at the addresses: as is typical of word clouds, Mueller's models differentiate words by size and hue to indicate their prominence in the text, with larger words being the more important words and darker hues being the words that often appear in each address. For instance, Mueller's word cloud treatment of Frank D'Angelo's 1980 address "Regaining Our Composure" demonstrates that the most prominent words were *literature*, *composition*, *English*, and *writing*, while for Cheryl Glenn's 2008 address "Representing Ourselves," the most prominent words were *students*, *writing*, and, *teaching*. Mueller's nephological model offers a visual argument for what each Chair emphasized.

Following in the tradition of these scholarly treatments of the Chairs' Addresses, I focus on how the addresses overlap with one another thematically, but for the sake of brevity, I explore two distinct but overlapping threads among the Chairs' Addresses, pointing out addresses that fall within these categories and then narrowing my focus on select examples that are representative of the categories. First, I explore the addresses that



seek to define the discipline. These addresses attempt to balance the research and teaching agendas of rhetoric and composition studies, seeking to establish the discipline's legitimacy as intellectual work while simultaneously questioning the fixed boundaries of disciplinarity. Second, I turn to addresses that face the anxiety and discomfort generated by composition studies' troubled relationship with English studies, most famously exemplified in Maxine Hairston and David Bartholomae's addresses. When considered together, the efforts to define the intellectual work of the discipline and to reconsider rhetoric and composition's relationship with English studies illustrate the areas of disagreement and contention between the positions assumed by different Chairs as they have sought to articulate what the discipline is.

In many cases, the addresses shift easily from one category to another, or challenge the taxonomical frame within which I analyze them. Indeed, the addresses that seek to define the discipline as often as not reject efforts to define the discipline at all, seeking instead to "compose" the discipline or to embrace an interdisciplinary identity. And the addresses that speak to our disciplinary connection with English studies necessarily must seek ways to define the discipline, whether they propose a separation from or continued negotiations with English studies. However malleable it may be, I find this frame useful for placing in the forefront the collective efforts of the Chairs to articulate views of what rhetoric and composition studies is and what it should become, views that are necessarily complex and fluid.

## **Defining a Discipline**

Attempting to determine precisely what defines rhetoric and composition studies as a discipline has been one of the most consistent issues taken up in the Chairs' Addresses. For instance, in his 1986 address "Diversity and Change: Toward a Maturing Discipline," Lee Odell asserted, "the disciplinary ground keeps shifting under our feet" (146). His remarks were unique to his particular historical moment—his address came only a year before Stephen M. North argued that composition studies would likely not grow into a fully-fledged discipline because of its methodological fluctuation—but his comment resonates with the remarks of many other Chairs. In 2011, Gwendolyn D. Pough argued for an interdisciplinary, or "undisciplined," approach to rhetoric and composition, embracing the very shifting ground that Odell pointed out twenty-five years before, arguing that "comp/rhet is bigger than we are allowing it to be" (306). Chairs have used their addresses to attempt to broaden the scope of the discipline, whether they are referring to the limitations imposed by the powerfully dominant metaphor of the classroom and suggesting that we consider extracurricular sites of writing instruction, as Anne Ruggles Gere asserts in her address in 1993; or to the pedagogical and ideological differences between two- and four-year colleges that affect the scholarly directions of our field, as many Chairs have addressed, including Lynn Quitman Troyka in 1981, Nell Ann Pickett in 1997, and John C. Lovas in 2002; or to argue for more diverse perspectives and a more diverse membership, an argument made by Chairs such as Rosentene B. Purnell in 1984, Jacqueline Jones Royster in 1995, Victor Villanueva in 1999, and most recently,

Malea Powell in 2012. The variety of issues raised by the Chairs speaks to the instability of both our disciplinary identity and our intellectual work.

In this section, I examine two addresses that attempt to take on the challenge of defining who we are. The “we” in question is itself difficult to define, and it is a question that the Chairs have addressed repeatedly. Because of the organizational role of the Chair, the “we” usually implies CCCC and its members. However, the “we” just as frequently can be thought of as teachers of writing who may not attend the conference or participate in CCCC as a whole. Although Lillian Bridwell-Bowles cautions her listeners in 1994 that “we cannot always talk about a common ‘we’” (274), most of the Chairs use their addresses to invoke a unified organization, even if that organization is broad and multivocal. In this section, I explore how Chairs do just that: invoke a unified group even as they recognize the numerous differences in research and teaching approaches in order to articulate their vision of the discipline. These Chairs are Richard Lloyd-Jones (1977) and Andrea A. Lunsford (1989); their addresses span more than ten years of the tradition of Chairs’ Addresses, illustrating just how vital the Chairs find it to work continually to refine the definitions of the intellectual work of rhetoric and composition and the disciplinary identity that is formed by that work.

As the first Chair in the contemporary tradition, Richard Lloyd-Jones had a great deal of flexibility in how he presented his thoughts to the assembled group at the Opening Session in Kansas City. His address is playful and dramatic, to the extent that at the end of his address, he noted that he did not deliver an academic paper, but a “sermon about our behavior. A call to action. An admonition” (“A View from the Center” 51). In his

address, he aimed to encourage contemplation in the audience about the state of CCCC and the discipline at large. Lloyd-Jones, for example, delivered an address designed to build on commonalities, specifically on the members' love of language, reading, and writing.

Lloyd-Jones' address revolved around the metaphor of the *center*. He offered this metaphor as a new way for the discipline to conceive of itself, positioning it against the metaphor of *basic*, as in basic writing. He argued that to think of composition studies as basic is restrain the discipline, saying "The metaphors we choose to represent ourselves determine in part how we feel about ourselves and how we are to be judged by others" (50). Lloyd-Jones was particularly interested in how we represent ourselves to those outside of CCCC, but he saw as the logical starting point for crafting a coherent identity the CCCC members themselves. He called metaphor crafting "the ethical badge of membership in our guild," (46) implying that members of CCCC—and by extension members of the discipline—have the ability to control how the public perceives them because of their expertise in the use of language. Eighteen years before Doug Hesse would ask in his address, "Who Owns Writing?" Lloyd-Jones made his stance clear that teachers of writing own writing, the same conclusion Hesse reached in his address.

Yet even as he attempted to forge a metaphor that will define the discipline as a whole, Lloyd-Jones acknowledged the difficulty of finding the common ground necessary to produce such a metaphor, as he pinpointed one of the key problems with articulating a singular disciplinary identity: "Ten of us in a room manage to find ten different ways of identifying the foundations of our discipline" (47). Lloyd-Jones

recognized the divergence of views that go into forming the boundaries and the texture of the discipline, but he argued that CCCC needed to present a unified image to the general public so that the organization could assume a more prominent national role in discussions and debate about literacy. Lloyd-Jones delivered his address only two years after *Newsweek*'s "Why Johnny Can't Write," which caused a public uproar about the failure of writing instruction. Thus it makes sense that, even as he acknowledged the internal struggles about the identity of the discipline, hardly well formed in 1977, he argued for a way of representing the discipline that would be coherent and public-oriented. Representing a coherent discipline—a discipline that appears to be united about many of the key issues in writing instruction, even if internally members continue to debate those very issues—enables one of the most important professional organizations of writing teachers to speak authoritatively about the state of writing instruction and increases the possibility that the organization will in fact be heard among the numerous charges of the decline of literacy.<sup>23</sup>

Lloyd-Jones invoked the "center" metaphor as a means of emphasizing the importance of the teaching of writing. He did not use the metaphor in the sense of the political center—a comparison he overtly rejected as not useful for his vision of the discipline—but instead, rather less humbly, the center of the universe. Lloyd-Jones argued for rhetoric and composition as the epistemological center because members of the discipline study and teach language, making the members of the discipline into a multitudinous Orpheus:

We are the ones at the center who reach to all other disciplines and to all other people. We synthesize knowledge and unite people. By our force, we draw from the wisdom of other disciplines and in making it ours, transform it by combining it in new ways. The instrument of language which we play soothes the savage breast, opens the secret places, and weds the separate selves. And it is the common property of all faithful people. (49)

The tone of this passage in particular is in keeping with his characterization of his address as a “sermon.” Yet beneath his hyperbolic language was in fact his effort to articulate what composition studies has to offer the world. He saw rhetoric and composition as the discipline that synthesizes the work of other disciplines, turning it into new knowledge. But Lloyd-Jones’ metaphor makes that endeavor into a higher calling. He recognized the vital role of exchanging knowledge with other disciplines in not only constructing a knowledge base for rhetoric and composition but in fulfilling the mission of the discipline, which he saw as uniting individuals through the study of language. Lloyd-Jones’ “View from the Center” is a call for teachers of writing to assume control of the public discourse on writing instruction and for scholars to draw freely from other disciplines to build new research projects and methodologies.

Like Lloyd-Jones, Andrea Lunsford’s 1989 “Composing Ourselves” in Seattle explicitly addressed the role of self-definition in defining the discipline. However, unlike Lloyd-Jones, who asserted the need for crafting a public persona for composition studies, Lunsford *rejected* the notion of definition. She offered as an alternative to *defining* ourselves the act of *composing* ourselves, a metaphor that speaks to the etymological roots of composition: putting pieces together to make a whole as opposed to the fundamental concept of limitation suggested by defining. Lunsford referred to David

Bartholomae's address from the previous year (which I analyze below), in which Bartholomae attempted to articulate the boundaries of composition studies. While she approvingly noted the work done in his address, Lunsford sought to mediate Bartholomae's impulse to define: "But insofar as we have been intent on *defining*, I see these efforts as too often limiting and constricting. Rather than *defining* ourselves, therefore, I propose that we attend closely to *composing ourselves...*" (186). She situated the need to compose rather than define historically, pointing to the discipline's non-traditional development compared to other disciplines.

Rather than proceeding by a "clear setting out of boundaries, a staking of territory, and then a rigorous defense of those boundaries," she characterized the historical development of the discipline as "more heterogeneous, more expansive and inclusive" and, borrowing from Kenneth Burke, benefitting from "perspectives by incongruity" rather than following a linear, homogeneous line to disciplinarity and giving into the "seductive lure of crisp definitions" (186). Like Lloyd-Jones, Lunsford positioned rhetoric and composition as a discipline that draws much of its strength from its interaction with other disciplines. She called for more work that is explicitly interdisciplinary in nature, which fits an image of the discipline that can never be static or fixed.

Lunsford also turned her attention to the public image of composition studies, listing a number of groups and individuals who attempt to compose the discipline, from administrators who see writing teachers as the "floating bottom" and "soft underbelly" of the academy to Alan Bloom, whom she argued sees compositionists as "soft-headed

know-nothings.” Capitalizing on the oral nature of the genre, Lunsford concluded each of these paragraphs with a variation on a sentence, transforming it into a refrain, e.g., “*I don’t want such administrators composing us*” or “*I don’t want Alan Bloom composing us*” (190, italics original). Lunsford called for members of the discipline to cling to the power of composing rather than allowing themselves to be composed by others. While Lloyd-Jones’ address does read at times as an admonition, Lunsford’s address reads as a celebration of the organization’s continued retention of its amorphous disciplinary identity. Lunsford did not seek a common center; she wanted not “consensus but coalitions” (191). At every point in her address, even as Lunsford draws attention to what the discipline does well, she emphasized the importance of the ever-changing, fluid boundaries of rhetoric and composition. The kind of discipline that Lunsford suggests is one that remains malleable, adjusting to the research interests of faculty and the needs of students at the undergraduate and graduate levels: A discipline that does not change is one that cannot meet the continually evolving needs of the academy in which it functions.

### **Rhetoric and Composition’s Relationship with English Studies**

The previous two addresses from Richard Lloyd-Jones and Andrea A. Lunsford are representative samples of addresses that explicitly examine the disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition; they are by no means the only ones, as disciplinarity is a common theme for the chairs to speak to. The next four addresses all explore a more specific aspect of the disciplinary development of rhetoric and composition: The disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition is complicated by its relationship with



English studies, generally (although certainly not universally) considered the umbrella under which rhetoric and composition finds its home even as it has progressively developed its own disciplinary identity. Although establishing an academic discipline was not initially one of the chief goals of the organization, CCCC has been vital as an incubator for the professional development of the proto-discipline and, subsequently, a supporter of the growth of the discipline throughout the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Yet CCCC's relationship with English studies has always been strained, and so it is not surprising that several of the CCCC's Chairs have addressed this relationship.

The positions taken by the Chairs represent the conflicted positions taken by the discipline, which now sees some independent departments of rhetoric and writing emerging while other programs remain in English departments. Here, I examine four addresses that roughly form two pairs in which one-half of the pair imagines a separation from English studies and the other half suggests negotiation instead. The first pair is William F. Irscher (1979) and Frank D'Angelo (1980) and the second pair is Maxine Hairston (1985) and David Bartholomae (1988). I chose these addresses to pair because they work in direct conversation with each other: The first two addresses were delivered in consecutive years, and it appears clear that D'Angelo's address is at least in part a response to Irscher. Bartholomae's address may follow Hairston's address by three years, but he overtly references her call for a separation from literature departments. In both cases, the two pairs reveal the discipline's ambivalence regarding its relationship to English studies.

When William F. Irscher delivered his address in 1979, he was fighting to establish a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition at the University of Washington (Herb 69). Irscher does not state this in his address, but these efforts may have informed his frustrations with English studies. Most of Irscher's address laid out how writing provides a continual means of learning, making composition a critical educational endeavor "basic to all disciplines" ("Writing as a Way of Learning and Developing" 68). Irscher's address was primarily a call to unify the diverse epistemological positions of rhetoric and composition: "Whatever primary motive we give to the teaching of writing, whether it is self-actualization, creative experience, discovery, or communication, writing is more than a frozen record of thinking. It is an action and a way of knowing" (64-5). Irscher was not seeking a single, coherent epistemology for rhetoric and composition; instead, his openness to multiple primary motives indicated a desire to construct a sense of unity that does not elide the numerous epistemological differences. His key epistemological assertion was that writing is not a means of recording thought, but of giving thought space to develop. In his introduction, Irscher employed a spatial metaphor to indicate the tremendous possibilities of disciplinary growth: "Those of us in composition occupy valuable territory. We are a land of jobs. We are a land of grants. We are unexplored territory" (63).

Irscher's address began as a bright and hopeful vision of the disciplinary possibilities. However, the address seemed ultimately to require a foil to sustain its hopeful tone of unexplored territory and a generosity toward differing epistemological approaches to writing. In order to position his call for unity, Irscher evoked a number of

enemies immediately after his optimistic opening. Like most unexplored territory, according to Irmischer's spatial metaphor, the disciplinary space of rhetoric and composition is "vulnerable to invasion." Irmischer feared the "scientific absolutists, who tend to make research a matter of figures and footnotes [and] the anti-rhetoricians, who refer to writing only as a testable item," but more than any other figure, he feared the "literati, who have always been attracted by our markets" (63). He placed the greatest emphasis on the literati because of the blurry distinction between the study of reading and the study of writing, a distinction that he challenged on the basis that the two logically go together. But Irmischer's reference to literary studies' attraction to "our markets" suggests the metaphor of literary studies as the colonizer and composition studies as vulnerable territory. And since literary studies at that time dominated (and arguably continues to dominate) English studies as it is defined by other disciplinary organizations such as the MLA, following Irmischer's metaphor to its logical conclusion leads to a call for a declaration of independence from English studies.

Irmischer was not willing to take that final declarative step, however. He pulled back from the logic of his own colonial metaphor, saying: "This is not a declaration of independence or even a declaration of resistance. It is a declaration of integrity—the integrity of our own discipline as a subject worthy of research and understanding" (63). Irmischer's statement registers unease in thinking about dissociating rhetoric and composition from English studies even as he established the ethical grounds for initiating a disciplinary divorce. As he began to imagine a disciplinary future separate from English studies, Irmischer retreated from the edge—an edge that was doubtless frightening when

the discipline was still so young, with very few doctoral programs supporting the growth and professionalization of the field—issuing instead a “declaration of integrity.” His declaration functions as a manifesto, a cry from the unexplored lands that rhetoric and composition demands to be taken seriously. In many ways, Irmischer’s address makes possible Hairston’s more famous declaration six years later because Irmischer initiated the process of imagining a separation from English studies.

A year after Irmischer’s declaration of field integrity, Frank D’Angelo delivered his address, “Regaining Our Composure,” suggesting that rhetoric and composition (he was the first Chair to employ that particular name for the discipline in an address) needed to step back from the insurrectionist position that Irmischer’s address constructed. However, the address was not an explicit response to Irmischer, even if his central concept of regaining composure appears as such. D’Angelo played with the association of composure with composition to articulate a position that supported rhetoric and composition’s continued place in English studies. He began his address by talking about his failed attempt to launch a doctoral program at Arizona State University in rhetoric, composition, and linguistics.<sup>24</sup> He noted that the strongest resistance to his proposed graduate curriculum was an English professor in literature who accused D’Angelo of encouraging “curricular decomposition.” The professor further accused him of detracting from literary studies to focus on “a narrow vocationalism” and “mere literacy” (72).

Using the anecdote as a means of connecting literacy to the ancient study of rhetoric, D’Angelo presented an argument that recalls Richard Lloyd-Jones’ inaugural address from three years earlier—a recent enough address to remain fresh in the minds of

many members of CCCC. He presented an argument aimed simultaneously at heightening the professional status of rhetoric and composition while retaining a relationship with English studies: “My contention is that composition can provide a unifying center for English studies as well as for the liberal arts” (74). Lloyd-Jones placed language at the center of the universe, but D’Angelo’s claim was not quite as large, even though he made the legitimizing move of connecting the young discipline of composition to the ancient art of rhetoric—hence his use of *rhetoric and composition* as the discipline’s name. He explained his adoption of the name: “To accept rhetoric and composition, then, as legitimate parts of the graduate curriculum is not a sign of dissolution, dispersion, and decomposition. It is, rather, a sign that we are regaining our composure...” (73). For D’Angelo, literary studies emerged from rhetorical studies, meaning that rhetoric and composition has no reason to leave English studies. His chief suggestion was that English studies should value all writing, not just literary texts. Following his logic of de-emphasizing “elite verbal artifacts,” or literature, D’Angelo concludes his address by placing responsibility for literacy on the shoulders of English studies and its teachers. Following Irmischer’s address, which almost took the step of calling for a division between rhetoric and composition and literary studies, D’Angelo’s address reads as a message of reconciliation and compromise. Whereas Irmischer stops just shy of encouraging the fledgling discipline to move out of its parent discipline’s house, D’Angelo argues that composition and literary studies belong together, working toward the common mission of literacy.

This conciliatory gesture on D'Angelo's part contrasts sharply with Maxine Hairston's 1985 address, entitled "Breaking Our Bonds and Reaffirming Our Connections." Hairston's is probably the most famous of the Chairs' Addresses.<sup>25</sup> What makes Hairston's address so remarkable is her call for rhetoric and composition to break its "complex psychological bonds" with English studies, a call invoked in the very title of the address ("Breaking Our Bonds" 133). Hairston's address suggests that rhetoric and composition cease its efforts to reconcile with English studies through such legitimizing efforts as incorporating literary theory with composition theory and encouraging graduate students in rhetoric and composition to incorporate literary criticism into their dissertations to be more marketable. She made plain her reason for this advice, framing it as what she sees as the first lesson teachers and scholars of writing need to learn: "THEY'RE NOT LISTENING" (138). Hairston argued that incorporating literary scholarship into composition scholarship was a "one-way street," that writing scholarship was not being incorporated into the work of literary scholars.

Whereas William F. Irmischer pulled back in his address and stated that he was not making a declaration of independence or resistance, it is difficult to read Hairston's address as anything but such a declaration. Rooting her concerns in material conditions—contingent, underpaid labor as well as assistant professors who fight for and lose tenure bids in rhetoric and composition programs<sup>26</sup>—Hairston argued that the only way she could see to improve those material conditions was to break the psychological and emotional bonds with English studies. She did not call outright for a full-scale divorce, but she provided enough qualifiers in her address to make it clear that she supported the

notion of independent writing and rhetoric departments, a revolutionary concept at the time. As she initially argued for rhetoric and composition to break its bonds with English studies, she noted parenthetically that she doesn't necessarily mean physical separation, adding "although in some cases that may be a good idea" (133). But by the end of her address, as she attempted to envision how rhetoric and composition could achieve parity with literary studies in English departments, she concluded her address with her "radical option" to split and form a department of rhetoric. She referred to speech communication's separation from English studies earlier in the twentieth century as a precedent for the separation, suggesting first that rhetoric and composition follow form, "taking freshman English with us," and second that the discipline join with speech communication and journalism "to form a new and vital department of language and communication, and once more make humanism and rhetoric relevant in our modern society" (141). This is indeed the radical option, a choice that would drastically alter the disciplinary boundaries and identity of rhetoric and composition and the institutional structures for housing such a discipline. And while Hairston was careful in her address not to suggest that the discipline break away completely from English studies, she stated at the end of her radical option, "This option would be the most disruptive and most difficult; to me, at the present time, it would also be the best" (141).

To make the separation from English studies even seem like a viable option—a crucial rhetorical move since such suggestions were rare prior to her address, at least in such visible ways—Hairston relied on the same kind of divisive metaphor as Irmischer when he invoked the *literati*. Hairston's metaphor was the mandarin, making class

struggle more clearly a part of the debate. She argued that the literary mandarins find writing teachers useful—“indeed, [they] probably couldn’t survive without us” (136)—but that the need for writing teachers makes literature professors more contemptuous of writing teachers. Hairston’s mandarins became one more way of envisioning literature faculty as enemies of the discipline, another way of transforming literature professors into bogeymen determined to undermine the pedagogical, scholarly, and disciplinary goals of rhetoric and composition. The metaphor fits comfortably into other models that vilify literary studies, such as Irscher’s *literati* and John C. Gerber’s senior professor of literature (discussed below), suggesting that Hairston evoked a metaphor that many members of the discipline found persuasive, even if they did not agree with her primary argument that rhetoric and composition should part ways with English studies.

In order to pave the way for rhetoric and composition scholars and teachers to become “autonomous professionals with a discipline of our own” (134), Hairston laid out a three-part plan to “face the challenge of establishing our discipline on solid ground, both in the academic community and in the community beyond the university and college” (139). First, individuals must produce and publish research and scholarship that contributes to the growth of the discipline. Second, the discipline must reach out to other disciplines to establish connections. Third, the discipline needs to make connections with “business, industry, technology, and the government” (140). Hairston’s plan was an argument for making public what rhetoric and composition has to offer, rather than allowing it to remain in the shadows of English studies. Although the majority of writing programs are still housed in English departments, Hairston’s declaration of independence



clearly struck a chord within the discipline that continues to sound over twenty-five years later.<sup>27</sup>

Just three years after Hairston issued the call for separation from English studies, David Bartholomae's 1988 address was a charge to reconsider CCCC's and the discipline's relationship with English studies, a relationship he saw worth preserving. Bartholomae was not unsympathetic to the difficulties in negotiating the political currents generated by the continued alignment of composition studies and English studies, offering his own narrative about completing his dissertation on Thomas Hardy and realizing he "could not imagine writing another paper on Hardy or the Victorians" or any other literary subjects; his address is a charge to reconsider CCCC's and the discipline's relationship with English studies ("Freshman English" 170). He also conjured the familiar image of the literati first invoked by William F. Irmischer, recalling the figure that John C. Gerber referred to as the "senior professor of literature," a figure Bartholomae calls "all too familiar" (172). However, rather than arguing for separation from English studies, Bartholomae argued that rhetoric and composition continues to revise English studies, and that as an organization, CCCC has historically had the opportunity to "make up English as they went along" (173). Like D'Angelo, Bartholomae envisioned composition studies as an integral component of English studies—the component that revived the broader field.

Bartholomae spent the majority of his allotted time telling the story of CCCC, a move that Doug Hesse later characterized in his own address as a convention of the Chairs' Address, to "retell the founding of the tribe" ("Who Owns Writing?" 465).

Bartholomae situated his history by focusing on three terms: *composition*, *communication*, and *conference*.<sup>28</sup> Bartholomae used his historical frame as a way to position rhetoric and composition as a leader in directing English studies rather than a servile, half-starved stepchild of literary studies. He argued that the history of CCCC shows a discipline seeking to form itself, often in contrast to English studies, and that the anxiety generated by composition's relationship with English studies has led to a desire to "replace senior professors of literature with senior professors of composition" (176). In other words, the drive to build composition studies as a separate discipline does not resolve the problems of dominance that both Irmischer and Hairston commented on, but simply relocates the problem into a new disciplinary scene. He then stated, "There has been too much pain and disappointment for me to say this lightly, but I think it is fortunate that these attempts have largely failed" (176). Without specifically referring to calls for emancipation from English studies, Bartholomae positioned himself as a supporter of strengthening and continually reshaping rhetoric and composition's relationship with English studies.

Bartholomae found the term "communication" useful in keeping the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and composition from firming up. He called communication "a term that keeps us from ever completely knowing our subject," arguing that it serves as "evidence of our anxiety about composition as a subject-less activity" (177). He noted that "composition and communication," a phrase used in the early years of the organization as a name to denote the field, had been replaced with "composition and rhetoric," a move Bartholomae found difficult to accept because he sees rhetoric as an

area of study beyond the limits of any discipline. It is in his comments about disciplinarity that Bartholomae most clearly answered Maxine Hairston, referring to her address as a marker of disciplinary anxiety. He responded to her address, therefore, by expressing his own anxieties:

I am nervous about our sudden obsession with disciplinary boundaries. I regret graduate courses or graduate programs with reading lists designed to define composition and rhetoric as a set or self-contained field. I believe that to tell our graduate students to read Blair, Campbell, and Whately but not Foucault, Pratt, and Jameson is to assert the worst and most paranoid kind of disciplinary influence. It means that we will jeopardize their role in the general project that is reforming English. (177-8)

Here Bartholomae suggested that cutting off rhetoric and composition's use of literary theory was detrimental to the development of the field because it narrowed the intellectual focus of graduate students and faculty. Further, he saw this split as detrimental because he sees it as a significant mission for rhetoric and composition to reform English. His suspicion of "calls of coherence" and the subsequent "boundaries and disciplinary habits"—a suspicion that Andrea Lunsford elaborates on in her address just one year later—is predicated on how Bartholomae envisions the work of rhetoric and composition. He is not looking for disciplinary stability, but instead mutually beneficial interaction between the many branches of English studies.

Bartholomae, however, did not address the underlying premise of Maxine Hairston's desire to break away from English studies, and further, he did not address the problem of material conditions. Indeed, at the end of his address, in a series of statements that seem to invoke the forceful cadence of the concluding lines of Tennyson's

“Ulysses,” Bartholomae advised his colleagues “to resist the temptations of rank and status” (181). This is the only reference he made to the material conditions upon which Hairston built her case, and his suggestion is to resist temptation. While his vision of a “multivocal, dialogical discipline” is captivating, and certainly in keeping with the continued efforts of CCCC to maintain an open and flexible understanding of disciplinary boundaries, his offhand dismissal of Hairston’s primary concern does not seem to resolve the labor issues Hairston raised. Yet his desire for CCCC to continue its “most precious legacy, [...] a willed and courageous resistance to the luxury of order and tradition” (181) seemed in keeping with the vision that Hairston closed her address with, articulating a discipline that shifts from a “bond of dependence” to a “dynamic of interdependence,” giving her hope that rhetoric and composition can maintain a healthy relationship with English studies (142).

### **Revising Ourselves**

The CCCC Chairs’ Addresses, when taken as a whole, take advantage of the continued disciplinary instability of rhetoric and composition; each Chair asks different questions that expose new areas for growth and development or old areas to be revisited and reconsidered. From Richard Lloyd-Jones’ call in 1977 for CCCC members to create a coherent, united vision of the discipline to show to a public that is frequently frightened that the end of literacy is nigh, to Malea Powell’s urging in 2012 that every member consider carefully the possibilities of learning from the stories we can tell one another, allowing our perspectives to be vulnerable to the power of those stories, the Chairs’

Addresses act as more than formal occasions for a teacher-scholar to welcome individuals to the annual meeting and launch the conference; the Chairs' Addresses are moments when individuals are given the opportunity to speak to the state of the discipline as they see it, and to suggest possible courses that we may follow to grow the discipline. Each Chair is given the opportunity to articulate a vision of the discipline, to offer insight into the future possibilities of composition studies. In the same spirit that Andrea A. Lunsford urged CCCC members to consider how we *compose ourselves*, I argue that the Chairs' Addresses act as occasions that call on members to *revise ourselves*, to perpetually reconsider the disciplinary identity of composition studies and to strive to improve our intellectual work and our writing pedagogy. The organization of CCCC as a whole represents efforts by members of the field to revise the discipline continually, to consistently revisit important questions and issues that shape the field.

This chapter has focused on how a professional academic organization articulates a vision of a disciplinary identity. Because of its varied membership and its inclination toward interdisciplinary research, CCCC serves as a particularly useful example of the complexities of generating any kind of unified disciplinary identity. Like the discipline itself, CCCC privileges both pedagogy and scholarship. Indeed, the organization attempts as often as possible to bridge the gap between pedagogy and scholarship, attempting to situate each in a dependent relationship that allows each to benefit from the other. The original vision of the founders of CCCC was of a practically-oriented organization that offered postsecondary teachers of writing space to discuss their own pedagogical concerns. As rhetoric and composition has evolved first from a course of study to a field

of scholarly activity, and finally to an institutional discipline, CCCC has continued to provide such a space. It has also changed to reflect the needs of an academic discipline, providing space for conversations about scholarship and research—as perhaps best demonstrated in the pages of its scholarly journal, *CCC*. The artifacts examined in this chapter—the Constitution for CCCC, articles and editorial comments in *CCC*, and representative examples of the Chairs’ Addresses—jointly make it clear that participants and leaders have struggled to articulate a coherent disciplinary identity for rhetoric and composition. It seems most fitting, then, to return to Andrea Lunsford’s address, and to acknowledge that CCCC does not represent a homogeneous body of scholars and teachers, but instead that it represents a heterogeneous group working toward coalition, not consensus. The disciplinary identity articulated by CCCC is fluid, overlapping with numerous other disciplines in deliberate and productive ways.

While this chapter has focused on the explicit representation of disciplinary identity through its attention to a professional academic organization, I next return in my focus to disciplinary nomenclature. The following three chapters therefore explore how disciplinary identity is articulated at the curricular level—first in doctoral programs, then in independent writing programs and undergraduate writing majors, and finally in the discipline’s genesis, the first-year writing course and the writing programs that support it.

CHAPTER III  
DOCTORAL PROGRAMS AS SITES OF DISCIPLINARY IDENTITY  
CONSTRUCTION

This chapter examines doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition as sites of disciplinary construction and inculcation of the doctoral students who are in the midst of becoming active scholars and teachers in the disciplinary community. I assert that doctoral programs are essential to building a disciplinary identity for rhetoric and composition, not only for the individuals who receive PhDs through the programs, nor the faculty who design curricula and teach graduate courses, but also for the field as a whole. Based on the specializations of its faculty, each doctoral program builds a different focus, necessarily constructing multiple perspectives on the work of the discipline rooted in the specific scholarship of those faculty and the students they train. Within the credential-based, research-driven model of the university, a discipline must be able to produce new knowledge and expand its membership. Doctoral programs are vital sites for both of these discipline-defining activities. Programs in rhetoric and composition have proliferated over the past thirty years, increasing from only a handful of universities that offered concentrations or minors in rhetoric and composition in English departments to a substantial number of programs, both within and separate from English departments.

While these programs share some common characteristics, the local institutional pressures upon each program have given shape to different curricula and philosophical stances on doctoral education for emerging scholars-teachers in rhetoric and composition. Many of the students trained in these programs then receive faculty positions at different institutions, where the disciplinary views from their training interact with how the discipline is configured at their new institution. That negotiation of perspectives based in different specific institutional settings collectively gives shape to the discipline as a whole, making local settings a vital component in the construction of disciplinary identity.

To account for the growing presence of doctoral programs, I chart trends by examining surveys of these programs' development, starting in 1980 with two separate efforts to explore the burgeoning potential of graduate education and moving next to *Rhetoric Review's* multiple surveys of doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, published from 1987 to 2007 until the survey gave way to a wiki after 2007. Then, I turn to the Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition, formed in 1993 as a research-oriented organization to increase communication and collaboration between programs. Each of these efforts to chart doctoral programs speaks to a desire among members of the discourse community to map a coherent discipline.<sup>29</sup> But more than just mapping the existing discipline, the surveys and the consortium also represent active efforts to claim disciplinary legitimacy for rhetoric and composition, efforts that ostensibly provide the rationale for further growth. The surveys provide data on doctoral programs for members of the discipline, while the Visibility Project, one of the more high-profile endeavors of



the Doctoral Consortium, headed by Louise Wetherbee Phelps, is ultimately focused on gaining greater attention for rhetoric and composition from the academy at large by generating classification codes for theses and dissertations in national higher education surveys. The *Rhetoric Review* surveys primarily offer an intra-disciplinary argument for accepting that rhetoric and composition is a valid, growing academic discipline. The Doctoral Consortium has functioned since its establishment in 1993 as a forum for members of doctoral programs to talk with one another, but the Visibility Project is fundamentally an effort to make the argument for disciplinary legitimacy outside of the discipline itself.

While doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition do as a whole share some attributes, the programs have all evolved in specific institutional settings that have affected what they view as the training necessary to create new scholars and teachers in the discipline. The surveys and the Consortium have had and will continue to have an impact on doctoral programs, but ultimately, doctoral programs take different forms because they see different purposes for graduate education in their own settings; they are able to attain varying levels of resources and funding for their work; and they perceive of the discipline in multiple ways. The shape each program takes and the name that program assumes evinces different views on the purposes, boundaries, and flexibility of the discipline of rhetoric and composition. To that end, I compare five doctoral programs in this chapter, constructing a brief profile of each and using the combined profiles as a means of mapping multiple perspectives on the shape of the discipline. This mapping of perspectives illustrates the fluidity of disciplinarity: when disciplinary knowledge

encounters local institutional settings, the curricular structures that emerge represent constant negotiations between the epistemological and institutional forces that ultimately shape our understanding of disciplinarity.

In previous chapters, I argued that 1963 is a useful marker for the initial establishment of rhetoric and composition as a discipline. As CCCC matured as a professional organization and CCC began publishing increasingly scholarly materials that marked the revival of classical rhetoric and the invigoration of scholarship in writing pedagogy and the writing process, one of the most important aspects of an academic discipline had yet to form. Formal, systematic graduate education in rhetoric and composition began in the 1970s and accelerated in the early 1980s as more and more universities established doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition. Until the emergence of these doctoral programs, the majority of scholars in rhetoric and composition generally held doctoral degrees in literary studies—for example, Peter Elbow wrote his dissertation on Chaucer and David Bartholomae wrote his on Thomas Hardy; Andrea Lunsford was the first person awarded a PhD in rhetoric and composition from the Ohio State University in 1977. At the time, rhetoric and composition remained firmly associated with English departments, which privileged literary studies. Many literature programs offered courses in linguistics, but few offered graduate courses in rhetoric and composition since that field was associated with teaching writing, a pedagogical designation in a discipline that had strived to establish its identity as a research-driven field.<sup>30</sup>

The development of doctoral programs in the 1970s and 1980s serve as another broad marker in the advancement of disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition. The credentialing of graduate students demonstrates a significant move toward professionalization, a process that had begun with the establishment of CCCC and had continued through the revival of rhetoric in the 1960s and the process movement in the early 1970s. In the early years of doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, graduate faculty strived to construct programs that provided students with training in and exposure to the kinds of disciplinary knowledge necessary to qualify as experts in the field.

Some programs, such as Carnegie Mellon University, sought allegiances with other disciplines, such as education, psychology, and linguistics, to help to establish the requisite coursework for students and to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to the construction of knowledge, while other programs, such as Purdue University, built new curricula from the ground up. These early programs established models that graduate faculty at other institutions could look to for examples of how to build their own doctoral programs. One curriculum cannot be moved from one institution to another, however, because each institution has its own strengths and specific local circumstances that contribute to the shape of new programs. Also, faculty at different institutions were equipped with different specializations, so each doctoral program grew and evolved according to its specific goals and resources. It is not useful, then, to attempt to define what *a* doctoral program in rhetoric and composition looks like, but instead to search for

trends in doctoral education that may help us to better understand the relationship between specific institutions and disciplinarity.

The efforts to define precisely what a doctorate in rhetoric and composition means continue to the present, with new programs being launched to match the needs of the market and with old programs revising their curricula to reflect those market demands as well as the shifting knowledge base of the discipline. Defining what doctoral programs do is vital because those programs provide credentials to subsequent generations of scholars who will continue the process of challenging and expanding disciplinary boundaries, both epistemologically, through the production of new knowledge through scholarship, and institutionally, through the revision of curricular structures and the design and redesign of courses. In other words, doctoral programs are important because of the doctoral students themselves, many of whom will assume positions in the academic structures that will produce more doctoral students. For example, in *Refiguring the Ph.D. in English Studies*, Stephen M. North states that the “key to power in English Studies...is doctoral education; and the key to power in doctoral education in turn lies in what students (are allowed to) write” (260-1). While North is making claims about English Studies in general, his point is certainly applicable more specifically to rhetoric and composition: the research and writing done by graduate students provides direction for doctoral education because that work, whether in the form of dissertations, scholarly articles, or even seminar papers, represents the future research areas for the discipline.

North’s central argument is that faculty and students need to actively collaborate with one another to make decisions about the future of doctoral education, and while he is

basing his argument on his own program at SUNY-Albany, he clearly intends other programs to follow suit. He describes a “fusion-based program,” a model of doctoral education that places faculty and doctoral students alike in “locked-room negotiations” where the power dynamic must shift so that doctoral students are active participants in the negotiations about the purposes of the doctoral program. He states that this move is predicated on the graduate faculty being “willing to renegotiate their disciplinary and professional status vis-à-vis one another *and*...doctoral students” (255). North’s fusion-based program is based on the principles of SUNY-Albany’s “Writing, Teaching, and Criticism” doctoral program, a program that seeks to cross disciplinary boundaries between literature, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, and the other disciplines housed in English studies to create a cohesive model of doctoral education that centers around graduate student writing. Whether his particular model is worthwhile or not—many English department faculties have found productive ways to thrive and cooperate without the antagonistic locked-room negotiations North suggests are necessary for all English programs—what is worth noting is North’s dedication to placing emphasis on graduate students as stakeholders in revising program curricula. He sees the active participation of doctoral students in planning and revising programs as vital to creating strong, productive doctoral programs.

In a similar vein, although focused more specifically on rhetoric and composition than North’s broad claims about English studies, Rosanne Carlo and Theresa Jarnigan Enos argue that doctoral programs are not keeping pace with the shifting job market, that programs’ core curricula are sorely lacking in areas that appear as desired areas of

expertise in job advertisements such as technology, technical communication, writing centers, writing across the curriculum, and writing program administration (215). Several programs I profile below offer courses in these areas, but they tend to offer them as electives, which often compete with the core requirements students must meet in order to complete their coursework in a timely fashion. Carlo and Enos argue that graduate writing should serve as a serious source of information for revising and constructing doctoral programs: “Our study has shown that we need to listen to [graduate students’] insights, look to *their* scholarship as identifying future trends. The challenge of revision and invention that we continually face as a profession is one that we are always asking our students to consider in writing” (221). Doctoral students are encouraged to write their way into the profession by working in new directions and exploring new disciplinary trends; Carlo and Enos suggest that doctoral programs can benefit from that work by using graduate writing as a means of exploring plans for program and curricular revision, a suggestion that resonates with North’s argument, even without the more antagonistic, contact zone-style lock-in that North encourages.

The basic assertion of this chapter is that doctoral programs play a significant role in shaping the disciplinary identities of the students who graduate from those programs. But as North, Carlo, and Enos suggest, graduate students play a reciprocal role in shaping doctoral programs, making the dissertations produced in each program useful indicators of the directions programs may be moving in. Further, I argue that the nomenclature employed by a program illustrates how that program sees itself in relation to the discipline, whether it is a program like Purdue University, that trains its students to be

general experts in rhetoric and composition, or the program at Arizona State University, that continues its relatively long history of encouraging students to work in the multiple disciplines of English studies to produce their areas of expertise, or the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, that sees writing studies as a specialization that can aid scholars in numerous disciplines. The students produced by these programs are influenced by the curricular structure and the attitudes of the faculty toward the discipline. However, what is equally clear is that doctoral students play a significant role in shaping doctoral education, that their work points out new directions for the field and thus new courses, specializations, and concentrations for doctoral programs to establish. Doctoral programs function as important sites for the development of disciplinary identity, but they are not stable sites; they are always in flux. The next two sections trace that fluidity as illustrated by the emergence and evolution of doctoral programs.

### **Around 1980: Charting the Emergence of Doctoral Programs**

While several doctoral programs began to offer concentrations and minors in rhetoric and composition in the early 1970s<sup>31</sup>, a major increase in the number of doctoral programs occurred within two years on either side of 1980, leading to the first substantive wave of scholars holding a PhD in rhetoric and composition in the mid-1980s. While some programs at schools like Ohio State University and the University of Iowa were started earlier, with the University of Iowa dating back to 1970,<sup>32</sup> the establishment of graduate programs accelerates significantly at the end of the 1970s, with programs starting in 1979 at the University of Louisville, Bowling Green State University, and the

University of Washington, followed in 1980 by programs at Carnegie Mellon University, Miami University of Ohio, and Purdue University. According to the first of four surveys of doctoral programs published in *Rhetoric Review*, which lists 38 doctoral programs in existence in 1986 when the survey was conducted, the period between 1978 and 1986 was a period of significant growth for programs, with roughly five to six being established each year. These early programs provided curricular and philosophical models for other universities to study and emulate as graduate study in rhetoric and composition proliferated at the doctoral level.

As doctoral programs began to increase in number at a faster rate, scholars began making concerted efforts to chart the emergence and growth of those programs. The earliest surveys of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition supply an incomplete picture of what doctoral programs existed and how exactly they were structured, but the earliest surveys were crucial simply as evidence that doctoral education in rhetoric and composition was growing. The fact that programs had been successfully launched and that graduate students were working toward professional credentials in the discipline was vital for other programs to use in arguing for establishing their own programs. The first two systematic surveys of graduate education in rhetoric and composition were published in 1980. The earlier of the two surveys, a report written by Janice M. Lauer on a special session sponsored by RSA at the CCCC Annual Convention in 1980, provides a list of universities that were engaged in graduate education in rhetoric to varying degrees, whether they were granting doctoral degrees or simply offering courses (“Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric” 194). The list emerged from a panel on doctoral programs in



rhetoric, featuring James Kinneavy, W. Ross Winterowd, and Richard E. Young as speakers, and jointly chaired by Edward Corbett and Richard Larson. Lauer acted as recorder, a position on CCCC panels that remained common until the late 1980s.

The three speakers outlined positions on graduate education in rhetoric and composition that continue to resound. First, Richard Young argued that a program's goals should determine the form a program takes, suggesting that programs begin by questioning what a discipline is and how rhetoric may fit with English as a discipline. For Carnegie Mellon, considering these questions meant that the program was designed to accommodate academic and non-academic interests, with an emphasis on professional writing as well as the intellectual study of rhetoric. Second, James Kinneavy argued that programs should build a core of courses that would help to shape students by giving them consistent training in rhetorical history and theory as well as methodologies. Speaking from his experience at the University of Texas at Austin—like Carnegie Mellon, the program at Austin was still brand new—Kinneavy stressed the importance of interdisciplinary training for doctoral students in fields such as philosophy, education, communication, linguistics, and psychology. In part, such an interdisciplinary approach to structuring a curriculum was necessary since the discipline-specific courses would take time to establish, but the appeal to disciplinarity also resonates with RSA's organizational mission to explore rhetoric from multiple disciplinary positions, as I discussed in Chapter Two. Third, Ross Winterowd suggested that the primary emphasis of doctoral programs in rhetoric should be literacy. By shifting the emphasis to literacy, Winterowd argued that the focus of English studies as a whole would be shaped by literacy, making reading and

writing the central mission of English departments and, he further claims, the mission of the humanities as a whole.

I recount these arguments here in brief because each speaker identifies components of the broad context in which doctoral programs were emerging. An increased interest in literacy as a field of study led some doctoral programs to turn their attention and resources, through the faculty they appointed and the graduate work produced in those programs, to the study of reading and writing in conjunction with one another. Additionally, Kinneavy and Young both allude to the problems of constructing graduate programs in rhetoric within English departments. Young focuses on the problem of disciplinarity for rhetoric and how that disciplinarity may or may not fit with the disciplinary identity of English studies while Kinneavy emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of rhetoric, meaning that studies in rhetoric could not be limited to the boundaries of the forms of humanist inquiry predominant in English departments. Kinneavy also speaks to the importance of a core curriculum, a set of courses that all graduate students in a program are expected to take. Doctoral programs have handled all of these issues differently, sometimes drastically so, but it is worthwhile to note that this early panel about doctoral programs marked some of the key challenges for graduate studies in rhetoric and composition.

While the points generated by the three speakers are clearly significant, what emerged from the panel that becomes most important is the list of doctoral programs that Lauer constructs at the end of the brief report. She divides her list into programs that award PhDs and MAs; that offer concentrations in rhetoric; that offer courses in rhetoric;

and that are in the planning stages to offer courses and degrees. Because of the session's focus on rhetoric, the list does not include information about composition, although many of the programs that were offering courses in rhetoric were also beginning to offer composition seminars. This omission suggests that those reporting on the state of doctoral programs in 1980 saw rhetoric and composition as discrete, separable fields, or possibly that rhetoric was a legitimate basis for graduate work while composition remained a profession rather than a research area. However incomplete, the list provides a glimpse of the state of graduate education in rhetoric in 1980. Although organizations such as CCCC and RSA had begun growing in membership and journals devoted to the emerging discipline had increased in number substantially since the founding of *CCC*, the number of doctoral programs was still very small. The discipline had begun to professionalize decades earlier, but most doctoral-granting institutions still did not recognize rhetoric and composition as intellectual work, and thus not worthy of designing curricula for awarding doctorates. Lauer lists seven programs that offered Ph.D.s in rhetoric:

Carnegie Mellon University  
Rensselaer Polytechnic  
Rutgers University  
University of Iowa  
University of Louisville  
University of Southern California  
University of Texas at Austin

Most of these doctoral programs were still in their infancy, the oldest of which, the University of Iowa, was ten years old, while several were at that time still in their first year. Lauer's list is based on responses provided by members of the audience, making the

list at best anecdotal. At the end of the session, the question of how many doctoral programs there were currently in rhetoric was raised, and the audience supplied the answers that constituted Lauer's list. While the resulting list was anecdotal and undoubtedly incomplete, the sheer volume of people (Lauer reported that more than 200 people attended the session) meant that the enthusiasm for doctoral education was growing as more institutions began establishing programs.

It is important to read the results of Lauer's survey in its specific context. The report was published in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, and the event was sponsored by RSA. Logically, the report focused on doctoral programs in rhetoric, not necessarily on programs that focused on composition as well. The report reflects RSA's interpretation of the disciplinary identity of rhetoric, what Lauer describes as "the society's view of rhetoric as a synthesizing discipline, drawing upon, collaborating with, and applying scholarship in my fields" (191). To phrase it more succinctly, the report reflects RSA's vision of rhetoric as interdisciplinary, even while Lauer describes the meeting as "an important stage in the development of the discipline" (190). The report indicates the fluctuation between a sense of a disciplinary identity for rhetoric and an identity that could be characterized at varying points as interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, transdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary. This fluctuation is especially acute from the perspective of RSA, an organization that has always positioned rhetoric not as a discipline but as a philosophical and methodological subject that is studied by and employed in numerous disciplines such as philosophy, literary studies, communication studies, and writing studies.

The other survey from 1980 is positioned within English studies, as is made clear by the article's placement in *College English*. The report by William A. Covino, Nan Johnson, and Michael Feehan is based on a questionnaire that was mailed to 45 English departments in the United States and Canada. The shift in perspective is important because the survey does not examine only doctoral programs in rhetoric, but also programs in "rhetoric-composition" or "rhetoric and composition" (Covino, Johnson, and Feehan 390, 398). More accurately, the survey focuses on English doctoral programs, whether they have concentrations in rhetoric and composition or not. The focus on English departments is important in contrast to Lauer's report because it indicates a certain perspective on the place of rhetoric and composition in the university. The RSA session focused on programs that offered training in rhetoric, a term that does not preclude English programs, but does not limit the parameters to English studies either. English departments, nearly universally the home of composition instruction since the course's inception, are the logical sites for the development of graduate education in writing instruction because those departments satisfied the university's writing course requirements. Many English TAs had been teaching composition for decades, a teaching assignment that led many of them to become interested in composition as a scholarly field.

Unlike the *Rhetoric Review* surveys that began in 1986—to be discussed below—this survey was not designed to retrieve information about programs specifically, but instead to gather information about "motives, attitudes, and orientations relative to graduate training in rhetoric-composition" (390). While Lauer's survey responses were

based on those present at the session and the *Rhetoric Review* surveys responses usually came from directors of graduate study or directors of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, this survey was designed to get responses from all possible faculty and graduate students in English departments. To that end, the results of the survey are divided according to four not entirely distinct groups: General Faculty, General Graduate Students, Rhetoric Faculty, and Rhetoric Graduate Students. The latter two groups are included in the general categories, but they then are considered separately.

The survey sought to determine the kinds of training writing teachers received at the graduate level. What this suggests is that even as Covino, Johnson, and Feehan position the survey as an argument for graduate-level work in rhetoric and composition, they see the ultimate outcome for such work to be the production of teachers of writing, not researchers. Thus the report is not offering an argument to make more discrete the disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition, but instead to better understand how English studies as a field engages in the teaching of writing and rhetoric. This difference in approach yields some intriguing results. For instance, from a list of fourteen potential courses that could be necessary for teachers of writing,<sup>33</sup> all four groups overwhelmingly favored training in classical rhetoric and general linguistics. The third place course is “Theoretical Analysis of Written Discourse,” a course title that even the authors of the questionnaire and subsequent report admit is too vague and malleable to be informative. Covino, Johnson, and Feehan dismiss its popularity as a result of it being an “it-could-mean-anything-so-it-must-be-good-for-something” course (392). Even so, the choice of these three courses indicates that the respondents saw a productive interaction between

rhetoric, linguistics, and writing. The earliest doctoral programs maintained a strong emphasis on linguistics, an emphasis that has faded over the past decades until now only a handful of doctoral programs require courses in linguistics.<sup>34</sup>

The other two important components of the report are tables that illustrate interest in forming doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition and for considering it a discipline. The two questions are clearly intertwined, but they are not the same question, especially since the latter question points toward a possible separation from English departments. The authors state that faculty “overwhelmingly favor doctoral education in rhetoric,” although the faculty are unsure exactly what that doctoral education should look like (392). The authors discover that the phrase “PhD concentration in rhetoric” does not produce consensus as to what makes a concentration, nor the extent to which the concentration means that students take multiple courses and write a dissertation in rhetoric and composition. Indeed, Lauer distinguishes between doctoral programs in rhetoric and programs with concentrations in rhetoric, likewise pointing to the murky status of the term “concentration” that exists in some departments to this day. A significant minority among the faculty and graduate respondents also specify a preference for seeing doctoral programs established separate from English departments, or at least as interdisciplinary programs that work in conjunction with English departments. This minority points toward the conflicts about the placement of doctoral programs that continue in many universities to date, while the majority that favor placement in English departments also reflects the mutual productivity many rhetoric and composition programs find within English studies.

Because the questionnaire did not focus on gathering information about which universities had graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, but instead on how faculty and graduate students felt about the growth of doctoral education in that field, the authors do not focus on the number of graduate programs in existence in 1980. They offer helpful information, however, regarding faculty and graduate students' agreement that eighteen programs offered PhD concentrations in rhetoric and composition (397). There was some disagreement among those two groups about the status of two other programs, Beaver College and the University of California at Los Angeles, which did not have doctoral concentrations at that time. But the information is useful to compare to Lauer's report, published only a couple of months before the Covino, Johnson, and Feehan report, which notes seven universities with doctoral programs in rhetoric. Lauer also lists programs that offer courses and have minors in rhetoric and composition, which increases the number drastically, although only a little over half the programs correspond between the two reports. A comparison of the two lists yields ten common programs that qualified as active PhD programs in rhetoric and composition.

This disparity between the two reports in 1980 can be expected because of the limited nature of each inquiry. Lauer could only draw on those who were present at the special session at CCCC, while Covino, Johnson, and Feehan were dependent on responses from 45 universities, who could self-identify as English departments with concentrations in rhetoric and composition, but they were not invited to indicate other institutions that may or may not have similar programs. Taken together, what the two reports demonstrate is clear confusion on the state of doctoral education in rhetoric and



composition at the time. Nevertheless, the reports also demonstrate that faculty are paying increasing attention to the emergence of the discipline,<sup>35</sup> and that programs are beginning to be established at a fast pace, fast enough that neither report can adequately chronicle their growth. Both of these reports are one-time efforts to chart the emergence of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition. The first systematic and repeated effort to chart growth begins in 1986 with the first survey conducted for *Rhetoric Review*.

### **Long-Term Efforts to Chart the Growth of Doctoral Programs**

While Covino, Johnson, and Feehan's report in *College English* represents the first systematic attempt to locate and synthesize information about the emergence of doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, the most prolonged efforts to chart the growth of doctoral education in the discipline has been in the pages of *Rhetoric Review*. Over the past twenty-five years, the journal has published the results from four surveys, offering first a brief report that synthesizes the findings and second a one- to two-page profile of each doctoral program surveyed. David Chapman and Gary Tate conducted the first survey in 1986, the results of which were published the next year.<sup>36</sup> They provided four reasons for undertaking the survey: to assist graduate students in their search for a doctoral program; to provide information to faculty for counseling graduate students; to give schools a basis for comparing their programs; and to give a sense of the development and direction of rhetoric and composition (Chapman and Tate 125). As they explained their methodology for seeking basic information about programs, they indicated an understanding of the problematic nature of employing a survey to retrieve

information about programs. They argued that “it was sometimes necessary to lop off the feet of our subject” (126), meaning that generating a one-size-fits-all survey made it difficult to chart the divergences between programs.

While noting the similarities in programs provides crucial data for tracing the growth of graduate education, the distinctive approaches of individual programs offer an idea of how the discipline shaped and was shaped by local conditions at specific institutions. What has been clear throughout all the efforts to chart the emergence of doctoral programs is a consensus that programs differ widely in large part because of their local circumstances. Thus a survey that seeks to chart basic features is already flawed because it cannot account for the significant differences between programs. Brown and Enos, along with their other collaborators, would later attempt to alleviate this flaw by adding open-ended questions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of programs, as well as more quantitative sections on enrollment criteria, job placement information, and financial support available to graduate students. Even with this unavoidable flaw in design, Chapman and Tate’s survey supplied ample evidence for making generalizations about the growing discipline of rhetoric and composition. For instance, Chapman and Tate see as one of the chief difficulties for the doctoral programs the fluctuation of courses that form the core curriculum, stating that many programs base their degrees on a number of hours taken in the area rather than a specific set of courses (129).

The survey represents an effort to categorize doctoral programs in a way that is intrinsically disciplinary in outlook: Chapman and Tate group the responding programs

into three broad and sometimes overlapping groups: multidisciplinary programs, integrated programs, and rhetoric and communication programs. These three categories define programs according to an understanding of how rhetoric and composition functions as an academic discipline, when, in the mid 80s, very few scholars even in the field agreed that it was a discipline. Their categories suggest a need to understand how doctoral programs position themselves in relation to their understanding of the disciplinary work of rhetoric and composition. Chapman and Tate define multidisciplinary programs as doctoral programs that structured their curriculum in conjunction with other academic units, such as education, sociology, linguistic, speech communication, and psychology departments, suggesting that such interaction with other departments “works well to provide the background needed for advanced research in writing” (130). However, noting Janice M. Lauer’s early caution against making composition a “dappled discipline” by allowing doctoral programs to become multimodal (a term Lauer used to indicate interdisciplinarity rather than multiple modes of textual production, as the term usually indicate now), Chapman and Tate frame the multidisciplinary model as a weak form, suggesting that it could dilute the disciplinary emergence of rhetoric and composition.

Integrated programs are similar to multidisciplinary programs in their interaction with another discipline, although in this case, Chapman and Tate are referring specifically to literary studies. They position the University of Pittsburgh’s program in Cultural and Critical Studies as an example of a program that seeks to integrate the study of literature and rhetoric. Chapman and Tate do not advocate against such a program, as they did

against a multidisciplinary program; instead, they question the feasibility of a program that ultimately relies on the cooperation between literature and rhetoric faculty to construct courses and a curriculum that aids graduate students in literature and in rhetoric. They express a healthy fear of relying on this cooperation, invoking the dreaded “senior professor” of literature who will prove unwilling to incorporate rhetorical methodologies and research into his courses. However, their tone indicates a subtle preference for the model, pointing to the importance of faculty being able to operate from “varying perspectives” on their individual specializations to make such a model work (132). This preference seems likely because, as the other two models indicate, it was still difficult to imagine a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition that was not somehow allied with English studies. Indeed, the vast majority of doctoral programs to date remain affiliated with English studies.

Rhetoric and communication programs are those programs that make rhetoric the sole focus of their doctoral program—which is to say, Chapman and Tate define these programs as those which exclude training in composition. Additionally, one of the key differences between these programs and the other two models is the absence in a requirement for coursework in literary studies. Another difference is a strong emphasis on research rather than pedagogy, meaning that Chapman and Tate see this model as one more in keeping with the general academic trend toward research and scholarship but not in keeping with rhetoric and composition’s traditional emphasis on teaching. The other significant difference is that these programs have connections to business and industry, encouraging a strong emphasis on non-academic work within the degree. Chapman and

Tate specify Carnegie Mellon University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute as the only two universities that had such programs when their results were published in 1987.

These three models represent an early attempt to compare programs and synthesize the findings of those comparisons. The models are problematic in numerous ways—for instance, Carnegie Mellon seems better suited to the multidisciplinary model based on its strong preference for interdisciplinary work—but they bring to light some of the conflicts Chapman and Tate saw emerging in doctoral studies. The integrated programs demonstrate the potential problems that were already emerging between literature and rhetoric and composition at the graduate level in this time period. Chapman and Tate advise program directors to begin to think about how they should interact with English departments in more fruitful ways, and their advice hints at the possibility that some programs will find it more beneficial to stake out territory elsewhere. Generally, however, the report envisions rhetoric and composition as a discipline rooted firmly in English studies, a trend that continues throughout the rest of the *Rhetoric Review* surveys. Chapman and Tate conclude their report with a prediction that doctoral education would grow rapidly, predicated on the notion that nearly the majority of the programs they surveyed were less than a decade old.

The next survey took place in 1994, conducted by Stuart C. Brown, Paul R. Meyer, and Theresa Enos. While they model their survey on the one used by Chapman and Tate, they revised it to gain more information about how the programs differ from one another, seeking to address the weakness that Chapman and Tate noted in their own findings. Brown, Meyer, and Enos also pay more attention to the discipline as a whole, a

position that was more difficult to imagine in 1987, when the disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition was less stable than it was in the 1990s. While Chapman and Tate were clearly interested in the corollary between doctoral programs and the growth of the discipline, as indicated by their discipline-based taxonomy, they used the data about doctoral programs almost exclusively to compare the programs with one another. The 1994 survey becomes a device for speaking more broadly about the growth of the discipline, demonstrating proof of what Brown, Meyer, and Enos call “the increased disciplinary viability of rhetoric and composition” (240). In fact, the surveys as a whole can be seen as one large claim about disciplinary growth and maturity, providing data that faculty and programs can then use to support their own claims about the validity of rhetoric and composition as an academic discipline.

They begin their report with three words—growth, consolidation, and diversification—words that continue to organize the research findings of later surveys as well. *Growth*, of course, indicates an increase in the number of doctoral programs as well as the number of students enrolled in those programs. The number of graduate programs increased from 53 (only 38 of which appeared to be legitimate doctoral programs at that time) in 1987 to 72 in 1994, a significant increase that makes the period between 1987 and 1994 the second most prolific period for the establishment of doctoral programs, outpaced only by the frantic speed of the birth of programs around 1980. Growth also indicates the increase in tenure-track faculty, a number that more than doubles from 238 in 1987 to 567 in 1994, indicating a very healthy growth for the discipline.

*Consolidation* and *diversification* refer respectively to how alike and different programs seem to be. The authors pay less attention to consolidation—despite it being listed as a “key term,” the word only appears twice in the entire report, and it is never clearly defined—than to diversification, probably because the differences in doctoral programs are more illustrative of how the discipline is taking shape in specific institutions. Additionally, even with the advent of the Doctoral Consortium, there is no effort for doctoral programs to work toward any consistency in design. For instance, in 1994, the notion of a common core curriculum continued to remain elusive, with the reports indicating “little consistency in core requirements or course offerings” (247). That the surveyors are seeking this consistency, and identify its lack as a potential problem, reveals their interest in seeing greater consolidation in graduate programs; however, the diversification can in fact be interpreted to have a positive impact on disciplinary formation, because the various forms of training that graduate students receive and the specific means of relating to the discipline that form while they are in graduate school generate faculty who interrogate the areas of inquiry in rhetoric and composition from multiple perspectives.

In seeking out further signs of consolidation, Brown, Meyer, and Enos describe what they see as another difficulty in defining the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and composition: The institutions that responded to the survey have difficulty determining who should be counted as faculty in rhetoric and composition, leading some schools to specify only a small handful of individuals, while some list all of the faculty in the English department, and others list faculty who are peripherally involved in rhetoric and

composition, making these portrayals of faculty difficult to compare with one another. More important than the difficulty to compare programs on this point, however, is the implication that institutions find it hard to define exactly what faculty positions in rhetoric and composition look like. This trouble in distinguishing faculty who specialize in rhetoric and composition from faculty in other areas of English studies remains a problem in the 1999 survey as well.<sup>37</sup> A statement in the 2007 report suggests another difficulty in identifying faculty in rhetoric and composition: “Ominously, new conflicts seem to be arising as some faculty define themselves as either rhetoricians or compositionists and not as both” (Brown, Enos, Reamer, and Thompson 339). Such a distinction seems inevitable as the discipline matures and continues to grow, a consequence of increasing specialization and the balkanization of disciplines encouraged by the structure of the contemporary research university.

Such an identification with one side or the other signifies a different understanding of the discipline than previous members exhibited or expressed, although it has been common since the inception of the discipline for scholars to work more prominently in one rather than the other. This statement, which illustrates a problem that could potentially rupture the discipline into multiple discrete disciplines, is addressed no further in the report. The idea that faculty are identifying with either rhetoric or composition suggests discomfort among faculty with identifying with a discipline that unifies the two (not to mention discomfort among the surveyors who observe the trend), indicating potential maneuvers to redefine the discipline or to redraw the boundaries to separate rhetoric and composition. But the relative silence of the surveyors on the



possible friction between rhetoric and composition suggests a desire on their part to draw attention to signs of disciplinary growth, not disruption.

Despite the difficulties the surveyors enumerate throughout the 1994, 1999, and 2007 reports, they ultimately argue that their findings indicate healthy disciplinary growth, concluding in the 1994 report, for instance, that “the tenuous ad hoc beginnings to the profession are now of historical significance rather than current concern. Rhetoric and composition has obtained an integral and important place in English departments” (Brown, Jackson, and Enos 250). Such a statement elides the discrepancies between rhetoric and composition and English studies as an umbrella multidisciplinary site to emphasize the growth of the discipline into a stable form, downplaying the continuing tensions between rhetoric and composition and its fellow sub-fields in English studies to display an image of robust disciplinary health.

The reports on findings from the later surveys seek to refine the terminology and methodology of the 1994 report, continually drawing attention to the ways in which the discipline is growing and maturing, even when the data may suggest otherwise. For example, the number of programs actually decreased from 1994 to 1999, from 72 to 65, as several programs began to shut down because they were losing key faculty necessary to run the programs.<sup>38</sup> The number of tenure-track faculty members also went down during that period. However, enrollment continued to grow, meaning that the fewer graduate programs were seeing larger numbers of students in their programs. The number of programs once again increases in the subsequent survey, conducted by Stuart C. Brown, Theresa Enos, David Reamer, and Jason Thompson.<sup>39</sup> However, the count is

complicated by a number of programs that did not respond to the survey despite continuing to offer doctorates in rhetoric and composition, such as the University of Pittsburgh and Temple University, both of which still have programs in rhetoric and composition. Some universities reported that their programs were no longer viable. Based on the number of surveys returned, Brown, Enos, Reamer, and Thompson were able to supply 67 profiles of doctoral programs, a small increase over the 1999 survey, although the authors speculate that as many as 78 doctoral programs were in operation at the time of the survey.

The surveyors continue to argue for the importance of consolidation in later reports, combining the term with maturity. This combination more clearly illustrates the trend among the later surveys to argue that more consistency between programs proves that the discipline is maturing; this argument is problematic because programmatic consensus does not ipso facto demonstrate disciplinary maturity. In the 1999 report, Brown, Jackson, and Enos indicate that the surveys demonstrate an increased dedication to TA training, a greater emphasis on professionalizing graduate students in preparation for the market, and a stable “core study” (237).<sup>40</sup> The latter finding suggests that the programs have made great strides in seeking to standardize the courses that make up the core curriculum, a finding that ultimately seems to be inaccurate, as Enos herself notes in an article coauthored with Rosanne Carlo in 2011.<sup>41</sup> The core curricula at universities still vary widely. It is relatively safe to generalize so far as to say that most programs’ core curricula are composed of some variation of courses in the history of rhetoric, contemporary rhetorical theory, writing pedagogy and theory, and research methods.

Taken as a whole, the four surveys conducted by *Rhetoric Review* from 1986 to 2007 provide an invaluable record of the growth and development of doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, both on the national level and at the individual program level. But the surveys are in fact arguments to prove that the discipline is growing and solidifying around an increasingly consistent understanding of what the discipline is, a fact that should make readers of the survey results cautious in accepting their claims. The profiles are valuable because they provide internal views on the shape and direction of each program: Each program profile offers a new program description that gives a glimpse into the program's changes in priorities and areas of study from 1986 to 2007. The self-reporting nature of the surveys means that some of the information is more difficult to work with based on confusions in terminology—does a program offer a PhD in rhetoric and composition or a PhD in English with a specialization in rhetoric and composition, for instance. But the four surveys jointly represent the most thorough attempts to map out doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, offering a long-term record of how programs have shifted in response to changes in the discipline and to changes in the interests of faculty and students at individual institutions. These surveys, as well as reports published by the faculty involved in the founding of many of these programs, form the basis of my analysis of five representative doctoral programs. Before turning to those five programs, however, I examine another significant source of information about doctoral education in rhetoric and composition: The Doctoral Consortium.

## **The Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition**

As more and more doctoral programs were established in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the period that the *Rhetoric Review* surveys mark as one of significant growth for doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, the faculty charged with running the programs felt a need to establish lines of communication with their counterparts at other universities, partially satisfied through the Association of Departments of English (ADE), an organization designed to connect department administrators primarily through the *ADE Bulletin*. However, faculty in rhetoric and composition have also sought ways to communicate with other faculty who have constructed or are in the process of constructing doctoral programs. The ADE, as is evident from the organization's name, is structured around English departments, and not all doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition are housed in English departments, although the vast majority remain in English. Nevertheless, doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition sought ways to communicate directly with one another. In order to fill this need, several representatives from doctoral programs met at CCCC in 1993 to organize the Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition, appointing Janice M. Lauer from Purdue University as the first coordinator to expand membership and organize meetings at subsequent CCCCs. The consortium's purposes center around increasing communication between doctoral programs and increasing visibility for research and scholarship produced in the doctoral programs by graduate students. The consortium facilitates communication by hosting a listserv and a website and maintaining a list of contact faculty members at its member doctoral programs.

Twenty years after its establishment, the consortium is now composed of over 70 doctoral programs, a number generally in keeping with the findings of the *Rhetoric Review* surveys. The consortium continues to meet annually at CCCC, where it hosts a half-day Wednesday caucus, providing a number of presentations on issues deemed relevant to doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, and conducts its annual business meeting to establish its priorities for the following year.<sup>42</sup> The consortium's chief value lies in its efforts to bring representatives from doctoral programs together to discuss shared issues concerning doctoral education in rhetoric and composition. The programs that were created around 1980 had no such organization to consult, and thus they were left to build their curricula alone, relying solely on their knowledge of the fledgling discipline and the other disciplines that had been established long enough to provide models for them to follow. Thus we can think of the Doctoral Consortium as a mechanism that enables new programs to access more information about program formation than would otherwise be possible. The availability of this information, as well as the data provided by the *Rhetoric Review* surveys, offers new programs and those programs interested in revising their curriculum or their focus examples of what other universities have done.

The Doctoral Consortium's recent effort to increase visibility for rhetoric and composition outside of the disciplines has probably been its most significant contribution to the disciplinary status of the field. The Visibility Project, led by Louise Wetherbee Phelps, has been the Doctoral Consortium's effort to articulate the purpose and boundaries of the discipline by creating new codes in important national surveys and

databases. In their report on the progress of the Visibility Project in 2010, Phelps and John Ackerman posit that the discipline has done much to establish its intellectual credibility through the proliferation of scholarly journals and series of monographs and edited collections, as well as the continued prominence of CCCC as a conference for the exchange of research and the building of knowledge. They assert, however, that no discipline can survive solely by proving merely to itself that it is, in fact, a discipline: “External validation matters; disciplinary status can’t be willed from within, nor can it be solely written into existence” (182). Their point resonates with Karen Kopelson’s critique of rhetoric and composition’s habit of self-examination, which she calls “disciplinary self-indulgence” (775). In Chapter Two, I argued against Kopelson’s position that the field should abandon its habit of self-examination—this dissertation is an exercise in self-examination, after all—but again, I think Kopelson’s fundamental point that the discipline needs to leave its identity crisis behind is worth our consideration, and one way to leave behind the identity crisis is to build a quantifiable form of disciplinary legitimacy outside of the discipline itself, and the Visibility Project represents one of the most sustained efforts to satisfy that need.

The external validation that the Visibility Project sought came in the form of “the information codes and databases of higher education” (182), specifically the National Research Council (NRC) and the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP). The National Research Council conducts an annual survey of doctoral programs, a survey from which rhetoric and composition has been absent until the Visibility Project and a task force established by CCCC argued successfully for the inclusion of the discipline in

the survey. The CIP gathers information about fields of study for the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), an important governmental organization linked to funding opportunities for graduate education. Neither of these important sources of information about national trends in higher education were even aware that rhetoric and composition existed as a discipline until Phelps began lobbying for the discipline's inclusion in their data. The Doctoral Consortium had already lobbied successfully in 1996, an effort led by Linda Ferreira-Buckley, to create a code for rhetoric and composition for the Dissertation Abstracts International index.

Adding the discipline to these other two important national organizations was a significant victory for the consortium, and for the discipline in general. As Phelps and Ackerman argue, adding rhetoric and composition to national databases and surveys is vital because of the need of the “entrepreneurial hunger of a global information economy” to be able to comprehend the discipline through the data it generates (209).

From the perspective of my particular project, one of the more intriguing aspects of the Visibility Project was agreeing to a designation for the discipline. In other words, those working to codify rhetoric and composition first had to agree on what to call it. In a memo sent to the NRC in 2004, where Phelps first formally laid out her case for rhetoric and composition as an “emerging discipline,” Phelps acknowledges the problem of disciplinary articulation: “There was (and is today) no single term used by Ph.D. programs or by scholars that encompasses all the complexities of the field itself or accounts for the diverse ways that doctoral studies in writing and rhetoric are configured and articulated at different universities” (“Case for Rhetoric and Composition” 2). The

problem that Phelps points out here is important because it establishes the power doctoral programs have in shaping the discipline by the choices they make for naming their programs. She suggests that this is because of “all the complexities of the field,” such as the incorporation of technical writing and communication in some programs or the inclusion of creative writing in other programs.

For the National Research Council, the Consortium adopted rhetoric and composition as the discipline’s name because it serves as “a generic designation of the field because these terms and their variants are the most commonly used in scholarly discourse and in doctoral program titles to refer to the discipline as a whole” (3). For the Classification of Instructional Programs, however, the discipline is named differently; it is labeled rhetoric and composition/writing studies. The difference in nomenclature is due to the nature of each organization. Because the NRC conducts surveys, it needs a title that enables it to identify programs that fit the model of a rhetoric and composition doctoral program. Because the CIP is a classification database, it needs to be able to account for variations in the work of programs and of doctoral students. Therefore, rhetoric and composition/writing studies represents the entire group, while internally the terminology is broken down further to provide codes for “Writing, General,” “Creative Writing,” “Professional, Technical, Business and Scientific Writing,” “Rhetoric and Composition,” and “Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies, Other,” the latter of which serves as a miscellaneous category to provide flexibility (Phelps and Ackerman 199).

The Doctoral Consortium’s work through the Visibility Project indicates a general agreement that the doctoral programs that produce the members of the academic



community play a pivotal role in the formation of disciplinary identification. To further explore the concept of how doctoral programs play a role in the formation of the discipline itself and how its members identify with it, I now turn to profiles of five current doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition. As I contended above, we can learn more about the interaction between local curricular sites like doctoral programs by exploring the differences in how these programs have formed and how they approach the process of training graduate students: While the *Rhetoric Review* surveys sought to argue for consolidation as an indicator of disciplinary maturity, I argue that the continuing proliferation of different curricular models, what the surveys would characterize as diversification, demonstrates a more organic form of disciplinary growth that continues to draw on rhetoric and compositions interdisciplinary roots even as these programs collectively construct stable, if ever-changing, disciplinary boundaries.

### **The Nomenclature and Curricular Design of Doctoral Programs**

My central argument in this dissertation is that the nomenclature associated with the discipline of rhetoric and composition at multiple sites affects the epistemological and institutional shape that the discipline then takes. In this chapter, I argue that doctoral programs are fundamental to the formation of conceptualizations of the discipline because graduate students are trained according to certain curricular and philosophical perspectives in their programs. Many of those graduate students then become faculty members at different institutions, carrying their particular disciplinary perspectives, informed by their doctoral education, into new institutional settings, which then requires

further negotiation of disciplinary understanding. In other words, the disciplinary inculcation that graduate students experience in their programs is not the final word on their understanding of the shape and boundaries of rhetoric and composition; their understanding continues to shift as they work in new institutional settings and, in many cases, in regional and national professional organizations and associations. This section looks particularly at the curricular aspects of five sample doctoral programs in relation to the names they choose to designate their relationship to the discipline. In keeping with my argument that the way we name the discipline shifts the way we identify with it, I have chosen five programs whose names indicate different perspectives on what makes a viable candidate for entry into the profession. I have also chosen programs that vary in age, although all of the programs were established in 1980 or later. Further, each program has responded to the periodical *Rhetoric Review* surveys, providing a useful basis of comparison. Much of my analysis depends particularly on how the programs describe themselves, and these descriptions vary from one survey to the next, sometimes because of shifts in leadership and sometimes because of significant organizational or institutional shifts.

The five programs I examine are housed in the following universities, in order of their establishment from oldest to newest: Carnegie Mellon University, Purdue University, Syracuse University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Arizona State University. All five schools are research-intensive universities with large undergraduate and graduate populations, characteristic of doctoral granting institutions. Three of the universities are public (Purdue, Illinois, and Arizona State) while two are

private institutions (Carnegie Mellon and Syracuse). The sample also provides a mixture of institutional configurations for the PhD in rhetoric and composition, ranging from the traditional seat of the discipline within English departments to an interdisciplinary unit that retains strong ties to English and an independent writing program that focuses exclusively on doctoral education. Thus, while the schools are similar in that they are research-oriented, they each provide different models of program construction.

For each university, I offer an analysis built on program descriptions/mission statements and descriptions of the curriculum that leads to the degree. Each program follows the standard doctoral studies model of two to three years of coursework, followed by some form of qualifying exam, a prospectus, and a dissertation. But beyond commonalities in basic structure, programs exhibit diverse approaches to the study of rhetoric and composition. Finally, I conduct a brief survey of the dissertations produced by students in the programs in recent years,<sup>43</sup> since the scholarship produced by graduate students reflects to some degree the kinds of guidance and direction they receive from their faculty advisors. The faculty who design graduate programs envision certain programs of study that provide a suggestion of what they see as the shape of the discipline and its potential overlap with other disciplines. The writing produced by graduate students (not only in the form of dissertations, although those are the artifacts I consider in this chapter, but also in scholarly publications, conference presentations, and seminar papers, as well as in the design of courses taught by graduate teaching assistants) illustrate how that vision provided by program architects is interpreted and potentially reshaped by those students.<sup>44</sup> As I noted above, Stephen North argues for a contact zone

approach to curricular revision, with faculty and graduate students negotiating with one another to reshape doctoral programs, but even without the direct approach that North advocates, the interaction between the program designed and taught by faculty and the work produced by graduate students enacts a constant negotiation, whereby students take what they have learned in their programs and begin constructing their own disciplinary identities.

### **Carnegie Mellon University: Rhetoric**

The doctoral program at Carnegie Mellon was established in 1980 in response to the faculty's sense that the study of rhetoric was becoming increasingly important in English studies. In his comments at the special RSA session on doctoral programs in rhetoric, discussed above, Richard E. Young, who helped to launch Carnegie Mellon's rhetoric program, argues that the best way to begin a doctoral program is to move away from the thinking that rhetoric should be a parallel curriculum to literary studies, or that curricular architects should not look at the existing literature curriculum and simply attempt to mimic it. Instead, he advocates for building a curriculum after an intensive process among the faculty responsible for the new program of asking questions and making plans based on those questions. The questions help to determine goals, and the goals help to determine the curriculum. According to Gary Waller, a professor of English at CMU, the goals determined by the questions Young posed led to a program steeped in interdisciplinarity, moving beyond the "traditional boundaries of English" by establishing connections with other departments such as "speech, cognitive psychology, computer

science, philosophy, [and] design” (112). Through the work of faculty such as Linda Flower, Carnegie Mellon’s program quickly became associated with cognitive rhetoric, one of the most significant epistemological movements in rhetoric and composition in the late twentieth century.

In Young and Steinberg’s article on program planning, they use their involvement in planning graduate programs at Carnegie Mellon as the basis of their suggestions. They champion what they term the “comparative advantage” model of planning programs, and their emphasis on comparative advantage helps to explain Carnegie Mellon’s early association with cognitive rhetoric and theories of composing. Young and Steinberg emphasize the rhetoric program’s productive interaction with the department of cognitive psychology, which was already doing work on process-tracing and problem solving (398). They explain that the “tradition of interdisciplinary research at CMU made our interaction with other departments a great deal easier and more productive” than it is for universities that do not privilege interaction between the disciplines and the academic units that house them. Linda Flower and John R. Hayes’ collaborative work, such as their 1981 article “A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing,” contributed direction for cognitive work in rhetoric and composition for the next fifteen years, until social construction became the dominant paradigm in composition theory to the general exclusion of cognitive rhetoric.<sup>45</sup> Flower was a professor in the English department while Hayes was a professor in psychology, demonstrating the productive interdisciplinary work that Young and Steinberg have in mind for the comparative advantage model. For Carnegie Mellon’s graduate program, interdisciplinary study remains a significant focus.

By framing program invention around the needs of the institution as well as the needs of the discipline, Carnegie Mellon also maintains an emphasis on professional writing, a field that, like creative writing and technical writing, is not necessarily seen as part of the discipline of rhetoric and composition even as many writing specialists throughout the United States focus on the study and teaching of professional writing.<sup>46</sup> The program description in the 1987 *Rhetoric Review* survey explains that the program is designed for students interested in “research in rhetoric, the teaching of rhetoric and composition, and the design and evaluation of professional documents in government and business” (Chapman and Tate 140). The first two aspects can be expected of any doctoral program in rhetoric and composition. The third aspect, the emphasis on professional writing, suggests a doctoral program that from its outset did not intend to produce graduates for academic careers only. Young and Steinberg draw attention to a strong focus on business and professional writing throughout Carnegie Mellon when the rhetoric program was launched:

There was a pervasive interest at CMU in technical, scientific, and professional communication, doubtless a consequence of its strengths in engineering, science, and management. And the English department already had flourishing undergraduate programs in creative and professional writing and the country’s oldest bachelor of science program in technical writing. (398)

Working with these elements that already existed in the English department, the doctoral program was designed to incorporate aspects of professional writing, and the department also launched a master’s program dedicated specifically to training graduate students in professional writing, with curricular overlap between the master’s and doctoral programs

to provide graduate students with experience in applied rhetoric in addition to the more theoretical study of rhetoric that graduate students focused on in the doctoral program.

However, the emphasis on professional writing fades in the descriptions provided in subsequent surveys. The 1999 program description shifts to a central focus on “how people produce and understand discourse across a variety of social, cultural, and material contexts,” a description that implies the continued presence of professional writing as a significant focus (Brown, Jackson, and Enos 258). The concluding sentence of the description states that the program prepares students for “academic careers” (258), and while professional writing can be part of an academic career, the shift away from preparing students for work in business and government to preparing them for academic careers suggests that the program’s focus narrowed in the intervening years from applied rhetoric to the study of rhetoric. The 2007 program description is a lightly revised version of the same description, with the continued emphasis on academic careers, although the description of academic interests has been augmented to include “research about the writing process and communication design more generally.”

Doctoral programs undergo periodic curricular revisions to shift course requirements to match what the faculty identify as the needs of graduate students, making it no surprise that what the program is today bears some resemblance to the original vision, but that it has also experienced substantive changes. Programs are routinely reviewed and revised, according to the needs of the faculty, the students, the institution in general, and the shifting boundaries of the discipline. In other words, even when a program has been established to fulfill certain functions, it is still shaped by the epistemic

and institutional pressures ever present in the academy. Carnegie Mellon has retained its MA in Professional Writing, as well as adding an MDes (Master of Design) in Communication Planning and Information Design, suggesting that the English department remains dedicated to training professional writers, but that the doctoral program has evolved in ways that distance it from professional and technical writing. Thus, the doctoral program has narrowed its focus, as reflected in its core curriculum of five courses:

- History of Rhetoric
- Contemporary Rhetorical Theory
- Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis
- Theories of Language for Rhetorical Study
- History, Theory, and Practice of Writing Instruction

While the program has moved away from the strong attention that it paid to professional writing in its earlier years, it has built and retained an emphasis on discourse analysis as one of its chief methodologies for its doctoral students. It is also clear from the core curriculum that composition studies does not have a strong presence in the program, which is not surprising since the degree seeks an overt focus on rhetoric.

The kind of tension suggested by CMU's course names between rhetoric and composition, when envisioned as two discrete fields rather than the singular field my usage of the nomenclature implies, illustrates the kinds of difficulty the field has had in articulating a coherent disciplinary identity for itself: It is difficult to articulate an overarching identity when members of the discipline do not in fact agree that they are part of the same field. The fifth course is dedicated not to composition studies—language



that disappears from the program descriptions by the 2007 survey—but more specifically to writing pedagogy, a choice in nomenclature that implies a much narrower focus on the practical pedagogical needs for graduate student training. That same description lists “the history and theory of rhetoric” as the chief center of training for academic careers it envisions for its students. In other words, composition is not a particularly strong interest within Carnegie Mellon’s doctoral program. A brief glance at all four *Rhetoric Review* surveys indicates that the core curriculum at Carnegie Mellon undergoes routine revision, suggesting that the doctoral program itself remains fluid, shifting to meet new needs as they arise. The constant courses are slightly varied instantiations of the history of rhetoric, discourse theory, and rhetorical theory.

A brief survey of recent dissertations demonstrates that Carnegie Mellon’s strengths do in fact lie in rhetorical theory and discourse analysis. According to the 2007 survey, three areas tied in the number of dissertations written since 2000: the history of rhetoric and composition, technology and communication, and linguistics. These results do not seem to reflect the trend in dissertations completed since 2007, most of which focus on rhetorical criticism. Of course, as I discuss above, the categories used for the *Rhetoric Review* surveys are broad to the point of being difficult to match with some programs. The dissertations also indicate a continued dedication to interdisciplinary studies, including cultural and literary studies, fellow occupants of the English department. The two most recent dissertations listed in the survey focus on African American studies, one from a literary perspective and the other from a sociolinguistic perspective. One dissertation published in 2008 focuses on document design, indicating

that while the doctoral program as a whole has begun to move away from professional writing and document design, it remains a component of the program. Other dissertations focus on rhetorical formations in other disciplines, such as probability mathematics and the peer review process in scientific journals. Two recent dissertations illustrate the breadth of subjects of study undertaken by doctoral students at CMU: In 2009, Nathan S. Atkinson completed a dissertation that engaged both the study of visual rhetoric and the history of the Cold War, taking as its specific focus the way in which news reels rendered the testing of atomic bombs public. In 2011, Ann Margaret Sinsheimer completed a dissertation that analyzed the effects of organizational changes in government agencies in the aftermath of 9/11 on international students. Overall, the dissertations reflect a program that has enabled its graduate students to construct projects that are based in rhetoric, focusing on any number of cultural and textual subjects.

### **Purdue University: Rhetoric and Composition**

The 1994 special issue of *Rhetoric Review* dedicated to doctoral studies includes a brief account of the beginning of Purdue's doctoral program, written by Janice M. Lauer. Lauer has proven to be one of the most prolific scholars of and advocates for doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, making her short narrative particularly useful because of its focus on an individual program rather than doctoral education in general. Lauer recounts the chronology of the program, stating that following an external review led by Edward Corbett and his subsequent suggestion that Purdue begin a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition, the faculty at Purdue formed the curriculum "after

considerable debate” and launched the doctoral program in 1980, admitting the first group of students in 1981 (“Constructing a Doctoral Program in Rhetoric and Composition” 392). Her comment about the considerable debate and a few other thinly veiled comments about the struggle for equity in teaching assistantships implies a significant struggle and a lingering tension to build the new program in the existing English department. But once the program started, it began growing at a rapid pace until it became one of the largest and most esteemed doctoral programs in the discipline.

The survey results for Purdue combined with Lauer’s narrative of the program’s establishment suggest that the program has always put a strong emphasis on its core curriculum. More than other doctoral programs, whose core curricula shift from one survey to the next or are not formally mapped out at all, the Purdue curriculum has remained fairly stable since its inception. The core has consistently included courses in rhetorical history, composition theory and pedagogy, and research methodologies (with a particular emphasis on empirical research). The names have changed over the decades, but the content of the core curriculum has remained remarkably stable. The core is composed of five courses:

Introduction to Composition Theory  
Issues in Composition Studies: Classical Period to the Renaissance  
Issues in Composition Studies: Modern Period  
Seminar on Empirical Research on Writing  
Postmodernism and Composition Issues

Of particular note regarding the course titles is the complete absence of the word “rhetoric.” The program is characterized as a rhetoric and composition program, and it

stands to reason that the two-sequence Issues in Composition Studies courses are what most programs refer to generally as history of rhetoric courses. In fact, the brief descriptions of each course provided on the program website indicate that these are courses in rhetorical history. The choice of “composition studies” as a replacement for rhetoric thus points to the program’s fundamental emphasis on composition rather than rhetoric, or perhaps that the program sees rhetoric as composition. Either way, the dissonance between the emphasis on composition studies and the name of the program suggests that although the core curriculum has remained more stable at Purdue University than at many programs, that the ways in which the graduate faculty envision the discipline and their place in it remains fluid, adjusting as the field’s understanding of itself continues to change.

The program descriptions in the four *Rhetoric Review* surveys also indicate a preference for composition studies over rhetorical theory. The first description states that the program is designed to meet the needs of “writing teachers, administrators, and researchers at all levels of education” (Chapman and Tate 162). Among the sample of programs provided here, Purdue is unique in its early attention to the intellectual work of writing program administration, a field of study mentioned in almost all of its program descriptions from the four *Rhetoric Review* surveys. It is not mentioned specifically in the 2007 description, although it is implied in the phrasing “historical, theoretical, and practical preparation for a variety of positions within and outside academia,” if one considers writing program administration practical preparation for positions within the academy. Again, this points toward greater sympathy for composition studies than for

rhetorical studies considering the closer alignment of writing program administration with composition.

While the configuration of the core courses and the strong push to privilege writing program administration—as well as the teaching of writing—as intellectual work suggests a greater emphasis on composition than rhetoric, a brief survey of recent dissertations complicates this view. The intellectual pursuits of the doctoral students appear to vary widely, including historical work, rhetorical theory, and literacy studies, with the occasional dissertation that employs rhetoric to analyze literary texts. Each *Rhetoric Review* survey includes a quantifiable section on a program's dissertations, based on the areas of the dissertations. The 2007 survey asks for the number and areas of dissertations completed since 2000. Among both this sample of programs and the programs surveyed in general in the 2007 survey, Purdue is notable for its range of dissertations. Most programs cover a range of four to seven areas of dissertations; Purdue includes fourteen areas. The implication is that the dissertations completed at Purdue reflect a highly varied range of intellectual work among the graduate students. Recent dissertations completed by Purdue students suggest an increased focus on the study of the concept of community, from Allen H. Brizee's 2010 dissertation on partnerships between colleges and communities to construct literacy programs and Mark Hannah's dissertation that theorizes a "rhetoric of connectivity," which focuses on cultural practices among students of public engagement to Megan Schoen's 2012 dissertation on the discursive practices associated with the development of democracy in Botswana. Even though community forms a thematic connection between these dissertations, their theoretical

approaches and their content differ widely, illustrating the variety of foci graduate students at Purdue pursue in their dissertations.

In her narrative about the program, Lauer notes that one of the significant difficulties with the program in 1994 was the amount of time faculty spend with graduate students on dissertations because students “stake out dissertations in many directions” (“Constructing” 396). She frames this as a problem, but one that leads to the increase of tenure-track faculty for the program. Thus rather than seeking to focus on certain kinds of intellectual work, Lauer’s statement suggests that Purdue uses the variety of student interests as justification to expand the faculty in rhetoric and composition to accommodate those interests, an inversion to the logic offered by Carlo and Enos that graduate programs grow out of faculty specializations.

### **Syracuse University: Composition and Cultural Rhetorics**

Among the five programs discussed here, Syracuse University’s Composition and Cultural Rhetoric program is unique because it is a freestanding academic unit. It is the first doctoral program to be associated with an independent writing program. In the promotional comments on its website, the program’s independence is emphasized as one of its key strengths, not only because the writing program is housed outside of an English department, but also because the graduate faculty who work with the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric program are able to give more attention specifically to doctoral studies. There are no master’s or bachelor’s degrees associated with the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric program, although a writing major track is available through the writing

program. As an academic unit, the independent writing program is complex, with the doctoral program attached to the writing program. Faculty work in both, although as one may expect at a major university with a doctoral degree in rhetoric and composition, many of the undergraduate writing courses are taught by graduate teaching assistants. While the program generally sees its independence as a strength, it lists its independence under the Program Challenges on the 2007 survey because of the training graduate students receive: “Unlike most programs, our graduates take positions in departments that are quite different from the one where they were trained, and it can be a challenge to communicate that difference and to prepare our students for it.” Despite a significant trend toward establishing independent writing programs, the discipline of rhetoric and composition is still predominantly housed in English departments; therefore, whether graduate students are trained in doctoral programs housed in or out of English departments, they are more likely to join English departments as new faculty, working with other faculty whose primary disciplinary allegiances are not to rhetoric and composition.

The program at Syracuse did not begin as an independent unit. When the program was first launched in 1989, Composition and Cultural Rhetoric was listed as a minor area in English studies. The 1994 description of the program indicates that the minor was designed to provide “opportunities for focused inquiry in composition studies, with an emphasis on the conjunction of theory and practice” (Brown, Meyer, and Enos 361). The description then focuses on the structure of the program—the minor was administered by the Writing Program and supervised by the graduate committee of the English

Department. It is thus clear that when the program was conceived, it was planned as belonging generally to the Writing Program. However, its designation as a minor and its severely limited core curriculum (two introductory courses, one in composition and the other in rhetoric) indicates a program not yet fully built.

The doctoral program left the English department along with the Writing Program in 1996, separating literary studies from rhetoric and composition studies. Instead of retaining its association with literary studies as many doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition have done, Composition and Cultural Rhetoric aligned itself, as the name of the program implies, more with cultural studies. The program focuses on cultural rhetoric through an emphasis on context, positioning work in rhetoric and composition with an acute awareness of the cultural context of all writing and rhetorical acts. Its particular strengths rest in gender and sexuality studies, ethnic rhetorics, and digital literacy, as well as strength in general rhetoric and composition.

Like most doctoral programs, the curriculum has changed several times since the program's inception. The 1999 survey lists nine courses, including courses in studies in the social history of rhetoric and interdisciplinary studies in language and literacy, while the 2007 survey lists three core courses (little more than the two courses required for doctoral students to complete the minor in 1994), a methodology course, an introduction to composition studies and a twentieth-century rhetorical studies course. The surveys reflect a program in flux, its main consistency being its lack of a consistent core. This can be attributed in part to the relative newness of the program as an independent doctoral unit (although even in that form, the program is now almost twenty years old) and in part



to the variability of the *Rhetoric Review* surveys discussed above—that different individuals answered the surveys, often interpreting the questions differently than their predecessors. Comparing the three responses suggests that the core curriculum composed of nine courses was likely an exaggeration. Instead, it appears likely that Syracuse has generally kept its core small, perhaps to offer greater flexibility in coursework to graduate students, many of whom are encouraged to take courses in other departments.

The current core curriculum, however, suggests an attempt to build a larger, potentially more stable core curriculum. The current core for the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric program is composed of six courses:

- Composition Histories/Theories
- Contemporary Rhetorics
- Studies in Writing Pedagogy
- Writing, Rhetoric and Technologies
- Ancient Rhetorics
- Advanced Research Practices

These courses reflect a careful balance between courses focused on writing and those focused on rhetoric, as well as a course focusing on research methods. Indeed, the technology course combines writing and rhetoric, a move in keeping with the program’s tendency to align writing and rhetoric with one another in their research, emphasizing the “dynamic interaction of writing and rhetoric in a variety of cultural and historical contexts.”

The most recent dissertations completed at Syracuse demonstrate a tendency toward projects rooted in pedagogy as well as toward investigations of race, gender, and transnational rhetorics. The most recent dissertation listed in ProQuest focuses on the

history of Syracuse University's Writing Program, and it as well as other dissertations point toward an interest in archival work. According to the 2007 survey, the most common areas for dissertations were histories of rhetoric and composition or rhetoric or composition theory, while there was also a significant number of dissertations in technology and communication, keeping Syracuse roughly in stride with the general trends in doctoral education in rhetoric and composition. The trend in focusing on history has continued, with two recent dissertations focusing on histories of education, including Laura Joan Davies' 2012 dissertation, "Lightning in a Bottle: A History of the Syracuse Writing Program, 1986-1996," which as the title makes clear, recounts a decade-long period of program's administrative engagement with contingent labor, and Zosha Stuckey's 2011 dissertation, "Friction in Our Machinery," an investigation of rhetorical education in the New York State Asylum in Syracuse. Both of these dissertations draw from archival studies in local institutions, reflecting the strong present interests in archival studies in rhetoric and composition. Other dissertations illustrate a consistent interest in the study of classroom pedagogies and curricular structures in rhetoric and composition.

### **The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Writing Studies**

The Center for Writing Studies (CWS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is unique among the sample of programs provided here because of its structure within its institution. While Syracuse University's CCR program is its own freestanding academic unit, the CWS is a fully interdisciplinary academic unit, working

in conjunction with other academic units to provide a specialization in writing studies. The designation of “writing studies” is in keeping with the general consensus regarding that term as discussed in my first chapter; the term is preferred by those who want to see the field of writing studies not as a discipline but as a fully interdisciplinary approach to writing. The CWS was founded in 1990, designed and established by faculty from English, Speech Communication, Education, and English as an International Language. In the 1994 *Rhetoric Review* survey, the program describes itself as “truly crossdisciplinary” (Brown, Meyer, and Enos 283), and now describes itself on its website and in the 2007 *Rhetoric Review* survey as interdisciplinary. The program prizes its independent, interdisciplinary status to the extent that in the 1999 survey, under the heading of Program Strengths, the program reported that the “Center for Writing Studies itself is a major strength of the program” (Brown, Jenkins, and Enos 269).

As an interdisciplinary unit, the Center for Writing Studies offers a specialization in writing studies that can be attached to any number of doctoral degrees, although the English department is still the home department of most of the writing studies doctoral students. Regardless, in addition to the departments that were involved in constructing the program, doctoral students in any other department can work toward a specialization in writing studies. As a consequence of its interdisciplinary status, the CWS does not possess a significant core curriculum. One of the obvious benefits of the structure of the specialization is the flexibility it provides for students. Instead of several courses taken in Writing Studies, all students are required to take only two courses through the Center:

Writing Studies I: Social Contexts and Functions of Writing  
Writing Studies II: Writing Processes and Their Development

Beyond those two courses, students must also take two methodology courses from multiple departments that have been approved by the Center for Writing Studies, again making the specialization unusually flexible. The number of approved methodology courses is small, but departments can apply for approval of courses at any time, usually at the request of their graduate students. In addition to the two methods courses, students must also take another two courses as electives in Writing Studies, chosen from a list of approved courses in consultation with a CWS faculty member. It is worth noting that all of the rhetoric courses are housed in Speech Communication, while the courses devoted to discourse analysis and program design are housed in English. In addition, numerous departments offer courses each semester, providing graduate students with the opportunity to take courses in Art History, African-American studies, Educational Psychology, and many other disciplines.

The other two requirements for completing a specialization in Writing Studies is delivering a lecture based on original research at the Center's Colloquium Series Graduate Research Network<sup>47</sup> and completing a dissertation in Writing Studies, the topic of which must be approved by the director of CWS and supervised by faculty affiliated with the Center. Otherwise, students must follow the guidelines for program completion established in their home departments. While those departments universally require comprehensive exams, the Center itself does not require exams, although CWS-affiliated faculty members often oversee the exams within other departments.

While the curriculum and the structure of the Center for Writing Studies is distinctly different from other institutions, the dissertations completed by doctoral students demonstrate a clear alignment with rhetoric and composition as a discipline. This could be in part because, as noted above, many of the students who pursue a specialization in writing studies are housed in the English department, meaning that they are trained in the methods most familiar to other members of the discipline, the vast majority of whom are trained in the humanist methods common to English studies. According to the 2007 survey, the two most popular areas for dissertations were literary studies and technology and communication. This is fascinating because the names and abstracts of dissertations completed since the CWS was established does not support the first group. This can be attributed to the flaws of the surveys discussed above, most particularly the self-reporting aspect. Indeed, a quick glance over the titles and abstracts indicates that whoever filled out the survey in 2007 very likely meant literacy studies, a clear strength of the program, making “literary studies” a simple typo, but one that suggests a very different focus for the program. For instance, in 2011 alone, three dissertations focused on different aspects of literacy: Rebecca S. Bilbro’s “Engineering Literacy,” which examines how literacy practices in the College of Engineering at UIUC shape disciplinarity, Patrick W. Berry’s “Beyond Hope: Rhetorics of Mobility, Possibility, and Literacy,” which explores the literacy narratives of writing teachers, and Samantha Waselus-Looker’s “Enacting and Interrogating the ‘Academic’ in Undergraduate Language and Literacy Practices.” Other areas popular among the graduate students are medical rhetorics and LGBT Studies. Taken in conjunction with

literacy and technology and communication, the dissertations present an array of topics not unlike other graduate programs. Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary structure of the specialization in writing studies likely enables and encourages graduate students to pursue the many lines of inquiry reflected in their scholarly work.

### **Arizona State University: Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics**

Unlike several of the other programs, dating the establishment of the doctoral program in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics at Arizona State University is a fairly complex endeavor. The four *Rhetoric Review* surveys offer different answers for the year the program was established. The first two surveys pose 1985 and 1980 respectively as the years of origin. The last two surveys both agree that 1995 was the year the program was established. This difference can be attributed to the general confusion about what constitutes a concentration or specialization in rhetoric and composition that the early surveyors of doctoral programs identify. However, the nomenclature helps to make sense of the confusion. The first two surveys label the program as either an emphasis or a concentration in rhetoric and composition. The last two surveys label the program as a concentration in Rhetoric/Composition and Linguistics (the slash between rhetoric and composition does not appear on more recent materials). The differences in the materials reported indicate a rudimentary concentration in rhetoric and composition that began in the early 1980s followed by a significant revision and reallocation of resources to revamp the program in 1995.<sup>48</sup>

The program that was first established in the 1980s fit precisely the model that Chapman and Tate described as an integrated program. The program description in 1987 indicates that the program aimed to train students for “careers in English departments in which literature, linguistics, and composition carry equal weight” (Chapman and Tate 136). Further, the program encouraged explicit connections between the teaching of writing and the teaching of literature. The 1994 program description similarly encourages students to “develop their own programs” beyond the 12 hours in rhetoric and composition, and to “make connections between rhetoric and literature or rhetoric and cultural studies” (Brown, Meyer, and Enos 257). The program designers clearly saw it as crucial for doctoral students to have training in literature as well as rhetoric and composition, an understandable position when tenure-track lines in rhetoric and composition were less numerous. The shift in 1995 also makes sense as the program adjusted to the availability of positions for rhetoric and composition specialists in the job market and the accompanying demands for increased specialization in areas of expertise.

The program revision moved away from literature as a significant contributor to the degree and toward linguistics as an important factor. The English department had already built an applied linguistics doctoral program, so incorporating linguistics into the rhetoric and composition concentration was not only simple, but already a long-standing part of the culture of the department. After all, the first program description indicated linguistics as an important component of the training doctoral students should receive. So the shift from the concentration in rhetoric and composition to the new designation of rhetoric, composition, and linguistics is not so much a drastic shift in curriculum as it is a

move away from literary studies as a significant factor of the degree, a move that is in keeping with the general shift of the discipline. In the 1999 survey's "Program Strengths," the connection between rhetoric and composition and linguistics is emphasized because it "provides students with a broad background in the history, theory, and use of language," further indicating that this connection is appropriate in the American Southwest, "where people are multilingual and multicultural," a local condition that has played a significant role in shaping the program's goals.

What has remained consistent in the program is the flexible structure of the curriculum. There is no identifiable core curriculum; instead, the program requirements are broken into sections with designated credit hours, a structure intended to ensure the maximum amount of freedom for students to take courses they find relevant to their work. The requirements are broken into four sections:

- Research Methods
- Foundational Distribution
- Advanced Studies Distribution
- Continuing Concentration or Interdisciplinary Option

The Research Methods requirement is met by a course classified as English methodologies or linguistics methodologies. The Foundational Distribution section requires four courses: one in rhetoric, one in composition studies, and two in linguistics. The Advanced Studies Distribution can be used either to focus in a particular area (rhetoric, composition, or linguistics) or can be used to take a mixture of courses in those three areas. The Continuing Concentration allows students to take more courses in the foundational category, or students can pursue the Interdisciplinary Option, taking up to



four courses outside of the English department. The program website states that the flexibility in the structure of the plan of study is to enable students “to pursue those aspects of the disciplines which interest them the most.” Thus students are encouraged to pursue their own interests within the areas of rhetoric and composition instead of being potentially directed by a core curriculum.

The program does not list its most recent completed dissertations on its website, leaving the *Rhetoric Review* surveys as my sole source of information about the work completed by students at Arizona State University. The 1999 survey indicates that most dissertations were completed in the area of rhetoric and composition pedagogy, with technical and professional communication pedagogy as a close second (Brown, Jenkins, and Enos 248). Taken together, the results indicate a prevalent interest in pedagogy among the graduate students at that time. Among the four dissertations listed as examples on that profile, three quite clearly focus on issues of pedagogy, while the fourth focuses on reading and writing jury instructions, a dissertation that was probably classified as technical and professional communication. The 2007 survey indicates a major shift in the areas of dissertations, with as many dissertations in linguistics as the other four areas listed combined. Rhetoric and composition pedagogy as well as technology and communication assume the second and third positions, indicating that the results from 1999 did not yet reflect the strong emphasis on linguistics in the program, an emphasis that manifests in the dissertations completed after 2000.

Arizona State University’s emphasis on linguistics within the rhetoric and composition program makes it unique among the sample of programs provided here, and

among doctoral programs in general. As indicated above, the focus on linguistics in rhetoric and composition broadly has slowly faded since Covino, Johnson, and Feehan completed their survey of attitudes and orientations toward graduate study in the discipline. The program at Arizona State clearly still finds a strong emphasis in linguistics useful, however, in the study of rhetoric and composition.

### **Implications for Doctoral Education in Rhetoric and Composition**

In their synthesis of the findings from the 2007 *Rhetoric Review* survey, Brown, Enos, Reamer, and Thompson are careful in explaining their rationale and methodology to indicate that the findings from their surveys are not intended to be used to rank programs, arguing that “programs are too distinctive to accommodate any sort of fair system of ranking” (332). It is with that sentiment in mind that I wish to compare the five programs briefly profiled above. My analysis of the five programs is not meant to express or support any sort of ranking, but instead it is meant to offer some sense of what we may learn by comparing programs, both with one another and with their past and present forms, as measured through the surveys from 1980 to the present. This form of comparative analysis, which centers around the three aspects of graduate programs that I have discussed above (program descriptions, core curricula, and dissertations) provides me with the opportunity to suggest broader implications for doctoral education in rhetoric and composition.

All five programs have provided multiple descriptions for the *Rhetoric Review* surveys, varying from one survey to another in what they specified as their focuses and

their strengths. The range of the descriptions for each program provided since 1987 (or later if the program was established after that date) offers a glimpse into the culture of the program, a way of exploring how the program has changed over the decades and what priorities they set for their programs. Those programs that have preserved fairly consistent descriptions illustrate a general sense of satisfaction with the direction their program has taken as well as a sense that their program is flexible enough to adjust to the fluctuating needs of the job market even as the program itself remains fairly stable. Other programs have shifted considerably, illustrating a perceived need and an ability to change directions in order to provide as viable a program as possible.

The program that provided the most consistent accounts of itself was Purdue University's concentration in rhetoric and composition. Although the program is housed in an English department, the founders worked to establish parity with literary studies from the beginning, enabling the program to set its priorities and pursue them in relative stability for a doctoral program in a fledgling discipline, placing a premium on training its students to work not only as writing teachers and scholars, but also as program directors, making writing program administration an intellectual subject from the beginning. Carnegie Mellon University has also pursued a fairly consistent agenda, seeking to align doctoral education with the needs not only of the academy but of business and industry, providing training in document design and technical writing. Its focus has shifted more toward producing members of the academy than when it first began, in keeping with the growing demand for specialists in rhetoric and composition from the mid-1980s forward, but it has retained an emphasis on providing training for

non-academic careers. Perhaps more importantly to the philosophy of the department, Carnegie Mellon has preserved its original emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinary education for its students. Like Purdue, the program designers established a program that was based in principles of inquiry rather than in imitation of previously existing branches of English studies.

The program that has seen the most drastic revision has been Arizona State's Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics program. Its shift from a rhetoric and composition program that encouraged a strong interaction between rhetoric and literature or rhetoric and cultural studies to a program that builds connections instead with linguistics points to a department that finds interdisciplinary work crucial to the process of training specialists in rhetoric and composition. However, the program has been revised as trends in the field moved away from a strong alliance with literature, even as many of the students who complete degrees will go on to work in departments alongside literature faculty. The move away from such an active partnership with literary studies seems to be a strong move toward recognizing the disciplinary legitimacy of rhetoric and composition in that program. Instead of training students to believe that their professional success depends on their ability to incorporate literary scholarship into their work, ASU moved in 1995 to a model that offers doctoral students greater support to work within their own disciplinary areas, or to work with linguistics, an area that is frequently neglected by both literature and rhetoric and composition, thus providing students with an opportunity to generate innovative work through the mixed methods of those fields.

Ultimately, one of the most important points to take away from the comparison of program descriptions is how vital doctoral programs find interdisciplinary work. While the University of Illinois embraces interdisciplinarity to the extent that it is defined by that status, the other programs consistently emphasize the importance of working with the methods of other disciplines. Purdue's program seems to place the least emphasis on interdisciplinary study, in keeping with its endeavor to train general rhetoric and composition specialists, while Syracuse and Arizona State strongly urge their students to take courses in other disciplines. Rhetoric and composition is frequently configured as an interdisciplinary field of study—one reason scholars like Janice M. Lauer and Stephen M. North have argued that it would be difficult for rhetoric and composition to achieve disciplinary status, a view both of these scholars have since amended—and the programs' emphasis on interdisciplinary study reflects both that historical perception of the field as well as the understanding that the discipline benefits from interaction with other disciplines.

The five programs profiled here demonstrate a range of core curricula, from programs with strictly set courses, such as Purdue and Carnegie Mellon, to the relative fluidity of the curriculum at Syracuse, to the negotiable curriculum at the University of Illinois and Arizona State. As a concept, then, core curriculum is highly variable, dependent on the institutional needs and perceptions of the program. While the programs with more specifically set core curricula emphasize the strength of those courses, Purdue, the program with the most stable curriculum (in keeping with its generally stable status as compared to the other programs) has indicated on the two most recent *Rhetoric Review*

surveys that offering electives to provide students with more specialized areas of knowledge has proven to be a challenge because of the inflexible structure of the core. That same core provides Purdue's students with a strong sense of community and common knowledge of the discipline, an undoubted strength of the program, but the number of electives offered often conflict with the scheduled times for the cores, limiting students' options to choose among those electives.

On the other side, the flexibility of the core curriculum for the Center for Writing Studies means a constant negotiation with departments to establish courses that meet the requirements for a specialization in Writing Studies, and the lack of a specified set of courses at Arizona State means that students must be savvy enough to plan their own courses of study to lead them toward the areas of expertise they wish to pursue. However, that flexibility provides students with the opportunities to engage in new disciplines and different courses that they would not otherwise be able to pursue if they were locked into a more firmly established core curriculum. In other words, what this comparison makes clear is that there is no single "right way" to establish a core curriculum for doctoral programs.

However, the types of courses required by each program indicate some common trends among doctoral programs. All five programs require at least one course in methodology, demonstrating the importance of training doctoral students in the variety of methods employed in the scholarship of rhetoric and composition. Most of the programs also require historical work in rhetoric and composition, usually broken into a sequence of two courses to cover the history of rhetoric from the classical period forward to the

combined history of rhetoric and composition in the twentieth century. Most programs also require students to take a course in contemporary rhetorical theory as well as a course in writing pedagogy. The structure of the curriculum at each program varies, but the general privileging of knowledge in theory, pedagogy, history, and methodology is clear in most of the programs.

The work produced by doctoral students serves as their entrance into the discipline as full members of the profession; hence the significance placed on dissertations in all of the programs in the sample (and in doctoral programs in general). The topics covered in these dissertations vary greatly even within the programs as students build their own areas of expertise outside of the core curriculum and the areas of expertise of their faculty mentors. For that reason, it is difficult to establish any sense of common program philosophy or identity by examining dissertations, although it is possible to see trends in the kinds of work students produce within programs. These students present on their work at conferences and use their dissertations as the bases of journal articles and monographs, making their work public enough that other members of the profession can typically see features in student work that in one way or another marks them as a product of their programs. It is simply more difficult to quantify than the other aspects of doctoral programs, which are more centrally controlled by faculty and the institutional culture than the directions students will take in their dissertations.

Because it is so difficult to quantify dissertations—although the *Rhetoric Review* surveys have consistently attempted to do so, although their areas for dissertations are approximations at best, and thus subject to broad interpretation by those answering the

surveys—I will not speak here to trends in the dissertations, but instead I assert that the dissertation as a genre forms as a node of contact between the student, the program, and the discipline as a whole. In “Using Student Texts in Composition Scholarship,” Joseph Harris argues that “working with student texts is one of the defining moves of our field,” characterizing student texts as “a form of currency in the knowledge economy of composition” (“Using Student Texts” 667). Harris refers specifically to undergraduate student writing, which has been the primary focus of research in rhetoric and composition, but his claims are equally applicable in the case of graduate student texts as well. The dissertations completed in these programs as well as at the approximately 70 other doctoral programs in the United States and Canada form the future trends in scholarship for the discipline. They are thus a point at which the influence of the doctoral program the student works within plays a significant role—after all, doctoral students choose their committees based on the direction their projects will take, hoping that the areas of expertise belonging to their committee members will reinforce their own project in unexpected and productive ways—but the individual work done by the students to build their own areas of expertise are designed to open new avenues of research, to fulfill the requirement for original research for the project.

Whether graduates from these programs are hired by institutions that enable them to engage more actively in the production of new knowledge through scholarship or by teaching-intensive institutions where their primary contributions to the field focus more on classroom activities, the disciplinary identities of students are profoundly influenced by their graduate programs and the dissertations they produce, which in turn influence the



interests of faculty and the possibility of future courses. A glance at the names of the graduates and their dissertation abstracts on the *Rhetoric Review* surveys from the 1990s indicate that those students went on to become successful scholars, publishing their own original research that has played an important role in expanding knowledge in the discipline. And even the graduates who have not continued to develop their research as extensively as others have a significant impact on the field, albeit in less measurable ways: Graduates who become faculty at teaching-intensive institutions may not produce scholarship on a regular basis, but they contribute to the field through their work in writing classrooms, continuing to explore and refine their pedagogical approaches and convincing undergraduates to become more interested in writing. Thus, the doctoral programs serve as important sites for developing disciplinary identity, not just because the doctoral programs mold the students according to their philosophies and their core curricula, but also because students work within those programs to build their own profiles as scholars in the discipline.

### **Defining and Revising Doctoral Education**

If this chapter has proven anything, it is that generalizing about doctoral education is a difficult matter. Programs are established to achieve different purposes, strongly influenced by local institutional and social contexts. Doctoral programs differ to such a degree that making broad statements about the goals of doctoral education can prove trying. In 1989, only two years after Chapman and Tate's survey for *Rhetoric Review*, Richard Lloyd-Jones argues that the survey as a methodology cannot provide an accurate

picture of doctoral education because of how vital local factors are to program formation. He notes the problematic nature of curriculum and course descriptions, and how difficult it is to take those descriptions beyond the limits of their institutional frames because of how nomenclature can be used so differently: “It is hard to tell from our surveys where the intellectual center of a program is, for terms like *rhetoric* or even *writing* are elusive” (“Doctoral Programs: Composition” 18, italics original). Lloyd-Jones is pointing out what remains one of the key problems for understanding the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and composition, that the terminology that is most basic to the discipline is easily contested, or perhaps more accurately, readily confused. Studying rhetoric in one program is not the same as studying rhetoric in another program, even if the programs appear to be similar on paper.

Nevertheless, Lloyd-Jones offers a generalization about the subject of study: “all programs engage the serious study of how language is generated in speech and writing and include a secondary emphasis on how texts are interpreted” (19). Lloyd-Jones’ phrasing provides a broad territory within which doctoral programs can maneuver, with some including the study of speech in their curricula even though few doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition now actually study orality, typically the disciplinary turf of communication studies. He also provides room for textual interpretation, a concept that makes it easier to draw connections between rhetorical and literary studies, and thus easier for rhetoric and composition to position themselves in English departments. Because his statement is so broad, it is still difficult to imagine the commonalities among programs, but in that sense, the most important phrase Lloyd-Jones employs is “serious

study,” a marker of the intellectual validity of rhetoric and composition as a discipline in the academy.

In the same collection, Janice M. Lauer and Andrea Lunsford seek to articulate what doctoral education in rhetoric and composition has to offer English studies, positing that it is “the conviction of scholars in rhetoric and composition that such an alliance [among all areas of English studies] forms the richest base for doctoral studies in English” (110). Lauer and Lunsford suggest that rhetoric and composition contributes to English studies “by integrating reading and writing, by establishing interdisciplinary frameworks, by broadening our textual base, and by viewing pedagogy as an enactment of theory” (110). Lauer and Lunsford’s definition of rhetoric and composition encourages continued cooperation with English studies, which remains generally to be the model that most doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition follow. Their definition encourages employing literacy as the force that unites literature and rhetoric and composition.

Lauer and Lunsford’s definition also encourages continued attention to interdisciplinarity, which no longer functions as a weakness as Lauer originally posited it in “A Dappled Discipline,” but is instead one of the hallmarks of the discipline by 1989. As the work of graduate students and the design of the multiple curricular models explored in this chapter suggest, interdisciplinary study continues to energize rhetoric and composition. The draw of interdisciplinarity explains some of the difficulty in defining the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and composition, because not all the members of the community actually agree that it is a discipline, suggesting instead that rhetoric and composition—or writing studies, the nomenclature most often used to capture this

particular conceptualization of the field's identity—is ultimately an interdisciplinary venture, too big to be limited to a singular discipline. This disagreement does not hinder the continued growth of rhetoric and composition—again, interdisciplinarity energizes the field—although it contributes to the difficulty of clarifying and classifying the kinds of work that fall within the parameters of the field. This was one of the greatest challenges that the Doctoral Consortium faced when it undertook the Visibility Project, because in order to render the field visible to the larger academic world, the field must be able to describe its work. Doctoral education in rhetoric and composition provides a means for understanding the breadth of that work.

The next chapter continues along the curricular path established in this chapter, moving from an analysis of disciplinary formation in doctoral programs to an analysis of the undergraduate major in writing. In addition, I also examine independent writing programs as sites of disciplinary formation and articulation. I have allied the undergraduate major and independent writing programs because the latter is often the site of vertical curricula, although numerous English departments have also established undergraduate majors. While doctoral programs have been vital to establishing the disciplinary credentials of rhetoric and composition, the undergraduate major is important because it demonstrates the discipline's ability to support a vertical curriculum. The undergraduate major proves at the institutional level that rhetoric and composition as an intellectual field is capable of attracting undergraduates to pursue a bachelor's degree in writing and rhetoric.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EXPANDING CURRICULAR HORIZON OF RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

In “Civic Rhetoric and the Undergraduate Major in Rhetoric and Writing,”

Thomas A. Moriarty (from Oakland University) and Greg A. Giberson (from Salisbury University) begin their argument for making civic rhetoric the centerpiece of a writing major in an elated tone, declaring that “it’s an exciting time to be a rhetoric and writing specialist” because of the strength of job offerings in the field and the graduate programs that produce candidates for those positions (204). But they are more excited about the growing trend among colleges and universities to build undergraduate majors in writing and rhetoric, arguing that the growth of undergraduate majors represents a crucial moment in the development of the discipline:

We finally have a place in the undergraduate catalog, on the department Web site, a prominent place that puts us on equal footing with other disciplines. We’re no longer just a set of service courses, or a vague concentration within a literature degree, or an exotic-sounding emphasis in a PhD program. We’re a degree. (204)

Moriarty and Giberson concisely cover numerous tensions in the development of rhetoric and composition—bumps in the road as the field has sought to claim its status as a fully-fledged academic discipline, on par with other disciplines that have long been recognized as legitimate fields of inquiry and instruction in higher education. Their observation points toward a central curricular site where the discipline has long lacked a substantial presence: the undergraduate major. In “Undergraduate Writing Majors and the Rhetoric

of Professionalism,” published in 2012, Christian Weisser and Laurie Grobman characterize the last ten years as “the decade of the undergraduate writing major,” arguing that “no other curricular movement within writing studies has proliferated at so rapid a pace” (39). The most authoritative list of writing majors, “Writing Majors at a Glance,” compiled by the CCCC Committee on the Major in Writing and Rhetoric and last updated in 2009, listed 68 institutions with one or more writing majors.<sup>49</sup> When the list was first published in 2006, there were only 45 institutions identified with writing majors. Accounting both for the committee’s own acknowledgement that some of the institutions in the later list already had writing majors in 2006 that the committee hadn’t yet counted and for the relative staleness of that report, which is assuredly outdated in 2012, the list nevertheless illustrates the kind of growth that leads Weisser and Grobman to call the past ten years the decade of the undergraduate writing major, making the evolution of this aspect of the curriculum one of the most significant sites of growth and change for rhetoric and composition, and therefore a crucial element in the continuing maturation of the discipline. As Susan H. McLeod notes in her reflection on Maxine Hairston’s 1985 chair’s address, “Universities have an unwritten rule: you are what you teach” (532): thus one may argue that the establishment of writing majors indicates a sustainable disciplinary status for rhetoric and composition.

In the previous chapter, I examined the establishment and development of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition during and after the late twentieth century, focusing on how the growth of those programs reflect both the expansion of the discipline in general and the numerous manifestations the discipline assumes in different

institutional and curricular settings. The fifth chapter analyzes the growth and development of first-year writing programs, which are the oldest curricular structure in our discipline; rhetoric and composition grew as an intellectual field out of the initially practical and pedagogical interests of teachers of writing, interests that evolved into increasingly theoretical inquiries that employ multiple and complex methodologies to conduct research and publish scholarship as the discipline has matured over the past fifty years. This chapter, then, interrogates the curricular space that lies in between first-year writing and graduate study in rhetoric and composition: the undergraduate major in writing and rhetoric. After all, how can the discipline continue to argue for the necessity of its existence and continued growth if the curricular structures from first-year writing to doctoral programs do not represent some kind of clearly defined and easily comprehensible path of linear progression?

Like doctoral programs, undergraduate majors began to appear in colleges and universities well after the establishment and entrenchment of first-year writing in the American curriculum. The major, however, took much longer than doctoral programs to take root in the bulletins and catalogs across the United States, but writing majors and concentrations are becoming increasingly common, both in English departments and in independent writing departments. In both cases, the writing major illustrates the solidification of rhetoric and composition's disciplinary hold in the academy. While the emergence of doctoral education in rhetoric and composition in the 1980s demonstrates the increasing professionalization necessary for the discipline to construct and maintain a healthy slate of lines of inquiry for the field to produce knowledge, the rise of the writing

major reflects the discipline's desire for stability and longevity among the other academic disciplines that had already established undergraduate majors; the proliferation of writing majors demonstrates the continuing maturation of rhetoric and composition as the field expands its curricular structures beyond the first year and graduate school.

While this chapter focuses primarily on the writing major as the bridge that connects the previously massive gap between freshman and graduate education in rhetoric and composition, I also address the growth of independent writing departments as an important component in the expanding territorial claims of the discipline. Numerous English departments offer concentrations in writing, whether those concentrations include creative, professional, or more academic-oriented writing, but I connect the writing major and the independent writing department because both of these constructions—one curricular and the other institutional—indicate a deeply felt need among members of the disciplinary community to create a firmer base for the discipline within the academy at large. This need often brings rhetoric and composition into potential conflict with its traditional home in English departments, where composition has long been confined, in most cases, to one or two freshman courses that most, if not all, incoming students are required to take. As Deborah Balzhiser and Susan H. McLeod ask, “How can one design a first-class major in a department where composition is considered to be a second-class subject?” (424). Thus, when considered collectively, vertical curricular constructions such as writing majors and independent writing programs elucidate the disciplinary desire to expand beyond the limitations of a curricular structure that is both bottom and top heavy. Further, the efforts to expand disciplinary territory



inevitably draw attention to the tensions that exist between rhetoric and composition and its traditional home, English studies. Therefore, this chapter focuses on disciplinary efforts to develop the curriculum of rhetoric and composition beyond the horizontal-oriented first-year composition construction (with the graduate curriculum built initially to support that horizontal construction) to the vertical-oriented writing major.

### **The Writing Major and Creative Writing**

Throughout this chapter, I refer to “the writing major” while fully conscious that this is not a homogeneous construction: Writing majors from one institution to another can look drastically different. Indeed, exploring those differences illustrates different interpretations of disciplinary alignments and student needs. Many writing majors place greater emphasis on the presumably more practical, career-oriented professional writing tracks while others provide a more liberal arts-oriented model of a writing major designed to provide students with a broader understanding of what writing is. Before addressing the many models of writing majors that have emerged over the past couple of decades, I find it crucial to comment briefly on the relationship between rhetoric and composition and creative writing, fields that both engage in writing and that both developed as academic areas of inquiry in the aftermath of World War II.<sup>50</sup> More than doctoral programs or first-year writing programs, the writing major brings into sharp focus the ways in which creative writing and rhetoric and composition have grown separately of one another even when their interests overlap.

In a 2009 special issue of *College English* dedicated to creative writing studies, Tim Mayers delineates the differences between *creative writing* and *creative writing studies*, the former focusing its work on the production of creative texts and the latter focusing more on the theoretical and scholarly study of creative writing. Mayers suggests that creative writing should be absorbed into creative writing studies, a broader disciplinary field, and one of the key reasons he makes this suggestion is that creative writing increasingly finds itself in difficult positions as rhetoric and composition (or in this case, perhaps writing studies is the more appropriate disciplinary title) continues building its own disciplinary identity. Mayers notes that as more English departments begin to divide into separate departments, creative writing faculty find themselves in a difficult position: "If they hew to the distinctiveness of their own writing from other sorts of writing, perhaps they choose to remain with literary studies. If they emphasize their roles as textual producers over their roles as textual interpreters, perhaps they choose to join the emergent world of writing studies" (227). The obvious question here is, where does creative writing belong?

From a curricular perspective, students at all levels are frequently left to intuit connections between disparate courses. Does a student in a creative writing workshop see a connection between that course and a seminar in Victorian literature? Does it matter? In the same special issue of *College English*, Gerald Graff argues that it is the responsibility of departments (in his case, he refers specifically to English departments) to make these connections clear, both to students and to faculty. He sees building connections between classes (and thus necessarily *talking* about those connections) as a solution to the

increasing disciplinary division among separate areas of English studies and the corresponding distance that develops between courses in the curriculum: “In my view, given how professionally overtaxed most of us now are, the only way that our divisions are likely to be overcome is in the curriculum, by our connecting courses in the different domains. We are unlikely to start talking to each other until we start teaching with each other” (“What We Say,” 279). The emphasis for Graff is on talking with one another as a way to deal with issues that have developed due to the increasing disciplinary gaps growing between areas in English studies. Similarly, in a 2010 special issue of *CCC* focused on the future of rhetoric and composition as a discipline, Doug Hesse encourages scholars in rhetoric and composition to turn their attention to creative writing because it is, after all, writing: “When creative writing and composition studies have little to do with one another, the division truncates not only what we teach and research but how writing gets understood (or misunderstood) by our students, our colleagues, and the spheres beyond” (“The Place of Creative Writing,” 34). Both Graff and Hesse emphasize a responsibility among faculty to articulate relationships between related but separate disciplinary areas, a responsibility to the students who take courses in those areas.

While writing majors have proliferated in the beginning of the twenty-first century, some existed in the late twentieth century, but they did not closely resemble the kind of major that I describe further below. Until the past twenty years or so, as graduate programs and their resulting credentialed scholars and teachers have proliferated, rhetoric and composition lacked sufficient numbers to make a broad push for writing majors at many colleges and universities.<sup>51</sup> Writing about an exception to this rule in 1981, Arthur

W. Shumaker describes DePauw University's major in an article entitled "How Can a Major in Composition Be Established?" He argues that some form of the major has existed at the university since the 1910s, well after DePauw separated the English department into two departments in 1896, one housing literary studies and the other housing composition and rhetoric. Shumaker's account of the history of DePauw's writing major seems inconsistent even within his own essay, and the university's current configuration of the English department houses both literature and writing (*not* composition—more on that later) degrees. Regardless of his factual inaccuracies about the exact history of DePauw's composition major, however, Shumaker's article is important for two reasons: first, he asks about the feasibility of establishing a writing major well before the current strong trend to do so began; and second, he provides a very small glimpse of the composition major at DePauw.<sup>52</sup> This early model serves as an intriguing contrast to the writing majors that are established later. The major at DePauw was essentially a creative writing major, providing students with curricular space to develop their writing for entry into careers as "writers," a career Shumaker defines in particularly restrictive ways. As a field, creative writing had already matured to the extent that it could provide credentialed teachers to staff such majors, in large part due to the Associated Writing Programs' insistence that MFAs should be considered terminal degrees rather than PhDs.

As he contemplates the difficulties of establishing an undergraduate major at other institutions, Shumaker delineates five major challenges he thinks will prove detrimental to others attempting to establish a major: "entrenched courses in literature,"

along with resistance from literature faculty (145); a lack of instructors with suitable undergraduate or graduate backgrounds in writing; the ability to allow the major to be constructed slowly and deliberately rather than a rapid and potentially faulty curricular construction; being able to invite writers as speakers and guest lecturers; and broad institutional respect for writing among other disciplines. Shumaker's concerns are generally well-founded. Further, while, as Moriarty and Giberson point out, the job market is now strong in rhetoric and composition and paths have been established for individuals to pursue tenure through scholarly activity, Shumaker's particular hesitations about tension between writing and literature faculty, the potentially awkward construction of curricula that attempt to build majors from pre-existing courses, and the general lack of respect for (or, in many cases, awareness of) the disciplinary work of rhetoric and composition within the university as a whole remain relevant for writing faculty who take up the challenging work of building a writing major.

It is also useful to think about what Shumaker means as a *composition* major, an idea that was unheard of at the time he was writing. The composition major that Shumaker describes is actually much more like a creative writing major—hence his concern about being able to invite successful writers to speak to students. He describes four kinds of students who participate in the major: 1) the “very talented student [who] wants to become a writer,” 2) students who “want to enter journalism,” 3) “students who are only average...but who have so much motivation that they revise and revise to the point that they have a chance of doing something in writing after they graduate—although they may very well end in going into their fathers' businesses after all,” and 4)

“our own quota of deadheads...either because of lack of ability or lack of motivation” (141-42). Shumaker’s odd characterization of the students in the major is useful not only for the delight one may take in his cantankerous and ornery tone regarding students who will inevitably end up entering their fathers’ business or perhaps doing nothing at all, but more importantly because it illustrates how possible conceptualizations of writing majors have changed since Shumaker published his essay in the *Journal of Advanced Composition*. Shumaker in 1981 saw the composition major as a track for novelists or dramatists, or even secondarily as a track for students with journalism ambitions.

Shumaker’s conception of a writing major stands in stark contrast to most current majors, which either eschew creative writing entirely or make it a component of a broader focus on different kinds of writing, including professional and academic writing, illustrating at least in this anecdotal instance the manner in which rhetoric and composition has evolved over the past thirty years, becoming the dominant model in writing studies. Shumaker’s essay illustrates a conflation of what are now seen as multiple fields that focus on writing, including creative writing, rhetoric and composition, journalism, and professional writing. While these fields sometimes intertwine with one another, they tend to follow the pattern of academic fragmentation consistent with the contemporary university model, so that creative writing, for example, is not typically a part of writing majors as they are characterized in this chapter. Of the five samples discussed at length in this chapter, only two majors, housed at Rowan University and Georgia Southern University, offer significant coursework in creative writing. Creative writing, then, is still a difficult field to define in a curricular sense, because it does not

seem to find a place in most undergraduate writing majors. Like rhetoric and composition, creative writing is still an evolving discipline, but as rhetoric and composition has grown, it appears to have crowded creative writing out to an extent. Shumaker's 1981 version of a composition major focused primarily on creative writing, but the writing majors that have grown over the past two decades bear little resemblance to that model.

I next trace the development of independent writing departments and writing majors to two crucial moments in the history of rhetoric and composition, both of which are cited repeatedly in scholarship and less formal discussions about these developments as pivotal moments. These crucial moments are CCCC Chairs' Addresses, separated by nearly two decades. I argued in Chapter Two that these addresses are instances in which chairs are able to speak to developments they see already occurring in the field, or developments that need to occur for the field to continue to grow and thrive. That chapter addressed the importance of the Chairs' Addresses in disciplinary development; this section returns to these specific addresses because of their vital roles in contributing to the critical mass necessary for forming independent writing departments and undergraduate writing majors.

### **The Seeds of Change: Hairston and Yancey**

Both the development of independent writing departments and writing majors can be traced back to two influential CCCC Chairs' Addresses: Maxine Hairston's 1985 "Breaking Our Bonds and Reaffirming Our Connections" and Kathleen Blake Yancey's

2004 “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key.” In scholarship regarding these two separate but related developments in rhetoric and composition, both of these addresses are cited repeatedly as crucial moments in the conversation about the future direction of the discipline. This is not to suggest that Hairston’s address is directly responsible for the beginning wave of writing programs seceding from English departments to form their own departments, or that Yancey’s address is directly responsible for the acceleration in the number of writing majors being established throughout the United States in the early twenty-first century. Instead, both of these addresses are indicative of shifts in the field in how scholars and teachers were thinking about the curricular structures of rhetoric and composition. The addresses may have encouraged others to act, but it would be an exaggeration to suggest that these addresses are the causes of the shifts that they are associated with. Instead, these are highly visible moments—at least among the disciplinary community—that can be referred to as markers of the changes that followed.

I have already paid considerable attention to the Chairs’ Addresses in Chapter Two, especially to the importance of Hairston’s address in complicating the relationship between rhetoric and composition and English studies, the umbrella disciplinary formation that houses literary studies and creative writing as well as—most of the time—rhetoric and composition. To put it succinctly, Hairston challenges rhetoric and composition to break its emotional bonds to English studies even as she acknowledges the productive interaction between the different fields in English studies. She does not actually call for rhetoric and composition to break away *en masse* from English studies to



forge its own disciplinary future, but she nudges the disciplinary conversation in that direction. She suggests splitting away from English departments as “our most radical option,” one that she characterizes as “the most disruptive and most difficult,” concluding that it is the option that seems best to her (141). So even as Hairston shows restraint in her call for a break with English studies, she assumes a clear personal stance on the question of independent rhetoric and composition programs, a stance that was undoubtedly influential in the establishment of an independent rhetoric program at the University of Texas at Austin eight years after Hairston’s address. Following the address, a movement to establish independent writing programs began to gain ground slowly. It was not until 2002 that the first edited collection to focus on the growth and development of independent writing programs, *Field of Dreams*, was published. Many of the essays in that book acknowledge the difficulties and challenges of establishing independent writing programs.<sup>53</sup>

More recently, Kathleen Blake Yancey’s Chair’s Address in 2004 focused in part on the need for rhetoric and composition to expand its curricular territory in order to encourage the continued growth of the discipline. Yancey breaks her address into four quartets, modeled on T. S. Eliot’s book-length poem of the same name. She dedicates her third quartet to three changes that she finds pivotal to the future of the discipline: developing a new curriculum for first-year writing, revising and revitalizing efforts to build WAC programs, and developing a major in rhetoric and composition. Yancey sees these as interconnected threads, working collectively to expand the curriculum both horizontally (beyond the limits of first-year writing) throughout the academy and

vertically through the undergraduate major. She argues that “it is past time that we fill the glaringly empty spot between first-year composition and graduate education with a composition major” (“Made Not Only in Words” 439). Yancey calls for the large gap between the two distinctly different curricular structures that existed prior to the proliferation of writing majors—a proliferation that is still underway, as the undergraduate writing major is still far from prevalent in colleges and universities—to be closed by the establishment of what she calls a “composition major.” Yancey’s critique of the state of composition studies at the time of her address hinges on the notion of composition as “school” writing: she suggests that the discipline cannot move toward what she terms a twenty-first century model of composition based on the twentieth-century model of school writing. She proposes instead a resituating of the study of writing to focus on writing as circulation, a shift that would broaden the scope of composition from process to include the production and movement of texts, noting finally that “first year composition is a place to begin; carrying this forward is the work of the major in composition and rhetoric” (444).

Yancey’s address usefully acts as the beginning marker of the time that Weisser and Grobman call the decade of the undergraduate writing major. The CCCC Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition, for instance, was established in the immediate aftermath of and in direct response to the address, charged to document writing majors and the many forms those majors take (which resulted in the Writing Majors at a Glance database that I have already referred to), identify a common set of outcomes for a writing major (similar to what the WPA Outcomes or the Framework for Success in

Postsecondary Writing have done for first-year writing), identify particular core courses that could be adapted by institutions newly launching writing majors, and track post-graduation information about students who complete writing majors.<sup>54</sup> The Committee's charges point toward a felt need both to compile information about existing writing majors and to construct guidelines and standards that will prove beneficial for institutions that are seeking to build writing majors. Both of these needs are important to the continued proliferation of the writing major, as any documents generated by the Committee (as of 2012, only the first charge has resulted in significant progress, but future work on standards and core courses can be anticipated) can be used by departments to petition for the necessary resources from administrators and chairs to establish or revitalize writing majors. In addition to the work of that committee, scholars routinely point to Yancey's address as the moment when the field began to pay more explicit attention to the writing major and when departments began to push more forcefully to further legitimize the study of writing by increasing the discipline's presence in the undergraduate curriculum.<sup>55</sup>

### **From Advanced Composition to Advanced Writing**

Before examining the two-pronged territorial expansion of the discipline represented by the undergraduate major and independent writing departments, I turn to the phenomenon of the advanced composition course—a phenomenon that has built its own considerable corpus of scholarship, illustrated by the establishment of *JAC* (originally, the *Journal of Advanced Composition*) in 1980<sup>56</sup> as well as numerous edited

collections, including *Teaching Advanced Composition* (1991), *Landmark Essays on Advanced Composition* (1996), and *Coming of Age* (2001). One of the peculiarities of rhetoric and composition in comparison to other disciplines in the academy is the relative lack of upper-level courses for undergraduates to take. This lack can be explained in two different but fundamentally interrelated ways. First, because of the discipline's traditional home in English departments, it has made up only a part of the coursework for students who major in English, and most majors in English are structured to emphasize literary studies, which has long been the primary intellectual endeavor of English studies. There is a growing trend among English departments to create concentrations in writing, but these concentrations still incorporate varied but consistently high numbers of courses in literature, just as rhetoric and composition doctoral programs housed in English departments often do. The English studies model, when construed as a large field within which multiple disciplines live and work, encourages a more generalist approach to writing studies. Second, advanced composition courses have existed within English departments for decades, providing a curricular space for upper-level undergraduate study in composition. CCCC published its "Guidelines and Directions for College Courses in Advanced Composition" in 1967 in response to the already significant number of advanced composition courses that had appeared in English departments. These guidelines define advanced composition as "a composition course open only to students who have at least passed the freshman course," a definition that leaves much to be desired regarding specificity ("Guidelines" 266). The statement acknowledges that the definition is "relative and operational" in order to preserve maximum flexibility for colleges and

universities to design advanced composition courses that fit with their existing curricular structures.

The advanced composition course is simultaneously the first manifestation of a composition curriculum that is not flat and horizontal, limited to the freshman course and an indicator of the failure to imagine the potential for increasing the range of courses in rhetoric and composition. In her introduction to *Coming of Age*, Rebecca Moore Howard characterizes advanced composition as a course that defies definition, making it a composition course that is “more of the same, but harder,” rather than a course that introduces students to disciplinary practices and theory. She asserts that “when the knowledge base of a discipline...is used only to inform skill-oriented pedagogy and is never shared with undergraduates as a field, the riches of that discipline are being only partially used” (xvi-xvii). Howard argues instead for a shift in nomenclature to advanced *writing*, realigning the course with writing studies and distancing it from composition as a means of emphasizing undergraduate study as grounding in the discipline:

Now writing studies becomes something other and more than a first-year sequence and a graduate curriculum that trains teachers for that sequence. Now writing studies comes of age, taking its place as an intellectual discipline with instruction that is driven by disciplinary rather than lay exigence and methods and asserting its place as a discipline in which pedagogy and theory are mutually constructed in a rich, complex relationship. (xxii)

Howard’s proposed model represents an epistemological shift from a course that emphasizes the same kinds of writing done in first-year composition courses — although the kinds of writing done by students in first-year writing courses are certainly far more varied and institution-specific than Howard’s argument seems to allow<sup>57</sup> — to upper-level

courses that acknowledge the disciplinary, historical, and philosophical complexities of writing.

*Coming of Age* is one of the most indicative texts that members of the discipline were ready to move away from the amorphous advanced composition course as the sole upper-level curricular space for rhetoric and composition (although that name and endlessly varied course still exists in many colleges and universities that do not offer a writing major) and toward a concerted effort to build undergraduate majors. Many of the contributing authors provided models of writing programs that would lead to the establishment of undergraduate majors at institutions such as Arizona State University, George Mason University, and the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Several writing majors already existed when the book was published in 2002—and many of the authors in the collection taught in those writing programs—so the book not only illustrated the successful establishment of writing majors in some institutions, but it also provides models for other programs to contemplate as they considered establishing their own writing programs. The book includes a CD-ROM that houses the full text of several program and course descriptions, making the book an early comprehensive examination of the curricular future of rhetoric and composition.

The intentional shift from advanced *composition* to advanced *writing* first described in *Coming of Age* and repeated in the scholarly literature that followed represents a critical move in the disciplinary nomenclature that has implications for the entire field of rhetoric and composition (as I have discussed in Chapter One), but especially for the undergraduate vertical writing curriculum. Despite the name of the

committee established to research the proliferation of the writing major in American higher education—the CCCC Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition, as it was originally named—the term *composition* is startlingly absent from the titles and, somewhat less so, course offerings of writing majors. In “The Undergraduate Writing Major: What is It? What Should It Be?” Deborah Balzhiser and Susan H. McLeod draw from their research as chairs of the CCCC Committee on the Major, noting that while many graduate programs possess names that include *composition*, the overwhelming majority of writing majors do not: “Although this [difference] may not matter, it does raise the issue of how, exactly, we identify ourselves to others” (429). Balzhiser and McLeod demonstrate some ambivalence toward the differences in the names of program, wondering if those differences matter, but they understand that there is an issue of representation at play here. The large divide between graduate programs and undergraduate majors demonstrated by the difference in nomenclature reflects the lack of clear connection between the two curricular structures, something that could eventually become problematic as rhetoric and composition continues to mature as an academic discipline.

For Balzhiser and McLeod, the problem may be as simple as consistency in nomenclature, so they suggest a seemingly simple solution to the problem: “Perhaps we should think about some consistency in naming ourselves and our programs—something like ‘rhetoric and writing studies’” (429). The name they suggest covers the numerous formulations of the discipline that includes both the study of rhetorical theory and history and the study of writing, both doing it and teaching it. But the problem is not simply one

of representing the discipline to the broader academy and to the public; the problem is that the curricular structures actually do not align with one another as they are currently conceptualized. First, considering the remarkable differentiation in the way individuals name the discipline and the institutional units that take part in that disciplinary work, it seems unlikely that members of the field would be able to agree on one name in particular. The difficulty of succinctly naming a discipline that aligns composition, rhetoric, technical writing, professional writing, linguistics, ESL, writing program administration, pedagogy, genre theory, and creative writing means that the field will always struggle to articulate precisely its many research and teaching interests. Indeed, many scholars would not agree that all of those areas are in fact part of the discipline at all. So while a greater consistency in nomenclature may make it easier to communicate the purpose of the discipline to our fellow academics and to the public in general, the differences in nomenclature draw attention to very real disagreements about what areas of study should actually be included in the discipline. What seems compelling about Balzhiser and McLeod's suggestion, especially in light of my central argument in this dissertation that the name of the discipline reflects the reality of the work members of the discipline do, is that if those members could agree to a common name for the discipline, they would find more common ground. In other words, while it seems incredibly unlikely that a common name could be agreed upon by the numerous factions within the discipline, or just on the outskirts of the discipline, the idea that a common name would more clearly define the work of the field supports my assertion about the relationship between the work and the name of the field.



The second problem, the main focus of this chapter, is the dissonance between the multiple curricular sites associated with the discipline. The top and bottom form the curriculum has taken means that for decades, other than the occasional advanced composition course (whose goals were almost always vague at best), there was very little writing instruction in colleges and universities beyond the first year, depending on whether or not an institution built a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. The WAC movement that began in the mid 1970s<sup>58</sup> demonstrates a significant effort to mitigate the lack of writing instruction by incorporating writing in discipline-specific courses. For several decades, WAC and WID programs represented the most significant efforts to provide undergraduates with writing instruction beyond the first year course. While WAC programs demonstrate a felt need to extend the curriculum, they do not provide a curricular structure that specifically addresses the concerns of rhetoric and composition. Like first-year writing courses, WAC programs extend the service model of writing instruction.<sup>59</sup> At the graduate level, the impetus was primarily on methods of teaching writing. The vagueness of advanced composition courses points to the difficulty of conceptualizing what lies between, and while the growth of writing majors has accelerated since Rebecca Moore Howard advocated a shift from advanced composition to advanced writing, the writing major itself is still a concept that lacks much consistency from one institution to another. This is, of course, one of the reasons that the names of programs take such different forms. Yet there are still commonalities among the many disparate forms that the writing major takes across the country, which I will discuss further in the last section of this chapter. But one example that may help to illustrate the

point is the prominence of professional writing in undergraduate writing majors, a decision dictated by the need to make the major attractive to undergraduates who are not necessarily interested in pursuing graduate education in rhetoric and composition. The writing major in many ways is born out of the pragmatic need felt by members of the discipline to build a curricular bridge between first-year writing and graduate programs, and that pragmatism necessitates that the major take forms that will draw student interest, even if the major does not then connect precisely to the predominant kinds of research done in rhetoric and composition. So the kind of consistency Balzhiser and McLeod seek through renaming the discipline is made even more difficult by fundamental differences in the kinds of work done at each curricular level, as well as the reality that different institutions provide education to different student populations with different needs and goals. As the repetition in that last sentence should bear out, the emphasis is on *difference*: Institutions fulfill different roles based on their missions, their student populations, and the needs of their regions.

The institutional movement most closely related to the curricular development of the undergraduate writing major—the move from advanced composition to advanced writing—in the disciplinary development of rhetoric and composition is the trend to form independent writing programs and departments. The next section briefly outlines the causes and effects of breaking away from English studies to seek out new institutional territory for the discipline.

## **Breaking Away: Independent Writing Departments**

In a report published in *Rhetoric Review* in 1995, David Chapman, Jeanett Harris, and Christine Hult presented the findings from a survey conducted in 1992 of English departments to see how many of them offered writing concentrations or majors and to discern what those curricular structures looked like. The survey was intended to update the findings of a similar survey conducted by Donald Stewart in 1987, the results of which were published in *CCC* in 1989 (“What Is An English Major, and What Should It Be?”). Chapman, Harris, and Hult found that the responses illustrated remarkable growth in offerings, especially in the 1980s as rhetoric and composition emerged as a more recognizable academic discipline. They note that of the 264 English departments at four-year institutions<sup>60</sup> that responded to their survey, approximately 70% reported offering some instantiation of a writing concentration, as opposed to the 38% reported in Stewart’s survey (422). Allowing for the slightly different methodological approaches to the survey and the likelihood that many institutions responded to only one of the two surveys, the difference in the reports is nevertheless astonishing: From one survey to the next, writing concentrations and majors nearly doubled. They qualify this so far as to say that only 27% of the English departments offered writing tracks within the English major, indicating the potential for broad interpretation of what it meant for an English department to offer a concentration in writing.

In their speculations based on the survey, Chapman, Harris, and Hult note that although Maxine Hairston had made the call for writing departments to begin their separation from English departments, only eight reporting programs were independent

departments. Nevertheless, they predict that, while independent programs will remain relatively rare, tensions that emerge in English departments as writing concentrations continue to grow will generate more desires among faculty to break away and build their own departments, citing as precedent the separation of speech, journalism, and linguistics from many English departments throughout the twentieth century. The authors suggest that “separating from the English department may be a necessary step at some institutions where the departmental mission is narrowly focused and deeply entrenched, where resources are unfairly allocated, or where the composition and rhetoric program is itself narrowly conceived” (427). Chapman, Harris, and Hult identify the potential institutional and epistemological conflicts that may occur in English departments when the faculty seek to construct a writing major; these are the same kinds of conflicts that Hairston refers to in her influential and controversial address.

One of the most important reasons for establishing an independent writing department is to build a power base for faculty members who previously felt that they lacked institutional power in English departments. Writing about the establishment of the autonomous writing department at Colgate University in 1993, Rebecca Moore Howard<sup>61</sup> advocates that writing faculty seek to establish independent departments as a means of recalibrating the power dynamic between literature and rhet-comp faculty: “The writing program can gain institutionally sanctioned power by exercising institution-changing power” (“Power Revisited” 37). She refers to Ed White’s well-known mantra for WPAs regarding power—use it or lose it—and suggests that seeking departmental independence is one of the only ways that faculty can gain power within the structure of the academic

hierarchy. She refers to Maxine Hairston's call for independence as well as Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* and its critique of labor and the institutional positioning of writing instruction as her primary justifications for the move to establish a separate department at Colgate University. What is most interesting about Howard's essay is its focus on the process of applying to the Dean's Advisory Council for permission to establish the department. By holding to the notion that institutional practice is changed by working within the boundaries and rules of an institution, Howard and the other faculty seeking departmental autonomy followed the procedures of their university to apply for an independent department.

Howard indicates that while the council was supportive enough to establish the department, it did not initially established tenure-track lines within the department—meaning the writing faculty were briefly in the awkward position of being part of a department while still belonging to the English department they were striving to break away from—and that the council would not approve the proposed name of the new department, which was the “Interdisciplinary Rhetoric Department.” Instead, they were named the Department of Interdisciplinary Writing, concerning which Howard states “The reasons for this revision have so far eluded our every attempt to ascertain them,” but she speculates that the absence of the term writing from the title suggested to the administration the potential of not only a rejection of the English department but also the first-year writing course (43). This difficulty in choosing a title for the department demonstrates not only the importance of how a department aligns itself with a discipline through its name, but also of the importance of establishing a name that makes sense

within a specific institutional context. It also shows that these names are not always chosen by the faculty who possess disciplinary knowledge, but instead by administrators who want to see a particular logic to the academic system as a whole. However, Howard also writes that the council made it possible for the department to revisit its name at a later date, and it is now the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, which suggests a compromise between the vision of the faculty and the administration and also an alignment with national trends in independent departments, many of which carry that very name.

In her influential polemical history, *Composition in the University*, published in 1998, three years after Chapman, Harris, and Hult's survey results, Sharon Crowley notes that there were only three independent writing programs that had split off from English departments, a number that disagrees with the survey findings above, but one that also demonstrates how small the movement toward independence was at the close of the twentieth century. But the argument at the core of Crowley's book—that universities should abolish the universal requirement for first-year writing courses—is a crucial argument in the trend toward both independent writing departments and the development of writing majors. Crowley argues that “there is a place for composition in the university, and that place does not depend upon Freshman English” (265). While the argument to abolish the required course is not new, Crowley positions the abolition argument to draw attention not only to the exploitation of teachers of writing, many of whom are hired on a contingent basis, but also to the negative curricular effects of first-year writing, a course that “comes from nowhere and goes nowhere” (242).

Crowley also argues that the universal requirement has negative disciplinary and institutional effects, restraining the potential growth and expansion of the intellectual work of composition by limiting its curricular focus to a single course or short sequence of courses (243). She articulates a vision of an expanded curriculum for composition that would invest it with sustainable intellectual energy: “I would hope that [a vertical elective curriculum in composing] would not confine students to practice in composing. Rather, it would help them to understand what composing is and to articulate the role it plays in shaping their intellectual lives” (262). According to this vision of potential curricular revisions, a writing major would present undergraduates not only with opportunities to practice composing texts but also to study composing itself. The latter half of that work is to a great extent the intellectual work of the discipline of composition studies, meaning that Crowley imagines a curriculum that engages undergraduates in the disciplinary work of composition studies.<sup>62</sup> Crowley’s vision for both a composition curriculum that extends beyond the first-year classroom and for rhetoric as a discipline in its own right gestures toward the rising disciplinary desires for independence from the historically literary-based mission of the English department.

By tracing the beginning of the independent writing department movement to Maxine Hairston’s “Breaking Our Bonds” address in 1985, members of the discipline indicate a particular source of anxiety and stress that drives faculty in rhetoric and composition to seek independence. Susan H. McLeod narrates an English department meeting at an unnamed institution to appoint a new chair that ended with the dean, who intervened when the department could reach no consensus, declaring, “This department

does not need a chair—it needs an exorcist” (525). The rhetoric and composition faculty at that department eventually divorced themselves from the English department, as did the department that McLeod later joined. McLeod questions the applicability of the metaphor of divorce, instead following the lead of Little and Rose to suggest that rhetoric and composition is a descendent of the English department, a child ready to stake out its own future: “We are now a mature discipline, or at least one old enough to strike out on our own if home is not a happy place” (529). Yet both the metaphor of divorce, drawn initially from Hairston’s comparison of composition to an undervalued wife in her chair’s address, or the metaphor of growing up and moving out imply a relationship with English studies that has become in one way or another untenable. The narratives may frame the drive to independence as a move toward disciplinary legitimacy, and independence assuredly does imply a stronger recognition of our disciplinary position within academia, but most of the narratives of independence hinge on a moment of such intense conflict within English departments that rhetoric and composition faculty could no longer justify remaining a part of such a unit. The inherent violence of the divorce metaphor and the inevitability of the coming of age metaphor suggest that ultimately rhetoric and composition will go its own way in the twenty-first century, leaving English studies behind just as journalism and speech did in the mid-twentieth century.

I end this section by returning to the English department as the traditional institutional home of rhetoric and composition in the university. It is easy to assume that the independent writing department narrative represents the future of the discipline since the voices in that narrative have become more prominent in our scholarship, as



collections such as *A Field of Dreams*, *Coming of Age*, and *What We Are Becoming* either directly or indirectly address the issue of institutional and epistemological independence from English studies. But as Melissa Ianetta notes in “Disciplinary, Divorce, and the Displacement of Labor Issues,” the majority of teachers and scholars of writing are still members of English departments. Certainly since the mid- to late-nineties, when Chapman, Harris, and Hult and Crowley pointed out how miniscule the move toward independence was, the number of independent writing departments has increased substantially. And Ianetta indicates what she sees as an elevation of the independence narrative in scholarship, alluding to CCC’s revisiting of Maxine Hairston’s “Breaking Our Bonds” address, composed of responses from Susan H. McLeod and Joseph Harris, from an independent writing department and program respectively.

Ianetta calls for scholars to pay more attention to the English department as the institutional home of the majority of writing specialists rather than seeing independence as the sole route to disciplinary legitimacy and professional stability. After a brief review of essays in *Field of Dreams* that especially gesture toward English department strife as the source of their desire to break away, Ianetta states, “Although there is little evidence of these assertions, once we are emancipated from the English department, we are told we will find institutional power, disciplinary prestige, and professional self-esteem” (68-9). Ianetta stresses that instead of focusing on narratives of emancipation, whether rhetoric and composition remains predominantly a part of English studies or if more and more faculty break with English to form independent writing departments, what must remain at the heart of our considerations is the question of labor. She notes that the move toward

independence has not resolved our discipline's institutional reliance on contingent labor, instead reinscribing the departmental hierarchy to position writing specialists at the top while still depending on fixed-term instructors and lecturers to teach the majority of undergraduate courses.

I refer to Ianetta's caution about embracing the heroic narrative of the independent writing department not to negate the drive toward independence, but instead to assert that independence is not a magical solution to all of our disciplinary problems. Surely, many writing faculty have had good reasons to form their own departments, and as my case studies below will demonstrate, not all writing faculty have been part of English departments prior to their independent status anyway. But many members of the disciplinary community reside happily, productively, and prosperously in English departments, as the continued relative slowness in the growth of independent writing departments suggests. The institutional home of rhetoric and composition reflects the fundamentally interdisciplinary work of the field, meaning that faculty can perform their work in numerous institutional configurations. The pluralistic institutional basis of the discipline means that the field resists a pull toward a singular curricular model, instead working to negotiate the demands of local circumstances and the areas of inquiry in the discipline to formulate curricular structures that best benefit the students whose needs have always been at the heart of our work.

The question of separation and autonomy remains a divisive issue in the discipline. As Maxine Hairston notes in her address, not every writing specialist will deem divorce from English studies necessary. But since 1985, the drive to establish

disciplinary legitimacy has meant in many cases that faculty members have felt that the only way to earn respect for the intellectual work of rhetoric and composition has been to stake new territory within the institution. In the next section, I explore five different models of writing majors, three of which are housed in independent writing departments and two in English departments. These five case studies illustrate the multiple ways in which writing majors can develop to meet the needs of students.

### **The Nomenclature and Curricular Design of Writing Majors**

In Chapter Three, as an introduction to my exploration of five doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, I assert that nomenclature is the central lens through which I examine the disciplinary development of rhetoric and composition. My central argument in this dissertation is that the way we articulate the discipline at multiple sites can collectively serve to demonstrate the ways in which the field is expanding and changing. The two central forces that I pinpoint in directing these changes—epistemological and institutional pressures—work together (even when they are in conflict with one another) to give shape to the boundaries of the discipline, which are always shifting and being redefined by members of the discourse community.

This chapter focuses specifically on the manifestation of the undergraduate writing major, with additional attention dedicated to the related trend of the establishment of independent writing departments. To that end, I examine five different undergraduate writing majors, three of which are housed in independent writing departments (Rowan University, Oakland University, and Georgia Southern University) and two housed in

English departments (Clemson University and Washington State University at Pullman). These institutions represent a broad geographical sample, with two southern universities, one middle Atlantic university, one Midwest university, and one west coast university. All five institutions are public, ranging in size from approximately 12,000 students (Rowan University) to approximately 21,000 (Washington State and Georgia Southern). Clemson and Oakland are both composed of approximately 18,000 to 19,000 students.<sup>63</sup> I have organized my analysis of each department into two basic clusters: writing majors in independent writing departments and writing majors in English departments.

For each department, I offer an analysis of the mission statements and program descriptions offered on their websites, followed by an examination of the major requirements, with specific attention dedicated to core courses and different emphases, when applicable. Unlike the doctoral programs I examined in Chapter Three, the writing majors do not have as clear a trajectory for their undergraduates; while some of those students who complete writing majors may go on to study rhetoric and composition at the graduate level, students' participation in the discipline may end after they complete their baccalaureate degrees, as opposed to the dominant model in doctoral studies in rhetoric and composition, where the students overwhelmingly become a part of academia. The trajectories of undergraduate writing majors are more varied and complex, so I will also examine how the departments present options to their majors, and what possible futures they envision for their students through the kinds of courses and concentrations offered.

## Rowan University: Writing Arts

The Writing Arts faculty at Rowan University contributed two chapters to Giberson and Moriarty's *What We Are Becoming*, one dedicated to providing a brief history of the development of the writing major and the other to a meditation on the interconnections between the discipline and the introductory course for the writing major. In the latter, Sanford Tweedie, Jennifer Courtney, and William I. Wolff, all faculty at Rowan, argue that any department that offers a writing major should develop a required introductory course for the major that focuses on exposing students to disciplinary history and knowledge in order to construct an effective contextual knowledge for students to better understand the courses that compose the major. Tweedie, Courtney, and Wolff choose *writing studies* as the disciplinary banner for their program—an appropriate choice considering the broad title of their department. This choice in nomenclature is intentional and meaningful, shaping how the department has developed its curriculum in response to how it envisions the field. They argue that the introductory course is the site for articulating the discipline for undergraduate majors:

Because writing studies conceives of writing in its broadest terms, inclusive of multiple subdisciplines (rhetoric, composition, technical writing, and genre studies, to name a few) and because writing studies is concerned with many forms of writing, highly reliant on communication technology, we suggest that departments and programs offering writing majors develop a course that *posits writing as a discipline in and of itself by establishing the sociohistorical, technological, and theoretical concerns common to all writing*. (265, italics original)

Like most definitions of writing studies, Tweedie, Courtney, and Wolff's definition emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of this particular iteration, creating an umbrella

formation that houses the study of writing as it manifests in multiple fields. The authors frame this definition of writing studies as justification for the introductory course (which I will discuss further below), but a brief review of the Department of Writing Art's curricular structure makes it clear that this broad, inclusive definition of the discipline informs the department's entire mission.

The Department of Writing Arts is housed in the College of Communication and Creative Arts.<sup>64</sup> The writing program split away from the English department in 1996, when Rowan College was renamed Rowan University and organized into six different colleges, a reorganization that reflects the system-wide restructuring of public colleges in New Jersey. English was housed in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, while the writing program was moved to the College of Communication (it only became Communication and Creative Arts in 2012), a move to combine the study of writing with communication studies that had some precedent in 1966 when the college was still Glassboro State College, and speech and rhetoric broke away from English to form its own academic unit. In 1996, the writing program followed the pattern established by that earlier break. The department was initially named the Department of Composition and Rhetoric, and it did not offer a major, but instead continued offering freshman writing courses and a limited number of upper division writing courses. In 2003, the creative writing faculty petitioned to combine with the composition and rhetoric faculty, and the newly reorganized department was renamed Writing Arts to reflect its varied approaches to writing. The department offered a dual major degree with English education as well as a concentration in creative writing, but there was no writing major until 2006, when the

college's dean decided that every department in the college would offer a Bachelor of Arts. Thus, the department began to develop a vertical curriculum that would support a writing major.<sup>65</sup> The result is a bachelor's degree that aims simultaneously to be rooted in disciplinary knowledge and to take advantage of interdisciplinary connections with other departments, both within the College of Communication and Creative Arts and in other colleges.

The BA in Writing Arts is structured around a core curriculum consisting of five classes and a senior portfolio seminar. In their explanation of the core courses, Courtney, Martin, and Penrod specify that the department's motive for structuring the core curriculum was in order to "create coherence among elective choices" (250). There is, in fact, a carefully structured system of areas in which students take electives for the major, but I find it intriguing that the rationale they offer was to provide coherence for electives rather than to construct a common set of knowledge areas with which the department expects their students to be familiar. In other words, it seems from their statement that the department arrived at the decision to construct a core curriculum in reverse—they found the need to provide some structure and guidance because students were not seeing the connections between the courses they were taking. Courtney, Martin, and Penrod attribute this lack of cohesion to the dual major degree with education, with students who identified primarily as education majors and who did not always understand how the courses offered by Writing Arts contributed to their education. The faculty in Writing Arts were presented with the opportunity to build a curriculum that reflected careful thought about the connections between courses.

The core courses Writing Arts offers collectively reflect the department's mission to "[advance] students' understanding of written communication within our dynamic society." The emphasis on writing as communication results not only from the department's institutional position, but also from its broad interpretation of what writing actually is. Further, the mission statement indicates that Writing Arts (which they indicate focuses on "the art and craft" of writing) "meets the need for an articulate, informed citizenry with enthusiasm, creativity, and rigor." Their emphasis on the art and craft of writing seems to be intended to indicate a deep focus not only on writing as communication but also writing as artistic expression, befitting a department that houses creative writing, and their gesture toward citizenship indicates a connection to composition studies' deeply-rooted tendency to intertwine education and democracy as mutually informed missions.

The core that developed from this mission spans from an introductory course to courses at the senior level, meaning that writing majors at Rowan University engage with the core curriculum throughout their undergraduate education. The core consists of the following courses:

- Introduction to Writing Arts
- Communication Theory
- The Writer's Mind
- Writing, Research, and Technology
- Senior Seminar: Evaluating Writing
- Portfolio Seminar

According to the department's website, the introductory course "familiarizes students with the disciplinary underpinnings of Writing Arts, providing a background in the



history of writing, current writing theories, writing as technology, and the writing professions,” an undoubtedly ambitious agenda for a single course. Yet the direction of the course points toward the broad vision of writing that the Writing Arts department has based its major on, a vision that includes historical, theoretical, and professional approaches to writing meant to give majors the opportunity to take their education in many different directions. The other courses in the core expose students to different aspects of writing, from technology and evaluation to communication theory (housed in Communication Studies) and practical experience in writing. The Portfolio Seminar almost always culminates, for instance, in an essay on an internship completed as an integral part of the major.

The courses in the core curriculum are designed to give a coherent structure to the major, guiding majors through several courses central to the major while also giving them flexibility to take other courses in areas to complement the core. Beyond the core, the major defines four broad areas required to complete the major: Elements of Language, Creative Writing, Writing in the Professions, and Culture and Communication. The courses that meet these requirements are housed not only in the Writing Arts department, but also in Communication Studies, Art, Philosophy, and English. The structure of the major demonstrates a department that defines its discipline as an ultimately interdisciplinary endeavor, drawing from the disciplinary knowledge of many fields while structuring the major around a core of courses that keep students focused on writing. In an account of the difficulty of adapting to working in the Writing Arts department, Jennifer Courtney writes:

I needed to rethink my core beliefs about specialization. Specifically, I needed to stop seeing myself as a “rhet/comp” person...[Writing Arts] is not rhetoric and composition; it is not creative writing; it is not professional writing; it is not literature; it is not literacy studies. It is, in fact, all of those things and more. (Giberson et al., “A Changing Profession”)

Courtney’s reflection on the necessity of having to shift her understanding of specialization and disciplinarity indicates just how crucial curricular sites are to how members of the discipline envision their work in relation to our graduate training and professional identity. Even though the curriculum Rowan constructed for their writing major demonstrates an intense ambition to combine areas of study that have their own individual disciplinary discourses, the Writing Arts department at Rowan University with its interdisciplinary major offers a powerful challenge to the concept of disciplinarity in rhetoric and composition.

### **Oakland University: Writing and Rhetoric**

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric (WRT) at Oakland University is unique among independent writing departments because it did not break away from an English department to reform itself as a separate academic unit. In her contribution to *What We Are Becoming*, Wallis May Anderson, a professor of writing and rhetoric at Oakland University, indicates that the writing program at OU “has never been a part of the English department, for reasons rooted in institutional history” (67). When Oakland University was first founded in 1970 (it had previously been an honors college of Michigan State University, officially named Michigan State University-Oakland), writing was housed in the Department of Learning Skills, not English. The writing faculty eventually lobbied

for the construction of a separate Department of Rhetoric in order to remove the remedial notions associated with the name of the previous department. Anderson suggests that the writing program's initial placement in Learning Skills "has haunted the program for over thirty years," making it difficult to acquire new faculty or to build a major (69). In their own brief history of the writing program at OU in *Composition Forum*, Lori Ostergaard and Greg Giberson argue that the writing program sought to separate itself from Learning Skills "to counter the seemingly inevitable marginalization of writing" that came with the administrative housing of writing instruction in a non-disciplinary department. The Department of Rhetoric was then combined with communication studies and journalism into the Department of Rhetoric, Communication, and Journalism.

In 2008, the rhetoric faculty once more separated themselves from an academic unit, this time to establish the new Department of Writing and Rhetoric. As Anderson notes, the independent writing department at Oakland grew out of the establishment of an undergraduate major: "The writing program's independence and the development of its major intertwine" (67). Anderson argues that the intertwined development of department and major enabled the faculty to generate a major strongly rooted in current theory in rhetoric and composition: "Initial independence allowed the faculty to create a curriculum based on contemporary disciplinary thinking, and that curricular focus persisted through its time in a blended department, flowering in the proposal for the major" (67). The department thus consciously modeled itself on the latest developments in rhetoric and composition, retaining its historical focus on rhetoric (all of the tenure-stream faculty prior to the separation from communication studies and journalism were

Rhetoric faculty) while making writing its primary curricular focus for its undergraduate program.

Rather than renaming themselves the Department of Rhetoric when they applied for approval for a new undergraduate major, the faculty proposed a new name that was intended to draw the attention of multiple audiences: students, administrators, and employers. The faculty chose the name Writing and Rhetoric as a means of placing emphasis on the practical applications of the major. Ostergaard and Giberson indicate that the name of the department was chosen quite carefully in order to reflect the work of the department and to communicate outside of the institution the importance of writing:

While most of us agreed that “rhetoric” was a more appropriate term to describe the work of the department, we also felt that the term “writing” would be more student and employer friendly than composition or rhetoric, as it is commonly identified by both groups as a valuable and desirable *skill*. (Emphasis added)

Intriguingly, the faculty chose a name for themselves that not only reflects their academic work—rhetoric—as well as trends at the national level among other departments and programs, but also a carefully weighed evocation of writing as a skill, the very stigma faculty had sought to eradicate by removing themselves from Learning Skills and establishing themselves as a department dedicated to rhetoric. Ostergaard and Giberson emphasize that their choice in naming the department and major was carefully constructed both to draw the attention of students and employers and to rehabilitate writing instruction as a vital component of Oakland University’s mission. For instance, they indicate that they chose to place writing as the first word in the department and major to capitalize on a newly instituted writing-intensive requirement for graduation,

and that by using Writing and Rhetoric as opposed to Rhetoric and Writing, “we might attract more students to our upper-level courses as they looked to the catalog for ‘Writing’ courses.” They argue further that their choice in nomenclature was “purely strategic,” because the major “now occupies the very last place in the college catalog, making it easier for students to find us and our classes.”

The WRT department offers bachelor’s degrees with three different emphases: Writing for the Professions, Writing in New Media, and Writing as a Discipline. The department also offers graduate courses in writing and rhetoric, but it does not offer graduate degrees, instead limiting its graduate curriculum to courses in teaching and tutoring writing, as well as a few courses in writing in new media, all of which support other graduate programs at Oakland University. The department also houses the first-year writing program, a two-course sequence that most undergraduates must complete before graduating.<sup>66</sup> But as Anderson suggests, the department is ultimately defined by its undergraduate major. The department is currently composed of ten tenure-stream faculty, five of whom are assistant professors, a consequence of the department’s rapid expansion subsequent to its establishment as an independent academic unit.<sup>67</sup>

The curricular structure of the major depends primarily on the emphasis students choose when they declare the major because each different track has its own gateway course, but there is also a small core curriculum of courses that all writing and rhetoric majors must take. The core consists of three courses:

Issues in Writing and Rhetoric  
History of Rhetorical Studies  
Literacy, Technology, and Civic Engagement

The first course is designed as an introduction to the discipline, an opportunity to expose students to the theoretical and historical background of writing and rhetoric that contributes to current issues in the discipline. The second course is a traditional history of rhetoric course, designed to survey the classical roots of modern rhetoric to further strengthen students' understanding of the historical background of the discipline. The description of the course indicates that the purpose of the course is also to consider "the influence of rhetoric in other disciplines," indicating a desire among the faculty teaching the course to emphasize the fundamentally interdisciplinary nature of rhetorical theory even as they use rhetoric as a vital component of their definition of the disciplinary study of writing. The third course, seemingly a grab bag of peripheral issues in writing and rhetoric, focuses primarily on "the uneven shifts from oral to print to digital literacy and how those shifts affect the production of knowledge, social relationships, and opportunities for civic engagement." These three courses give a general structure to the disciplinary knowledge students in all three concentrations are introduced to, providing a firm grounding in the field on which students build their more specialized areas of knowledge. The core curriculum also requires a senior thesis or internship to serve as a capstone for the major.

The three emphases each carry their own gateway courses that act as a fourth flexible core course. Writing for the Professions carries as its gateway course "Introduction to Professional Writing," a course that explores the "theories, practices, technologies, and ethics of professional writing in the workplace." The remainder of the emphasis consists of such courses as business writing, science writing, and writing for

human services. The range of courses students complete for this emphasis are designed to prepare them for working in a professional setting following the completion of their bachelor's degrees. The gateway course for the second emphasis, Writing for New Media, is a course of the same name that focuses primarily on theories of online constructions of identity and community and the ethics and stylistics of web authorship. The courses associated with this emphasis include composing audio essays, digital storytelling, the rhetoric of web design, and the rhetoric of video game culture. The gateway course for the third and final emphasis, Writing as a Discipline, is "Composition Studies," which focuses on the history of the academic discipline as well as central theories and practices associated with postsecondary writing instruction. Other courses students take in this emphasis include peer tutoring in composition and teaching writing.

By focusing on different aspects of writing, the three emphases at Oakland University provide students with curricular pathways to specific professional and academic ends. While any of these tracks could potentially lead to immediate employment for majors, it seems clear that the Writing as a Discipline focus is intended to prepare undergraduates for graduate study in rhetoric and composition, providing precisely the kind of undergraduate training in writing and writing instruction that Arthur W. Shumaker identified as one of the most significant obstacles to the establishment and expansion of writing majors. And because the department does not offer any graduate degrees, the faculty's attention is necessarily more focused on providing students in all three tracks with the necessary disciplinary and professional knowledge to prepare them for their careers in writing, whatever those tracks may take. It seems likely that, as the

faculty in WRT continues to grow, the department will probably develop their graduate curriculum further and offer graduate certificates and degrees. But that curriculum will grow out of an established undergraduate major, a rarity in rhetoric and composition.

### **Georgia Southern University: Writing and Linguistics**

The Department of Writing and Linguistics' website proudly proclaims that the department is "the only free-standing writing department in the state of Georgia and one of only a handful in the nation." The statement frames the department's independent status as something that sets it apart from other writing programs in the nation, a mark of distinction. The pride contained in the statement reflects the energy the department has brought to bear to renovate the first-year writing program and to build a writing major. Thanks to the publication of *A Field of Dreams*, the history of the formation of the Department of Writing and Linguistics is well documented by faculty members who were there either when the department was severed from the English department or by new faculty who were hired in great numbers shortly into the department's independent life. The collection is edited by three scholars who were then faculty members at Georgia Southern, so while Angela Crow and Peggy O'Neill entitle their introduction "Cautionary Tales about Change," the drive to compile this collection demonstrates the kind of scholarly interest the faculty at Georgia Southern took in their independent status.

The Department of Writing and Linguistics was formed in 1997 based on an initiative started by upper-level university administration to divide the existing Department of English and Philosophy into two departments of less burdensome size. At



the time the initiative began, English and Philosophy housed 77 faculty members, making it by far the largest department in the university, and it had grown too large for the existing administrative structure of a single department chair with no assistant or associate chairs to govern effectively. As Eleanor Agnew and Phyllis Surrency Dallas point out in “Internal Friction in a New Independent Department of Writing,” a chapter in *A Field of Dreams*, one of the chief causes of resentment that arose over the division of the department and the subsequent reorganizing of the two new departments was that “the creation of the new department was driven by senior administration rather than by faculty” (39). That the creation of an independent writing department was accomplished at the behest of administration rather than faculty is an important distinction, since the master narrative of independent writing departments typically focuses more on the struggle of writing faculty to build their own departments despite opposition from English departments and administration—a sort of pioneer narrative, a manifest destiny that I have sought to suggest with the name of this chapter.

In their brief history of the birth of the writing department, Agnew and Dallas describe multiple models that were proposed by a committee put together at the request of administration for reorganizing the Department of English and Philosophy, but eventually the faculty chose a model that would create a new school separate from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) with an accompanying dean to house the newly severed Literature and Philosophy Department and the Writing and Linguistics Department. So even though the initial concept of separating the departments did not come from the bottom up (if I may with a straight face call faculty the bottom),

the faculty were empowered to choose the model that best suited their needs. However, as Agnew and Dallas recount, “something happened to the proposal on the way to the board of regents,” and the result was that the English and Philosophy Department was divided without a new school being created (44). Instead, an associate dean position was created to oversee the two newly divided departments, with little explanation of how they would relate to one another or of what that associate dean’s job actually was. In other words, the administrative structure chosen by the faculty was rejected while the division of the faculty was approved, a process that engendered confusion and resentment, especially in the new independent writing department, which was cut loose from a department with a graduate program and a large major and sent on its way with first-year writing and no major at all.

Two years after the department had been formed, internal strife had embittered many of the faculty, who could not agree on vital departmental concerns such as processes for tenure and promotion and research expectations. Conflict resolution consultants were brought in to settle the discord that arose in the department over issues of tenure and rank (several tenured members of the new department did not hold terminal degrees) and the pattern of bringing in PhDs in rhetoric and composition, which some of the faculty without terminal degrees or tenure took as a threat to their livelihood. However, this period of internal strife was short-lived, since Agnew and Dallas conclude their narrative by declaring that “despite this history of conflict, the possibilities for our program seem great” (48). A decade after the publication of *A Field of Dreams*, the department seems to be doing just as well as this statement suggests would happen. The

department now houses a writing major and the Georgia Southern Writing Project, a National Writing Project site, and the program has also hosted numerous local, regional, and national conferences including the 2012 Writing Across the Curriculum Conference as well as the upcoming 2013 Writing Program Administrators' Conference.

Most importantly in the context of this chapter, Georgia Southern approved a writing major in 2004, a crucial step for an independent writing department to move from purely service status as the institutional home of the first-year writing program to a fully-fledged academic unit. The department does not offer any graduate degrees, although it does offer a graduate certificate in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. The major in Writing and Linguistics, however, has become a thriving degree option for undergraduates, claiming 140 majors in 2011. Unlike the other majors that comprise the case studies in this chapter, the Writing and Linguistics major at Georgia Southern is not constructed around any core curriculum at all. Rather, the major is composed of multiple areas in which students take courses to satisfy the general requirements for the degree.

Undergraduates take anywhere from one to five courses in each of the following areas:

- Common Body of Knowledge
- Process of Writing and Language
- Capstone Experience
- Creative Writing
- Linguistics
- Professional and Technical Writing
- Writing Studies

Each section offers students numerous options for satisfying the requirements. For example, the Common Body of Knowledge section, a title that suggests that these courses

are considered introductory to the kinds of work students will do in the major and in whatever fields they enter when they complete their degrees, requires students to take two of these four courses:

Language and Linguistic Theory  
Creative Writing  
Foundations in Professional and Technical Writing  
Introduction to Writing Studies

While there is no formal core, what these four courses make clear is that students are expected to choose one or two areas within the major on which to focus their coursework. The structure of the major gives students the flexibility to explore numerous approaches of writing; indeed, because they are required to take at least one course in all four areas of the major, undergraduates are expected to acquire familiarity with a broad range of academic, professional, and creative forms of writing. The Capstone Experience, comprised of internships in linguistics, advanced creative writing workshops, and a writing for publication course, appears designed to build on a student's focus in one of the four primary areas.

Without dividing the major into four different emphases, the Department of Writing and Linguistics has mimicked the structure of departments that give students experience in the entire disciplinary area of their major while giving them the ability to concentrate their studies in one particular area. This structure is commonly found in English departments, as my two sample English writing majors below will make clear. So while the independent writing department was empowered to create its own procedures and curriculum, it is interesting to see a major that does not differ drastically in structure

from English majors, even if the content of the major is quite different. In “Cautionary Tales about Change,” Crow and O’Neill discuss how independent writing departments often become highly conservative units despite the nearly revolutionary fervor that can sometimes surround their establishment because they must work within the parameters of university protocol: “In order to separate and gather momentum, independence is necessary; however, independence within the university is illusory; thus the independence requires a caution contradictory to the initial ideals” (4). That caution can be seen at work in the contour of the writing major at Georgia Southern. Rather than designing a completely new curricular structure, Georgia Southern relies on a more familiar structure for the major. While this may indicate the kind of conservatism Crow and O’Neill allude to, it also illustrates a basic pragmatism at work: The faculty constructed a major that makes sense to them and to their students, a major that provides significant flexibility for structuring a plan of study that suits the needs of each undergraduate.

### **Clemson University: Writing and Publication Studies**

The English department at Clemson University is part of the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities, a combination that, according to the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Catalog, “offers one-of-a-kind opportunities for interdisciplinary exploration and achievement—opportunities that are at once rigorous and imaginative, classical and innovative” (Undergraduate Catalog 62). While the writing major resides in the English department, the combination of the college indicates an interdisciplinary

drive similar to that exhibited by Rowan University's integration of communication studies, arts, and writing—an interdisciplinary drive that is consistent with Clemson University's graduate studies in rhetoric and writing in its innovative PhD program in Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design as well as its Master's degree in Professional Communication. The description of the PhD program on Clemson's website, for instance, declares that its graduates will be valuable in departments of art, communication studies, English, rhetoric, writing, and New Media. Further emphasizing its efforts to destabilize traditional disciplinary boundaries that typically provide clear trajectories for curricular structures, the English department characterizes itself as one of "the nation's pioneers, combining literary studies and professional communications." This description suggests that, while the writing major is housed in the English department, the model of English studies at Clemson University differs from more traditional departments of English, where literature remains *de facto* the dominant field of study. Yet an examination of the core curriculum indicates that literary study does in fact remain the most prominent area of study in the department. The curriculum at Clemson University, while focused on two major concentrations, also includes other areas of study, including children's literature (which is often separated in college curricula from more general literary studies), creative writing, language, criticism, and theory, and film and screen writing, the latter of which is a significant part of Clemson's program.

The two major emphases in the department are Literature and Writing and Publication Studies (WPS). According to the website, "Students in both concentrations will complete a core curriculum providing a strong foundation in history, literature,

critical inquiry, writing, and analysis.” The core curriculum illustrates a desire to provide students with a broad conception of English studies even as, as I remarked above, it continues to emphasize literary studies as the more prominent of the two concentrations. The core curriculum is the same for both concentrations, a reflection of the department’s expressed desire to provide students with a broad base in the kinds of knowledge and research common to English studies. The core for all English majors is comprised of the following four courses:

Professional Development  
Critical Writing About Literature  
Shakespeare  
Senior Seminar

Additionally, the major requirements include two literature survey courses, one course in Language, Criticism, and Theory, and one course in Advanced Writing. The Professional Development course is in part an introduction to the disciplinary work of English studies as a whole and in part a survey of possible career options for English majors. Such a course is common in some form to departments as a gateway to the major, whether the course focuses on English generally or writing more specifically; the focus of the course typically depends on whether the course is in an independent writing department or an English department. English departments, as units that house multiple fields of inquiry and career interests, necessarily have to cover different ground than departments that focus solely on writing and rhetoric. At the other end of the major, the senior seminar provides students with the opportunity to further develop their specific interests in English studies by working closely with faculty in literature, writing, and rhetoric. These

two courses, which focus more broadly on English studies, establish a progression from an introduction to the numerous sub-fields of English to an intensive focus on each student's particular area of study.

The other two core courses are literature courses: *Critical Writing about Literature* is described in the catalog as a course in the “terms and techniques for literary analysis, close reading, vocabulary for analysis, [and] research and writing skills.” It is a junior-level course, but from its description, the course functions as a more narrowly focused introduction to literary studies than the *Professional Development* course makes possible because of its broad attention to English studies. It is intriguing that while writing is in the name of the course, the only mention of writing in the description relegates the course's attention to writing as a skill that serves as the counterpart of research. In other words, while the name of the course suggests a more intense focus on the relationship between writing and literature, *Critical Writing about Literature* emphasizes literature as content and writing as skill. The other core course, *Shakespeare*, is self-evident in its focus on literary studies, and is a surprising requirement for a department that wants to situate itself as a curricular innovator in English studies; the requirement for an author-specific literature course does not seem to align with the desire to emphasize writing.

The core curriculum at Clemson University, then, provides very little direct curricular support for the *Writing and Publication Studies* concentration, since most of the core courses do not actually address writing and publication studies. The *Advanced Writing* requirement can be met by multiple courses, but it seems most often to be met by *Advanced Composition*—an interesting dissonance in nomenclature between the



requirement and the course which is probably explained by the course pre-dating both the requirement and the disciplinary shift from advanced composition to advanced writing. The Advanced Composition course is defined simply as a “workshop in practical writing focusing on principles and style,” a broad definition that further suggests that Advanced Composition has existed on the books at Clemson University for a number of decades. The primary possibilities for writing majors to take courses in writing and publication studies are provided through additional requirements for WPS majors to take two courses in that area and a Practicum in Writing (used as a shell to give institutional credit for internships) during their senior year in addition to the Senior Seminar.

What seems most puzzling about the Writing and Publication Studies concentration at Clemson is determining precisely what the goals of that concentration are. The core curriculum for the concentration suffers from the lack of courses that focus specifically on writing and publishing, instead offering a curricular structure that requires undergraduates to take courses that fall broadly into the category. The courses that satisfy these broad requirements do in fact nominally support the supposition that the English department has sought to meld literary studies and professional communications; these courses range from those focused on the more professional side of writing, including Scientific Writing and Communication, Technical Editing, Writing for Electronic Media, and Topics in Book History to those that relate more directly to the academic discipline of rhetoric and composition, including Classical and Modern Rhetoric (both of which are cross-listed with the Communication department) and Genre and Activity Theory. The majority of the courses available for WPS majors are more in the vein of professional

writing, making it clear that the WPS concentration is designed to provide undergraduates with immediate career possibilities as well as a strong background for graduate study in professional and technical writing. The concentration does not focus on introducing undergraduates to the disciplinary history and knowledge of rhetoric and composition, suggesting that the undergraduate major the department envisioned is first and foremost a professional degree. This focus on professional writing is the most common approach to the undergraduate writing major in English departments.

### **Washington State University: Rhetoric and Professional Writing**

The English department at Washington State University, Pullman, offers five different concentrations within the English major: English and American Literature (counted as one concentration according to the department's website), Rhetoric and Professional Writing, Teaching, Creative Writing, and Digital Technology and Culture. The careful division of the concentrations makes Washington State an interesting example of how much an English department can expand its course offerings while still remaining within the disciplinary and institutional structure of English studies. The divisions also reflect a conscious consideration of the differences in the fields of study and a recognition that these degrees will lead to different kinds of careers and graduate studies. In other words, the multiple curricular structures of the English major at Washington State suggests a consciousness that while all the faculty who work within the department are English faculty, their areas of specialization justify a particularly expansive curriculum; the multiple concentrations also suggest that the department is

interested in offering its students considerable flexibility in their study. In addition to the department's exceptionally large number of possible concentrations, WSU also offers MAs and PhDs in literature and rhetoric and composition, as well as an interdisciplinary liberal arts degree called the Digital Technology and Culture (DTC) degree, which is a collaborative curriculum divided among approximately a dozen departments.

According to the department website, WSU's English programs are "suitable for anyone interested in a career involving reading and writing," and that the department "uses a multiplicity of approaches in its scholarship, teaching, and service, unified by the department's commitment to the study, understanding, and production of texts of many kinds" ultimately aimed to engender "critically literate citizenship of all students." The Overview of the English department's mission concludes, "We are brought to these commitments in the first place by our shared belief that a university can bestow no greater benefit on its students than confidence in their ability to make effective use of language." The language I have selected for attention here is noteworthy for the effort to provide a broad-scale view of the mission of English studies. In keeping with Thomas Miller's interpretation of literacy as the chief goal for English, with literacy being composed of both reading and writing, the departmental mission statement emphasizes careers in reading and writing, acknowledging the general purpose of a degree in English. The purposes of coursework in the department are combined into the statement about the "study, understanding, and production of texts," a linkage that provides a very open interpretation of how the department envisions reading and writing. The mission of the university that the English department suggests—building confidence in the ability to

make effective use of language—is connected to the critically literate citizenship that the faculty envision, a mission that links the department’s vision of its work to the democratic and liberatory visions of such education scholars as John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

I have started with WSU’s vision of the work of literacy as a democratic endeavor because that vision has a significant impact on the core curriculum for the Rhetoric and Professional Writing undergraduate major. Each major emphasis has a separate core curriculum built to address the specific needs of undergraduates working toward expertise in those areas, although they all share one course, Introduction to English Studies. The brief description provided for this course establishes it as a gateway course for the major: the course introduces students to “interpretation of texts in several fields of English studies including rhetoric, literary study, creative writing, and professional writing.” The course acts as a gateway to the major for any of the concentrations, emphasizing commonalities in methodological approaches while also providing students with opportunities to come into contact with the multidisciplinary structure of English studies. Introduction to English Studies is the only common course to each emphasis, however. From there, students in different emphases follow different tracks to pursue their specific goals and interests. The core curriculum for the Rhetoric and Professional Writing emphasis is composed of four classes:

- Introduction to English Studies
- Writing and Rhetorical Conventions
- Principles of Rhetoric
- Rhetorics of Racism

In addition to these four specific courses, students must take two courses, one in literary study or the history of the English language and another that focuses them more particularly toward rhetoric or professional writing: *The Scope of Rhetoric or Theory and Practice in Technical and Professional Writing*.

The core curriculum for the Rhetoric and Professional Writing emphasis clearly privileges rhetoric over professional writing, an intriguing choice for a degree that is intended, according to the 2011-2012 university catalog, “for students preparing for careers in business, public service, law, or other professions requiring writing and reading skills” (150). Only after establishing this profession-oriented mission for the emphasis does the catalog then add, “It is also suitable for those seeking careers in higher education specializing in rhetoric and composition.” Yet the purpose of a core curriculum is to give students similar experiences in and awareness of particular areas of disciplinary knowledge. It then seems surprising, considering not only the stated goals of the emphasis but also its very title, that *Theory and Practice in Technical and Professional Writing* is not one of the core courses, but is instead a course students elect to take in order to satisfy degree requirements. The department offers a broad range of courses for students to take that would give them training in professional writing, from courses in legal writing and literary editing to advanced professional writing and editing. Students who wish to focus on professional writing would have no difficulty constructing a strong background by taking these courses.

However, the core curriculum for Rhetoric and Professional Writing suggests that the primary focus of the emphasis is in fact the study of rhetoric. Certainly, students

wishing to focus on professional writing would gain skills and experience from studying rhetoric in these core courses, but it seems odd for an emphasis that is clearly designed to attract not only students who are interested in continuing their rhetorical studies at the graduate level but also students who will go on to be technical and professional writers when they complete their BAs. This potential dissonance between the core composed of courses in rhetoric and the electives composed of courses in rhetoric and/or professional writing speaks to the difficulty in constructing an undergraduate major rooted in the disciplinary knowledge of rhetoric and composition. Since much of the work done in rhetoric and composition focuses on postsecondary pedagogy, for instance, it becomes difficult to prepare undergraduate courses rooted in that pedagogical theory. At WSU, the division of emphases places the undergraduate interested in teaching in the English Teaching track, where students must take Rhetoric and Composition for Teaching. In some ways, then, the division of emphases that makes WSU admirable also creates problems for an undergraduate instantiation of rhetoric and composition.

While I have argued that the core curriculum does not necessarily align with the nomenclature WSU has assigned to its undergraduate writing major—and it is also worth noting briefly that there is an undergraduate creative writing major, meaning that the department technically houses two writing majors, recognizing the difference in the kinds of work students would do in these tracks—it is clear from the numerous course offerings that students who prefer to take courses in professional writing will find no lack of opportunity to take courses that interest them. In other words, my concern is not practical in the sense that the name of the emphasis is somehow misleading; instead, I am struck

by the mismatch between the goals of the emphasis and the courses provided to prepare students to meet those goals. The Introduction to English Studies, as a shared gateway course taken by students in all five different emphases, is an important component of the writing major because it introduces students to disciplinary ways of thinking about literacy. Writing and Rhetorical Conventions and Principles of Rhetoric also make sense considering that students who will either study writing or produce writing in their careers will need substantive knowledge of conventions as well as a fundamental knowledge of rhetoric provided by the combination of the two courses. Even Rhetorics of Racism, a course that would very likely be delegated to elective status in many undergraduate writing curricula, makes sense in the local context of Washington State University, an institution with a highly diverse population in an area of the nation, the Pacific Northwest, that is more diverse than many other parts of the United States. But the lack of a professional writing course in the core curriculum seems surprising, considering the emphasis placed on professional writing in the name of the major.

Despite this particular problem with the core curriculum, the Rhetoric and Professional Writing emphasis at Washington State University provides a fairly typical portrait of similar versions of the writing major in English departments at other institutions. The emphasis provides flexibility for students with a broad range of interests, from professional to academic, to pursue those interests through the wide array of courses offered in both areas. If the core curriculum does lean too heavily toward rhetoric, one of the strengths of the emphasis that counterbalances that lean is the relative smallness of the core. Since one class is taken by all English majors, this means that the core

specifically designed for Rhetoric and Professional Writing is composed of only three courses, with two additional flexible core categories that expose writing students to literary studies and allow them to focus their interests primarily on either rhetoric or professional writing.

### **Where Are We Going From Here?**

When Christian Weisser and Laurie Grobman declared the past ten years the decade of the undergraduate writing major, they did not mean to suggest that the movement toward undergraduate writing majors is somehow losing momentum. If anything, efforts among colleges and universities to construct writing majors will likely accelerate over the next decade, probably outpacing the growth of graduate studies in rhetoric and composition, an area in which the discipline has had much longer to mature. The result of the acceleration in the establishment of writing majors is that colleges and universities will continue hiring more writing faculty to teach in those majors. The academic job market for most disciplines is in decline, with newly minted PhDs finding it difficult to secure tenure-track positions in the first year or two of their search. The job prospects for PhDs in rhetoric and composition have remained quite bright despite our own predictions that the center cannot hold, that eventually the expansion of tenure-track positions in rhetoric and composition must slow down to match the pace of the remainder of the market. Certainly, our field cannot sustain the kind of growth that we have seen over the past thirty years indefinitely, but our discipline is currently compensating for a deficit that can be attributed to the relative newness of rhetoric and composition as a



recognizable academic discipline. For the first six or seven decades of the twentieth century, positions were readily available for most academic specializations as the research university rose in prominence in tandem with staggering federal investment in higher education. By the time rhetoric and composition was emerging as an academic discipline in the sixties and seventies, however, the general academic job market was in decline, and it has generally followed that downward trajectory ever since. But rhetoric and composition has seen consistently strong offerings on the job market each year. A new PhD in rhetoric and composition can reasonably expect to secure a tenure-track position in the first year of his or her search. The remarkable growth in the number of positions available for writing specialists could be seen as the academic job market compensating for the absence of these positions until the late twentieth century. In other words, rhetoric and composition is still catching up with the rest of the academic disciplines as far as tenure-track positions are concerned.

While many issues factor into the strength of our small corner of an otherwise bleak job market, such as continued growth in graduate programs, writing centers, writing program administration, writing across the curriculum, and writing in the disciplines, one of the key curricular sites that will enable rhetoric and composition to sustain its current growth in tenure-track positions is the undergraduate writing major. The trend that Weisser and Grobman identify will only increase as more colleges and universities give in to the pressure, whether that pressure is exerted from faculty, students, or both, and approve new writing majors. Whether the majors are housed in independent writing departments or in English departments, the growth in the number of

writing majors will continue unabated, especially as faculty have more and more models for majors to point to that have been established already. The excitement surrounding the writing major has the feel of an epidemic about it: As more departments establish writing majors and show strong undergraduate interest in those majors, other departments will design their own curricula and seek support from administration to establish the majors. And as more majors emerge, the need for faculty to teach the expanded curriculum increases, providing departments with justification to request additional faculty lines. There is also a recursive strand at work that as new faculty are hired into departments without writing majors, many of them will soon advocate for writing majors to match the disciplinary trend. The writing majors that have already been established have demonstrated that they can survive and thrive in multiple institutional settings, from small liberal arts colleges to flagship research universities. My work in this chapter has focused on writing majors at comprehensive and research universities, but there is a strong commitment in smaller universities and colleges as well to build writing majors to meet the needs of their undergraduates, as demonstrated by institutions such as York College of Pennsylvania, Millikin University, and Mount Union College.<sup>68</sup>

I would like to conclude this chapter by complicating our understanding of the writing major and its implications for the discipline. The five case studies of writing majors provided above draw attention to a few key dilemmas facing the discipline of rhetoric and composition as institutions continue to establish writing majors. These dilemmas are well worth our consideration as we move forward with the expansion of rhetoric and composition's curricular horizons, and the answers to each question impact

the structure of the other questions, meaning that each concern is worth repeated consideration as the discipline seeks answers to these important questions. Any one of these questions could become the basis of substantial research and scholarship, so I will limit my work here to briefly outlining these questions.

First, when we talk about the writing major, what do we mean when we say writing? This question is by no means limited to the undergraduate major writing curriculum—after all, it is one of the dominant questions of this entire dissertation—but we should seek to articulate some answer to the question in the context of the major. The five examples above were chosen in part because of the meaningful differences in the language selected to identify the major and to connect it to the work of our discipline, but there is one commonality among the names that is perhaps more important than the differences: all five majors employ the word *writing* as a significant component of the title. For Rowan University, writing is emphasized as an art, and the program of study has deliberately separated the study of writing from the study of rhetoric, viewed in this instance as *techne*. Their major focuses instead on writing as an interdisciplinary, creative act, even when the writing is not limited to creative writing. For Georgia Southern University, writing is foregrounded as the dominant field of study over the second component of the title, linguistics. Undergraduates are exposed to writing in its academic, creative, and professional forms to give them what is perhaps among these five samples the broadest concept of writing. Oakland University and Washington State University, on the other hand, both maintain that writing and rhetoric are not only allied, but intertwined, fields, inseparable in their intellectual work and thus inseparable in a

curricular sense. Among these five, Clemson University most prominently retains the traditional association of writing and literature as inseparable fields of study, two sides of the literacy coin that defines English studies. So even as each department envisions writing differently from one another, they all agree that writing is at the heart of the undergraduate major, that writing is what will attract undergraduates to the major.

Second, what coursework is necessary to give students the necessary education to qualify them as beginning experts in writing? As I have shown above, each institution has taken different approaches to structuring courses to give students adequate coursework to meet the criteria for a writing major. As I did in Chapter Three when I analyzed five different PhD programs, I focused especially on the core curriculum that each department used to structure their writing majors. My emphasis on the core curriculum rests on the idea that what a major requires all students to take suggests what a department finds vital for students to learn before they finish the major and head off for careers as professional, technical, creative, or academic writers. Each of the five majors contains some form of disciplinary introductory course and some capstone experience, illustrating a felt need to frame the major on one side with theoretical experience and on the other with practical experience. Otherwise, each major tries to provide significant flexibility for students to take courses that they feel are best suited to their goals. Clemson University's major is perhaps the most flexible, at least in the sense of enabling students to take numerous electives toward degree completion, but it is also the major whose core curriculum seems least in keeping with the goals of other writing majors. Rowan University and Georgia Southern University provide majors that are based in the broadest understanding of what

writing is while still requiring students to take courses outside of their specific areas of interest. At any rate, all of the majors offer students some training in the disciplinary history and theory of writing and expose them to professional forms of writing.

Third, how does the undergraduate writing major align with the previously established disciplinary curricular sites of first-year writing and graduate studies? As I discussed early in the chapter, the writing major has grown at least in part from the desire among rhetoric and composition faculty to bridge the cavernous divide between composition courses and graduate study. Yet the major does not form a particularly smooth trajectory from those first-year classrooms to the graduate seminars. It is perhaps ridiculous to expect such a trajectory, since rhetoric and composition is most assuredly not alone among the academic disciplines in this lack of direct alignment from undergraduate to graduate work. So while I acknowledge that the writing major should not become a route that leads only to graduate study and replication of faculty, the disciplinary community should consider methods for encouraging the construction of disciplinary knowledge in undergraduates before some of them do in fact decide to pursue graduate studies in rhetoric and composition. The disciplinary introductory courses are currently the most common answer to this dilemma, and some of the programs more explicitly acknowledge the difference between undergraduates who are studying writing to pursue careers in professional and creative writing and those who wish to academicize (to borrow Stanley Fish's term) writing in ways more appropriate to the disciplinary work of rhetoric and composition. Perhaps the best way to rethink this question is: do we need the different curricular sites to align to begin with?

Fourth and finally, what implications does the growth of the writing major have for the tangentially related growth of independent writing departments? While writing programs have operated independently and successfully without writing majors or graduate programs, or in some cases, without a significant number of faculty trained in rhetoric and composition—Harvard’s College Writing Program and Duke’s Thompson Writing Program are prime examples—departments need majors. All three of the independent writing departments I have described in this chapter were created *as departments* prior to establishing writing majors, but all three likewise saw the need to establish their presence in the undergraduate curriculum as a means of strengthening their position in their respective institutions. So we may think of writing majors and independent writing departments as sympathetic ventures, representing efforts to expand the curricular and institutional territory of rhetoric and composition. But while independent writing departments ultimately need writing majors in order to thrive in their particular institutions, the inverse is not true. Many of the majors on CCCC’s “Writing Majors at a Glance” are housed in English departments, and while it is always possible that departments will be reorganized and divided in the future, many of those writing majors and the writing faculty who teach the curriculum will remain in English departments. Nevertheless, while the growth rates are by no means the same, independent writing departments have gained significant traction since Maxine Hairston’s call for independence from literary studies a quarter of a century ago. I can safely say that more colleges and universities will create writing majors over the next ten years, and while I cannot speculate with any degree of accuracy about the growth of independent writing

departments, it seems probable that some of those new writing majors will be housed in newly established independent writing departments.

I end this chapter with a brief comment on the increasing call for majors of all kinds to be in some way vocational—that is, that majors should lead more or less directly to jobs. I will address the development of the discipline in relation to new political realities facing colleges and universities more fully in the next chapter, but the writing major provides an especially critical moment for addressing the increasingly boisterous call from the private sector, state legislatures, and citizens in general for a college degree to act as a ticket to gainful employment. While the growth in undergraduate writing majors reflects the continued maturation of a relatively young academic discipline, one could also interpret the increase in the number of writing majors as evidence that the academy is seeking to placate the public call for employability by providing a major that ostensibly enables students to receive training in professional writing that they then take with them into the work force. There is nothing inherently wrong with providing a major that leads to employment, but the discipline should resist the urge to use the writing major solely to survive the current vocational crisis in higher education. Instead, the writing major can provide students with the experience and training that can be usefully parlayed into employability while also sustaining a discipline with an active research agenda that produces knowledge *qua* knowledge in the tradition of the modern university.

## CHAPTER V

### FIRST-YEAR WRITING AND DISCIPLINARY LEGITIMACY

In Chapter One, I offered a reading of Geoffrey Sirc’s review essay “Resisting Entropy” as an illustration of the concept that I have referred to throughout this project as disciplinary identity discomfort—the notion that individuals within the discourse community of rhetoric and composition are uncomfortable with the instability of our professional identities, a discomfort rooted in a blurred sense of how rhetoric and composition functions as an academic discipline in comparison to other disciplines within the academy. In particular, I drew attention to Sirc’s terministic conflation between discipline and course when he was describing the discipline as a “career criminal,” a field that depends on an impossible endeavor—the teaching of writing—to sustain its claims to legitimacy. Now, at the end of this project, I return to his quotation to focus in on the course that Sirc attacks in his essay: “What depresses me about composition (or comp studies or comp/rhet or writing studies or college composition or FYC or FYW—it has as many aliases as a career criminal) is how unflinchingly narrow it is [...]” (513). Since I have already addressed at length the intriguing way in which Sirc uses these differing titles to interweave the discipline of rhetoric and composition with the course<sup>69</sup> that the discipline initially grew to support, I now want to draw attention to the charge that Sirc lays against first-year writing: that it is an “unflinchingly narrow” course.



Before addressing the challenge that first-year writing courses are narrow, however, a brief conversation about the nomenclature associated with the course is necessary, especially considering my project's explicit emphasis on the terministic screens that direct our attention to certain aspects of the discipline. Most scholars and teachers show a preference when naming the first-year writing course, and Sirc's quote lists some of those terms, such as college or English composition, first-year comp, first-year writing, or some other variation on those terms. My own preference leans toward first-year writing because the term appeals to my sense of broad applicability: first-year writing can just as easily be applied to composition courses as it can to thematic freshman seminars and introductory courses on writing in the disciplines, although the term usually describes the former, which remains the most common form of writing instruction in higher education.

What precisely does it mean for first-year writing to be narrow? Sirc positions his assertion in this way to emphasize the need for conceiving of texts more broadly, whether those texts are readings drawn from popular culture and news media or student texts composed in new and multiple media. In other words, Sirc takes issue with first-year writing focusing too tightly on academic discourse, thus making composition courses little more than exercises in school writing. Sirc is by no means alone in making the claim that first-year writing should not be limited to teaching students how to write academic essays for academic audiences in academic settings. Nor is he the only critic of first-year writing that finds the course to be limiting and potentially worthy of consideration for the scrapheap. The call for changes in approaches to teaching writing

vary widely from suggestions for curricular revision to outright declarations that universities abolish composition completely. In 1939, for example, Oscar James Campbell wrote:

I believe that the standard college course in Freshman composition has done much more harm than good, and the greatest service that college teachers of English could render to their profession and to collegiate education in general would be to urge the immediate abolition of the course everywhere. (179)

Such calls for abolition have become a cyclical part of the history of composition, resurfacing every few decades to be answered by another wave of scholars and teachers who defend the ubiquitous course.<sup>70</sup> Others, most notably Sharon Crowley, have suggested that the course itself should not be abolished, but instead that the universal requirement should be, removing first-year writing from its role as a “border checkpoint” (*Composition in the University* 230).

Much of the contention that surrounds first-year writing emerges from the difficulty of defining exactly what the course is supposed to accomplish. In its numerous reinvented forms, the course has focused on weekly themes composed in class, lessons in grammar, exercises in rhetorical invention, introductions to literary study, or experiments in cultural studies, to name only a few. Is the goal of first-year composition fundamentally remedial, providing a space for underprepared students to acquire the skills that they somehow did not gain during their secondary education? Is the goal to instill civic values in students commensurate with American democratic principles? Is the goal to train students in humanist methods of reading and interpreting texts? Is the goal to teach students that writing itself is a process through which we can think and invent?

These are necessarily rhetorical questions because the answer to each is always yes and no. Defining the purpose of first-year writing is nearly impossible because the course has always represented a nearly indefinable distress in the American public consciousness that freshmen do not enter college prepared to face the challenges presented to them by the rigor of the multiple academic disciplines they will face throughout the general education and their specializations.

In the other two chapters that have focused on curricular structures—doctoral programs and writing majors—my analysis of disciplinary development depended on a careful reading of specific programs, using those programs to illustrate both the variety of curricular interpretations of the disciplinary work of rhetoric and composition and the interaction between local curricular sites and the shape of the field; in other words, my argument in those chapters is that disciplinarity and local instantiations of curricular structures interact in a recursive relationship that points toward a continuous revision of what the discipline of rhetoric and composition actually is. In this final chapter, rather than examining particular first-year writing programs—an approach that can be just as useful and revealing as it has been for the other two chapters—I move toward a broader consideration of trends in first-year writing in order to emphasize how first-year writing is often defined in the negative. As I noted above, it is difficult to define the purpose of first-year writing, but inversely, scholars and teachers of writing, as well as those outside of the discipline and its most vital classroom space, whether they are other academics or public figures such as politicians or journalists, seem to have little trouble explaining

what first-year writing is *not*. This chapter focuses on three different strands of conversation that define first-year writing by arguing in negation.

Such an examination of the trends in first-year writing necessarily must be limited, considering the discipline has generated thousands of monographs, edited collections, and journal articles speaking to precisely this question, either directly or indirectly. So in order to impose a manageable shape to a question—what is first-year writing—I will emphasize three different strands of conversation about composition courses, focusing on moments in the history of the discipline that draw particular attention to these strands. First, is the role of first-year writing to train students in academic discourse or is it to help students to become writers, more broadly construed? This question is ultimately rooted in epistemological assumptions about writing, and the most notable artifact in scholarship that pushes this question to the forefront is the debate between David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow, first presented as panels at CCCC in 1989 and 1991 and later published in expanded forms with additional responses from each scholar in *College Composition and Communication* in 1995. Second, what is the connection between literature and first-year writing, especially since these two teaching areas began and matured in English departments? This question connects to other instances throughout this dissertation that have emphasized the tensions between these two areas of inquiry, and to frame my analysis, I turn to the debate about the role of literature in composition between Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate published in *College English* in 1993. Third and finally, a question that is possibly the most important, and thus the most debated, question about first-year writing: does it have any content? This

question is addressed in both of the previous debates, but a more recent development in writing studies scholarship is particularly helpful for highlighting the question of content, and that is the Writing about Writing (WAW) movement, started in a 2007 *College Composition and Communication* article by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs.

### **What Writing Belongs in First-Year Writing?**

In *Rhetoric and Reality*, his influential history of writing instruction in the twentieth century, James A. Berlin presents a taxonomy to classify the epistemological assumptions of different scholars and teachers of writing. The taxonomy divides the rhetorical theories that inform the teaching of writing into objective, subjective, and transactional theories. Like any attempt to establish clear lines of demarcation between different groups, Berlin's taxonomy cannot successfully separate the different groups because of the significant overlap between the groups he is seeking to classify even as he attempts to trace the differences in theories to the most fundamental assumptions about truth. Berlin's taxonomy is not useful when applied as a rigid, inflexible structure because that inflexibility renders the pedagogical philosophies of teachers and scholars overly simplistic. Nevertheless, when used as a loose guiding structure, amenable to adaptation when necessary, Berlin's taxonomy provides a matrix against which to read the work of other scholars, a system by which to clarify how different scholars relate to one another.

This section of the chapter focuses on a debate between two prominent figures in rhetoric and composition, David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow, who serve as illustrations

of two of Berlin's taxonomical groups: epistemic rhetoric, a subcategory of transactional rhetoric, and subjective rhetoric. Defined broadly, epistemic rhetoric is based in the assumption that knowledge is collectively constructed and that writers produce texts within the complex and multivalent cultural webs that inevitably surround them because of the collective construction of knowledge. Of epistemic rhetoric, Berlin posits that it never assumes a division between experience and language: "just as language structures our response to social and political issues, language structures our response to the material world. Rhetoric thus becomes implicated in all human behavior" (16). Operating from this social constructionist view of reality, writing instructors informed by epistemic rhetoric design courses that call on students to engage in wrestling with readings and their own writing to mediate meaning. David Bartholomae's works, most notably his groundbreaking essay "Inventing the University," which argues that students strive to invent the discourse of academic writing as a means of joining different discourse communities, and his work with Anthony Petrosky, including *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*, and the textbook that emerged from that study of reading and basic writers, *Ways of Reading*, all illustrate the kind of mediation between writer and text that Berlin associates with epistemic rhetoric.

Subjective rhetoric, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that truth, and thus access to knowledge, is accessible directly to the individual through internal explorations. Berlin argues that the pedagogy that develops out of this theory of rhetoric, which is most often referred to as expressionist or expressivist rhetoric (the latter having taken on a derogatory connotation), focuses around activities "designed to teach the

unteachable by fostering a learning environment that encourages private vision,” activities including the “search for original metaphor, the keeping of a journal, and participation in peer editorial groups” (14). The search for original metaphor emerges because language cannot adequately capture the truths discovered within the individual, so metaphors represent an attempt to render that truth at least partially visible to others. In Peter Elbow’s work in particular, this search for the original metaphor is perhaps better characterized as the search for the writer’s own voice. The other two activities, journal writing and peer review, have become deeply ingrained practices in the teaching of writing, even if the latter is the more common pedagogical practice. The popularity and longevity of these pedagogical exercises illustrate the limits of the taxonomical approach, but it is still worthwhile to note that these practices emerged from subjective theories of rhetoric. Many of these views on voice and the interaction of students can be seen throughout Elbow’s work, particularly in his foundational *Writing Without Teachers* (a title that Bartholomae parodies during the debate by naming his remarks “Writing With Teachers”) that emphasizes the importance of students working with each other to develop their writing, as well as his most recent book, *Vernacular Eloquence*, that seeks to re-establish the value of speech in relation to writing.

I offer these brief summaries of two of Berlin’s taxonomical camps because they provide a useful frame for contextualizing the debate over what students should be writing in first-year writing courses that began between Bartholomae and Elbow in 1989 at CCCC, eventually culminating in a printed version of the debate with responses from each, as well as responses from other scholars, in *College Composition and*

*Communication* in 1995.<sup>71</sup> In the preface to his remarks, Bartholomae characterizes the debate as a “public conversation about personal and academic writing” (“Writing With Teachers” 63), a distinction that is crucial to Bartholomae’s position about writing instruction. His opening distinction between personal and academic writing makes clear one of the primary areas of difference between him and Elbow. In his remarks, Bartholomae asserts that “academic writing is the real work of the academy” (63), thus making academic writing the primary area for writing instruction in first-year writing courses. In a manner in keeping with the multivalent views of language of a social epistemic, Bartholomae acknowledges that the term academic writing is difficult to define, stating that it is “a single thing only in convenient arguments” (62). He elaborates, “It is interesting...to consider how difficult it is to find positive terms for academic writing when talking to a group of academics. It is much easier to find examples or phrases to indicate our sense of corporate shame or discomfort” (63). Academic writing remains, as a descriptive phrase, as vague as it was in 1991, describing a generic mode of writing rather than a singular mode of writing, but academic writing no longer entails the sort of corporate shame or discomfort, or at least not to the same extent, as Bartholomae suggests it did at that time. Composition pedagogy has increasingly moved toward a position in sympathy with Bartholomae’s views, while preserving many of the practices associated with subjective rhetorics, as well as many practices from current-traditional writing instruction, as Sharon Crowley has argued.

David Bartholomae was one of the most ardent advocates of academic writing in the late twentieth century, which explains the defensive posture he feels he must initially



assume. But that defensive posture soon fades as he begins building his case against the epistemological assumptions he sees behind the writing pedagogies Peter Elbow represents in the debate. He asserts that Elbow encourages students to think of writing as an act removed from the context of history and politics, that he pushes writers to write in an “idealized, utopian space” that prohibits students from engaging in the purpose of academic writing, which is the production of knowledge (66). He challenges the basis of Elbow’s position by offering a set of rhetorical questions, beginning with:

Why should I or a program I stand for be charged to tell this lie, even if it is a pleasant and, as they say, empowering one for certain writers or writers at certain stages of their education? Why am I in charge of the reproduction of this myth of American life? (70)

The rephrased questions that follow focus on questions of authorship, both on the logic of valorizing authorship at a time when scholars such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida had challenging the validity of authorship and many members of the academy had constructed new views on authorship that emerged from those critiques, as well as a troubling question about the role of students as authors, a position that clearly disturbs Bartholomae even as he cannot completely turn away from it based on his stance on authorship:

Should composition programs self-consciously maintain a space for the “author” in a university curriculum that has traditionally denied students the category of author (by making students only summarizers or term paper writers)? But it is too easy to say yes if I phrase the question like that. (70)

We see in this statement some of the defensive posturing from the introduction, but perhaps more usefully, a continued questioning of his own position. After all, what is the value of valorizing academic writing if we do not constantly challenge our own theoretical assumptions? The purpose of academic writing from this perspective is to critique ideas, including the writer's own ideas.

Ultimately, Bartholomae argues that composition courses should be spaces in which teachers present students with the opportunity to engage in critical writing, the kind exemplified by contact zones, a metaphor Bartholomae invokes in his essay. In his response to Elbow's essay, Bartholomae defends the position of the teacher as an authoritative figure in the classroom, a position suggested by his parody of Elbow's book title for the original essay. Bartholomae writes: "The writing teacher is the person who not only prompts students to write but who prompts students to revise, to work on their writing in ways that they would not if left to (not their own) but the culture's devices" ("Response" 87). In other words, the writing teacher is there to urge students to continue challenging their own assumptions as well as the ideas of others. He views this as a method of investing students with power within the discursive practices of acceptable forms of writing in the academy: *Academic writing*.

Unlike Bartholomae, who it seems fair to suggest could have served as the model of epistemic rhetoric that Berlin theorized, Peter Elbow resists easy classification. While many of his views about writing instruction, regarding the importance of voice in student writing, the generative power of freewriting, and the view that our perspectives on student writing should not be limited to what students write for classes, align well with

how Berlin defines subjective rhetorics, Elbow's views are not so easily confined within Berlin's taxonomy. For example, in his response to Bartholomae's essay, Elbow spends nearly a third of his allotted space pointing out where he and Bartholomae agree about student writing and about theory in general. For example, he notes that they both agree that academic writing should be the focus of first-year writing, that teachers must fill an authoritative role to help students learn to engage in critical inquiry, and that individuals are socially constructed. The latter point is where social epistemics and expressionist instructors are most frequently seen as deviating theoretically from one another.

Regarding the role of first-year writing in providing instruction in academic writing, Elbow qualifies his response to indicate that he doesn't think academic writing should be the sole focus of first-year writing, or that academic writing can be successfully taught in a single course. Elbow draws explicit attention to the position he asserts in *Embracing Contraries*, that he rejects binary forms of thinking as restrictive and theoretically untenable. Such a position allows Elbow to agree with most of Bartholomae's assertions while still remaining committed to a drastically different vision of the role of writing in undergraduate education.

The position that Elbow constructs in "Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic," his revised essay from the initial oral presentations at CCCC, depends on a parsing of roles that is self-evident from the title of his essay. He begins his essay by stating that he fears that "there is a conflict between the role of writer and that of academic" (72). David Bartholomae's argument in favor of critical inquiry and academic writing as the focus of writing instruction blurs these roles, making student writers de facto academic writers.

Elbow rejects that blurring of roles while acknowledging that student writers necessarily engage in academic writing. He writes, “I want my first year students to feel themselves as writers and feel themselves as academics” (72-3), emphasizing that these two roles are vital parts of undergraduate education, but that they are different roles. He further asserts that writers have much to offer academics: “If academics were more like writers—wrote more, turned to writing more, enjoyed writing more—I think the academic world would be better” (82).

These comments raise a crucial question: how does Elbow differentiate the roles of writers and academics. He emphasizes that he defines these as roles rather than professions, meaning that these are aspects of an individual’s identity. In other words, to be an academic is to engage in certain habits of mind centered on critical inquiry while to be a writer is something else. The difficulty in this debate is that Elbow finds it easier to define the role of the academic, leaving the role of the writer as a more ethereal, undefined concept. He ultimately makes use of a binary to expose the boundaries of what he means by being a writer. Elbow associates the work of academics with reading and argues that while reading certainly has a place in first-year writing course, that he places much greater emphasis on writing. Of course, Elbow is responding within the terms of the debate: Bartholomae’s position on academic writing is built on the assertion that students must work with and against texts in order to invent their writerly personas in academic discourse, and for that reason, Elbow must address the role of reading. So what then do his comments on reading expose regarding the nature of the writer? He states, “To put it bluntly, readers and writers have competing interests over who gets to control

the text” (75), arguing that writers must resist the theoretical position that the author is dead, because writers have agency in communicating meaning through their work—  
“Academics in English are the only people I know who seem to think that the speaker/writer has no party in such discussions,” he jabs (76)—and also because writers are invested in the notion of ownership, which Elbow associates with not only the theoretical idea of authorship but also with the material and economic connotations of ownership: writers profit through ownership, so endorsing a view that readers own texts, even in the theoretical sense that readers create meaning through texts rather than writers, may ultimately lead to deteriorating material conditions for writers from Elbow’s perspective.<sup>72</sup>

The main characteristic of the writer that Elbow defines is the difficulty of getting into words the intuitions that they experience:

Writers testify all the time to the experience of knowing more than they can say, of knowing things that they haven’t yet been able to get into words. Paying attention to such intuitions and feelings often leads them to articulations they couldn’t otherwise find. ...I assume that students *know* more than they are getting into words. (77)

Elbow urges writers to ignore the pressing need of readers, at least sometimes, in order to take advantage of the generative power of writing rather than seeking to meet the needs of readers. The view Elbow espouses here illustrates a pedagogical view that ties him firmly to subjective rhetoric: writers always struggle to communicate something that is fundamentally internal and individual. This statement also offers the clearest definition of what Elbow means by writer in this text, especially since he offers painters, musicians,

and dancers as other illustrations of the limits of linguistic forms of communication. The difficulty with that comparison, of course, is that writing is linguistic while those other forms are not. But his point is that writers attempt to create texts that communicate the unknowable, and this definition of writer positions them as artists, while academics attempt to build knowledge through definition and inquiry. Defined in these ways, the roles of writer and academic are assuredly in conflict, or at the very least, they are distinctly different roles and thus require different kinds of attention in the postsecondary curriculum.

The Bartholomae/Elbow debate about what should be taught in first-year writing and about what role students fill as writers demonstrates two poles in the landscape of writing instruction. Bartholomae suggests that the important distinction between Elbow and himself is that Elbow emphasizes personal writing while he emphasizes academic writing. In their essays, each scholar challenges the way the other defines some of the important terms that define the parameters of their debate—reading, writing, writer, academic, and personal. And while the differences they each draw attention to are illuminating, the reality of writing instruction is that most teachers draw freely from the practical and theoretical ideas offered by the two broad camps that Elbow and Bartholomae represent in this debate. As I noted earlier, James Berlin associates peer review and journal writing with subjective rhetoric, but those practices have become integral components of writing instruction, no matter what philosophical stance teachers take. Further, reading and responding to texts, whether in the form of information literacy or argumentative discourse, is just as common as the other practices. In other words, the

philosophical distinctions between the positions represented by David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow are important considerations, especially since they point toward different primary missions for first-year writing. For Bartholomae, first-year writing is a site for introducing students to academic discourse and giving them the chance to engage in the intellectual activities associated with academic writing. For Elbow, first-year writing is a site for self-discovery, a space in which students can begin to understand themselves as writers and to distinguish that role from their identity as students. For most writing instructors, a pragmatist approach to teaching suggests that first-year writing is a useful space for both of these perspectives.

While the general trend in writing instruction has moved more in the direction delineated by David Bartholomae, with writing programs increasingly focusing on teaching students how to participate in academic discourse as the primary goal of writing courses, the Bartholomae/Elbow debate is worth our continued attention because of the fluidity of trends in writing instruction. Most writing programs now engage in routine programmatic assessment, largely in response to the increasing requirement among regional accreditation organizations and, at least for state-supported institutions, state legislatures that require increasingly quantifiable forms of accountability. But even if the causes of many programmatic assessments are external, programs benefit from consistent metacognitive inquiries into their learning objectives and the texts their students produce. These large-scale assessments provide writing program administrators with data that can point them in new directions in writing instruction. In other words, while academic writing has become the dominant form of writing students do in first-year writing,

consistent engagement with assessment presents programs with the possibility of changing directions in sometimes drastic ways to pursue new goals and new visions. If the history of writing instruction since the late nineteenth century has demonstrated anything, it is that writing teachers are often willing to make significant shifts in their pedagogical methods—and in the philosophical positions that undergird those methods—in order to help students become better writers.

The Bartholomae/Elbow debate broadly addresses the purpose of first-year writing. Are composition courses supposed to help students learn how to feel comfortable and confident in their own writing, or are they to train students to engage in meaningful ways in academic discourse, with the hope that the argumentative and research strategies they learn in the academy will prove useful outside? Both claims have their limitations, but they outline the general problem of first-year writing: is it a service course, designed to satisfy the needs of the academy, or is it a course that is intended to benefit the student, regardless of whether it provides them with the ability to write in other disciplines? The next section focuses on the Lindemann/Tate debate on the place of literature in first-year writing, a debate that raises similar questions to those in the Bartholomae/Elbow exchange while it also directly addresses the role of first-year writing in relation to the rest of the university.

### **Does Literature Have a Place in First-Year Writing?**

One of the most significant long-term debates in composition scholarship is, appropriately enough, what writing teachers should be teaching in their courses.



Ironically, this question rarely translates directly into a conversation about what students should be writing, but instead on what they should be reading. Even in David Bartholomae's "Writing With Teachers," he gives much of his attention to defining the role of reading in writing courses while he argues for the primacy of academic discourse in first-year writing, a point Peter Elbow astutely highlights. The roles of reading and writing in undergraduate education are almost always construed as intertwining endeavors, long-term learning objectives that are difficult to disengage from one another if one cares to argue for such disengagement. Thomas Miller's metaphor for literacy as a two-sided coin, with one side representing reading and the other writing, illustrates the dominance of this concept that reading and writing are inevitably connected. I actually agree that reading and writing should be considered in relation to one another, that they are each crucial for the success of the other. But what is most intriguing about the obsession with reading in writing classes is how it speaks to the question of content in writing classes. When a new approach to teaching writing arises, one of the first questions that inevitably arises is, "But what are the students going to read?"

Perhaps more than many other traits of disciplinary and pedagogical development, this question illustrates the deep roots of rhetoric and composition in English studies. The earliest members of the discipline were trained in literary studies, and many doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition—including my own—continue making literary studies a compulsory component of coursework, qualifying exams, and teaching assignments. Because of the slow growth of writing majors and master's programs in rhetoric and composition, many students who pursue PhDs in rhetoric and composition

possess degrees in literature. It becomes difficult for many members of the discipline to separate their roots in literary studies from their new disciplinary expertise in writing studies, and one of the most obvious questions arises: why should they separate them? English studies as a disciplinary umbrella provides significant curricular room for incorporating literature in first-year writing classes or other upper-level courses in writing about literature. But should literature be included in first-year writing? Does it have a place in a course that already has as its basic mission the preparation of student writers for the tasks they will face in the academy and beyond it?

For the most part, this debate has been settled in our discipline. The general consensus is that literary studies has little to no place in first-year writing, especially as courses have moved increasingly to a focus on academic discourse. But the debate flares back to life routinely, once more exposing the tensions surrounding the separation of instruction in writing and literature. In January 2013, the question once more came to life on the WPA listserv when Irene L. Clark suggested that the discipline needs to reconsider the role of literature in writing courses, asking specifically if literary texts should be analyzed rhetorically. The rhetorical analysis of literary texts is a typical compromise, a form of stopgap intended to legitimize the presence of literary texts in writing courses. Clark's question generated nearly a hundred responses of varying length and engagement with the central issue; the number of responses alone indicate the interest that the question of literature in writing courses still elicits.<sup>73</sup> The place of literature in first-year writing is a polarizing issue, and like most polarized issues, neither side has a completely adequate response. But the brief flare-up on the listserv (a listserv that is admittedly

composed of countless flare-ups on a seemingly endless array of issues loosely connected to writing program administration) demonstrates that the question has not been satisfactorily answered, and it is improbable that it will be as long as rhetoric and composition remains within the matrix of English studies, and as I argued in Chapter Four, the discipline can and should remain part of that matrix because of the material and epistemological benefits of conversation with the other branches of English studies. But if rhetoric and composition continues to reside primarily in English studies, this question will remain a perennial favorite. In this section, I turn specifically to a debate between Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate in 1993 that addresses most of the significant differences among advocates for or against literature in writing courses.

The Lindemann/Tate debate was published in *College English*, as opposed to the Bartholomae/Elbow debate, which was published in *College Composition and Communication*. This difference is important to note because *College English* has historically been a site for investigating the delicate spaces that exist between the multiple branches of English studies. While the journal has increasingly become a home for scholarship specific to rhetoric and composition over the past two decades, even now the journal provides a space for considering extra-disciplinary issues that are of interest to members of the large community of English scholars and postsecondary teachers. It is therefore appropriate that these debates found their homes in these specific journals. Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate represent the polarized sides of the debate about literature in writing courses, a debate that ultimately concerns itself with the question of content in writing courses. The debate brings to light nostalgia for a time before the

revival of rhetoric in the 1960s, a championing for the Writing Across the Curriculum movement, and a healthy challenge of academic discourse as the bread and butter of first-year writing. The two essays that comprise the main portion of the debate were published in the same issue, and since Lindemann's essay is published earlier in the issue, I address her position first.

The title of Erika Lindemann's essay, "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature," leaves little room for confusing her position on the question. Lindemann argues forcefully against including literature in first-year writing courses, ultimately asserting that first-year writing courses exist to train students to engage in the multiple academic discourse communities that they will encounter in college. Lindemann traces the tension that lies beneath the debate to a problem of purpose, and she acknowledges that one of the chief difficulties in speaking to that purpose is what she identifies as a lack of "a unified theory to guide our work" (316). And while her essay is now twenty years old, we can still point out that lack of a unified theory. (Whether we *want* a unified theory is a different question, one that brings me back to disciplinarity, and thus one that I address in the conclusion.) She posits that the question of whether literature should make up a significant portion of content in first-year writing can be answered by deciding the purpose of first-year writing, and her vision for that purpose is unambiguously a vision of a mission rooted in Writing Across the Curriculum:

Freshman English offers guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions. That is what our colleagues across the campus want it to do; that is what it should do if we are going to drag every first-year student through the requirement. (312)

What is immediately troubling about Lindemann's assertion about the mission of first-year writing is how she instantly inscribes service on the course, a role for first-year writing that has always presented difficulty for constructing the disciplinary apparatus necessary to support the growth of rhetoric and composition as a field even as it provided the curricular stability that enabled the proliferation of tenure-stream positions that support writing programs. Lindemann's position is the inverse of Sharon Crowley's argument that the universal requirement should be abolished in order to remove the stigma of service, or the abolitionist movement that calls for the undoing of the entire course since its history is tainted by its obligation to the rest of the university. Despite that issue, Lindemann's statement carves out a mission for first-year writing that by definition cannot privilege literature over academic discourse because writing courses should teach students to engage in multiple discourses.

Lindemann's position against literature as a significant component of first-year writing is based on her impression that first-year writing should prepare students by giving them practice writing in multiple disciplines and in multiple genres characteristic of academic discipline. She suggests that students are "poorly prepared" by engaging with literature alone, and she urges English faculty to overcome what she sees as a bias against academic discourse: "Instead of disparaging 'the stuff' written in other disciplines, we ought instead to appreciate the varieties and excellences of academic discourse" (311). What Lindemann ultimately reveals here is a desire to shift the content of first-year writing courses. Students will not read literature—and there is a reciprocal aversion to literature as the one Lindemann implies literature faculty have toward

anything other than literature—but they will instead read broadly from other disciplines. They will conduct research in their areas of interest, no matter what that area is, and the teacher will be there to talk about the writing, not the content of the work.

According to Lindemann’s vision for first-year writing, the teacher becomes a well-informed reader of academic discourse, not an expert in any particular discipline that students may be working with. She remarks: “To be this kind of teacher requires knowing how writers interpret and create texts in many disciplines” (313). Indeed, to be this kind of teacher is to be someone who has time to learn about the generic aspects of lab reports, memos, business plans, and financial reports. She acknowledges that the concept of the essay is too limited and broad to cover true engagement with other disciplines, since the ways of knowing associated with the essay are ultimately humanist in basis. So any teacher of writing becomes a teacher of genre, helping students to learn how to navigate the differences between these genres and the kinds of knowledge they construct and transmit. After all, no teacher can possibly gain the expertise to comment on the discipline-specific content of these assignments, leaving the teacher to comment on form, not content. She positions the teacher as an “experienced writer,” there to act as a coach as students write into their disciplines (313). Her aim is to make writing courses more like workshops than lecture classes, which is certainly a step in the right direction.

However, Lindemann’s model for first-year writing suffers from composition’s history in service to the university. While such a vision of teachers as coaches rather than lecturers is enticing, the problem is ultimately one of content. This is the weakness of Lindemann’s vision: despite her claim that such courses emphasize rhetorical knowledge,

her model for first-year writing seems to reduce the teaching of writing to a contentless area, at least as it is presented to other disciplines in the academy, risking a return to predisciplinary conditions for those teachers who then design courses intended to satisfy the needs of other faculty across the campus. She resists the argument that her WAC-based writing courses are skills courses, placing emphasis on the processes that such courses would teach. She suggests that her model moves attention away from nouns (which we may think of as content, such as literature or course themes) in favor of verbs: “planning, drafting, revising, using data, evaluating sources” and several more (313). Indeed, much of the disciplinary knowledge of rhetoric and composition has focused on developing an understanding of these processes, and most first-year writing courses that focus on academic discourse emphasize exactly these verbs. But the problem still remains that Lindemann’s vision cannot be removed from service, nor from the quote above should we assume that she wishes to see service removed, making her susceptible to Gary Tate’s charge that her WAC writing course is the “ultimate service course” (“A Place for Literature” 319).

Following the more traditional route in a debate of assuming the opposite stance, as opposed to Peter Elbow’s insistence on agreeing with David Bartholomae on most of the points of their debate,<sup>74</sup> Gary Tate’s “A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition” is a cry against moving away from the broad disciplinary home of first-year writing. He confesses to being consumed by guilt for having argued to remove literature from the composition curriculum at two different universities, assuming the position in this essay that removing literature from first-year writing removes student

access to literature as a model of good writing: “We have denied students who are seeking to improve their writing the benefits of reading an entire body of excellent writing. It is not unlike telling music students that they should not listen to Bach or Mahler” (317). The analogy between writing and music (both of which share the disciplinary descriptor of “composition”) is compelling, but it rests on a false comparison between the work of the two courses. The kinds of music classes Tate refers to either teach students how to play or write music or, rather more ephemerally, how to “appreciate” music. The equivalents to these courses in English would be creative writing courses and literature courses, not first-year writing courses. Nevertheless, Tate’s analogy emphasizes the need for students to read good writing, and he identifies good writing as literature.

While Lindemann’s essay implicitly blames literature faculty for many of the problems with first-year writing, at one point noting that one of the most insidious reasons for including literature in composition courses is to give graduate teaching assistants training in teaching literature without depriving faculty of their literature courses, Gary Tate explicitly conjures a villain in his essay: the Rhetoric Police. In a nod to Thomas Kuhn’s influential theory on paradigm shifts, Tate argues that approaches to pedagogy change, and the content of courses change with it. However, rather than seeing the disappearance of literature from composition courses as the result of a paradigm shift, he blames the revival of rhetoric for enforcing a removal of literature:

What was waiting to replace literature was rhetoric, supported since the 1960s by the Rhetoric Police, that hardy band of zealots who not many years hence were to become the dreaded enforcement arm of the Conference on College Composition



and Communication. ...Rhetoric replaced literature in the freshman composition course with no sustained debate...The Rhetoric Police merely moved in and we all surrendered. (318)

Much like the specter of the “senior professor of literature” so often evoked in the scholarship of rhetoric and composition, Tate’s metaphorical vision of the paramilitary branch of CCCC provides an enemy against which he can argue that literature was unduly removed from first-year writing. It is remarkable that the force he identifies as being responsible for the tragic loss of literature in composition is the same one that many historians, including myself, use as an important marker for the development of the discipline, when rhetoric and composition began to cohere its own discrete identity. In Tate’s brief counterhistory of the 1960s, those who supported the revival of rhetoric—they go unnamed in his essay, although confusingly, he suggests that Edward P. J. Corbett was not part of the group that contributed to the revival of rhetoric despite his influential text *Classical Rhetoric for Modern Students*—are rendered as pedagogical bullies who victimized supporters of literature.

Tate’s need for this vision of the Rhetoric Police suggests that his greatest reason for supporting the teaching of literature in first-year writing is fundamentally nostalgic: that was the way it was done, and it changed without substantive debate. But while Tate’s argument for returning to literature as a significant component of composition is not particularly persuasive, it does position him to provide a powerful critique of Lindemann’s support of Writing Across the Curriculum. As I noted above, Tate fears that Lindemann’s vision of first-year writing ensnares the course in permanent service to the university: “Does the vast apparatus of our discipline—journals, books, conferences,

graduate programs—exist in the cause of nothing more than better sociology and biology papers?” (319). Likewise, Tate expresses concern about the limits of rhetoric as the appropriate instrument for teaching composition: “to assume...that inventive procedures or the plotting of cognitive strategies do more than scratch the surface of the human mind thinking and imagining is to trivialize the creative act of composing” (318). Both of these critiques, one of privileging academic discourse and the other of privileging rhetoric as the tool to engage with academic discourse, demonstrate Tate’s skepticism about the direction the discipline began developing in from the 1960s forward, from the revival of rhetoric to the rise of the cognitive study of composing in the 1980s.

Gary Tate’s essay does little to provide a persuasive defense of literature in the classroom, but his underlying concern does not seem to actually rest on what students read and write about in first-year writing. That is, he does not actively advocate for writing instructors to incorporate literature into their syllabi, but instead he argues for the discipline to consider no texts beyond the purview of first-year writing. Tate’s primary objection to the position represented by Erika Lindemann is that academic discourse should not be dictate or limit writing instruction. He proposes an alternative model to WAC and WID that he calls “Writing Beyond the Disciplines,” a form of writing instruction that emphasizes the multitudinous aspects of writing that students will engage in once they have finished college. He stresses the need to provide writing instruction that helps students “as they struggle to figure out how to live their lives—that is, how to vote and love and survive, how to respond to change and diversity and death and oppression and freedom” (320). Tate’s broad view of the role of writing instruction in the lives of

students situates the debate firmly in the same territory as the Bartholomae/Elbow debate; while the debate is ostensibly concerned with the use of literature in first-year writing, what is clearly at stake in the debate is the role of first-year writing: Is composition supposed to focus on academic writing or personal and public writing?

The Lindemann/Tate debate draws the battle lines between those two positions more firmly than the Bartholomae/Elbow debate, with each participant entrenched in their positions concerning the role of academic discourse and rhetorical education for undergraduates. What makes this debate a useful point for clarifying the debate about academic and personal writing is that it involves more directly the question of content in first-year writing courses. The impetus for the debate is whether literature should have a place in composition, and while both authors provide definitive answers to that question, their concerns are less with whether literature has a reason to be in composition—as its defender, even Gary Tate seems ambivalent about its role, concerning himself primarily with preventing its exclusion rather than arguing for its inclusion—and more with the disciplinary identity that is invoked when movements like WAC and WID begin playing a more prominent role in writing instruction. Tate notes that the field's fascination with academic discourse demonstrates “the increasing professionalization of undergraduate education,” and in this case, professionalization is a pejorative term, suggesting that the discipline was moving away from its humanist roots, a tradition inherited in part because of its association with literature and English studies more broadly, and toward a more instrumentalist orientation. Lindemann's position depends on the assumption that the disciplinary work should focus on how best to help students succeed in college, and it is

on this assumption that Lindemann and Tate ultimately agree: Both argue eloquently about the role of literature in first-year writing out of a sense of duty to students, a hallmark of the pedagogical traditions of rhetoric and composition.

The Lindemann/Tate and the Bartholomae/Elbow debates are now two decades old, but the fundamental questions at the heart of the debates continue to haunt the teacher-scholars who spend their time thinking about innovative ways to meet the needs of students in their first-year writing courses. While academic discourse and rhetorical strategies for invention and analysis have become the dominant foci of writing courses, neither personal writing nor literature have actually vanished from writing instruction. The debates provide a useful outline of some of the long-term lines of inquiry associated with first-year writing, but the pragmatic nature of writing instruction tends to reject a full endorsement of any particular approach to teaching writing. As Lindemann points out in her essay, “One strength of our profession is our persistent effort to examine what writing courses should be and how to teach them well” (“Freshman Composition” 315). The fluid nature of writing instruction prohibits a conclusive outcome for debates about the best approaches to teaching writing, and this desire to continuously revisit pedagogical theories and practices represents one of the strengths of the discipline. The next section focuses on Writing-about-Writing, a recent development in writing pedagogy that seeks to resolve problems of content and service by making first-year writing courses an introduction to writing studies.

## **First-Year Writing and Disciplinary Legitimacy**

In 2007, Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle published an article in *College Composition and Communication* that has had a significant impact on how writing specialists envision the purpose of first-year writing. Built on the assertion that the traditional mission of composition courses—teaching students how to write in college—has failed, in part because the knowledge students gain in first-year writing does not successfully transfer to other courses during their academic careers, the article contends that first-year writing courses should focus explicitly on the disciplinary knowledge of rhetoric and composition. This approach has since acquired the title Writing about Writing, or WAW, and it has become a movement in writing pedagogy that continues gaining prominence. In a retrospective on the original 2007 article recently published in *Composition Forum*, Wardle and Downs<sup>75</sup> resist the monolithic identity that has become associated with WAW, stating that WAW “is not some specialized or niche or boutique approach to composition; it is simply an acknowledgement that we are a field and we know things and should teach them. Just like every other field. That’s it” (“Reflecting Back”).<sup>76</sup> While the definitive “that’s it” at the end of the statement is intriguing as a sort of distancing maneuver, what ultimately matters more here is what Wardle and Downs see as the mission of WAW, which is to position first-year writing as a cornerstone course for a discipline with an active research agenda whose scholarship can benefit students.

Wardle and Downs’ argument is powerfully informed by how they envision the discipline of rhetoric and composition. Their argument is like my own in many ways,

most importantly in the sense that the pedagogical traditions of the discipline are actually one of its more troubling obstacles to full disciplinarity. In the original article, “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions,” they charge that first-year writing illustrates a crucial failed connection between classroom practices and the research corpus that has grown in the discipline since the 1960s, that most institutions still cling to the notion that teaching students how to write in college is a small, manageable goal that can be met in one or two introductory writing courses. Wardle and Downs write: “we silently support the misconceptions that writing is not a real subject, that writing courses do not require expert instructors, and that rhetoric and composition are not genuine research areas or legitimate intellectual pursuits” (“Teaching about Writing” 553). In other words, writing specialists are complicit in making composition a “trivial, skills-teaching nondiscipline” (553), an identity that the field collectively has been working to reject at least since the founding of CCCC in 1949. Wardle and Downs’ statement points out not only the challenges that rhetoric and composition have routinely faced when its members have had to defend their positions as scholars, but it also emphasizes the long-term labor struggle that first-year writing has always faced: who can teach these courses? Wardle and Downs argue that people who are trained in the disciplinary practices of rhetoric and composition can teach the course, which is a bold statement despite it also being simultaneously an obvious one.

The key critiques of pedagogical practice that come with WAW are, as already indicated, that first-year writing cannot act as a salve for all the writing woes of the academy, and that students should be exposed to the discipline’s specialized knowledge.

The latter represents WAW's solution to the long-standing question of content. Wardle and Downs argue that writing cannot be separated from content, so teachers should expose them to the disciplinary knowledge that they already possess, disciplinary knowledge that directly addresses processes of writing and the shifting identities produced in writing. The approach Wardle and Downs champion explicitly draws attention to the problem of disciplinarity and the difficulty rhetoric and composition has historically faced in being acknowledged as a discipline. In their retrospective, they state that one of the chief arguments made against WAW is that it merely provides writing instructors with the ability to teach what they already know. Simply the construction of that charge should indicate the weakness of such an argument, since chemists teach chemistry and geographers teach geography. For Wardle and Downs, WAW represents "a bid to share our unique disciplinary expertise in a course of the same disciplinary designation; this is no more and no less than any other faculty member across the academy does" ("Teaching about Writing" 576). The WAW approach then aims to contribute to the construction of disciplinary legitimacy for rhetoric and composition.

The disciplinary identity that Writing about Writing is intended to support is more complex than the initial article suggests, which is not surprising since the disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition is always in flux, a main contention that I have made throughout this dissertation. In their retrospective, they offer this statement to nuance their earlier assertions that the specialized disciplinary knowledge of rhetoric and composition should be the material students read in writing classes: "What we did not say very clearly was that writing studies as an interdisciplinary field has some work to do in

determining...what our core knowledge is and...what part of that knowledge is relevant for all students in a gen-ed course” (“Reflecting Back”). The 2007 article offers WAW as an Intro to Writing Studies, a course that would not only serve to expose students to disciplinary knowledge before they went into other disciplines, but also as a recruitment tool, a course to persuade undergraduates that writing studies offered something worth their consideration. Such a recruitment aim is consistent with the growth of undergraduate majors throughout the early twenty-first century, and it helps to explain the popularity of the WAW curricular model since so many colleges and universities are attempting to plan new or revamp existing writing majors.

But what is writing studies, after all? Their initial argument presents writing studies as a discipline synonymous with composition studies (a term they use in a chapter in Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda’s *Exploring Composition Studies*, likely to mirror the name of the edited collection). They also use the term rhetoric and composition, but not as the combined singular form that I have employed consistently throughout this project, positioning them instead as separate but allied disciplines. And the quote above presents writing studies as an “interdisciplinary field,” one that still needs to define precisely what its core knowledge is before it can appropriately comment on what portion of that knowledge students will most benefit from. Even the advocates of disciplinarity have difficulty pinpointing with any precision the parameters of that disciplinarity and where one field stops and another one starts in the large writing studies umbrella that has been growing as the new conceptual construction of our (inter)disciplinary identity.



Perhaps making the disciplinary positioning of writing studies as envisioned by Wardle and Downs more difficult is their consistent assertion that a WAW-based first-year writing course serves as a useful gateway to a WAC or WID program because it teaches students how to think more consciously about their own writing. In “Reimagining the Nature of FYC,” Wardle and Downs articulate the WAW approach as one that asks students “to consider their own relationships to writing, their lives as writers, and how some relevant composition studies research can help them change both their conceptions of writing and their writing practices” (129-30). The WAC curriculum that Erika Lindemann identified for first-year writing has more routinely since 1993 become a program satisfied through multiple courses in numerous disciplines, a broader curricular cooperation between courses rather than a singular first-year writing designed to prepare students for writing in all academic disciplines.

Such programs provide students with more sustained engagement in the study of writing, even when writing is the object used for inquiry rather than the subject of a course. Nevertheless, WAW seems ultimately to prepare students to engage in the disciplinary study of writing, which may have equally little transferrable effect on other courses than other first-year writing courses. As Wardle and Downs confess, their approach is not that innovative—the kinds of assignments they advocated in 2007 include literacy narratives, auto-ethnographies, and primary research into writing practices, only the latter of which is especially particular to their pedagogical approach—but is instead useful because it explicitly highlights the need to connect first-year writing more ethically

and concretely to the specialized knowledge that rhetoric and composition has spent the past several decades generating.

The conclusion of this chapter returns to the questions of disciplinarity raised in Chapter One and sustained throughout the dissertation. Writing about Writing provides an especially useful space for transitioning from first-year writing to disciplinarity because WAW explicitly confronts the disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition, and in many ways WAW displays the disciplinary identity discomfort that pervades much of the field's scholarship because it tacitly admits that, until we make the disciplinary knowledge of rhetoric and composition the focus of first-year writing, composition courses have no content of note. And the growing popularity of the WAW-influenced curriculum—illustrated by the success of Wardle and Downs' textbook *Writing about Writing* as well as the careful attention paid to WAW in the most recent issue of *Composition Forum*—suggests that many writing programs are eager to embrace a curriculum that allows them to state unequivocally that writing classes have a demonstrable content area. And as the two debates and the rise of WAW all illustrate, the question of content is one of the most enduring disciplinary dilemmas.

The next section explores the discipline's deep roots in this public fear that illiteracy is an ever present threat, beginning with a recent political event in North Carolina that indirectly draws attention to writing instruction's peculiar position in higher education as a course deeply entrenched in humanist traditions of inquiry while popularly conceived of as a course based in skills rather than content. Recent comments made by Governor Pat McCrory provide me with the opportunity to speculate about the public

identity of rhetoric and composition. Most of this dissertation has focused on the academic identity of the discipline, but as a teaching subject—to borrow from Joseph Harris—composition has long been a course at the heart of public attention to literacy. There are other courses that have generated significant public and academic debate, most notably biology and other scientific fields that ostensibly challenge creationist views of reality, but first-year writing is especially noteworthy for being a course that is fueled by public distress over the state of literacy in the United States, even as the distress that drives continued support for first-year writing does little to calm the fears that stoke the course. One of the great paradoxes of first-year writing, and thus a difficulty for the discipline that has grown out of the course, is that the course was initially created to end the need for itself; composition was never envisioned as a course that would become a permanent component of undergraduate education.

### **Public Distress and Disciplinary Origins**

On January 29, 2013, Pat McCrory, the newly inaugurated Republican Governor of North Carolina, made comments on a radio show that made explicit his desire to redesign how the state distributes funding for the University of North Carolina system. While speaking to conservative host Bill Bennett, McCrory indicated that he was already investigating how to initiate a plan that would shift the UNC system from its long-established balance between liberal arts and research model, most often exemplified in the flagship university in Chapel Hill, to a model which is decidedly more vocational in its outlook. He stated that the formula for deciding how much the state invests in each

university in the system (as well as the 100 community colleges that comprise a separate but connected state system) would be based on performance rather than on the size of the student body: “It’s not based on butts in seats but on how many of those butts get jobs” (qtd. in Kiley). In their discussion, McCrory and Bennett gestured specifically to gender studies, philosophy, and the liberal arts in general as areas that the state government “subsidized” to the detriment of providing more funding for programs and departments that support the development of business and industry in North Carolina in more immediately measurable ways.<sup>77</sup> McCrory’s comments drew immediate attention from the media and sharp criticism from members of the UNC system because the interview indicated a political agenda to reshape higher education in North Carolina, an agenda that McCrory had hinted at during his bid for office in 2012 without being as blatant about his intent.

The response from academics was predictable: a strong defense of undergraduate education based in the liberal arts as well as the academy’s obligation to produce knowledge, even when that knowledge has no measurable economic advantage: knowledge *qua* knowledge. The incident brought into view the conflict between politicians and academics, between business-oriented attention to the acquisition of skills and the liberal arts mission of helping students to become critical thinkers. While the potential impact of McCrory’s plans, if executed as sketched out thus far, would be devastating for one of the oldest and most well-funded state university systems in the United States, the conflict seems almost a caricature of broader national debates about the purposes of higher education, a sort of posturing by a newly elected Republican governor

to demonstrate his commitment to conservative ideals. In other words, McCrory's comments could amount to nothing more than what it has already become: a highlight in the news cycle. This is, of course, our hope. However, the same national trends that McCrory seems to be mimicking now are themselves indicative of the long ideological battle that lies ahead for higher education in the United States. However important this battle is for the future of colleges and universities as we now know them, I have referenced McCrory's comments to draw attention to the unique position of first-year writing in American higher education, and for the discipline that has grown out of that course.

Since first-year writing courses first emerged in the late nineteenth century, the teaching of writing has occupied a position that initially denied it legitimacy among the research-oriented academic disciplines emerging at roughly the same time while also simultaneously making freshman writing indispensable to the public work of universities. First-year writing developed in response to a sense among colleges and universities, at first elite institutions like Harvard and Yale and shortly thereafter public universities and smaller colleges, that high schools were not providing adequate instruction in writing and graduating students who were underprepared for the demands of rigorous academic writing. At Harvard, the faculty and administration decided that the crisis in student preparation required a temporary solution, a stopgap until high schools could improve the quality of writing instruction and subsequently send students to college who did not struggle to write clear, coherent, and grammatically correct prose. That temporary solution was English A, a freshman writing course that rapidly became a model for other

institutions across the country in part because other institutions felt they were facing the same disintegration of good student writing and also because if Harvard was doing it, then they should probably do it as well. The course that was envisioned as a temporary solution became a staple of American higher education, a nearly ubiquitous required course. In 2013, first-year writing shows no signs of disappearing, despite occasional calls to abolish the course that emanate from within the discipline that grew to support the teaching of writing. The reasons for the course's lasting power are complex, but two require attention at this stage, especially in light of calls to change higher education like those offered by Governor Pat McCrory: ties between first-year writing and democratic principles and the extension of the literacy crisis until it became a permanent component of American public culture.

Working toward a more democratic society is one of the chief principles that has driven the growth and development of American higher education, as demonstrated by the establishment of state institutions, especially with the aid of federal laws such as the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 and other forms of legislation that have made funds available for more and more citizens, including the G.I. Bill following World War II and Pell Grants. These institutions have driven the expansion of education from the few young men (and some young women) able to attend college to the modern American conception that higher education is a right of every citizen. However, even among the elite institutions like Harvard, the idea that education is a critical component of democracy has tied first-year writing to the evolution of American higher education. In an account of the development of English A by Adams Sherman Hill and Le Baron

Russell Briggs at Harvard University in 1884, Rollo Walter Brown, who earned his MA at Harvard in 1905, describes the proliferation of first-year writing based on the model that Hill and Briggs established when they relocated Harvard's writing course from the sophomore year to the freshman year: "Now how could this transaction, by any stretch of the imagination, become a matter of national significance? The answer is to be found in certain theories of democracy cherished by the American people. They wanted as much education as possible for everybody" (qtd. in Brereton 30). Brown turns to the democratization of education as an explanation for the rapid establishment of freshman writing courses across the nation.

Conceptualizations of the relationship between writing instruction and democracy have shifted over the past century and a half. In 1941, Herbert Weisinger, a composition instructor at the University of Michigan, published "A Subject for Composition" in *College English*, arguing from a survey of freshman writing surveys that "English composition has no subject matter," so it should adopt as its subject matter an active engagement in teaching the principles of democracy:

Democracy is failing today because its citizens do not know what it means or how it can be defended...That failure is present in the United States today, and the responsibility for it will continue to rest in large part on the universities until they repudiate the notion that their function is merely to transmit and begin to stand for significant values, regardless of the consequences which the ignorant and prejudiced will be quick to heap on them...In a world in which reason, decency, and the dignity of the individual are more and more scorned, the universities must be the first to prove that these values are worth maintaining. (695-6)

Setting aside the contention that composition has no content, a contention that has remained problematic for rhetoric and composition as I demonstrated above, as well as

many other assertions in his essay that seem tenuous at best,<sup>78</sup> what is worth noting in the passage is the mission Weisinger envisions for American universities: they are a site for inculcating democratic principles and practices in students.<sup>79</sup>

It is not my intention here to provide an exhaustive review of the relationship between composition and democracy, but instead to suggest that the American democratic experiment is one of the determining factors in the ubiquity of first-year writing in U.S. colleges and universities, a course that is rare to the extent of being nearly non-existent—or at least rarely a required course—in other nations. The primacy of democracy in the collective consciousness of university administrators and teachers that structured thoughts about the purpose of higher education throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may be in decline (although I will only go so far as to say *may*) at present in light of more career-oriented approaches to education like the position offered by McCrory.

What is most assuredly not in decline is a fundamental belief among Americans that young men and women's abilities to read and write erode from one generation to the next. Depending on the particular agenda of the individuals espousing such views, blame for the collapse of literacy shifts from high school teachers to technologies such as television, the Internet, smart phones, laptops, and tablets to (although this one is rarer than the others) a lack of adequate funding for teacher education and the institutions that provide literacy instruction. Where the blame is placed is less important, at least in this instance, than the phenomenon that has developed in response to the perpetual desire to find the smoking gun. The literacy crisis has been a fixture in American public



perceptions of education for such a long time that we can no longer take it seriously as an actual crisis. Instead, the United States has conducted a constant campaign against the perceived decline in literacy since at least the late nineteenth century, and no amount of evidence to the contrary can overturn the deeply seated sense that literacy is one failed classroom away from complete collapse. Since Harvard launched its composition courses as a means of providing remedial writing instruction for students who, according to the professors at Harvard, should have already possessed a far greater proficiency in writing, the perennial literacy crisis has been a significant contributor to the spread of composition instruction in American universities.

When framed as a response to the literacy crisis, writing instruction cannot help but carry a connotation of a desperate response to an epidemic. One of the chief beliefs associated with the myth of the literacy crisis is that writing instruction is a temporary curricular band-aid, an inoculation against illiteracy that will soon go the way of smallpox and polio vaccines. Yet first-year writing remains, not just surviving but flourishing as its practitioners have developed the disciplinary matrix that I have examined throughout this dissertation. In “The Language of Exclusion,” Mike Rose calls this vision of writing instruction “the myth of transience”: the idea that first-year writing will soon outlive its usefulness, so there is no cause for long-term strategizing about the direction of writing program development. Rose’s 1985 observation still applies, even though rhetoric and composition was then undergoing its most significant wave of professionalization that would lead to the proliferation of faculty who are trained in rhetoric and composition and who would then advocate for more thoughtful curricular

development and for more college and university resources to go toward improving writing instruction and, contrary to the myth of transience, making not only first-year writing but writing instruction more broadly a permanent feature of higher education's landscape, with the subsequent development of writing centers and WAC/WID programs.

The history of the literacy crisis is integral to our disciplinary history, acting as both a source of derision and discontent as well as a source of stimulation. In *From Form to Meaning*, a history of the eradication of first-year writing at the University of Madison-Wisconsin in the 1960s, David Fleming suggests that the source of the literacy crisis is based largely in class: first, the "educated elite" (a term that McCrory wielded as a mace in his radio interview) "detect, decry, explain, and sometimes even try to solve the crisis they perceive" (6). He labels this segment of the middle class the "professional-managerial class," borrowing the term from Barbara Ehrenreich and John Ehrenreich, who define the class as a group of "salaried mental workers" who depend on the cultural capital drawn from literacy to maintain their position in the meritocracy constructed by higher education. This explanation of the literacy crisis means that any renewed outcry represents a heightening of anxiety about status in the middle class because of a perceived threat to the cultural capital that the professional-managerial class depends on.

Rather than thinking of writing instruction as a form of triage, inoculation, or clinical diagnostic generated to protect the middle class from the ravages of illiteracy, I suggest that we revise our view of the interaction between the literacy crisis and writing instruction, exchanging one ultimately flawed metaphor for another metaphor that may be only slightly less flawed. If we think of the seasonal outbreaks of the literacy crisis as a

kind of brushfire, we can instead see a relationship between public perceptions of literacy and the expertise of writing specialists that empowers the latter to speak eloquently to the public about the continued need for writing instruction at all levels of American education, not because our literate culture is always nearing the brink of disaster but instead because writing is not a skill one masters by taking standardized tests in high school or by satisfying a university's one- or two-semester requirement for first-year writing instruction, as scholarship on knowledge transfer has demonstrated. What writing teachers have known for generations (and what rhetoricians since Aristotle and Gorgias have known about language in general) is that writing is not an end in itself—it is a method of invention that gives shape to, and shapes, our view of the world and empowers us to engage in discourse with our fellow humans. There are few things more important than that.

Whenever the literacy crisis leaps to the forefront of public discourse, it burns away the underbrush—which I envision here as both our discipline's own tendency to turn inward and talk to ourselves (a characteristic that does not distinguish us from other academic disciplines) as well as any misperceptions that have once more taken root and grown in the public about the work of higher education or the desire to see literacy as a skill that can be completely mastered by the time an individual turns eighteen. In other words, when the next version of *Newsweek's* "Why Johnny Can't Write" is published (or whatever event the next outcry forms around) and ignites public fears of illiteracy, we are presented with the opportunity to speak directly to those fears and to offer our expert knowledge not only to allay those fears but also to seek to shift the public's

understanding of what literacy actually is. Creating an end to the literacy crisis through the professional discourse of rhetoric and composition and its allies among literacy studies and education is a fundamentally utopian vision: we are not ending the myth of the literacy crisis because it is built on a foundation of anxiety and fear that individuals' positions in society are going to collapse beneath them with little to no warning. Therefore, if we cannot end the myth, we can find value in our ability to intervene in the public discourse about literacy, to assert that writing is an intellectual endeavor, and that writing instruction subsequently deserves not just a permanent role in higher education, but a prominent role at that.

I began this discussion of the origins of first-year writing with Governor Pat McCrory's anti-liberal studies, pro-careerist plans for reorienting the mission of North Carolina's university system. While I initially experienced the outrage common among members of the faculty at what I see as McCrory's dangerous miscomprehension of the purpose of higher education, I was then struck by a realization a little closer to home: in McCrory's vision of higher education, first-year writing would live on. The public fear of illiteracy would not fade in light of such a drastic change in the mission of colleges and universities, so English departments and undergraduate studies units would continue offering seemingly endless sections of composition. However, the composition in this new educational economy would not be anchored in the discipline that has grown around it, a discipline that is primarily humanist in its approach to knowledge and thus antithetical to the revised mission. First-year writing would very likely return to its origins as a remedial course intended to instill in its students a set of skills that are

considered attainable over the course of four or five months. It would be stripped down to a course that taught students that language is a tool for communicating thought, a conduit from one person to another. Along with the devaluation of the disciplinary knowledge of writing instruction would likely come a decrease in tenure-track lines for writing specialists and a parallel increase in the number of lecturers and adjuncts hired to teach the remedial, skills-based course. And we already face a tremendous labor dilemma as increasing numbers of adjuncts teach writing courses.

Of course, the vision I have just offered is speculative and apocalyptic. I have no way of knowing if a single governor could wield the power necessary to undo two centuries of growth and development in the UNC system and the epistemological work of multiple fields that have become the basis of our academic disciplines, including rhetoric and composition. Nor can I by any means accurately claim that first-year writing would be stripped of its disciplinary support and reduced to an instrumental, skills-based curriculum devoid of the knowledge that rhetoric and composition has constructed over the past fifty years about processes of writing and best practices in writing instruction. Instead, I find value in this conjecture because it draws attention to the peculiar space in higher education that writing instruction has inhabited since the late nineteenth century. David Fleming contends that this peculiar space is a defining feature of first-year writing: the course from which the discipline of rhetoric and composition emerged is liminal, its borders forever wavering because of its relationship to the course. Fleming writes, “If [first-year composition is] a course that exists at the margins, its very marginality can make it surprisingly central for students and teachers alike” (207). Like Fleming, I

believe that the liminality of first-year writing, and subsequently of the discipline of rhetoric and composition, is actually a strength: marginality allows us to remain vigilant about our pedagogical practices and our epistemological assumptions.

Yet my account of the development of first-year writing suggests a sort of powerlessness, or at least a lack of responsibility, among the members of the disciplinary community who have attained tenure-stream positions by constructing research agendas, sometimes focused around the teaching of writing and sometimes not, while also assuming administrative responsibility for writing programs. Writing specialists have eagerly built their expertise and have used that expertise to build epistemological and institutional positions for themselves and for rhetoric and composition more generally. The emergence of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) in the 1970s demonstrates a willingness among writing specialists to capitalize on the institutional need for writing instruction and the management of writing programs. This willingness to engage in administrative duties that support first-year writing and, more importantly, the untenable labor conditions that remain associated with the teaching of writing has been a sore subject within the discipline for decades. The development of the pragmatic practices associated with writing program administration have been seen by many as engagement in an unethical system for the sake of career advancement and disciplinary legitimization.<sup>80</sup> In *Postcomposition*, an argument for disrupting disciplinary views about the teaching of writing, Sidney I. Dobrin implicates the discipline in just the kind of unethical engagement I describe above:

[C]omposition studies has established itself as a juggernaut in the American university by convincing the institution that there is a need for a required course in writing, a need for large staffs of instructors to teach the required courses, and a need for a validated administrator to oversee those instructors... Without the very idea of writing programs (read: specifically required first-year composition courses), in fact, there would be little if any institutional demand for writing specialists. (118)

Dobrin emphasizes the role of writing specialists in “convincing the institution” that we need first-year writing courses, a narrative that seems strikingly different from my own assertion that the chief force that maintains composition courses is a long-term public fear of illiteracy that occasionally rises to the level of what we call literacy crises.

These two narratives only appear to be in conflict with one another. They are both part of the historical progression of rhetoric and composition from a ubiquitous course that seemed to require no specialized knowledge, as suggested by Herbert Weisinger and others throughout the early twentieth century (and, in some cases, well into the twenty-first century<sup>81</sup>), to a loosely constructed network of professional instructors in the mid-twentieth century interested in learning from one another through organizations such as CCCC, to a research-oriented field in the late twentieth century with doctoral programs that train new experts who then go on to run writing programs and train other teachers of writing in addition to researching different areas that fit within the broad disciplinary territory of rhetoric and composition.

The truth lies somewhere between these two narrative threads, as writing specialists, responding to the seemingly evanescent but clearly more sustained public need for postsecondary instruction in writing and reading, built their disciplinary knowledge and used that knowledge to make their own positions in institutions more

secure and permanent. The rise of the tenured professors in writing undoubtedly enabled writing programs to stabilize their course offerings and eventually, as I addressed in Chapter Four, to expand their curricula from first-year writing to vertical structures of writing majors and emphases. After all, WPAs act as proponents of their programs, arguing for sustained funding for programs and potential expansion when possible, not to mention their role in advocating for improvements in the material conditions of contingent labor. So while Dobrin and other like-minded scholars who argue that rhetoric and composition sustains its disciplinary legitimacy by furthering the institutional entrenchment of first-year writing are not entirely wrong, the longevity of composition—a longevity no one seemed to expect when the course first emerged in the late nineteenth century—is not due to the machinations of “boss compositionists” (à la James Sledd) taking advantage of a fraught system of labor and a captive consumer population like a stereotypical capitalist replete with top hat and monocle.

Or rather, the establishment of tenure lines in rhetoric and composition and the institutionalization of WPAs is not the sole explanation for the survival of first-year writing. Nor is my own narrative of public distress over the fate of literacy (with implicit assumptions about the cultural values of literacy) the authorized explanation. More than most academic disciplines, the historical development of rhetoric and composition is comprised of complex, interweaving, and sometimes conflicting narratives. Dobrin argues that composition studies is “enamored of its own history” (6), while Karen Kopelson claims that members of the disciplinary community of rhetoric and composition are “unrivaled in our proclivity for self-examination,” a proclivity that has



created a pattern of what she terms “disciplinary self-indulgence” (775). Both Dobrin and Kopelson gesture toward the truly astonishing amount of scholarship dedicated to reflecting on the question of disciplinarity in rhetoric and composition as indicative a kind of disease (or dis-ease, to connect more directly to my own nomenclature, disciplinary identity discomfort) at the heart of rhetoric and composition, a disease that hinders the field, at least in Dobrin’s estimation, from removing itself from its entanglements with writing instruction as our disciplinary *raison d’etre*. But I contend that the relentless examination of disciplinary historical narratives represent efforts to accomplish precisely what scholars such as Dobrin and Kopelson wish to see more of in rhetoric and composition. Whether the inquiries are rooted in the history of writing instruction, the empirical study of writers writing, or theoretical contemplations on the nature of invention in writing, all of these areas ultimately speak to the question at the heart of the discipline: what is writing?

### **The Continuing Disciplinary Evolution of Rhetoric and Composition**

If I knew how to answer the question, “what is writing,” this would be a very different dissertation. The ability to define writing is, at best, tentative, since writing is a technology (or perhaps better put, a set of technologies), a means of communication, a form of telepathy (as Stephen King defines it in his memoir *On Writing*), an art that requires lifelong dedication, a career (or perhaps better put, any number of careers), and so on. Writing is not simple, and while we may work as hard as we like as a discipline, writing will remain a mysterious but vital aspect of the human experience. This may

seem like a cheap way out of a difficult question—and in a way, it is—but developing theories of what writing is will remain at the center of the disciplinary work of rhetoric and composition as long as the discipline exists. The central question leads us to other equally important and devastatingly baffling questions that we also remain fascinated with: How do we teach writing? Can we teach writing at all? What are we teaching when we say we are teaching writing? And those are just questions that focus on the pedagogical aspects of the study of writing. The lines of inquiry that stem from the central question are endless, and that is a good place for an academic discipline to be.

This dissertation has been an inquiry into the shape and direction of the field of rhetoric and composition, taking as its central focus the ever-shifting nomenclature that members of the discipline use to name it, whether we call it rhetoric and composition, writing and rhetoric, writing studies, composition studies, or many other variations on these titles. The discipline takes on different forms at local, curricular levels, where faculty strive to build programs at the undergraduate and graduate level that offer students access to the disciplinary knowledge members of the discourse community have constructed for the past half-century, or thousands of years more, when we factor in the vibrant role rhetoric plays in the shape of the discipline. Rhetoric does not belong to rhetoric and composition any more than it belongs to philosophy, communication studies, anthropology, or any other field that claims rhetoric as part of its identity: Rhetoric is interdisciplinary (or perhaps it is blatantly a-disciplinary), lending itself for use to any discipline that finds its modes of inquiry compatible with its goals and missions. Even so, rhetoric has played a pivotal role in helping composition to construct its own disciplinary

legitimacy. And the concept of rhetoric being separate from any particular discipline even as multiple disciplines rightfully lay claim to aspects of rhetoric brings me to the final point of this project.

How much does disciplinary legitimacy actually matter? Put another way, does it matter whether we conceive of rhetoric and composition as a discrete academic discipline, one that has built itself within the parameters of English studies, or whether we conceive of it more along the lines suggested by the term writing studies, which may eventually contend with English studies as a new multidisciplinary construct, a new umbrella term that incorporates composition studies, technical writing, creative writing, and possibly rhetorical studies. It should be apparent that my answer is yes, of course these things matter. But I pose the question in such a provocative form because I have come to the conclusion that the disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition matters for two distinct reasons. First, acceptance by the academy of rhetoric and composition as a legitimate field of research and teaching offers material benefits for those within the discipline, who can then argue for more tenure-stream positions, broader curricular structures, and more funding for research. Second, disciplinarity matters because it provides the basis for the production of knowledge in the current conceptualization of the modern university. These two strands are obviously connected to one another, but they are in fact separate strands. Disciplinary legitimacy provides the means by which we can continue answering the innumerable questions that stem from our primary focus on investigating the nature of writing itself.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Sirc reviews the following books in his *CCC* February 2012 book review: Thomas Miller's *The Evolution of College English* (2010), Byron Hawk's *A Counter-History of Composition* (2007), Jody Shipka's *Toward a Composition Made Whole* (2011), and Joseph Harris, John D. Miles, and Charles Paine's edited collection *Teaching with Student Texts* (2010).

<sup>2</sup> In this project, when I state "the university," I am envisioning "the idea of the university," which seems most closely matched by major research universities that privilege research as the main marker for faculty advancement, but what is increasingly true is that smaller universities and colleges expect their faculty to produce more scholarship to earn tenure and promotions. So while "the university" tends to imply major research universities, I use the term as a metaphorical concept—which I explain later in this chapter—to describe the extradisciplinary body that houses the academic disciplines.

I focus primarily on the relationship between the discipline and the university in this project, but it is worth noting that the university is not the only contextual identification. Members of the discipline can also identify with activist groups, community organizations, and political parties. What Burke's connection from science to military technology demonstrates is that identification is not a simple, straightforward process. Each member identifies with the discipline differently, so their context shifts according to how and why they identify with rhetoric and composition.

<sup>3</sup> In "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing," a 1989 article in *CCC* which then became part of the monograph *A Teaching Subject* (which I discuss further below), Joseph Harris argues that scholars in rhetoric and composition should be careful about the notion of community, especially that of discourse community. Harris suggests that scholars want to retain some notion of speech communities, the idea that members of a discipline speak to one another, but he states that discourse communities are made up of members who are "dispersed in time and space, and who rarely, if ever, meet one another in person" ("Idea of Community" 15). He offers critiques of other terms, such as interpretive communities, but it is enough here to state that his call for caution is warranted when imagining the communities that we identify as academic disciplines.

<sup>4</sup> I refer here only to how Jonathan Monroe contributes to our understanding of the fluidity of disciplinarity, but it is worth noting that his edited collection is dedicated to furthering professional development in writing instruction among faculty members throughout institutions, rather than limiting that development to writing faculty, based on his work in the Knight Institute at Cornell, whose mission is to encourage consistent engagement in writing across the curriculum. The collection includes essays from on writing in physics, law, chemistry, sociology, and history.

<sup>5</sup> Harris revised his book, adding new reflective sections to the original text, and republished it in 2012.

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<sup>6</sup> Both Harris and North make note of how their respective books made tenure possible for them. North spends much of his introduction discussing how troubled he was when he was told by his department head at SUNY-Albany that he must produce a scholarly monograph on his field, which the department head interpreted as composition, despite the fact that North was hired as a writing center director, having written a dissertation that focused on writing center theory and practice.

<sup>7</sup> The history of many of these professional organizations are interweaved with one another. Like CCCC, TYCA is housed in NCTE, and the Chair of TYCA serves on the central governing board. The constitution for NWCA was first drafted at the NCTE conference in 1982; RSA was founded after a panel discussion at CCCC established interest in the organization; and a steering committee for what would be named CWPA was established at the MLA conference in 1976. In *Authoring a Discipline*, Maureen Daly Goggin traces the origins of some of these organizations while acknowledging that she cannot explore the history of all of them. She calls for more historical work on CWPA and IWCA, which she identifies as representing aspects of the discipline that are sometimes neglected—a neglect she claims to be complicit in by ignoring them in her monograph.

<sup>8</sup> The broader connotation of composing that Yancey suggests has since been taken up and elaborated by other scholars, such as Jody Shipka in her 2011 monograph, *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, in which Shipka argues that composition should be a fundamentally multimodal endeavor.

<sup>9</sup> Unlike CCCC, NAATPS has changed its name several times over the past century. In 1923, it became the National Association of Teachers of Speech. In 1946, it became the Speech Association of America. In 1970, it became the Speech Communication Association. Only in 1997 did Speech finally disappear from the organization's name, as it became the National Communication Association (NCA), which it remains to this day. Like NCTE, NCA is an incredibly large organization. It is an interesting parallel case for CCCC, which has had a more difficult time establishing disciplinary credibility, while communication studies established its disciplinarity through scientific approaches to communication research much earlier. Yet the name of the organization has remained unstable while the more protean CCCC has preserved its name—although not without occasional calls for revision.

<sup>10</sup> *College English* remains unique as a journal that seeks to accommodate the whole of the broader field of English studies. In the Editor's Note to the May 2012 issue, John Schilb writes that the inaugural issue of *College English* began with notes on the passing of Thomas Wolfe, setting the tone for the journal as a site for literary studies publications. He notes that only in the recent past has the journal become primarily a venue for scholarship in rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies. Literary scholarship

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is no longer the dominant type of research published in *College English*, but when *College Composition and Communication* began, it was in answer to the dearth of composition scholarship in *College English*.

<sup>11</sup> “College Publications of Freshman Writing” by Edith Wells provides a brief report on a survey sent to over 400 colleges and universities, 186 of which responded. Wells focuses on methods of publishing freshman writing across the nation. It is worth noting, as Charles W. Roberts does in his Editorial Comments, that Wells was a graduate student at the University of Illinois when she wrote the article—one of Roberts’ own students in his seminar on teaching composition. This means that the first scholarly publication in *CCC* was that of a graduate student, a fact which points to *CCCC*’s long commitment to the support and development of graduate students, even preceding the establishment of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition.

<sup>12</sup> Gleaned from the *Green Caldron*, one of the publications Edith Wells addresses in her report, this section of the bulletin was dedicated to student writing gaffes, brief sentences that contained errors that took a humorous turn. Here are a few examples: “Fraternities believe that if fraternity men go out for extra-circular activities, they will be more well-rounded.” “An infinitive is to plus a verb. Example: He *to was* a great fighter.” “Elmhurst is a city of sixteen thousand people lying fifteen miles west of Chicago.” As one might expect of such a list, some of the entries also take more of a bawdy turn, such as: “She wanted a lawn that was pretty, but for various reasons couldn’t get any grass to grow. She started in to experiment with the hired man, Sam, and hoped to find out what was the matter” or “She was a short stout woman with twenty years of teaching behind her.” The editor’s note at the bottom of the page asks for feedback regarding whether or not *CCCC* should maintain such a page. In what we may take as a fortuitous turn for the burgeoning professional organization, “Bona Fide Boners” does not appear in subsequent issues.

<sup>13</sup> The original bylaws of the *CCCC* Constitution set the editor’s term limit at three years. There has nevertheless been some inconsistency in the length of editorial terms. The longest serving editor of *CCC* was William F. Irmscher, who served from 1965 to 1973, making him responsible for nine full volumes of the journal during one of the most crucial periods in rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary formation. The current Bylaws establish a five-year term for the editor of *CCC*.

<sup>14</sup> Blind peer review was not a standard component of many of the early journals in rhetoric and composition. As more tenure lines were created for rhetoric and composition faculty in the early 1980s, there was a greater professional need for refereed publications so that junior faculty to make successful tenure bids. When Theresa Enos founded *Rhetoric Review* in 1982, she put together a formal process for reviewing submissions in order to make the journal one whose editorial process was similar to refereed literary journals, giving it greater weight as a publication. According to Goggin, Enos put a double-blind review process in place in her second year (128).

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<sup>15</sup> For a survey of the journal from 1950 to 1993, see Donna Burns Phillips, Ruth Greenberg, and Sharon Gibson's "College Composition and Communication: Chronicling a Discipline's Genesis." The article includes descriptions of changes to the format and cover of the journal through the period as well as brief statements on the visions of each editor and how those visions affected the journal. The article ends with an open-ended claim that by increasingly professionalizing the journal—and the discipline it represents—the editors may be risking the journal's original focus on the needs of students and teachers.

<sup>16</sup> In her Chair's Address, Gwendolyn D. Pough jokingly alludes to the logo as she argues for broader conceptions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity: "I'm not saying that we are the center of the universe or anything like that. But there might just be a reason why our logo is the sun..." (306). Pough's use of the logo to argue for broadening the field reads sympathetically with Macrorie's endeavor to make *CCC* a more accessible, more multifaceted journal.

<sup>17</sup> The Constitution of CCCC indicated that *CCC* must publish some talks delivered at the Annual Meeting each year. Macrorie diminished the number of papers published directly from the conference, although the practice of publishing papers from the conference did not end until Edward P. J. Corbett's editorship in 1975.

<sup>18</sup> The two articles on communication were George V. Allen's "Projecting the Image of America: A Problem in Communication" and Lee Anna Embrey's "The Proper Training in *C/C* for Government Writing." Randolph Hudson also wrote a pedagogical piece about teaching technical writing.

<sup>19</sup> Periodicals continued to proliferate throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including *WPA: Writing Program Administration* (1978), *Journal of Advanced Composition* (1980), *Rhetoric Review* (1982), and *Written Communication* (1984). For more, see Goggin (2002).

<sup>20</sup> More accurately, Richard Lloyd-Jones' address was the first in the current tradition of the Chairs' addresses. Previous CCCC Chairs have filled different speaking roles, sometimes moderating plenary sessions and sometimes offering addresses similar to those given now, but the tradition of the Chair's address comprising a significant part of the Opening Session, as well as the subsequent publication of the address, did not begin until 1977.

<sup>21</sup> The addresses of James Lee Hill (1982), Donald C. Stewart (1983), and Rosentene B. Purnell (1984) were not published in *CCC*. Stewart published a revised version of "Some History Lessons for Composition Teachers" in *Rhetoric Review* in 1985. Hill's and

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Purnell's addresses were unpublished until they were gathered in Duane Roen's *Views from the Center* in 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Very little scholarship has been dedicated to analyzing the Chairs' Addresses. Remarkably, much of the scholarly work on the Chairs' Addresses has been done by graduate students. In 2009, Rory Amundson Lee completed a Master's thesis on the Chairs' Addresses from 1993 to 2008 at Florida State University, using Ellen Barton's chapter as a matrix to read later addresses. In 2011, Kelli Custer completed a dissertation at Indiana University of Pennsylvania on the life stories of several of the recent Chairs, incorporating their addresses into her work.

<sup>23</sup> The argument that literacy is in crisis is a perennial charge against educators. Most recently, *Atlantic Monthly's* series entitled "Why American Students Can't Write," launched by Peg Tyre's article "The Writing Revolution," acts as an instantiation of the familiar cry that the effectiveness of writing instruction has declined. The series contains responses from professional writers, university administrators, and directors of National Writing Project sites.

<sup>24</sup> Both the University of Washington and Arizona State University now have thriving doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, programs that emerged from the efforts that were frustrating both Irmischer and D'Angelo when they were CCCC Chairs.

<sup>25</sup> Periodically on professional listservs, long threads of conversation will appear revisiting not only the key points of Hairston's address but also offering brief personal narratives remarking on how her address made the author feel or whether or not Hairston's address stirred the revolutionary imagination of the listener. Most recently, Malea Powell's controversial address, "Stories Take Place," inspired a long exchange among numerous members of WPA-L. Members of the list associated Powell's fairly rowdy challenge to the current disciplinary identity of CCCC with Hairston's address, most likely because Hairston's address stirred so much controversy among the members of CCCC. The listserv exchange was occasionally heated, demonstrating the lasting power of Hairston's address to inflame the imagination of the discipline.

<sup>26</sup> Assistant professors in rhetoric and composition in the 1980s faced significant challenges to earning tenure and promotion because their literary counterparts in English departments frequently did not accept the scholarly validity of journals in the field. It was in part a reaction to this roadblock to tenured positions that scholarly journals in rhetoric and composition began employing blind peer review. *Rhetoric Review* began using blind review in 1982, while CCC introduced a blind review system in 1987.

<sup>27</sup> Independent departments in rhetoric, writing studies, and composition studies have become more common in the years since Hairston's address. Hairston's own University of Texas at Austin followed her vision eight years after her address when it established a



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Department of Rhetoric. Indeed, following Hairston's address, many independent writing units began to develop across the country. "Breaking Our Bonds" is seen by many in the discipline as a powerful call for independent writing programs. The temptation is to read Hairston's address as the catalyst for the move toward independent writing programs—and as I discuss in Chapter Four, which analyzes the phenomenon of independent writing programs more closely, many scholars view her address precisely as such a catalyst—but it is perhaps better to read Hairston's address as a reflection of the tensions between rhetoric and composition and English Studies that led to the establishment of several of the first independent writing programs.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting that David Bartholomae does not turn his attention to the term *college*, the only missing term from the organization's title. Several other Chairs have used their addresses to interrogate the term and how it is typically defined in the discourse of CCCC, such as Lynn Quitman Troyka (1981), Anne Ruggles Gere (1993), and John C. Lovas (2002). Both Troyka and Lovas are community college faculty, and they use their addresses to draw attention to what they see as neglected aspects of scholarship and pedagogy in community college. Troyka discusses the influx of non-traditional students after the institution of open admissions for many community colleges. She focuses on the different learning needs of that population. Lovas emphasizes the need for more research on community colleges, noting, "You cannot represent a field if you ignore half of it. You cannot generalize about composition if you don't know half of the work being done" (406). Gere emphasizes the extracurricular work of composition studies, an argument that the discipline should expand its research beyond the confines of the college classroom.

<sup>29</sup> Another potentially useful tool for examining how doctoral programs and disciplinary identity interact is the Writing Studies Tree, established in 2011 by Sondra Perl and graduate students at the CUNY Graduate Center. Perl and Benjamin Miller first presented on the Writing Studies Tree at the 2012 CCCC. The basic premise of the project is that we can create a map of the discipline, a disciplinary family tree, by tracing intellectual mentors, or "ancestors," back through doctoral programs. The implied argument is that the "descendants" of the mentors are shaped by their mentors. Whether or not this argument is particularly accurate, the Writing Studies Tree demonstrates a desire to map the discipline in new ways, putting strong emphasis on doctoral education as a source of disciplinary identity. The Writing Studies Tree is still only a sapling, so it is too early to understand precisely what we will find from this project.

<sup>30</sup> MLA, the leading professional organization for literary studies, originally addressed pedagogical concerns, but in the early twentieth century, the organization declared that it would devote its energy to advancing the study of modern languages and literature as research, an agenda consistent with the shift in higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from primarily a teaching mission to a research mission. The organization's move toward research resulted in the establishment of organizations devoted to pedagogy such as the National Council of Teachers of English in 1911 and the

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National Association of Teachers of Speech in 1923. Although MLA publishes an annual issue of *The Profession*, which frequently addresses pedagogical concerns, the organization's journal *PMLA* focuses exclusively on research in literary studies.

<sup>31</sup> The first doctoral program in rhetoric and composition dates back to Fred Newton Scott's efforts at the University of Michigan. I do not discuss Scott in this chapter because, while his efforts are noteworthy toward the development of the discipline, they are not immediately relevant to the birth of doctoral programs that begins around 1980. For more on Scott and his revolutionary program at Michigan, see Connors' "Composition History and Disciplinarity," Donald and Patricia Stewart's *The Life and Legacy of Fred Newton Scott*, and, for an alternative perspective on the hero narrative the field has built around Scott, Lisa Mastrangelo's "Lone Wolf or Leader of the Pack? Rethinking the Grand Narrative of Fred Newton Scott."

<sup>32</sup> In the synthesis of their findings from the 1994 *Rhetoric Review* survey of doctoral programs, Brown, Meyer, and Enos list the University of Iowa as a program that did not yet have a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition, although it was at that time undergoing the necessary steps to form one (249). The University of Iowa has not yet appeared in a *Rhetoric Review* survey as a university with a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition. There is a Rhetoric Department at Iowa, but it is more closely allied with communication studies than rhetoric and composition, with PhDs awarded in Communication Studies and Mass Communication. This discrepancy between Lauer and Brown, Meyer, and Enos indicates the early difficulties of determining which universities had doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition and which simply offered courses in rhetoric and composition or aligned their degrees with other disciplines.

<sup>33</sup> The fourteen courses are Theoretical Analysis of Written Discourse, History of Literary Criticism, The Rhetoric of Written Composition, Current Theories of Composition, Classical Rhetoric, Major Figures in Modern Rhetoric, General Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Educational Psychology, Test Construction and Evaluation, Literary Periods: Specify —, Literary Genres: Specify —, and Other: Specify — (Covino, Johnson, and Feehan 391). The latter three courses provide survey respondents with the option of varying the list according to their programs, although the report provides little to indicate what those variable responses actually were.

<sup>34</sup> Jillian K. Skeffington argues that this early emphasis on linguistics resulted from most doctoral programs' placement in English departments, that rhetoric and composition's curriculum assumed components from literary studies as a means of fitting into English departments. Considering that Covino, Johnson, and Feehan were getting their information from English departments, Skeffington's claim seems accurate. However, it is worth noting that Purdue University lists linguistics as a required course in its current curriculum, suggesting that linguistics is not falling out of fashion in every rhetoric and

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composition program. Also, I have included Arizona State University in my sample of doctoral programs precisely because of its emphasis on studies in linguistics.

<sup>35</sup> The academy at large would not make note of the emergence of rhetoric and composition as an academic discipline for several more decades, which has been one of the greatest difficulties in establishing disciplinary legitimacy. As I discuss further below, the Visibility Project, an effort by the Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition to establish categories in national surveys of doctoral dissertations that reflect the discrete disciplinary work in rhetoric and composition, represents an effort from within the discipline to draw more attention from the academy to the intellectual work produced in rhet/comp doctoral programs.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to the Chapman and Tate survey, another survey of doctoral programs was conducted in 1986 by MLA, the results of which were included in Lunsford, Moglen, and Slevin's collection on doctoral education in English studies. The report, written by Bettina J. Huber, is based on responses from 126 doctoral programs in English. Huber notes that 33% of respondents reported active doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, with another 6% indicating that they were in the planning stages for doctoral programs. Of the approximately 40 programs that reported active programs, only two had not been established in the previous three to eight years. The MLA report confirms that doctoral education in rhetoric and composition was expanding rapidly. Almost half of the total departments reported that they planned to hire tenure-track faculty in rhetoric and composition within the next three years, outnumbered only by the combined category of British and American literature.

<sup>37</sup> A UNCG-specific example of this fluctuation in defining rhetoric and composition faculty can prove helpful. The 1999 survey profile of the doctoral program at UNCG includes Christian Moraru as a faculty member in rhetoric and composition because of his work with critical theory. Although Moraru remains a faculty member to date, he is not listed in the 2007 report as a rhetoric and composition faculty member, an absence that seems more accurate because he is in fact *not* a faculty member in that area. However, UNCG's common incorporation of literary and critical theory into the work of rhetoric and composition students makes his inclusion logical to a point. This example is included simply to demonstrate how difficult it can be for some programs to define the precise roles of their faculty or their degree of affiliation with the rhetoric and composition program.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, Jackson, and Enos offer several examples of programs that either ended completely or were in the process of closing their doors, such as the University of Southern California, Stony Brook University, and the University of Rochester. Stony Brook still offers a graduate certificate in Teaching Writing, and the University of Southern California offers a Master's of Professional Writing (MPW) and a PhD in Creative Writing and Literature.

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<sup>39</sup> In order to minimize the physical space required to print the individual profiles of doctoral programs, *Rhetoric Review* established a website to house the profiles, publishing only the synthesis report based on the profiles in the actual journal. The profiles that compose the 2007 survey then became the basis of the Survey of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition Wiki, an interactive website that gives program directors immediate access to their profiles so they can update information. While this advance to a wiki is useful because it can provide more recent information from programs, it is not a substitute for another complete survey, conducted according to a revised questionnaire that then becomes the basis of another synthesis report.

<sup>40</sup> The professionalization of graduate students in English studies has generated its own corpus of scholarship, such as John Guillory's 1996 "Preprofessionalism: What Graduate Students Want," which argues that graduate students are being professionalized too early, to the detriment of their graduate education, and Andrew Hoberek's 2002 "Professionalism: What Graduate Students Need," a direct response to Guillory's article in which Hoberek argues that all graduate students should engage in administrative activity as part of their preparation for the academic job market. In rhetoric and composition more specifically, scholars have long suggested that graduate students should receive more training, both through coursework and through the practical kind of experience that Hoberek suggests for all English graduate students, in writing program administration. In 1995, Thomas Miller published "Why Don't Our Graduate Programs Do A Better Job of Preparing Students for the Work That We Do?" in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* that asserts, while acknowledging that many graduate programs (and more since then) are offering courses in writing program administration, that graduate students in rhetoric and composition need more experience working not only with writing programs, but with community literacy workers and high school teachers to gain a greater perspective on the kinds of work they are likely to do when they become WPAs.

<sup>41</sup> In "Back-Tracking and Forward-Gazing: Marking the Dimensions of Graduate Core Curricula in Rhetoric and Composition," Carlo and Enos call for more research into the variations of core curricula in rhetoric and composition, arguing as I do in this chapter that a program's curriculum is based in part on the specializations of the faculty who design and teach in it and on the perceived needs of the field. In a separate study, however, Karen Peirce and Theresa Enos compare core curricula to recent job advertisements in rhetoric and composition and find that many of the needs expressed in those ads—technical and professional writing, writing program administration, and writing across the curriculum, for instance—are not being met in core curricula, which tend to remain relatively stable, although my program samples below will illustrate some fluidity in core curricula. Carlo and Enos contend that the study of core curricula is "essential to understanding our disciplinary identity; it is a way of looking through the kaleidoscope to see the changing narrative dimensions of the field" (220). The significant

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studies done by Theresa Enos and others to date suggest that the discipline of rhetoric and composition would benefit from sustained scholarly attention to graduate programs and their core curricula.

<sup>42</sup> The general success of the Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition inspired the establishment of the Master's Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition, an organization whose establishment points to the growing disciplinary status of rhetoric and composition. While doctoral programs began around 1980, early master's programs were usually focused on professional writing or technical communication. Only recently has the discipline matured to the extent that it can support numerous master's programs in rhetoric and composition.

<sup>43</sup> The information used to compare dissertations is drawn from the *Rhetoric Review* surveys, which list statistical data about recently completed dissertations for each program and a few representative dissertation titles; from departmental websites, although that information is often out of date or not readily available at all; or from ProQuest, which at minimum provides abstracts for dissertations, although the database often makes complete manuscripts available.

<sup>44</sup> My future work on this project will engage more with all of these forms of graduate student writing, especially since my claim here is that graduate writing plays a prominent role in forming the disciplinary identities that are shaped in doctoral programs. In a more sustained study of doctoral education in rhetoric and composition, graduate writing warrants a chapter of its own at least.

<sup>45</sup> The last Carnegie Mellon dissertation to focus on cognitive rhetoric was completed in 1989, suggesting that the faculty and students began shifting their interests in other directions in the late 1980s.

<sup>46</sup> Note, for example, that the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) holds its annual conference the day before the opening of the CCCC Annual Convention, a connection that implies significant overlap between the disciplinary identities evinced by the two organizations. On the other hand, the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) was established in 1967 to provide creative writers and creative writing programs with a forum for communicating with one another, and AWP has no significant connection with professional organizations associated with rhetoric and composition.

<sup>47</sup> Carnegie Mellon's Rhetoric program also requires an oral delivery as part of its requirements for admitting students to candidacy for the PhD, making the CWS and CMU the only two programs in the sample that incorporate oral rhetoric as a significant component of its program, although Purdue's program strongly encourages its students to participate in a lecture series similar to the one required by the CWS.

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<sup>48</sup> In Chapter Two, I mention Frank D'Angelo's comments about the struggle of establishing a doctoral program at ASU in 1980. He referred to his efforts as a failed attempt, suggesting that the date reported in the first *Rhetoric Review* survey, 1985, is the accurate date for the initiation of a rhetoric and composition program at ASU. His comments in that address also affirm that the first efforts to establish a program focused on building what Chapman and Tate call an integrated program.

<sup>49</sup> Arizona State University, for example, has a writing major in its English department and its Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication department. These departments are distinguished on the basis of the kinds of writing done in each field, with the former dedicated more specifically to the humanist traditions of writing and the latter to multimodal and professional forms of writing. Few institutions have the undergraduate critical mass to house multiple separate writing majors. More commonly, institutions offer different concentrations within the major.

<sup>50</sup> The most authoritative text on the development of creative writing in higher education is D. G. Myers' 1996 history, *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, in which Myers traces the development of creative writing programs and their increasing focus in the latter half of the twentieth century on teaching creative writing. Myers characterizes creative writing programs as *elephant machines*, devices that produce more programs by producing more graduates.

<sup>51</sup> In contrast to Shumaker's composition major, David Beard writes about a rhetoric program in "More than 100 Years of Rhetoric and the University of Minnesota." In many ways, it makes sense for rhetoric majors to have continued to exist and even thrive in small pockets throughout the United States following the decline of rhetorical studies in the mid-nineteenth century, while the disciplinary community that I refer to as rhetoric and composition, a field that is based fundamentally in theories and pedagogies of writing, was still far from its origins as a recognizable academic discipline.

<sup>52</sup> Arthur W. Shumaker acknowledges the speculative nature of his claim about the status of the composition major at DePauw University, stating that the major is at least seventy years old and possibly older, but that the "phraseology of the old college catalogs" is "vague" (139). At worst, the vagueness of the record would mean that Shumaker's conception of the composition major at DePauw is based mostly on his own experience working with the major. Certainly he provides sufficient evidence to prove that the major existed at the time, the importance of which outweighs the accuracy of his account of the history of the department and the major.

<sup>53</sup> *A Field of Dreams* focuses on both the difficulties and advantages of founding independent writing programs. Barry M. Maid, for instance, writes about the establishment of the independent writing department at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 1993, which resulted from a tumultuous battle in the English department

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regarding the voting privileges of non-tenure-track faculty when hiring new faculty. Chris M. Anson describes the sudden abolishment of the Program in Composition and Communication at the University of Minnesota in 1996, which was incorporated back into the English department from which it had separated fifteen years earlier. Angela Crow and Peggy O'Neill describe the establishment of the Department of Writing and Linguistics at Georgia Southern University, which I address at length below. In total, the collection repeatedly returns to the tensions in English departments that resulted in battles and separation, as well as new tensions in independent departments. Yet the collection ultimately assumes an optimistic view that independent writing departments are crucial for the future development of rhetoric and composition.

<sup>54</sup> Also noteworthy is the establishment in 2008 of the Consortium of Undergraduate Rhetoric and Writing Studies Majors as a Special Interest Group (SIG) at CCCC. Renamed the Association of Undergraduate Rhetoric and Writing Studies Majors in 2011, this organization works with the CCCC Committee on the Major to coordinate roundtable discussions at CCCC. In 2012, these organizations co-facilitated “The Next Step: Outcomes for Majors in Writing and Rhetoric,” a roundtable discussion at CCCC in St. Louis. While nothing has yet been published about the discussion, the title nonetheless suggests movement toward tackling the second charge of the Committee on the Major.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, Weisser and Grobman, Balzhiser and McLeod, Heidi Estrem’s introduction to the 2007 special issue of *Composition Studies* dedicated to the undergraduate major, and Tony Scott’s “The Cart, The Horse, and the Road They are Driving Down: Thinking Ecologically about a New Writing Major.” The latter is especially noteworthy because Scott criticizes Yancey for ignoring the role of local institutional context in the shaping of writing majors, charging her instead with advocating for a generic model that doesn’t acknowledge the needs of individual programs.

<sup>56</sup> *JAC*, as it is now solely referred to, is itself a fascinating artifact illustrating the evolution of the discipline. Founded by Tim Lally in response to a call for a newsletter by the Association of the Teachers of Advanced Composition (ATAC) in 1979, the journal initially focused exclusively on upper-level writing courses that were, at best, ill-defined. But now, the journal is one of the more theoretical composition journals, having removed “advanced composition” from its title—retaining only the acronym—and adopted the subtitle of *A Journal of Rhetoric, Poetics, and Culture*. In her historical survey of the establishment of scholarly journals in rhetoric and composition, Maureen Daly Goggin compares *JAC* to *Freshman English Newsletter* (now *Composition Studies*), pointing out that while both journals were founded to examine practical, pedagogical concerns—concerns that tied the nascent discipline to writing instruction alone—each has become more theoretical in its outlook in the intervening years as the primary interest in writing instruction has lessened as the discipline has taken a broader perspective on the study of writing.

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<sup>57</sup> I dedicate Chapter Five to the examination of several debates that have resulted in the variety of curricular constructions of first-year writing that have developed over the past long century of the course's history in American higher education. For that reason, let it suffice at the moment to state that Rebecca Moore Howard alludes to an idealization of first-year writing that separates it from advanced writing.

<sup>58</sup> David R. Russell's 2002 *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History* provides an extensive history of the development of WAC, tracing the origins of writing instruction outside of composition courses back to the late nineteenth century, roughly concurrent with the emergence of freshman English. However, the institutions Russell identifies as examples of the contemporary form of WAC are Beaver College and Carleton College, both of which began their programs in the mid-1970s.

<sup>59</sup> My future research will need to consider WAC and WID programs more extensively, considering the role of these programs in contributing to the disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition. Since its inception, WAC has gone through significant changes of its own, with its own numerous models constructed to suit the needs of specific institutions.

<sup>60</sup> The survey also included results from community colleges and junior colleges, for a total of 360 responses, but the authors chose to confine their findings and speculations to four-year institutions.

<sup>61</sup> It is not coincidental that Rebecca Moore Howard is now a professor at Syracuse University, one of the most prominent independent writing departments in the country. Her move from one independent writing unit to another demonstrates a strong commitment to autonomy for writing faculty.

<sup>62</sup> I limit Crowley's comments to the disciplinary title "composition studies" rather than the broader disciplinary construction of rhetoric and composition that I typically use throughout this dissertation because Crowley does not see the same kinds of connections between rhetoric and composition that I do. She sees them as allied but fundamentally discrete fields, as she explains in her essay for *Enculturation*, "Rhetoric is Not Composition," an essay I discuss in Chapter One.

<sup>63</sup> The samples in this chapter are drawn from universities of similar size throughout the United States, but small liberal arts colleges as well as smaller state universities also feature writing majors. For example, Dominic F. Delli Carpini and Michael J. Zerbe's chapter in *What We Are Becoming*, entitled "Remembering the Canons' Middle Sisters: Style, Memory, and the Return of the Progymnasmata in the Liberal Arts Writing Major," examines the role of rhetoric in writing majors at York College of Pennsylvania, a small liberal arts institution. My future research will extend the comparative model constructed



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in this dissertation to include smaller institutions, but I have chosen to use similar models in this chapter to illustrate how writing majors emerge and develop in larger universities.

<sup>64</sup> The College of Communication and Creative Arts houses, in addition to Writing Arts, the departments of Communication Studies, Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising, and Radio, Television, and Film. Many of the electives available to writing majors are offered through these allied departments.

<sup>65</sup> This condensed history of Rowan University's Writing Arts department is based on Rowan faculty members Jennifer Courtney, Deb Martin, and Diane Penrod's "The Writing Arts Major: A Work in Progress." In this chapter, the authors argue for a self-reflective and deliberative approach to constructing the writing major and urge other departments who contemplate building a major to avoid the patchwork approach that sometimes occurs in English departments, who put writing concentrations together from pre-existing courses without any centralized rationale for the curriculum.

<sup>66</sup> The first-year writing curriculum is based on Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs' Writing about Writing, a recent movement in writing studies designed to move first-year writing away from a service course toward a site for introducing students to the discipline of writing studies. This movement has become an important component in the development of first-year writing, so I will address WAW more fully in Chapter Five.

<sup>67</sup> The department also employs a significant number of contingent faculty to support the first-year writing program, dividing their rank among special instructors and special lecturers. Combined, these ranks comprise 44 positions, meaning that tenure-stream faculty are outnumbered four to one at Oakland University. While these positions are contingent upon renewal, many of the instructors and lecturers have been teaching at OU for ten to twenty years.

<sup>68</sup> Faculty from these institutions, in addition to others, contributed to *What We Are Becoming* to chronicle the growth and development of their writing majors, all of which have taken on different forms much in keeping with the different kinds of writing majors I have described in this chapter.

<sup>69</sup> I use the singular form of course with the full awareness that many colleges and universities have created sequences composed of two to four different courses that students must take to satisfy their first-year writing requirement. The singular form here is intended to refer more generically to any form that first-year writing may take, assuming that sequenced courses are ultimately conceived of as a singular collection of courses intended to meet a singular requirement. The singular is thus more of a convenient shorthand for first-year writing than an assertion that institutions only require one course.

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<sup>70</sup> For more on the abolition debate, see Connors, “The New Abolitionism,” Euric, Taylor, Russell, and Roemer, Schultz, and Durst.

<sup>71</sup> The initial papers from Bartholomae and Elbow published in *CCC* were the papers they presented in 1989 and 1991, and while we may assume that the authors likely revised their work in the intervening years between presentation and publication, the structure of the debate is intended to offer those original texts from 1989, with both authors writing new responses for the publication. So the initial essays should be thought of as artifacts of the late 1980s, while the responses were written and published over half a decade later.

<sup>72</sup> Advances in technology further complicate the question of writers and ownership as texts become increasingly easy to access via electronic means such as computers and tablets. Also, in academic contexts, textual ownership yields little in the way of immediate material benefits for scholars, but because publishing is an integral part of professors’ careers, academics earn increases in salary and rank as compensation for their publications as well as status in their fields of study, which also ultimately contributes to their long-term economic success.

<sup>73</sup> A recent collection edited by Judith H. Anderson and Christine R. Farris, *Integrating Literature and Writing Instruction*, continues to challenge the separation of the two into wholly discrete fields, and the curricular models explored in that collection, including core courses, freshman seminars, and first-year writing, suggest that the literature/writing dichotomy may belong to an outmoded period when writing instruction was mostly limited to first-year writing courses.

<sup>74</sup> Finding grounds for agreement is one of the most important elements of Peter Elbow’s believing game and his general opposition to binary forms of thinking, so his response to Bartholomae is actually in keeping with his theoretical approach.

<sup>75</sup> Throughout their writing history together, Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle have not signed their names in a consistent manner. The 2007 article is signed in alphabetical order, but in more recent publications, they have more often inverted the names to Wardle and Downs. For that reason, my usage throughout the section follows their current practice.

<sup>76</sup> The same issue of *Composition Forum* that contains the retrospective also includes a program profile written by Elizabeth Wardle from the University of Central Florida that speaks to the question of teaching a WAW-based curriculum in a specific institutional setting, as well as an article by I. Moriah McCracken and Valerie A. Ortiz that focuses on revising a WAW curriculum to meet the needs of a Hispanic-serving institution.

<sup>77</sup> In the immediate media response to McCrory’s comments, almost all sources noted the not inconsiderable irony that Pat McCrory graduated from Catawba College, a liberal arts

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college, and that Bill Bennett earned a PhD in philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>78</sup> For instance, Weisinger suggests that composition teachers are specialists in nothing, and therefore they are qualified to teach in all fields: “the teacher of composition, while obviously not a specialist in any particular field of knowledge, has the right to consider in his classes not the technical information and the specific techniques of investigation of the several fields of study but their general significance in terms of human needs and aspirations” (688).

<sup>79</sup> Weisinger serves as a specific example of a long trend in rhetoric and composition, and in higher education in general. The works of John Dewey and Paolo Freire establish a similar vision for education. Weisinger’s argument is also rooted in the cultural awareness of the power of language as propaganda, so Weisinger asserts that teaching clarity in reading and writing is vital for democracy because language can be used for nefarious ends, an argument that George Orwell makes in *1984* and “Politics of the English Language” in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

<sup>80</sup> See Bousquet, Scott, and Parascondola, Strickland, and Schell.

<sup>81</sup> Stanley Fish’s *How to Write a Sentence*, for example, is predicated on the notion that writing courses have historically been content-free courses and that any attempt to seek content outside of grammar is to move away from teaching writing.

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