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Liminal Practice in a Maturing Writing Department

A Fulbright Project Report

prepared for

The Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications
the University of Winnipeg

by

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August, 2011

Introduction

In Spring 2011 I was awarded a Fulbright Specialist Grant to "consult, collaborate, and inform" on the future of the Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications at the University of Winnipeg, located in the city of Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada. The Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications department (hereafter, RWC) was a pioneer in writing instruction in Canada, where it became the first unit to establish itself independently as a department with a full-time faculty committed to both teaching and scholarship in writing and rhetoric. It remains a rare phenomenon on the Canadian higher education scene, where studies and programs in rhetoric and writing have developed late and along a different trajectory from the discipline in the United States. Because of its unique history, the faculty is positioned to make significant contributions to the further development of writing instruction and scholarship in rhetoric and writing in Canada and beyond. At the same time, the close fit between the department's character and the mission of the institution makes it a strategic asset to the university. This report presents my findings, analyses, and recommendations to the Department and the Fulbright Specialist Program, based on six weeks of inquiry and conversations.

I visited the University of Winnipeg from April 24 to June 4, 2011. From undergraduate students to central administrators, my hosts were extremely gracious and generous with their time. I conducted interviews with faculty members and administrators and met with faculty and student groups for a total of over 70 hours. I collected and read a large body of historical and current materials from the department and university (curricular materials, syllabi, faculty publications, university reports and reviews, policy papers, and more). Before and during my visit, I read a body of publications and reports about the history and current state of writing instruction in Canada as well as examples of Canadian scholarship in rhetoric and writing. I also conducted 3 phone interviews with Canadian scholars at other institutions, as well as talking with others at two conferences in the U.S. prior to my visit. On May 27, 2011 I delivered an invited lecture in the university's Distinguished Scholar Lecture Series. Copies of this speech, which was videotaped, will be made available to the department.

During my visit, I worked closely with a Steering Committee, which included Judith Kearns, department chair, and faculty members Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Wade Nelson, Barry Nolan, Jaqueline McLeod Rogers, and Tracy Whalen. At my request, this group met weekly to engage in conversations focused on the writings and curricular contributions of its members. Members presented a sample of their work and explained how it represented their intellectual interests or disciplinary affiliations, and how these translated into the curriculum. I also asked them to discuss how each benefited from being in a department with this particular focus and configuration, as signified by the terms "rhetoric," "writing," and "communications." I am indebted to these colleagues for the insights developed in these conversations, as well as in wide-ranging interviews with them and other faculty.

Judith Kearns was an invaluable source of information, materials, and wisdom about departmental history, structures, and processes. Jennifer Clary-Lemon, who developed the

project proposal, was the primary "go-to" person for the project, both intellectually and logistically. Staff members Cathleen Hjalmarson and Kevin Doyle were unfailingly courteous and helpful in making it easy for me to function in an unfamiliar environment . Finally, Allison Ferry, undergraduate major, showed impressive initiative in developing and administering a quick survey of majors and alumni and organizing a meeting where I was able to hear from a remarkable group of bright, enthusiastic young Canadians. All made this project truly a collaborative effort.

The theme I will be exploring throughout this report is best captured by Tracy Whalen's term "liminal practice"—fittingly, a notion she applies to rhetoric. In her terms, the department is at a liminal moment—between its history and its future; and much of its research and teaching involves traversing the liminal spaces defined by the relations of conceptual pairs.

EXIGENCE FOR THE FULBRIGHT PROJECT: RENEWAL, TRANSITIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

A number of considerations make this a propitious time for assessing current programs and planning future directions in the Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications. The project comes at a critical moment of transition for the department and university, coinciding with the emergence of new formations for studying and teaching writing, rhetoric, and cognate disciplines in Canada and internationally.

Program renewal. The steering committee, in setting priorities for my consultancy, described a primary goal of the project as "program architecture renewal." Programs need regular assessment and reinvention in order to keep them lively and responsive to changes in their environment. In this department, the first-year program, Academic Writing, is now 16 years old and overdue for such review and an investment of new energy and ideas. The Tutorial Centre in its current form was established at the same time and needs to be examined not only as an adjunct for Academic Writing, but as an underdeveloped asset for other programs, both in and outside the department. The undergraduate major (and the associated Joint Communications degree), while still vigorous, is now 8 years old and needs critical attention to ensure its continued growth and success.

At the same time, the department is developing a proposed M.A in Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life. If approved, this degree will open new paths for the department but implies many adjustments. I once heard a musician explain how replacing a member of a quartet transformed all the roles and relationships in the group, which had to discover through trial and error how to rebalance and reharmonize their sound. Adding graduate studies is not just an addition to the department; it is transformative in the same sense. A new student constituency adds its voice and its needs, and enters into relationships with faculty and with current students in the curriculum and Tutorial Centre. New faculty roles emerge, with new responsibilities and expectations from the administration and university faculty. Teaching in the program will add components of thesis and practicum supervision to course load. Graduate studies also require a strong faculty investment in relevant scholarship (research and publication, applied scholarship) to provide an intellectual base

and some funding for the program. All this requires rebalancing resources and priorities, while potentially enriching existing programs by integrating three levels of curriculum.

Transition at the University. While the University is not changing course from the direction set by President Lloyd Axworthy, it is going through some subtle transitions in consolidating and implementing these policies, which are directly relevant to change in the RWC dept. Several key administrators are relatively new and putting their own stamp on evolving developments. In 2009 President Axworthy published a policy paper articulating an "evolving mission" of "community learning": the "active integration of the university into the social, cultural and educational life of the community."[1] His vision "demands an effort to explore how people, especially children, learn, and how new practices can be shared with the community to improve access and to respond to a range of cultural, social and economic diversities." He specifies community learning in this sense in four dimensions, which involve providing learning opportunities for underrepresented populations, committing the university to address public issues in partnership with community groups, using university resources to facilitate sustainable development on campus and in the community, and placing these initiatives in both local and global contexts. His paper followed closely on a 2009 update of the Winnipeg Academic Plan, which emphasized many of the same themes, including as well a strong commitment to "original research and creative activity and enhanced research capacity, along with expanded graduate studies." In May 2011 the University of Winnipeg's Board of Regents formally approved the community learning policy.

These documents are a rich lode of themes that help give the university its character. As suggested in my lecture, the university explores and draws energy from the dynamic tensions inherent in this vision: between access and excellence, academy and community (or city), local and global, university and college, research and teaching, learning in and out of the classroom. These are reinterpreted in various ways to make them productive (for example, as crossing borders or as interdependent and reciprocal influences). These themes and the challenges the university faces offer some lenses through which to interpret the work of the department and to decide which directions are strategic opportunities, given university priorities and opportunities for partnerships in developing initiatives.

Generational change. In the next 5-10 year period the department can expect to deal with a wave of retirements among the founding generation of the department. In addition, the current long-time chair will complete her final term in two years. The department must therefore plan for new faculty and for concurrent leadership changes.

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[1] "The University and Community Learning: An Evolving Mission." Available on President Axworthy's website, http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/admin-president.

Disciplinary/interdisciplinary developments. Studies and teaching of writing, rhetoric, discourse, and communication in Canada are emerging in new configurations on campuses and experimenting with new definitions as an interdisciplinary field networked with international writing studies and global rhetorics. As the RWC faculty and its programs undergo growth and renewal, the department is positioned to contribute significantly to these national and international developments.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FULBRIGHT PROJECT

In view of these motives and conditions, the Steering Committee outlined priorities for my visit. I have reorganized and interpreted them here as follows:

Context and history. Characterize the identity of the department in the context of its local university/city setting and its distinctiveness on the Canadian scene, by examining the history of the department and its relationship to the Canadian instruction and scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and communications, past and present. This includes consideration of the faculty research strengths and the department's current and potential visibility among peers.

Curriculum. (1) Examine the curricular design and implementation of each of the RWC programs, both current and proposed, to inform future curricular decisions. (This includes the first-year program "Academic Writing"; the undergraduate major in Rhetoric and Communications; the Joint B.A. Program in Communications with Red River College, building on its degree in Creative Communications; the Tutorial Centre; the proposed M.A in Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life and the possibility of situating it as a stream within an M.A in Cultural Studies; and participation by department members in special instructional programs, partnerships, and learning initiatives.) Where relevant, make comparisons with U.S. programs.

(2) Consider how the department can articulate levels of the curriculum and explore relationships among the intellectual traditions represented by the three terms of the department's curricula, rhetoric, writing, and communications.

Process and collegiality. Suggest a process by which the department can work collegially and efficiently on program renewal and curriculum development.

CARRYING OUT THE PROJECT

Although six weeks seemed like a long time before I came, it was quickly evident that the original proposal and agenda covered much more than I could complete in that time frame. Instead, I have viewed myself as laying the groundwork that would enable the faculty to accomplish its priorities by continuing the processes of inquiry and conversation that I began with them.

In reporting progress toward each of these goals, I will primarily discuss here questions of curriculum and process. I decided not to construct a formal history of the department, since

its history is well-documented by publications and internal reports, and to go any further would require a full archival research project. But my investigation of that history as experienced by members of the department and narrated in these materials deeply informs my recommendations. The goal of contextualizing the department and its work in a variety of ways is addressed but not exhausted in my lecture "Writing Studies at the University of Winnipeg: A Strategic Opportunity " (Appendix 1). Understanding how the department fits into the institution and into Canadian, U.S., and international instruction and scholarship in written communication is fundamental to decision-making about its future, and the work I did on these questions is the point of departure for the analyses and recommendations below, as well as for collaborative research planned with Jennifer Clary-Lemon.

Curricular Articulation and Integration

In approaching the curricular tasks of this project, I asked myself a cluster of guiding questions, including these about *value*:

What is the value of each level and component of the curriculum to the department's faculty and students? to other Winnipeg faculties, students, and programs? to the institution at large? to the external communities it serves? What of value has been lost and gained in the evolution of the department from its pioneering days as a writing program? What value might the current and proposed curricular programs, and by extension the intellectual or disciplinary organization of the department, have to peers in Canada or elsewhere? How can these values be highlighted? strengthened through hiring, funding, partnerships, increased visibility? What is the potential to capitalize on these values to pursue new directions strategically?

Another sense of "value" is the values the department holds dear and promotes through its programs. The department began as a teaching program that emphasized a social mission identified with broader access to the academy. Subsequently, it developed an undergraduate major that teaches theory, criticism, history, and research methods as well as writing practices, while it developed its scholarly capacity in research and publication.

How has this original commitment both endured and evolved with the addition of degree programs and greater opportunities and expectations for scholarship? What challenges have arisen in balancing "access" and "excellence," and how are these values associated with different elements in the curriculum?

The department was constituted by virtue of a common teaching enterprise, enacted through conversations, experimentation, and faculty learning, that was at the heart of the department. So I asked these questions:

To what degree does (or should) the faculty still function as a teaching community, though with the teaching enterprise now redefined? To what extent is the intellectual work of the faculty (expressed as theory, criticism, reflective thinking, applied scholarship, and formal research, embodied in scholarly publication, presentations, teaching genres, or public writings) informing and enriching the entire curriculum? How might the department take greater advantage of its intellectual resources to articulate and integrate the curricula?

I'm going to begin with this last question, targeting the goals of integration and articulation. It's not the obvious place to start: it seems more logical to start with the parts and then look for connections. But that reproduces the way the levels and functions of the curriculum have come into being; they were not designed all at once as interconnected, but arose at different times in response to rather different needs, desires, conditions, and opportunities. As a result, they are in practice relatively discrete and disconnected, and it is hard to articulate them after the fact. I'd like to begin with the assumption that, by virtue of being

taught by a single faculty to overlapping groups of students, they comprise a holistic curriculum, differentiated by levels and purposes. Then specific analyses and proposals for each part of the curriculum can reflect the perception of cross-cutting themes, reciprocal influence, and synergies among them.

"Writing," "Rhetoric," and "Communications"

The disjunctures and disconnects within the curriculum have shown up most vividly in the major, where the Curriculum Committee has been trying for two years to group courses in order to structure requirements. The obvious choices are the "naming" terms of the programs, courses, and department—"rhetoric," "writing," and "communications." Naming is a way of staking out intellectual and curricular territory. Students expect these terms to help them make sense of the intellectual configuration of the department, and to match up to faculty identities, disciplines, graduate programs, and career paths. But both students and faculty have struggled with the recalcitrance of these terms when applied to these purposes. In order to get past this impasse, it's necessary to analyze these terms to see why, as currently (mis)understood, they do not work well for structuring curriculum or organizing the work of the department, but remain important signifiers for its activities.

Curricular space, as designated by departmental or program names, is implicitly a claim to disciplinary status as a faculty by virtue of belonging and contributing to a scholarly community whose "studies of" the topic ground the curriculum. It's not surprising, therefore, that faculty and students alike (including myself, at first look) have identified these terms with disciplines, and seen the faculty in turn as representatives of those disciplines. Under that assumption, the department title seems to imply a tri-partite disciplinary structure for classifying courses and faculty. This in turn raises the question of whether each has equal claims to curricular space, program development, and faculty resources in future planning, for example as "streams" in the undergraduate major.

However, the reality is that intellectual space is not carved up so neatly by the academy, and terms like these are context-variable (in part, by national culture) and operate rhetorically rather than taxonomically. (Modernism persists in our thinking, despite post-modernism!) To be useful, naming terms depend on strategic ambiguity, but they are therefore vulnerable to reinterpretation and misunderstanding.

Even if we could align these terms with disciplines, and specify them for Canada, the histories and scholarly interests of the RWC faculty would make their work quite difficult to place in disciplinary terms. Most are quite eclectic in the intellectual traditions, sources, and methods they draw on in publications and teaching. As Judith Kearns and Brian Turner have pointed out in a forthcoming profile of the department, most of the PhDs in the department "were trained in text analysis of some kind and learned to teach writing largely 'on the job.'"[2] Half the eight PhD degrees have some focus on "rhetoric," but what that

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[2] Judith Kearns and Brian Turner, "Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications: University of Winnipeg. In *Writing Programs Worldwide: Profiles of Academic Writing in Many Places*, Chris Thaiss, et al., eds., forthcoming.

means can be significantly different, depending on the doctoral program and whether it is Canadian or American. More recently minted scholars may have a more sharply honed sense of disciplinarity, but it can't be contained or explained simply by referring to one of these terms. Typically, faculty in fields focused on writing and rhetoric are dynamically interdisciplinary, learning new methods or turning to sources in unfamiliar fields at need, to work with new partners, pursue particular research questions, or inform teaching projects.

If that is the case, it's important to discover how these terms actually function in the discourse of the department (connotation as well as denotation) and how these meanings correspond to uses in external contexts, both academic and professional. This clarification will allow RWC to use these terms more strategically for the various purposes they can serve by their useful polysemy, while reducing confusion or oversimplification. In addition, it will provide a basis for answering questions that were raised during my visit about the future role of "communications" and "communications studies" in the department.

Without the opportunity to do a full-scale discourse analysis, I nevertheless formed some impression of the way these terms function in course titles, descriptions, syllabi, requirements for the major, and even the language of students. Setting aside my original observation that they are misperceived as labels for disciplines and faculty, I'll focus first on the way "rhetoric" and "writing" enter into a dichotomy between theory and practice. It appears that "writing" is over-identified with the "practical," while "rhetoric" is assigned the primary role of providing the theories and critical methods for producing and interpreting practices. Even though the practical is valued in the curriculum, this pairing comes at the cost of ignoring the vast development of contemporary studies in writing that reflect intellectual traditions other than rhetoric. At the same time, it obscures the fact that rhetoric itself, in the classical tradition, was a practical art.

This dichotomy of practice and theory is mapped onto the first-year curriculum ("writing") and certain "practical" courses (e.g., "Professional Editing and Style")) while "rhetoric" is associated with academic study in the major. Rhetoric stands in for a claim that the practices taught in the department merit serious scholarship. But in curricular practice, it is actually a handy umbrella term for teaching the arts of language use, providing communicators with principles of production and a critical method for analyzing situations, texts, images, and events.[3] The major program reflects a shared vocabulary of concepts and values rooted in classical and 20th century rhetoric, which actually informs the whole curriculum: explicitly in the M.A proposal and more tacitly as a basis for teaching Academic Writing. Thus Turner and Kearns claim in their profile that the first-year courses have the broad goal of "increasing our students' rhetorical awareness of academic and/or disciplinary styles, genres, and epistemic criteria." More generally, they say, the curriculum aims "to develop what Quintilian called *facilitas*—the ability to assess any rhetorical situation and respond appropriately." But, even in the major, "rhetoric" does not appear to be highly historicized or referenced to its contemporary development by scholarly communities.

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[3] See, for example, Objectives and Outcomes for the Major, available on the RWC website.

"Communications" is perhaps the most confusing term, partly because of the apparent disjuncture between the broad way it is most frequently used within the curriculum and the external uses that are relevant to the curriculum (professional careers in creative communications, for some students, research and graduate studies for others). In the case of "communications," the dichotomy between the "academic" and the "practical" hides within the term itself, which has three—arguably four—uses in the department. The first, most characteristic of the department, is a broad reference to practices of communication: oral, written, digital, multimedia, professional, or creative communication(s). These are differentiated both by mode or medium and by specialization. Since rhetoric is also often defined as "the effective practice of communication," there is large overlap in what the two terms point to; the differences lie in the way they have developed as studies and, in the case of communications, as professions. The second RWC use, then, of the term "communications" is to name professional careers in the media industry—public relations, advertising, journalism, and so on. The corresponding academic study of that industry is the third use (referenced particularly to the distinctively Canadian development of that discipline). Finally, although this is not well-articulated in the department, there are graduate studies that represent disciplinary studies of other specialized forms of communication, in particular professional and/or technical communication, which is a rising field in Canada and well-developed in the U.S.

I won't try to explain here the complexity of how these terms are translated into programmatic names for disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies, except for a few brief remarks. Programs exist in both Canada and the U.S. (though in very different forms and proportions) that represent disciplinary or multidisciplinary studies of any and all of the practices, professions, and specializations mentioned above. But programs are unpredictable and inconsistent in how they define and name those studies. To give one example, in the U.S., in just one state several programs embody three entirely different understandings of "communication":

  • an undergraduate concentration in "strategic communication," described as a "convergence of advertising, public relations and marketing concepts" using an "integrated marketing communication process" (U. of New Mexico)
  • a Ph.D in "rhetoric and professional communication," combining rhetoric, composition, professional [i.e., workplace] communication, and critical/cultural studies (New Mexico State)
  • a B.S. in "technical communication," which "teaches students to apply principles of communication and problem solving in order to transfer information effectively between scientists, engineers, managers, technicians, and the general public" (New Mexico Tech).

Not surprisingly, each of these programs is located in a differently named institutional home, housing different disciplines or interdisciplinary mixes.

Contrary to my first impression, there is similar variation in Canadian programs even though the dominant model is to study the communications industry academically while

preparing students for careers in it. There is new interest in professional communication degrees, for example, while in some cases "communication(s)" seems to be a term of convenience for eclectic groupings of faculty. Broadly, Canadian "writing studies" (more often represented by individual scholars than programs) can mean something like U.S. rhetoric and composition in one place, genre studies of workplace communication in another, and linguistic or cognitive studies in another. These are all being influenced by U.S. rhetoric and composition on the one hand and the recent development of international writing studies (as an interdiscipline) on another. Rhetoric is almost impossible to stabilize as a programmatic or disciplinary term because, first, it is effectively an interdiscipline that crosses many fields and appears in any institutional sites, and, second, it is typically found in integrated studies (rhetoric and composition, rhetoric and professional communication, rhetorical genre studies, and so on).

Given this chaos of terminology, I propose that the RWC treat these terms, in their primary *local* sense, as designating **symbolic practices**—writing practices, rhetorical practices, and communication practices—that have a large overlap in their reference or denotation, but represent different constructions of these practices as objects of scholarship. The reality is that faculty in the department bring to these practices not a single "discipline" each, but a wide range of intellectual resources and traditions for construing and analyzing them. Historically, the faculty and its programs have integrated approaches, primarily from rhetoric and writing disciplinary sources, in the study and teaching of a wide range of practices, including the professional practices of communication(s). Canadian disciplinary studies of the communications industry play a role in the major, but not significantly in other levels of the curriculum.

If this is established as the dominant understanding of these three terms in the curriculum, the faculty can clarify for students the other meanings they have in specific courses, in scholarship, in graduate programs at other universities, including Canadian/U.S differences, while explaining the uniqueness and value of the department's own integrative approach. It is this relationship between the generic arts and the specialized studies and professions that gives the curricular programs their value and the department its distinctive character. The department offers integrative generalist studies in writing and rhetoric and makes these relevant to careers in communications industries as well as various possible paths into graduate studies and academic careers. The broad preparation it offers in effective communication (oral, written, visual, digital, multimedia) can also be put to use in other professions, like law or government.

What are the implications of this analysis for the future role of "communications" in the department? On one level this is a question of language. The use of the terms "writing," "rhetoric," and "communications" in naming (courses, programs, the department) should be based on understanding the variety of meanings and uses they have. That means that all three terms should be retained, though not necessarily exactly as presently deployed, because each has important functions in the curriculum and scholarship of the department. It also means that all three terms—not just "communications"—need more critical examination and clarification, as I'll discuss further below.

The more substantive question is how curricular resources (and, by extension, faculty resources) should be apportioned in the department in some kind of relationship to its primary naming terms, now it is realized that these terms don't correspond precisely either to courses or to faculty identities and disciplines.

If it is impossible (as the Curriculum Committee found) to classify courses in the major unambiguously into categories of "writing," "rhetoric," or "communications," then perhaps that is not the best way to go about organizing and prioritizing the curriculum. A more useful principle might be a distinction that crosses these categories, for instance between "practical arts" and "academic studies" courses, both of them important to each of the department's curricula. "Practical arts" might designate courses that intend to teach students to produce and perform symbolic practices—writing, speech, visual rhetoric, or multimedia communication, including specialized genre courses (e.g., in organizational communication, science journalism, or advertising) as well as advanced courses focused on techniques and strategies. Academic courses would be primarily designed as "studies": of history, research traditions, theories, rhetorics, media, sites or communities of practices, and special topics or figures. In the latter courses, student practices (of writing, research, or criticism) serve as instruments for learning about these subjects. Experiential learning courses (tutoring, research projects, community action projects, internships) might be a third group, or could be construed as "practical." In either case, if concepts of "practical arts," "academic studies," or "experiential learning" are understood as emphases rather than rigid categories, it is possible to imagine courses that mix them in different ratios. This academic/practical distinction offers one of many possible ways to "map" curriculum so that decisions can take into account multiple perspectives.

Just as individual courses don't necessarily fit neatly into categories of "writing," "rhetoric," and "communications," there is no identifiable stream of courses in "rhetorical *studies*" or "writing *studies*" that could be identified with a particular discipline. Rather, the curriculum offers courses that expose students to broad understandings and specific topics related to, and often blending, rhetorical perspectives and concepts, writing theories and practices, communication histories and theory, and various interdisciplinary theories and research approaches (for example, cultural studies, critical discourse analysis, and ethnography). The major is not designed to study disciplines per se or to correlate student programs directly with future graduate study. Instead, it gives them a background that is appropriate for a variety of academic and professional paths. (What the department needs to do is explain the value of this approach better to students.)

This niche suits a department of small size and high diversity of scholarly training and interests, which has neither the reason or the resources to build streams around its naming terms. In this model, the curriculum shouldn't be thought as requiring equal development of each component, since they play different roles at each level. So an introductory course in communication studies as a field is warranted, or courses that contribute broadly to studying media, for example, but not an attempt to build a stream or program along disciplinary lines. If anything, there should be a more careful effort to make sure that *studies* in writing and *studies* in rhetoric are amply represented and well-balanced in the curriculum's academic courses, not in a discrete "stream" but through sufficient exposure

to courses that demonstrate how symbolic practices (including speech and image) are studied through different paradigms of research, theory, and criticism. This goal doesn't require sorting courses into three categories; instead, one can map courses against the desired learning experiences, recognizing that each may have several functions or meet multiple goals.

One implication of an integrative model is that particular topics and concepts don't belong exclusively to a discipline or school of thought and should, where possible, be taught from a multidisciplinary, contrastive perspective. In this way the department and students can take advantage of the diversity and eclecticism of its faculty. For example, the concept of "mediation" is not limited to Canadian communications studies (the Toronto School), where it is traced to Marshall McLuhan; "mediation" is a central idea in activity theory (originating with Russian psychologists Vygotsky and Leontiev), developed and applied widely by international scholars in interdisciplinary research areas ranging from interaction design to genre studies.[4]

These comments on the curriculum are separate from the question of how disciplinary or interdisciplinary background should enter into decisions about future faculty hiring. I will return to this question in considering hiring for the future, below.

TAPPING THE DEPARTMENT'S INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES TO INNOVATE AND INTEGRATE

In the recent history of the department, despite important accomplishments like designing the M.A proposal, too much of the available energy for curricular work has focused on the three terms analyzed in the previous section, filtering all problems and disagreements through this lens. During my visit, the most overt debate over these terms emerged in the context of curricular mapping in the major, but they also tended to structure differences and concerns that were not so publicly voiced. In my view this focus has eroded faculty collegiality by over-identifying faculty scholarship (and its disciplinary sources) with the supposed recognition of, representation of, and respect for these identities and fields in the courses, groupings, and levels of the curriculum. The confusion around these terms and their perception as competitive priorities have blocked the path to fresh curricular thinking. With clarification of these terms and a better understanding of how they can function more productively in the department's discourse, it becomes possible to take advantage of the intellectual resources that are available in the department to address its priorities for articulating levels of the curriculum and building collegiality. In this section I want to introduce a number of strategies for undertaking fresh thinking about curriculum: the first set working with significant terms, concepts, and themes; the second set working with exemplars or models. Specifically, I advocate critically examining terms and terminological pairs of several types; identifying from local sources (institution and faculty) generative concepts as themes that can cross and connect different levels of

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[4] See, for example, Victor Kaptelinin and Bonnie A. Nardi, *Acting with Technology: Activity Theory and Interaction Design* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2006); and David Russell, "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis," *Written Communication* 14.4 (1997): 504-54.

curriculum or types of courses; and identifying exemplars or models in courses whose ideas or approaches are portable or more broadly applicable. In identifying examples that implement these strategies, I will try to suggest how these can become practical, concrete tools for accomplishing curricular thinking, design, and change.

<u>Concepts, Terms, and Themes</u>

1. Institutional themes

As I pointed out in my lecture, there are clear institutional themes that manifest themselves in the courses, curriculum, and overall ethos of the RWC department. It is useful to make these themes the object of critical consciousness, because they are both productive and also subject to certain dangers. The institutional tension between access and excellence, for example, is susceptible in RWC to being articulated as a contrast between curricula (first-year vs. major or graduate studies) or between different student groups and educational goals within each of the programs. Thus "access" may be interpreted as a "service" mission in the Tutorial Centre or certain sections and functions of Academic Writing, while "excellence" is attributed to the ideals for scholarship and knowledge-making embodied in the major, graduate studies, and faculty publication. Or, again, this tension could be aligned with different student groups within Academic Writing, or with the differences between students preparing for careers in Creative Communications in the joint major and those preparing for graduate school. As the university increases attention to research, the same pairing could be simplistically equated with teaching and research as competing values.

The antidote to these kinds of reductions and equations is to understand that any particular responsibility taken on by faculty, and any instructional site in the department can embody commitments to access and also strive for excellence in teaching and student learning. Tutoring, for example, and other writing centre functions are not only for underprepared students. Further, students with great potential, motive, and determination appear in every demographic group, and high faculty expectations can nurture them. However, it is important to acknowledge honestly that sometimes these commitments can compete with one another and greatly complicate particular tasks and situations, as, for example, when a course or program enrolls students who differ dramatically in their preparation, expectations, and divergent goals. The department needs to confront directly the reality that these different responsibilities can compete for faculty time and energy in particular instances, and devise ways to meet the challenges presented by student heterogeneity at each of its program levels.

Other important institutional pairs manifest in the department's work include oppositions and relations between academy/institution *and* city (or communities) and local *and* global contexts. Each of these is highly relevant to the department's work in both teaching and scholarship. The ways that these pairs engage relationships of difference, contrast, alienation, cooperation, separation, linkage, complementarity, synergy, and so on have very concrete expressions in situations like these, for example:

• A teacher offers a version of Academic Writing on-site at Urban Circle in the North End

• Students undertake an assignment to "compose our Winnipeg"
• Tutors or teachers work with "new Canadians" or aboriginal students who have never used a computer before, alongside international students or immigrants who define "post-national" identities through digital, cross-cultural communication.[5]

There are other, less remarked institutional themes whose possibilities and connections to the curriculum might be explored in future planning by the department. Among those I noticed in the Strategic Plan Update are an ideal of sustainability as "the paradigm that connects learning with access, economic viability, community interaction, and social commitment" (echoed thematically in U.S. composition studies) and the related concept of "a traditional way of going forward" as a strategy for responding to change. Another is the ancient "tension between University and College" (think of Oxford and Cambridge). Winnipeg's evolving approach reminds me of the New American College/University movement in the U.S., which attempts to combine the scope and variety of a university education (offering research opportunities and career preparation) with the intimate atmosphere and student engagement of a liberal arts college.[6]

In reflecting on particular curricular choices and issues, faculty should realize that these are embodying in concrete terms both the potential and the tensions created by these commitments.

2. "Foundational terms and concepts" in the RWC curriculum

In catalog copy about the Rhetoric and Communications major, I encountered the claim that Academic Writing offers students the "foundational terms and concepts" needed for upper level courses. I have been wondering ever since to what degree the department faculty is consciously aware of having a common vocabulary of "foundational concepts," which implies a sense that the curriculum is held together in part by such concepts and envisions some kind of development in their use over subsequent levels. I think this would be a provocative and useful topic for inquiry, both to discover what terms appear to be "foundational" across curricula (for example, "audience"), and also to explore their meanings, contexts of application, variations, sources, and histories of usage in the program. For example, how widely shared are particular terms? Which are more rare or recently introduced? When a teacher introduces a term (e.g., Bakhinian's "chronotope") or updates a canon (e.g., memory as "public memory"), does it spread to other courses? How? Can this work backwards, with terms introduced in advanced courses migrating back to first-year writing? Do terms become more complex, historicized, or theorized in later courses? Do students who encounter foundational terms in earlier courses actually retain

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[5] See Iswari Pandey, "Researching (with) the Postnational 'Other': Ethics, Methodologies, and Qualitative Studies of Digital Literacy." In *Digital Writing Research: Technologies, Methodologies, and Ethical Issues*," Heidi McKee and Danielle DeVoss. eds. (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2007) 107-25.

[6] See the New American Colleges & Universities website, http://www.anac.org/, with the motto "*Integrating Liberal Arts, Professional Studies, and Civic Responsibility*."

knowledge and use of these concepts or strategies in subsequent courses—in RWC? In courses in other disciplines?

Some primary source materials I looked at with this question in mind include program descriptions and materials on the web and in the catalog, especially learning objectives and outcomes; teachers' individual course descriptions; and syllabi and assignments. These provide strong evidence for what I have said about the dominant role of rhetorical perspectives in teaching various symbolic practices, centered on written language but inclusive also of speech and images (especially as objects of critical analysis) and conscious of the role of technologies in mediating communication.

It would be an interesting experiment to solicit from students in their 3rd or 4th year of the major all the rhetorical concepts or terms that they can think of, and then compare lists for overlapping (i.e., most commonly named) terms. I have tried this experiment with teachers in a program, starting with individual lists; moving into small groups to determine common terms and outliers; then comparing results between groups. (I didn't worry about whether or not the terms were really "rhetorical"—it was sufficient that they thought so.) My point was to demonstrate that teachers had acquired, and taught largely unconsciously, a broad shared "programmatic" vocabulary of rhetorical concepts and terms. This experiment won't get at concepts that students or teachers don't recognize as rhetorical, but such a list would provide an important window onto actual usage and learning as compared to the aspirational language of formal curriculum documents.

Many deeply foundational terms for each program or level of curriculum are used uncritically by the faculty and, therefore, by students, precisely because they are so indispensable that they have become naturalized as "givens" that need not be defined or defended. Curricular reviews of Academic Writing and the Rhetoric and Communications major present an opportunity to look at such terms with the assumption that their meanings are actually multiple, ambiguous, and subject to disciplinary and public controversy. I will have more to say about these in later sections; suffice it to say here that all three naming terms in the curriculum merit such scrutiny, in such contexts as "academic *writing*," plural "*rhetorics*," and "creative *communications*," as does the concept of *genre* deployed in Academic Writing.

3. Organizing terms in RWC programs

Here I want to emphasize not so much the need to examine these individual terms critically (although that is necessary) as to point out that certain concepts are constitutive of the very structure of these programs. They therefore offer a starting point for analyzing particular problems and issues as practical consequences of these structures.

The current Academic Writing curriculum (and, by extension, the Tutorial Centre) embodies an unacknowledged and underexplored conflict between a concept of "academic writing" as a teachable body of general knowledge and the idea that writing is genre-specific and best learned in context. The undergraduate major in Rhetoric and Communications (including students pursuing the Joint Communication degree) is more

explicitly structured by the co-existence and tensions between the academic or liberal arts orientation of the primary degree and the practical emphasis and career goals of the Creative Communications program that is linked to the RC curriculum. In the case of the major, these tensions are played out on the bodies of students enrolled in the different programs. Both oppositions are built into the very design of the programs and won't go away absent a complete redesign or abandonment of fundamental premises. While the M.A degree is still in the proposal stage, it may also turn out to be structured partly by versions of the academy/community or academic/practical binaries, as expressed in the alternative career paths it will accommodate.

4. Generative themes in faculty work

Faculty scholarship and curricular materials are an undervalued source of ideas for energizing and integrating the curriculum through multiple threads (rather than forcing a single vision on the whole). In this section they were my source for what I'm calling "generative themes." I found examples through my readings of these materials, discussed with faculty in the reading group, interviews, and other meetings. What makes them potentially "generative" themes? First, though these concepts may derive from or invite application to one curricular level, they seem generalizable or transportable to other levels. Sometimes they suggest concrete pedagogical designs or experiments; other times they offer topics, problems, questions, or perspectives to explore in various settings. Second, they enable faculty and students to connect their work with disciplinary scholarship and instruction in other settings.

• "Canadianizing": I came across this idea (new to me) in the context of a textbook, *Across the Disciplines: Academic Writing and Reading*, written by Jaqueline McLeod Rogers and Catherine Taylor, which substituted Canadian for U.S. authors in many of the anthologized articles.[7] This text is appropriate for a first-year class like Academic Writing. At the same time, I noticed that most students in my meeting with majors seemed unaware even of the existence of Canadian scholars and international bodies of scholarship in writing studies, composition, and rhetoric. My suggestion is that faculty should Canadianize their selections of readings at various levels of curriculum, but especially in the major, with the specific intention of acquainting students with the fact that writing studies, composition, professional communication, genre studies, and rhetoric, as well as media studies and cultural studies, have representation in Canadian scholarship and graduate programs.

• "liminal spaces": This concept was suggested by Tracy Whalen's article "Rhetoric as Liminal Practice," which begins with this statement: "In liminal spaces we find ourselves on a threshold (or limen), caught between practices, cultures, frames for knowing the world, and modes of communication—between, for instance, the divine and secular, university and workplace, private and public, linguistic and non-linguistic."[8] Liminal space/time

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[7] Jaqueline McLeod Rogers and Catherine G. Taylor, *Across the Disciplines: Academic Writing and Reading* (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2011).

[8] *Rhetor* 1 (2004) <cssr-scer.ca/rhetor>

(especially as a specifically rhetorical concept) offers one interesting interpretation and way of exploring the many thematic pairs that characterize the university, the department, student experience, the city, perhaps even Canadian character. Living in and near numerous new buildings on the edge of the campus, I was particularly struck by the physical expression of liminal spaces between university and city that have been so transformed by recent building and the various programs through which the city and university interpenetrate each other in buildings and centres where different cultures meet. Liminality is also an apt description of a moment when the department is on the threshold of change and new opportunities, between history and future. It suggests to me the importance of valorizing innovation, risk, and invention, but also respecting and preserving the department's traditions and unique history.

• "critical": *Across the Disciplines* begins with a refreshing attempt to define "critical thinking," the buzz word of so many curricula, as not negative thinking, but "reasoning as opposed to guessing or just believing what you are told"(1-2). It goes on to specify critical thinking as particular disciplinary ways of thinking or reasoning well, manifested in key concepts, questions, and methods. I was reminded of James Crosswhite's concept of "written reasoning," in his brilliant and underappreciated book *The Rhetoric of Reason: Writing and the Attractions of Argument*, which "reconstructs" argumentation in analyses of claiming, questioning, and conflict (among other things).[9] As a faculty reading, this would suggest how that concept could be elaborated pedagogically (beyond first-year writing). Later, the textbook introduces a contrasting conception of "critical" in a later chapter as a "parallel method of critical thinking": "This method is 'critical' in the sense of 'critical social theory': its focus is primarily on power rather than on 'truth'. . . . Critical literacy involves becoming aware of the 'box' constructed by the text itself (sometimes called 'reading against the grain' of a text) by exposing the text's politics and drawing attention to its oppressive effects" (104). I later saw this second concept of "critical" articulated pedagogically in Catherine Taylor's course "Critical Studies of Discourse."

The notion of being "critical" is crucial to many contemporary theories, pedagogies, and research methods, as illustrated in terms and concepts like critical thinking, critical research, critical discourse analysis, critical consciousness, sometimes aligned with and sometimes opposed to "rhetorical" thinking, research, analysis, consciousness. It also enters into the curriculum in another pairing that deserves thoughtful attention—of "critical" versus "productive" orientations. How does the faculty make choices in balancing between teaching writing, rhetoric, and communications as critical activities and analyses (reading) and as productive activities (writing, creating multimedia products), educating students to be both "critics" and "crafters" of language (and image)? For example, what is conveyed by introducing rhetoric to majors first through a course labeled "rhetorical criticism," given that rhetoric developed first as a productive art? Does the curriculum adequately address multimedia production?

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[9] James Crosswhite, *The Rhetoric of Reason: Writing and the Attractions of Argument* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1996).

• "facilitas": This classical term has been identified in curricular materials and articles by Brian Turner and Judith Kearns as a core rhetorical concept in the curriculum. It is an interesting choice that connects into a broad body of contemporary work that deals with the question of what it means to be able or skilled as a form of knowledge, and how such abilities are learned so that they can be applied in novel situations. This work is found in studies of reflective practice;[10] adaptability, flexibility, and judgment as "dispositions";[11] and transfer.[12] These discussions are pertinent to the question of whether and how "academic writing" can be taught in a general manner that students can translate into writing in disciplinary classes.

• "place" and "identity": These concepts are obviously thematic in the department's curricular materials, both independently and, frequently, together, especially in reference to Canadian identity. The faculty can usefully situate this work in the scholarly literature and pedagogy of rhetoric, composition, writing studies, literacy, and so on, which share these preoccupations. Place (and space) are explored in areas like eco-composition, global and international vs. local perspectives, and environmental writing.[13] The formation of identity in academic writing and learning is widely discussed in international writing studies as well as in U.S. composition studies.[14]

• "performance," "delivery": These topics, addressed in courses and publications by Tracy Whalen, attracted my attention partly because they relate to speech, and this department is distinctive among writing departments in its attention to speech and orality. These themes, like place and identity, are significant topics in contemporary scholarship; for example, on the intersection of rhetoric and performance[15] and on recuperating the canon of delivery.[16]

Exemplars

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[10] Donald A. Schon, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss, 1987).

[11] David Perkins, Eileen Jay, and Shari Tishman, "Beyond Abilities: A Dispositional Theory of Thinking," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 39 (1993): 1-21.

[12] Doug Brent, "Transfer, Transformation, and Rhetorical Knowledge: Insights from Transfer Theory," forthcoming in the *Journal of Business and Technical Writing*, Fall, 2011. Available on the web.

[13] See Peter Simonson's recent keynote address to the Rhetoric Society of America's Summer Conference, "Our Places in a Rhetorical Century," available at the RSA Blogora, http://rsa.cwrl.utexas.edu/.

[14] Recent contributions on the topic include Stanton Wortham, *Learning Identity: The Joint Emergence of Social Identification and Academic Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006); and Roz Ivanic, *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1998).

[15] For example, Stephen Olbrys Gencarella and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, *Readings on Rhetoric and Performance* (State College, PA: Strata, 2010).

[16] For example, Lindal Buchanan, *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois P, 2005.

Here the strategy is to look at courses or sections that introduce key concepts or practices that have the potential to spread through the curriculum. Often they will be foregrounded only for a period of time, so that others can borrow, test, and optionally incorporate good ideas into their own teaching, and then the teaching community will move on to new ones. But sometimes they can merit consideration as permanent, signature features of the program. Here are several examples I noted.

Research methods. The key concept of inquiry, if it goes beyond the "research paper," tends to be specified in rhetoric and writing curricula today as "critical thinking" or rhetorical analysis in the context of reading. But the department's offerings of courses that incorporate more varied research methods, like ethnography, oral history, discourse analysis, or arts-based methods, along with the new research methods course in the major curriculum, suggest the potential for original undergraduate research to become a signature feature of the curriculum (including first-year writing). There are conferences, books, and local and national journals devoted to a pedagogy centered on undergraduate research.[17] Besides courses, faculty might consider involving interested undergraduates in their own scholarly research or offering them opportunities to pursue such research independently. An emphasis on undergraduate research as an activity fits into experiential learning approaches as well as the university's enhanced attention to research.

Experiential learning. The Writing Partnerships Practicum designed by Jennifer Clary-Lemon could be a model or inspiration for developing a significant strand of experiential learning at different levels of intensity within the entire curriculum. This could be integrated with a focus on undergraduate research in diverse ways, since the practicum calls for "writing and research expertise." In participating in the university's emphasis on experiential learning, it's important to give these experiences the distinctive stamp of this department through inclusion of critical readings and reflections combined with practical skills, production, and action. This theme articulates all levels of the curriculum, including the proposed M.A.

Translating academic knowledge or expertise for various publics. Barry Nolan presented to the reading group and discussed with me an approach to teaching linked science classes that has broad interest and application.[18] He asked students to compare articles by scientists with popular articles by nonscientists written for the lay public. Some of the issues this activity raises are discussed in scholarly terms (with respect to science) by Jeanne Fahnestock, as a question about the "rhetorical life of scientific facts."[19] Her article addresses in part the question of "the impact of science reporting on public deliberation."

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[17] See, for example, "Valuing and Supporting Undergraduate Research," a special issue of *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 93 (Spring, 2003); and Laurie Grobman and Joyce Kinkead, *Undergraduate Research in English Studies*, (Urbana: NCTE, 2010), in which Jaqueline McLeod Rogers published an article.

[18] Barry Nolan, Report on the Academic Writing Link with Kinesiology. University of Winnipeg, May, 2011.

[19] "Accommodating Science: The Rhetorical Life of Scientific Facts." *Written Communication* 15 (1998): 275-96. Other scholars might call this practice "re-mediation."

This pedagogical strategy, originating in Academic Writing, opens up up a set of significant questions for the whole curriculum, about how academic knowledge and expertise is communicated to various publics more or less successfully, sometimes by experts themselves and sometimes by translators. Graduates in ordinary life and as citizens have to know how to interpret and evaluate expert knowledge in order to put it to use (for example, as medical patients) or to make choices about it as voters or decision makers. As professionals they will almost certainly have to communicate expert knowledge to others who are not experts in their own particular area. As "creative communicators" some may specialize in translating legal, bureaucratic, scientific, medical, and other knowledge for popular reading and use. These tasks present important compositional, rhetorical, and ethical issues that could energize particular courses and become topics of conversation with faculty in other disciplines.

<u>Losses and Gaps</u>

At any point in a department's life there are losses and gaps: losses of important ideas and earlier practices that have been forgotten or faded away, but could be recuperated; and gaps, where current topics and approaches, while sporadically present, are not being robustly pursued and supported throughout the curriculum. A department can always find fresh ideas by revisiting its curriculum through this analytic lens, and gaps, in particular, may also suggest possible directions for future hiring. Here are a few that I noticed:

Losses. 1) writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines—greatly underdeveloped compared to original conceptions
2) an expansive concept of the Tutorial Centre, including the very successful apprenticeship model that was used in the original centre, with undergraduates acting as teachers of tutors in the context of community learning

Gaps. 1) histories and historical perspective
2) digital writing, new media, multimedia, especially courses in production
3) collaborative writing
4) creative nonfiction and its relation to academic writing
5) professional and technical communication.

One message of this section on themes and terms is that the RWC faculty, operating as a teaching community and a kind of think tank, have only to look around them at their own institution and their own scholarship and teaching materials to discover myriad ideas and concepts to explore. These provide ample, rich intellectual resources for developing the constructively critical perspective and the integrative connections they are seeking. At the same time, they will learn more about how the department's own teaching and research fits into broader Canadian and international trends, movements, scholarly communities, and bodies of work. By making these external connections, faculty can draw on this work more explicitly and comprehensively and make their own contributions more visible.

Levels of the Curriculum: The Major, the First-Year Program, and the M.A Proposal

In moving to practical advice, I'll begin by offering some general principles that need to be adapted to the very different situations and "liminal moments" of the three levels of the curriculum. These differences mean, as I'll suggest in discussing processes of implementation, that each level requires a different time frame for assessing and undertaking potential revisions in its curricular design and implementation. At the same time, this work offers the opportunity to strengthen the horizontal (thematic) and vertical (developmental) articulations of the whole curriculum.

Here are some principles that emerged in the course of this study:

1. *Take a bottom-up approach*. Before making decisions, conduct research to find out what is going on in the curriculum as it is actually practiced: how variable its content and pedagogical strategies are, how it is experienced and valued by students, how well it responds to needs articulated by various stakeholders, how it compares to what is represented in syllabi and curriculum descriptions, how well placement is working, etc.[20] Develop ways to gather basic data that is not easily available now (e.g., how many students take Academic Writing later than required, how many majors there are, how often courses are offered, alumni placements, etc.). Document the extracurriculum—mentoring and advising, tutoring, internships, student organizations related to the curriculum, etc. Talk to students, teachers, and a broader range of stakeholders inside and outside the institution. Investigate thoroughly, as well, institutional facts and contextual information (e.g., about funding, administrative priorities, faculty hiring opportunities, potential partnerships) that are relevant to your decisions.

This primary, local research is crucial, but for some parts of the curriculum faculty will also beneft from comparative research and readings to situate its own programs in relation to other programs in Canada or the U.S.

Common research methods include surveys, interviews, focus groups, document collection and analysis, institutional research, conversations with various stakeholders and among teachers, website research, and faculty discussion groups on relevant scholarship.

A corollary to this principle is

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[20] I am thinking here of the concept of curriculum developed in *Research as a Basis for Teaching: Readings from the Work of Lawrence Stenhouse*, Jean Ruddick and David Hopkins , eds. (London: Heinemann, 1985): "Curricula are hypothetical procedures testable only in classrooms" (68). "The curriculum problem. . . is that of relating ideas to realities, the curriculum in the mind or on paper to the curriculum in the classroom" (62).

2. *Employ "backwards design."* Develop goals based on this research and work backwards to design or redesign courses, curricula, and learning environments to meet them. Learning goals for students are primary, but they are not the only ones; and curriculum design must also take into account various constraints. Considerations might include, for example, accommodating faculty interests and availability for teaching, responding to funding or research opportunities, attracting a different group of students (e.g., dual majors), or making the department visible on the Canadian or international scene. Be prepared to modify both goals and curriculum dynamically as the programs evolve and circumstances change.

3. *Address the heterogeneity of student populations*. This involves dual goals: to meet the needs of students with varying backgrounds or experience and to help teachers deal with the challenges this diversity poses. Doing so may involve various strategies from placement to course design to faculty development programs.

4. *Develop and highlight signature features* of programs and of the curriculum as a whole.

5. *Clarify and make visible the terms, concepts, and tensions among perspectives that structure the programs, and work to make them productive*. One strategy is to make such problems into a topic of inquiry for both students and teachers, both as subject matter in the curriculum and as a basis for making curricular and course design decisions.

Below, these are specified and adapted for each level of the curriculum.

THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR IN RHETORIC AND COMMUNICATIONS

I begin with the major for several reasons. Relative to first-year writing and to an M.A that is still in the proposal stage, it is both young and thriving. Because of the department's emphasis on faculty autonomy, and because of the nature of a major, it is there that the department's faculty scholarship and teacher inventiveness are most fully deployed, visible, and diversified. So the major functions as the laboratory of ideas for the whole curriculum. Yet, because students demand that a major "make sense," the faculty must give it coherence in the way they describe it, map it with requirements or sequences, thematize issues and problems, and implement it in specific courses.

Analysis

By all accounts the major has been successful and popular. Yet both teachers and students voice some concerns and, more important, see unexploited possibilities for enrichment. The immediate exigence for addressing these issues during my visit was the Curriculum Committee's effort to determine requirements based on course groupings, which bogged down in the terminological confusions of rhetoric, writing, and communications. But other issues and needs, as well as exciting possibilities, emerged in my meeting with majors. That is also where it became clear how much the distinctive integrative design of the program needs to be more clearly explained and consistently implemented. Finally, it was evident

that the faculty needs to think more explicitly about how to accommodate and deal with the mixed student constituencies created by the Joint degree with Creative Communications.

In addressing all of these matters, I suggest that the faculty adopt (and adapt to its own purposes) the concept of "backwards design."[21] The idea is to work backwards from the goals or purposes of the curriculum to the means for learning, whatever they might be. Instead of a priori categories, decisions about requirements and courses follow from decisions about goals. Learning goals are central, but they are not necessarily uniform for different student groups in the program; and they are not the only kind of goals to be taken into account. For example, the faculty should be asking questions like this: Do we want to expand the size of the major? This might imply attracting new groups of students and responding to their needs. Are we interested in increasing access to the major through special supports for particular students? Or do we want to sustain (or even cap) the major at a certain size and shift the balance among different types of students? What balance among the heterogeneous groups (academic, Joint Program, and others) is desirable? Realistic?

The department does have a set of learning objectives and outcomes posted on its website. However, it is not clear what role they have played in the ongoing design and revision of the major curriculum, or whether they are being used as a basis for measuring its success. At the least, they didn't appear to be part of the conversation that was guiding decisions about regrouping courses for requirement. Nor did the students themselves seem to use these as reference points for understanding the curriculum and evaluating their experiences.

Without implying any negative judgment about the current objectives and outcomes, I suggest that they be reviewed for possible revision and additions only *after* a process of careful research to find out more about the needs and desires of students and graduates of the major themselves, as well as those of various other stakeholders; their perceptions and judgments of how the current curriculum and pedagogical approaches meet their own goals; and their suggestions for improvement or change. I include among the stakeholders the RWC faculty itself, as well as students who take a minor or certificate; faculty in other disciplines who might take an interest in the major (see below); faculty in graduate programs that alumni have attended or might attend; and potential employers. In addition, research should include comparisons with majors elsewhere and investigation of trends in the development of undergraduate majors, both in Canada and the U.S.[22]

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[21] Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005).

[22] See Greg A. Giberson and Thomas A. Moriarty, *What We Are Becoming: Developments in Undergraduate Writing Majors* (Logan: Utah State UP, 2010); and *The Writing Major*, ed. Heidi Estrem, et al., a special issue of *Composition Studies* 35.1 (2007). A committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication has posted a list of program titles and requirements for such majors at http://www.ncte.org/cccc/committees/majorrhetcomp.

Students were eager to collaborate in the kind of programmatic research I am recommending, as evidenced by the participation of many majors and some alumni in the survey and meeting with majors organized by Allison Ferry. Many programs solicit advice from undergraduate majors on an advisory board and include them in curricular planning. These students were interested in various means of working together and with the department as a cohort, offering ideas ranging from a colloquium to writing support groups. The department should welcome their participation, provide them a place to hang out together, and develop different channels for their input as well as encouraging them in developing an identity as a cohort.

I urge the Curriculum Committee, to the degree possible, to extend its conversations beyond students to the other stakeholders listed here, to get a broader sense of the role the major and its graduates play or can play in the university, the community, and across Canada. I would specifically single out faculty on campus who might interact with the major or its students: for example, those whose students do or might benefit from a dual major, minor, or certificate; those who could provide research or professional internships for majors; and those who might participate in a Writing Fellows program (see below). Once these contacts are established, the department should consider various possibilities for ongoing relationships, collaborative and advisory. Such efforts may synergize with (as suggested below) reviving efforts to work with other faculty on writing in the disciplines.

In developing this information, the faculty will discover it wants data that is not available, largely because there is no process, commitment, or even institutional mechanism for collecting it. For example, I was told it is impossible to know exactly how many majors the department has, and no one seemed to be tracking how many majors are duals and, among these, which major was primary. I suggest that one consequence of this research should be to try to establish stable mechanisms for gathering and archiving data for purposes of planning and assessing the program over time.

While in the end the department should continue to pursue its own distinctive vision of the major, it should do so after a clear-sighted look at the state of the major, as illuminated by all these viewpoints and sources of information. Most of this information was not available when the major was first designed and implemented, and the faculty has new members unfamiliar with the original exigence and subsequent evolution.

My meeting, along with the survey conducted by Allison Ferry (Appendix 2) has already provided some remarkable insights into the major from the perspective of students and graduates. Among the most obvious is a strong sense that the major *as experienced* is structured by dramatic differences in the goals of its constituents. In the first analysis, this structure reflects the perceived difference in learning goals and career paths between students in the mainstream major versus those in the Joint Communications program. At the moment, this difference presents itself as a problem of incompatible needs and conflicting priorities, but it need not be. A first step toward making it productive is to reinterpret this difference as neither dichotomous nor inevitably conflictual.

In my observations, the current audience for this major is more subtly differentiated than it appears to be. First, these two groups (single degree vs. joint degree) are not so sharply distinguished as they appear. Some students seem have a more ambiguous relationship to the two programs, not only in terms of whether they will pursue a joint degree, but also in the career paths their choices imply. Some seem to want flexibility to go either way in the future. Some are simply unsure what they want to do or be and are exploring the possibilities. One implication is that the faculty must be careful not to assume that the current dual structure of programs ("practical" vs. "academic") translates into students at one extreme or the other. Many in either program may fall in the middle, or want to combine elements of each. But others may fit neither mold.

Second, the major offers the option of a 3 or 4-year degree, which differentiates the student population along another dimension. The significant difference this implies in goals and in what the extra year enables (including the possibilities for combining majors) needs to be taken into consideration in thinking about how to address a heterogeneous student population in the major.

Third, I noticed that an unusually large number of students claimed dual majors or mixed programs of some kind (enabled in part by the large number of electives in requirements for the major). In some cases, R&C students were pursuing a second, complementary major; in other cases, students in another discipline were taking R&C as a second major that would enhance their degree and job prospects. If we add to this the possibility of R&C minors and certificates, this group presents opportunities for growth in the major. In the research phase of this project, I suggest careful investigation of which other majors are attracting students to take courses, certificates, minors, or dual majors in R&C as well as which are attracting R&C students as supplements to their program. These fields are prime candidates for developing course links, a Writing Fellows program, WAC/WID relationships, partnerships for internships and other joint ventures, as well as for recruiting students to the major program.

These existing variations and departures from the simple opposition of "academic" and "practical" majors suggest a more radical move to escape the dichotomy by helping students to reimagine an integrative, generalist major as affording multiple paths through it and into a range of careers. Even the most salient alternatives right now—academic careers in rhetoric, writing, and/or communications or careers as communication specialists in industry—are much more diverse than students realize. But besides these options, the major already has (dual major or minor) students from other fields like science or business heading toward either academic or professional careers, with R&C as a strong complement or supplement to their degrees. Finally, there are plenty of other careers for which a degree like the R&C major is particularly appropriate undergraduate preparation, including advocacy roles (a good fit with the proposed M.A degree), law, government, and politics.

In other words, the major is already heterogeneous in its student populations and paths to future careers, in ways the faculty could both elucidate and cater to by targeting different features and options to the curriculum for particular student goals and needs. To the

degree that research demonstrates genuinely different needs among groups, which may not be met by current curricular structures, I recommend that the faculty address these needs by expanding options and implementing them in flexible ways, rather than setting up a set of mini-curricula that separate students along particular lines of difference and then lock them into these choices, once made.

Such moves (as suggested below) would strengthen its curriculum, especially alongside efforts to both clarify and analyze its terms and question the oppositions they enter into, starting with local meanings. For example, I was struck by the fact that in Communications at Red River College, "practical" is actually equated with "creative" communication in mass media professions, not (for example) with the more common sense of transactional discourse like business communication. I wonder if common ground could be developed through such means as adding or highlighting coursework or topics in creative nonfiction, the role of narrative in inquiry, and the esthetic as a component of many rhetorics, both classical and postmodern. On the academic side there is no single discipline or graduate study into which students are being socialized, so that mentorship and course selections for this group must accommodate diverse interests and possibilities.

Faculty also need to be discussing with themselves and with students, in different forums (not only courses), the central terms of the curriculum. Besides "practical" and "academic," and the issues raised earlier about the department terms in relationship to disciplines, I wonder that "rhetoric" has not received more critical examination as the central term of the curriculum. For example, are students systematically learning about the multiplicity of rhetorics? Given a classical framework, is the core rhetoric Aristotelian, Platonic, Sophistic, or based on Cicero and Quintilian? How do these challenge one another, especially in their contemporary expressions? What about the current expansion of rhetorical studies to international or global or intercultural rhetorics? What does it mean to speak of "rhetorics of" identity, disability, social movements, and so on, or rhetorics with a modifier (feminist, cultural, networked. . .)? These questions suggest ways to connect rhetoric to other themes and priorities, like access or advocacy for social justice: for example, studying aboriginal cultural rhetorics; examining how identity issues intersect with academic learning for particular ethnic and social groups; studying the rhetoric of social movements in relation to aboriginal, urban, immigrant, and other social groups in Canada.

A Menu of Options

I'll end this section with some specific suggestions and recommendations reflecting the general strategies suggested above. They comprise a menu of options, not exhaustive, some of them drawn from proposals made by students and faculty in meetings during my visit.

1. Incorporate into courses, curricular descriptions, and program events (conferences, symposia, speakers, etc.) discussions of the integrative nature of the curriculum, the multiple meanings and relationships of terms, distinctive features of the curriculum in comparison to other types of programs, and explanations of how it will prepare students for various careers. Design courses and extracurricular experiences that enable the department and students to explore both the differences and potential connections

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between "academic" and "practical" or "creative" (communications) perspectives and futures, to expand conceptions of each, and to point to the role of rhetoric, writing, and communication practices in other careers like law, government, business, or technology.

2. In place of defined "streams," lay out and make available on the web a number of exemplary student programs that demonstrate different "paths" related to different interests and goals. Students need some guidance, not dependent on occasional conversations with advisors, as to how to put together coherent selections and routes through the program.

3. Develop undergraduate research as, potentially, a signature feature of the mainstream program. It could perhaps begin through a series of pilots and experiments, and then spread to become an explicit element of many courses. It could also be attached to specific programmatic options like a 4-year program or a possible Honours stream. In addition, the department should systematically develop the potential for independent research projects or participation in faculty projects. Other ways to develop this as part of the program signature are to catalog research methods used by the faculty and make that information known to students, perhaps with invitations to consider collaborative projects; offer a research methods course frequently; and bring speakers to talk about research.

4. Develop a robust set of options in experiential learning, both in courses and in internships (favored widely by students). This will involve the department in working with partners both in and outside the academy, and could lead to developing an external board for the whole curriculum. The many advantages of such a board including gaining insight into the current thinking of employers and other stakeholders, providing funding opportunities, gaining boosters, and offering internship placements.

5. Develop multiple opportunities for extracurricular participation of the undergraduate major cohort in activities with academic, professional, and community-building features. Among these, a number can tie together different levels of the curriculum or connect with other parts of the university and nonacademic community: for example, linking students in the undergraduate major with the M.A program and the first-year program through joint participation in the Tutorial Centre; or recruiting R&C majors along with students in other disciplines together into a Writing Fellows program (see discussion below, in context of the Tutorial Centre).

6. Consider an optional , team-taught capstone seminar, which might include "correlation and review" conducted largely by the students themselves, with faculty facilitators, and/or a capstone portfolio or extended writing experience. This could be designed specifically for 4 year BAs, students planning an academic career, and perhaps students in an Honours stream (see next item), but with the idea it might be open to others if there is demand for it.

7. Cautiously consider an Honours stream (or, depending on institutional requirements, a more informal alternative, perhaps for the 4-year degree), built around the capstone seminar and perhaps an identified series of recommended course choices plus options for extracurricular experiences, like undergraduate research, internships, or experiential

learning projects. Students requested an Honours section of Academic Writing; this might be considered, but most wouldn't know they wanted it until too late. The department could simply identify certain Academic Writing sections as more challenging (e.g., a more elaborate and demanding link, a service learning section, a student research-oriented section, or a specific set of readings or topics) and let students choose from them. Flexibility here is desirable, but may depend on university rules about what "counts" as Honours.

THE FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM: ACADEMIC WRITING AND THE TUTORIAL CENTRE[23]

The first-year writing program—"Academic Writing"—needs a thorough and comprehensive assessment, as anticipated by the department's establishment of a First-Year Committee with the charge to examine it in any and all aspects without preconceptions. It is a kairotic moment for revitalizing a program that has been running on auto-pilot for awhile. The program is more than due for a fresh look, given its age—sixteen years since its inception—and its importance in the first-year experience that is the focus of university concern in a recent task group report.[24] In addition to its role in fulfilling the task group's recommendation for the first-year curriculum to "be a strong foundation for later study," the first-year program also contributes, through the Tutorial Centre and some of its specialized sections, to ensuring that the curriculum "be accompanied by readily available but sustainable supports for students who need them." These two recommendations are a reminder of the potential for both excellence and access that is built into this department's first-year program (unique in Canada), which received so much public attention and accolades in its early years. The faculty needs to recapture the vitality and renew the legacy of these beginnings. It is tempting to see the major and proposed master's program as somehow more intellectually exciting and advanced. But the first-year program is the core of the department's scholarly and ethical mission and is not merely practical nor unconnected to its theoretical and critical work. It is time to reinvest intellectually in this program, in the access mission it represents as well as the capability to prepare students for writing development in college and beyond.

I need to warn at the outset that updating this program will take a lot of work. But if, as implied by the Fulbright project, the RWC department wants to reestablish the status of its first-year course and Tutorial Centre as a national model of innovative design, it must tackle two tasks as prerequisites: studying the course as currently implemented, as a response to the distinctive realities and writing environments of the University of Winnipeg; and reconnecting the program to current scholarship on writing instruction. The first-year committee needs to formulate an agenda and schedule for this work that will allow the department to make and implement decisions about the future directions of this course. This is what I will try to help with. I will share some general observations and link them to the kinds of research, discussions, readings, and experiments that I think would be productive for the first-year committee to sponsor and undertake. The committee's plan should distribute this work over a multi-year time frame so that it does not displace other priorities of the department.

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[23] I am including the Tutorial Centre in this section because of its origin and most common use at present, but, as I will discuss, it is not and should not be limited to support of Academic Writing.

[24] Final Report of President's Task Group on First-Year Curriculum, University of Winnipeg, Feb. 2011.

As a program ages and begins to take for granted rather than to argue and debate its major premises, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand how these are operationalized in practice. This is even more the case in a multi-section program taught by everyone in the department. Even in writing programs with a designated administrator, it is an ongoing challenge to document the variability of the curriculum in practice and to temper it (in the interests of consistency and coherence) with such measures as class observations, syllabi checks, readings of student work, faculty development programs, outcomes measures, and so on. Without such oversight, and without the dialogue and collaborations of a teaching community, there is nothing working either to sustain a particular model of instruction or to provide for its criticism and evolution. In the case of Academic Writing, there was no way for me to discern (and I'm not sure anyone knows) the relationship between the curriculum on paper (which is rather minimally described in syllabi and other places) and the curriculum in practice. Besides the natural variations in philosophy and style from teacher to teacher, it is hard to know what the commonalities and principled differences are among the design variants of the program: by major fields of study (humanities, social sciences, business and administration) or multidisciplinary sections; linkages to other disciplines; online delivery; and extended versions for several audiences. So the first order of business for the First-Year Committee is to examine each of these curricula—the curriculum on paper and the curriculum in practice—both separately and in comparison.

Researching the Curriculum on Paper and the Curriculum in Practice

The curriculum on paper—you might say the curriculum as conceived and intended—is more easily observed than the curriculum as it is actually practiced across multiple classrooms in several variants by many instructors. It can be studied through curricular materials—syllabi, assignments, departmental descriptions of requirements, and so on, amplified by teachers' own explanations of these, preferably in dialogue with one another. The committee needs to pay special attention to the differences these materials and teachers articulate about the structural variations around which the curriculum is organized.

My own look at the curriculum on paper was necessarily limited, although greatly aided by conversations with instructors. But that was enough to see that the structure of the curriculum conceals an unexamined opposition between two premises about writing and how it is learned: the first, a generalist notion of "academic writing" that underlies the whole course, most obviously its multidisciplinary sections; the other, a genre-based concept suggested by the primary organization of the course around major fields and the design of some sections as "links" to particular disciplines. In fact, the options available in the course correspond to one of the great divisions and ongoing controversies in writing pedagogy: the idea of writing as a broad capability that can be taught in a generic writing class as a "foundation" for later writing and learning versus the concept of writing as deeply embedded in social life, taking the form of specific genres that can only be learned through immersion and practice in the situations and contexts where they are tied to activities, social roles, knowledge content, technologies, and so on. The concept of "academic writing" is a variant of the first position that assumes there is a generic discourse—ways of thinking and writing—common to academic disciplines, which can be

learned in a composition course and will then "transfer" to the writing that students must learn and produce in disciplinary courses throughout college.

The multidisciplinary sections of Academic Writing represent the typical environment for teaching writing as a "global or universal ability," in the words of David Smit (a strong critic of this position),[25] while the linked courses (nominally, at least) push the curriculum in the opposite direction toward genre-specific learning. The organization of the first-year curriculum primarily around broad super-genres (the humanities, business, the sciences, the social sciences) seems to mediate these two apparently incompatible positions, but whether it does so in practice depends on what actually goes on in these sections, including, for example, whether the three options (multidisciplinary, linked, and major-field) are distinctly different in the curriculum as practiced and—especially—whether such a mediating stance is deliberate and explicitly taught.

In practice, I didn't see much evidence that a rich genre model is taught either conceptually or practically, even in the link courses. My suspicion is that, as suggested by the rhetoric of descriptive materials, most sections in all three models of "Academic Writing" are teaching versions of the same generalist, foundationalist position, with the major-field and even linked courses using disciplines primarily as the source of topics rather than teaching the concept or practice of field-specific genres. The only example I was able to examine up close was Barry Nolan's kinesiology link, which, while it is organized topically, also highlights comparisons between expert disciplinary discourse and popularizations (singled out earlier as a promising theme for the whole curriculum). Conversely, though, it is hard to see exactly what principles of writing, rhetoric, or communication animate a generalist approach and provide common ground across sections. One candidate might be the notion that academic writing is "critical" (see earlier discussion). Another might be the concept of "facilitas," and, more generally, the notion of rhetoric as an art adaptable to any context. A generalist notion of first-year writing meshes well with the undergraduate major, which emphasizes the portability of rhetorical strategies that can be applied and revised for different purposes, audiences, and settings. In fact, the major holds promise of providing defensible principles for this position and even articulating and reconciling it with a genre approach. But it is unclear how widely "rhetorical consciousness" is cultivated in Academic Writing, or how comprehensively a pedagogical rhetoric is implemented in the curriculum-in-practice.

Many of the assumptions underlying the foundationalist model of first-year writing have come strongly into question, in scholarship on "transfer" as well as in genre studies According to Canadian scholar Doug Brent, cited earlier, "We now generally accept that there is no universal educated discourse that students can learn in a writing course and easily apply to courses in history or astronomy." Nonetheless, the notion persists amongst teachers of the course and stakeholders in the first-year requirement alike that it can provide foundations, not simply for college writing in various disciplines, but for an

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[25] David Smit, *The End of Composition Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004) 10. For a critical review of his extreme position, see Louise Wetherbee Phelps, *Rhetoric Review* 25.2 (2006): 211-33.

indefinite future of writing tasks, functions, and contexts, ranging from courses in a student's major to writing in the professions or for civic advocacy. Any particular writing curriculum emphasizes one or more of these future contexts over others, but in all cases they imply a responsibility that extends far beyond the learning goals internal to the course and its semester time frame.

These expectations constitute a uniquely heavy burden for first-year writing curriculum planners. Practically speaking, it means that backwards design is extremely difficult, because the end point is so unclear, subject to the pressures of multiple constituencies, and, often, remote in time. As a result, the course tends to run on a tacit assumption that whatever is being taught—the "outcomes" to be reached at the end of the course—will magically serve as a foundation for any and all of these future writing contexts, without knowing very much about what they will be, how they differ, and by what means these foundational skills will carry forward from one to the next. (It doesn't help, of course, that some students may not actually take the course before completing 42 credit hours, as assumed in its foundational mandate.)

One conclusion that follows from this analysis is that, while research on the curriculum on paper and in practice needs to begin with an internal examination of the course, that is insufficient either to understand it or to gauge its effectiveness. The natural starting point for the First-Year Committee's work is to study the content, pedagogical strategies, and perceived effectiveness of the course as it is designed and experienced by the faculty who teach it and as it is experienced and assessed by students during and immediately after the course. Methods like surveys, focus groups, interviews, and faculty conversations will provide insight into the relationships between the curriculum in practice and the curriculum on paper. Both students and teachers will be able to express satisfactions, dissatisfactions, and suggestions for change. In addition, institutional research can provide basic data about issues like placement and timing of student enrollment in the course. But the foundationalist claims and expectations of the course mean that it is necessary to go beyond internal discussions and assumptions based on conventional wisdom about university writing (about the research paper, for example). The committee needs to develop empirical, local knowledge about what the course is actually preparing students for and, from the perspective of both advanced students and faculty in the disciplines, how effective it is. Research of this type encompasses such questions as the range of writing tasks and genres students encounter in their courses; faculty attitudes, concepts of writing, and pedagogical practices like assignments and responses to student writing; and advanced students' experiences and reflections as writers and learners in these contexts, including their assessment of how first-year writing did or didn't prepare them for these challenges.[26] Despite the focus on academic writing, faculty must also consider the role of nonacademic writing, since it is practiced by university students for internships, community projects, contexts of experiential learning, or professional courses like business, even sometimes in first-year writing assignments. Since ultimately, both students

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[26] For a start on this kind of research, see the brief survey of faculty in the disciplines, conducted by Judith Kearns and Brian Turner in Fall, 2009.

and publics expect that college writing instruction will produce graduates who can write for nonacademic contexts, ideally planners would gather information about the views of alumni and employers (some of it available from outside sources).

This is the kind of information base necessary for backwards design of Academic Writing. But it is only the first step in a complex process of deciding not only what relationship the first-year course *has now* to students' learning and writing in contexts beyond the course, but what relationship it *can possibly have*, based on an informed understanding of scholarly discoveries and debates about writing in the disciplines, genres, transfer, and related matters—issues and questions raised by the organization of the course.

These observations suggest that the First-Year Committee pursue its inquiry on dual tracks. One would focus on local research into the curriculum as it is actually practiced, experienced by students, and viewed by a widening circle of stakeholders (academic and nonacademic), beginning with an internal inquiry and moving out into the university to gather information and conduct conversations with teachers and students about concepts, practices, and attitudes toward writing in the disciplines in relation to the role of first-year writing. The second would analyze critically the intellectual premises, contradictions, and potential of the curriculum, drawing on scholarly perspectives as well as conversations with faculty in other fields. These would begin as separate projects, in different time frames and at different paces, but would converge and inform each other as the committee brings together the critical perspectives, insights, and alternatives from its readings and conversations with the process and findings of its research.

Some suggestions for reading may clarify how this convergence might happen. I recommend two books that explore the issues I have identified here in a practical way, by engaging in conversations with faculty in the disciplines. Because one, *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines*, locates itself in writing studies and the other, *In Search of Eloquence*, in rhetoric, they provide two intellectual perspectives on these topics (for example, whether there is any common concept of academic writing among disciplinary faculty, how a general art of rhetoric can inform understanding of writing in the disciplines) and two models for investigating them through faculty discussions.[27] Doug Brent's article, previously cited, offers a thorough and balanced introduction to the literature on transfer (accessible enough to share and discuss with faculty in other fields). For the First-Year Committee or a reading group set up for the purpose, these readings might be coupled with discussions of two statements on appropriate outcomes for writing instruction: the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition and the NCTE Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, both of which adopt a generalist position.[28] For the other side of

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[27] Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki, *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life* (Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2006); Cornelius Cosgrove and Nancy Barta-Smith, *In Search of Eloquence: Cross-Disciplinary Conversations on the Role of Writing in Undergraduate Education* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2004).

[28] The two statements are available on the web at the WPA and NCTE websites, respectively.

the picture, Bawarshi and Reiff offer a comprehensive guide to a large and complex literature on genre, including a good deal of Canadian scholarship.[29]

One problem that will emerge in studying the curriculum in practice, but needs separate attention, is heterogeneity in the student populations taught in Academic Writing, which manifests itself both in special sections (various versions of an extended option, as well as an online version) and within sections across the different options. Placement is by student choice, for the most part. The university's access policy coupled with a universal requirement means that, with self-placement, the range of student preparation, knowledge, and interest in writing might be extreme in a given class. There may also be a significant difference between students taking the course in their first year and students who delay it until late in their programs.

All these issues around the diversity of students in a universal course were well-recognized in the early years of the program, and the present structures of special sections, placements, and tutorial support were designed in response. I suspect this problem has faded into the background over the years, and the department assumes it is handled by placement and through the Tutorial Centre. But it can't take that for granted. The faculty needs to assess how these arrangements are working now in practice and how they might be enriched, improved, or modified. What are the consequences, good and bad, of self-placement? What is the range of differences among students in regular sections of the course, and what kinds of challenges do these present to teachers and students? I heard comments from majors who wanted a more rigorous first-year writing experience and from teachers who had some classes with a range of diversity that was pedagogically difficult to manage. What role is the Tutorial Centre playing in supporting this range of students? How effective is the extended version of the course, and are the right students taking it? What reasons do students have for choosing a major field, link, or multidisciplinary section, and do these reasons and placements have any pedagogical consequence?

Beyond First-Year Writing: Expanding the Tutorial Centre and Connecting to Disciplines

Focusing on the problem of heterogeneity and, especially, its relationship to access and to the work of the Tutorial Centre raises in a different context the question of limitations to a first-year foundational course. When students are admitted through the access policy, their needs for special support as writers and learners extend far beyond what even an extended course can do. What responsibilities does the RWC department have for these needs, through what means? Specifically, what role should the Tutorial Centre have in supporting these students as they move into writing in academic courses, over the college years? What communication or cooperation with faculty in other disciplines would that entail? How would such an expansion of tutorial functions be funded, organized, administered?

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[29] Anis S. Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*, West Lafayette: Parlor Press/WAC Clearinghouse, 2010.

This question, as it applies to access, is just a specialized version of the general problem that a foundational course can only be effective if it is taught as one element in a much longer sequence of writing development. With this issue, as with the other lines of research I have suggested, every effort to study the first-year course is likely to lead back into the writing environments that surround and follow it.

The fact is, first-year writing is not simply part of the whole RWC curriculum; it is the first level in the writing curriculum of the university, which is distributed among the disciplines (including RWC classes), activities, and settings where students write and learn. That means that first-year writing needs to be articulated with writing in those settings, through ongoing interactions with faculty and students and, where the opportunity arises, partnerships to strengthen the extended writing curriculum. It is not a matter of trying to re-institute a formal WAC/WID program, which I don't advocate, but of finding multiple ways to keep a line of communication open with faculty in the disciplines and student writers as they move through the university. Although an earlier WAC initiative lapsed, the spirit still lingers as a legacy among many faculty, and can be revived by various modest means, as the opportunity arises. For example, one of the simplest ways to make first-year writing relevant to writing in the university (and vice versa) is to invite faculty in the disciplines into first-year classrooms, as writers talking about their experiences of writing, teachers talking about their assignments, and readers explaining how to interpret materials in their field or comparing expert with popular representations of knowledge.

I would suggest that the department cautiously explore selective initiatives to extend the functions of first-year writing instruction and the Tutorial Centre to other levels, weighing their costs and benefits: for example, following up with students who complete extended sections to offer special support as needed in disciplinary courses; developing a Writing Fellows program, in which peer writing tutors with tutorial training and experience are located within writing-intensive courses in the disciplines; or experimenting with advanced links that work with disciplinary faculty to analyze and practice genres in disciplinary contexts. All of these possibilities require cooperation and involvement from faculty in other units, and choices among them should reflect departmental priorities and take advantage of synergies among different parts of the curriculum. For example, a Writing Fellows program might both employ majors as tutors and also attract new double majors or minors from recruited tutors who had performed well as writers and learners in a targeted disciplinary course. Such initiatives would, of course, require funding, either through reallocation of department resources or through university or external sources.

Using the Current Framework as a Scaffold for Change

There is so much going on in any first-year writing course, and so many demands placed upon it, that it is important to build a very strong research base and consensus for undertaking any major changes. I urge the department to take a slow evolutionary approach to making actual changes and to use the existing structure of variations and options as a viable continuing framework; it has the flexibility to allow experimentation and the potential to make its problem—an apparent philosophical contradiction—into an opportunity.

The structure of Academic Writing, as now organized, has two potentially viable concepts for writing instruction. Both have deep roots in the history of the department, but the generalist approach is stronger because it has developed into, and reflects, a full-scale curriculum in the major, whereas the genre approach was only sketched schematically by the organization of sections by field. It was never developed as a collective departmental project, and, with the fading of the WAC initiative, lost connection with the disciplines. I see no need to choose between them, however; maturity of a program, like that of an individual, means being comfortable with ambiguity, complexity, and paradox. Rather, I suggest taking both more seriously and developing each as fully as possible as an intellectual position and pedagogical model, so that ultimately they will enter into a dialectical relationship that reveals the complementary virtues and limitations of each.

These two pedagogical positions do not equate, as one might too quickly assume, with rhetorical studies and writing studies in any disciplinary sense. Each of them is compatible with a range of theoretical frameworks from different disciplinary perspectives. In this department, the generalist position corresponds, as noted earlier, with the integrative, interdisciplinary ethos of the department, already projected into the major: essentially, a notion of rhetoric as a global art for use in writing, communication, and critical practices. That idea translates naturally into a first-year pedagogy of generic principles, to be applied in subsequent rhetorical situations and contexts of communication. I suggest that this conception of writing instruction be thought of as what Paul Ricoeur calls a "weighted focus," or productive bias, informing the whole curriculum, to be played against and articulated with a genre perspective on how advanced writing develops in terms of context-based practices. By posing the two against one another in a dialectic method— reading each generously, the idea is to allow each to bring out both the virtues and limitations of the other.[30] To carry out this method, though, requires making the faculty's understanding of its preferred pedagogy more explicit and critical, while using its discipline-oriented sections for actually developing and instantiating a genre-oriented pedagogy.

While the department's generalist pedagogy has practical vitality, it needs a greater intellectual investment to explain how it relates Academic Writing to the rhetorical curriculum of the major. This work is not independent of the suggestions made in earlier sections for enriching the whole curriculum conceptually; the first-year initiative can draw on such efforts from any quarter of the department (individual or group), or initiate its own. This work must be critical as well, questioning assumptions about what is being learned in Academic Writing and how easily it will transfer. Genre studies offer that criticism, along with research and theory on the situations and demands that advanced writers face in the disciplines and outside the academy. But to play its part in this dialectic, genre pedagogy must have its own place in the curriculum. That can begin, at least, by

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[30] An explanation of Ricoeur's dialectic method is offered in Louise Wetherbee Phelps, "The Third Way: Paul Ricoeur and the Problem of Method," Ch. 8 in *Composition as a Human Science: Contributions to the Self-Understanding of a Discipline* (New York, Oxford, 1988).

developing genre concepts and relationships with other disciplines in the discipline-oriented sections of Academic Writing (major fields and links), drawing particularly on the strong Canadian scholarship in genre studies, which is rhetorically based.

Ultimately, truly exploring genres in the disciplines for both students and teachers requires going beyond first-year writing, since experience with context-specific genres is very limited in most first-year courses in the disciplines. The real promise of this effort would be to begin to figure out what kind of bridging strategies make "transfer" possible. For example, Academic Writing could develop genre itself as a rhetorical concept to prepare the way for understanding its role in advanced applications of general principles. In link sections teachers could work with disciplinary partners to illustrate how specific genres exemplify such general principles while also clarifying the kinds of knowledge that can only be acquired in practice of such genres.

All the proposals I've made for assessing and transforming Academic Writing assume continuation of the overall framework while trying to develop its content more substantively and make an apparent contradiction into a productive tension. That is to say, my proposals are conservative; not only do they build on what's there, but they can be paced according to the department's priorities and resources. The way to control the pace is to set long-term schedules for research, reading, analysis, and discussions, while inviting faculty to conduct practical experiments and pilots of their ideas (which can then, of course, be folded into assessment).

Specifically, I think multidisciplinary sections can be used as laboratories to push the boundaries, trying out alternate models of the course and themes and ideas from various sources, including other parts of the curriculum. For example, one could have sections organized by experiential learning or around undergraduate research, or (from the M.A proposal) by a focus on civic writing and advocacy. Some sections might introduce digital and multimedia writing, develop a local-global theme, or try to incorporate genre theory into the dominant rhetorical approach. Link courses are inherently experimental in the connections they could more actively explore between the first-year curriculum and the writing and reading of the linked discipline, by working more closely with disciplinary faculty. Any useful information that emerges from them (for example, regarding the relations between expert and popular writing about disciplinary knowledge, or the range of actual assignments) can then be fed back into the major fields curriculum to inform teachers or provide optional themes and assignments. Experiments outside the Academic Writing curriculum per se could affect it profoundly; for example, if the department develops a Writing Fellows initiative, the Fellows could become a rich source of knowledge for first-year writing teachers and students about the genres of particular fields, the applicability of general principles, the problems of transfer, and so on.

PROPOSAL FOR M.A IN RHETORIC, WRITING AND PUBLIC LIFE

In Sept. 2009, in response to the university's decision to expand graduate studies, the department submitted a proposal for a Master of Arts in Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life along with a Graduate Certificate in Rhetoric and Public Life. When I arrived, the proposal was still pending, because of changes in the climate for such expansion, and the department was reluctantly preparing to try an alternate route. After two graduate programs were approved which COPSE was unable to fund, including an M.A in Cultural Studies from the English Department, the university had put a hold on adding independent graduate programs, including this one from RWC. Instead, the department had been encouraged to consider the possibility of "nesting" its M.A as a stream within the M.A in Cultural Studies. The M.A Subcommittee was in the process of developing a revised proposal for this purpose. I was asked to examine and evaluate this prospect.

Briefly, the proposal as originally written is for a one-year master's degree intended to educate graduates in rhetorical analysis, design, and practical production of writing, with a strong focus on using this knowledge to support community-based efforts for social change. It claims that "our graduates will be well positioned to continue to work for social justice by applying their expertise in their careers in their volunteer work, whether their work contexts are activist organizations or mainstream employers such as government departments or corporations." The centerpiece of the proposed program is its preparation of students for real-world practice of rhetorical and research skills through a practical internship, with a companion course to make the connections between theory and practice. Students are also required to learn research methods and study relations between rhetoric and public life. The program's theory-practice combination, along with the focus on civic contributions by students and graduates, is the most distinctive and unique feature of the proposed program. However, it also provides a second option for courses without the internship, more oriented to academic study and future doctoral work.

In my initial reading, I found this a strong proposal that built on strengths in the department's faculty and undergraduate curriculum. But members of the M.A Subcommittee believed that placing the program as a stream within the Cultural Studies M.A would require significant revision, including stripping out its signature feature—the internship requirement. Because important decisions on this strategy were to be made while I was on campus, I made it a priority for investigation. I will return to the proposal itself after reporting that investigation and its consequences.

<u>The Streaming Option</u>

I interviewed Dr. Kathryn Ready, the first Coordinator of the Cultural Studies program, and Dr. Serena Kesavjee, Coordinator of the Curatorial Practices specialization, which had already been implemented as a stream within the Cultural Studies MA. I also interviewed Dean of Graduate Studies Sandra Kirby twice, the second time in the company of Catherine Taylor, chair of the M.A Subcommittee. All were candid and extremely helpful in clarifying the situation. I also touched on the proposed program and possible streaming arrangement

in interviews with other administrators, among them Vice President (Academic) John Corlett and Dean of Arts David Fitzpatrick.

My questions focused, first, on trying to understand exactly what this arrangement would mean—how it would work—and what costs and benefits it would have to each program as well as to the university. These facts were essential to weighing the viability of such an arrangement and whether it was worth sacrificing some changes in order to get the program in place rather than waiting until an independent program proposal would be welcomed. I was particularly concerned about the degree of autonomy for the streamed program (its requirements, curriculum, administration) and the specific changes that would be needed to make it compatible with the Cultural Studies degree framework. I also wanted to know exactly what savings or efficiencies in use of resources, as well as intellectual benefits, would be generated by nesting the program, and whether these could be achieved in alternate ways. Finally, I wanted to find out directly from administrators whether there was any chance that a RWC proposal for an independent program could still succeed.

On May 13 I reported my findings and recommendations to the M.A Subcommittee. First, on the negative side, I concluded that the Cultural Studies M.A was not a viable framework for streaming the Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life degree. It made sense to stream Curatorial Practices, which relies on cultural studies courses to supply the theoretical component of its program. But the Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life degree has its own theory, represented in courses, and, in order to gain any of the hoped-for efficiencies through sharing courses or faculty, would have to give up an essential feature that defines the program—the practicum. The specific expectations for how streaming would work (for example, housing students from all three programs in a single research methods course) didn't seem to me logistically practical or intellectually desirable. The Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life degree has its own integrity and needs both curricular and administrative autonomy. Further, I couldn't really identify many, if any, financial advantages to the university or the programs from nesting the RWPL program in the Cultural Studies degree. It appeared to me that most of the advantages cited for streaming could be achieved by cross-listed courses or allowing some courses from either department to be listed in the other program as a possible elective.

At the same time, my conversations with administrators were unexpectedly positive about the renewed possibility for pursuing the proposal as an independent program. Vice President Corlett and Dean Fitzpatrick both encouraged the department to put forward, in a new submission, a proposal for its ideal M.A program, built on its own philosophy and strengths, and then explore ways to make it work, comparing different models of partnership with other academic units or with organizations outside the institution. Dean of Graduate Studies Sandra Kirby, in a brief conversation, expressed interest and asked me to come back for a second discussion.

Based on these conversations, in my meeting with the M.A Subcommittee I recommended that the department suspend efforts to revise the proposal for streaming with Cultural Studies and talk directly with administrators to explore further the prospects for the

original proposal, with whatever modifications might be desirable to strengthen it. The department should, I thought, not negotiate away or compromise what it wanted to do in the program ahead of time, by offering a reduced version of its proposal, but remain open to various possibilities for partnerships with other units, including Cultural Studies. I thought it important to show flexibility, but to set conditions to preserve the integrity of the proposal.

(At that time I also recommended certain changes to the proposal unconnected to the streaming option; these are explained and amplified below, based on subsequent discussions and reflection.)

The next step was for me and Catherine Taylor to meet again with Dean Kirby so that she could understand the proposal better and the department could learn more about the process for submission and the (new) arrangements for funding. Based on the notes both of us took, by the time I left campus shortly after, the department was positioned to revise the proposal and research further possibilities for partnerships, as recommended by Dean Kirby.

Probably the most important information we learned in this interview was about the way graduate studies programs will be judged in the new plan for integrated budgeting (which is still under development). Under this type of budgeting, graduate programs will be funded through the academic deans' offices, rather than centrally through the Graduate Dean's office. The budget for a department, including its graduate studies, will be based on the values and benefits overall of its programs, rather than requiring that each program be independently self-supporting.

Dean Kirby encouraged the department to think about the program as anchored in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications but essentially interdisciplinary, belonging to the Faculty of Arts, drawing on and contributing to other elements of its culture. The department needs to demonstrate what benefits its program can contribute in these terms, to the department, Arts, the university, and the community. These values include but are not limited to financial contributions from graduate tuition or research funding. Among those we discussed—not an exhaustive list—were these:

• exerting upward pressure on undergraduate students, making graduate work visible and achievable for them
• contributing to the university's reputation
• strengthening other graduate programs
• fostering student research
• increasing faculty research capacity through access to research assistants
• contributing to the Arts faculty's community profile and connections
• offering opportunities for internships or employment that benefit other units, community organizations, and companies .

The department does need to pursue the whole range of options for funding students that can make a small program sustainable. In the case of this program, this might include not

only faculty research grants, but also support from foundations, paid internships, or local organizations and companies, and relations to other funded programs, e.g., in links to the sciences or business.

Suggestions for Revision

I turn back now to the substance of the proposal. Based on these discussions and my own further reflections, I want to explain and extend my recommendations for revision.

In my original evaluation, I recommended to the M.A Subcommittee that the proposal give more weight and importance to the academic option of completing coursework without the practicum. The proposal includes it, but it seems almost an afterthought rather than an appealing alternate track deliberately designed for future academics. In doing so, I was thinking of the number of undergraduate majors in the department who expressed strong interest in a master's degree that could launch them on an academic career. I also suggested highlighting a broader range of placements beyond nonprofit community organizations (a point later reinforced by Dean Kirby).

I would like now to enlarge this point to suggest that the proposal be recast so that it is not quite so highly specialized to prepare community-based advocates for social change, while retaining this ethic of citizenship as a strong philosophical element in the degree. I believe that with relatively minor changes, the program can become somewhat less of a niche program and appeal to a broad range of prospective students. In doing so, the Master's degree will become a closer fit with the generalist, integrative character of the department and will have a greater pool of potential students. It will not take a great deal to make this revision, because the proposal anticipates its broader appeal in many places.

First, let me reflect a bit on the students the program could attract. Its fundamental strength (like that of its undergraduate programs) lies in its firm roots in practice, coupled with academic study of rhetoric, its audiences, and its social contexts. As the proposal notes, this kind of generalist rhetorical education is needed in a wide range of careers, not limited to activist work with community organizations. The proposal itself lists a variety of employment destinations where strong communication skills are needed. It also recognizes that it is desirable for the ethic of social justice and citizenship that it emphasizes in rhetorical practice to be diffused across contexts like government departments, corporations and small businesses, law, politics, and education. It seems to me that the department can reconceive this degree to prepare students for ethical and skilled rhetorical practice in any such real-world contexts where advocacy and strong argumentation are needed. Internships, as stated in the proposal (and as emphasized by Sandra Kirby) should be open to a wide variety of settings including corporations, the communication industry, and the university itself. At the same time, the ability to prepare students for careers and volunteer activities in "public life" and community advocacy constitutes a unique, niche feature of the program.

A second theme, however, needs to be brought out and enhanced: that is preparation for careers in literacy and rhetorical education. A number of students will want to take the

Masters as a route into doctoral studies and a career in the academy. The department has already conceived internships that support this goal, including the literacy internship and Writing Centre internship, with a companion course. But this strand of the program can also serve to prepare students to use the M.A degree as a terminal degree to prepare them for secondary or postsecondary teaching or for community literacy education and adult education. In this connection, the department might want to study a recent report on U.S. Master's degrees in English from the Modern Language Association.[31] The report demonstrates that in the U.S., the increase in numbers of non-tenure-track faculty has led students to treat the M.A degree as a route to a career in post-secondary education. "The master's degree in English has acquired increased complexity and significance as a credential and route to employment in higher education, secondary and elementary school teaching, and business, government, and not-for-profit organizations" (1). The M.A in Rhetoric, Writing and Public Life could easily be adapted and presented as serving this additional purpose.

The kinds of changes to the proposal I am suggesting are largely rhetorical, in how the degree is conceptualized and presented to a broader range of audiences, emphasizing more its generalist nature and the range of career possibilities. The internship would be valuable for all these kinds of students and possible careers, with the possible exception of students heading for doctoral studies, who may want to emphasize research-oriented coursework, academic writing experiences, and perhaps research internships. However, there are some possible implications for the curriculum, in particular the companion courses and research methods.

The companion courses as they stand are extremely specialized and matched up almost one to one with types of internships. If the range of the practicum is as broad as anticipated, this kind of specialization will not be practical. The department can't keep adding companion courses for every new setting for the practicum. I can think of two solutions to this problem. First, it is not entirely clear to me why it takes a 3-credit course to reflect on the practicum and connect theory to practice. It seems to me the companion course could be conceived as an appropriate theory course, even available as an elective to those not taking the practicum, with the third credit of this course being devoted either to a discussion of the internship experience in terms of theory-practice relations, or (for those taking the academic option) to writing a seminar paper with workshop support. (The workshop support for the latter could be organized to include students from all companion courses.) A second alternative is to have only one or two companion courses that are broadly designed for students in any internship to compare and analyze their experiences, perhaps with differentiated theoretical readings for the different types of practicum.

Currently, the research methods course is extremely specific in its focus on community-based action research. I question whether this will be appropriate to all internships and practicum experiences and also to the academic option, even though it does cover a wide

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[31] "ADE Ad Hoc Committee on the Master's Degree, "Rethinking the Master's Degree in English for a New Century," Web publication, June 2011.

range of methodologies. It is difficult to offer two versions of such a course when classes are expected to be small. The department should think about how to accommodate student needs for research methods that are not limited to community-based action or, perhaps, not even to qualitative social science methods. Although the department may be reluctant to outsource a required course to another department, the faculty might consider working with partner departments to match up some students (especially in the academic option) with research methods courses that fit different needs.

Experience suggests to me that when a department offers a strong degree in an attractive subject matter not well-represented in the region, it is likely to attract local students who are very diverse in their interests and goals, as distinct from the more homogeneous group of students drawn from a national pool who seek a highly specialized degree. I believe this degree is more likely to experience the former situation than the latter, especially in view of the undergraduate major and its range of students, and recommend that the department conceive its proposal and curriculum accordingly.

The department is understandably impatient to move forward with this proposal, but I would counsel avoiding haste and taking the time to refine and strengthen it, in response to Dean Kirby's advice and my suggestions above. Given the complexity and length of the approval process, she indicated that admitting students for a Fall 2012 startup would require working at a very rapid pace, beginning immediately (i.e., in May). Besides the formal steps, with the information gathering they require, she also suggested multiplying connections and partnerships that could add value to the program. There is an element of political and rhetorical work in any such process, not only to consult and gain the RWC faculty's endorsement of changes, but also to cultivate support from other faculty and administrators on campus. In light of the various priorities the faculty will be weighing for curricular work, I believe a 2013 start would be more realistic.

A final word with respect to all curricular innovation and, especially, expansion: department planners need to analyze budgetary implications and, where necessary, look for sources of new funding. Some program renovation can be done within an existing instructional budget, but if the department is adding sections, courses, tutorial functions, or other new responsibilities, these will require additional funding. One of the virtues of small experiments and pilots (discussed below) is to demonstrate concretely what value they add, whom they serve, what synergies they create.   Sometimes the pilots themselves can be funded with micro-grants. The department needs to build this kind of thinking into curriculum planning and program renewal.

Process, Governance and Leadership, and Hiring

PROCESS

The process modeled during my visit and in this report represents a pattern or cycle of program development, as visualized in the attached diagram (Appendix 3). It asks a department with responsibility for a curriculum at several levels to operate as a teaching community with a built-in think tank. As I have tried to demonstrate, the department's own scholarly and curricular materials are among its richest resources, but the process also connects the curriculum and teachers to scholarly communities through relevant readings.

The process begins with research—gathering and analyzing data, seeking input through broad consultation with multiple constituencies, reading and discussing curricular materials and scholarly writing. This research, which continues recursively through other phases of curriculum development, produces the kind of concrete, hands-on materials that should be the focus and catalyst for any group discussion: syllabi, assignments, faculty publications, survey data, student work, scholarly readings. It is usually, though not always, a group responsibility, taken up in committees, subcommittees, task forces, and reading groups that may include faculty, staff, and students.

Another component of the process is experimentation. I strongly advocate experimenting with pedagogical ideas and approaches in small pilots to test them at low risk before formalizing the most successful in broader curricular change. Many innovations—for example, uses of new technologies, perhaps pioneered by a few early adopters—can simply spread informally by diffusion. I recommend that in multi-section courses these experiments be in pairs or trios, in what I call co-teaching arrangements. Each person teaches a similar version of an experimental course design or pilots new pedagogical strategies in the company of a partner teaching a parallel section. They compare and discuss their experiences, then report back their results and student response to appropriate groups.

These processes of research and experimentation are knitted together by conversations, sometimes simply exploratory, other times critical, often debating problems and choices, their consequences, the benefits and costs they represent, the conflicts they embody. Many faculty members spoke of the importance of respecting one another's positions and expertise. That is certainly a prerequisite for collective action and mutual coexistence by a diverse faculty. But it is not enough. The faculty needs to cultivate the hermeneutical quality of appreciation. Appreciation is closely linked with respect because not being appreciated is felt as disrespect. But it requires more than distanced respect or tolerance; it requires knowledge: learning what others believe and feel strongly about; what their work actually is, whether in curriculum, leadership, published scholarship, teaching, student mentorship, or something else; what talents and commitments it expresses. Reading one another's scholarship and curricular materials when there is nothing at stake, or reading scholarship together from one another's disciplines and influences, lays the ground for

more productive debates when decisions need to be made. Appreciation also involves patience, listening instead of defending, seeking people out before putting together proposals in order to learn their thoughts and hopes and to take into account the impact decisions will have on their own work and priorities.

The department has a tradition of mutual respect, in the sense (as explained to me) of "everyone being equal" regardless of rank or status. This can't realistically mean that everyone does the same things, has the same role and responsibilities in the department, or has the same talents or "credentials." What it can mean is that the values that determine rank or status are not equivalent to levels of respect and appreciation. It means not stereotyping people by category. I think this idea is expressed in President Axworthy's concept of a community of learners: "One of the most effective ways to . . . [achieve significant change] is to treat the entire University and surrounding community as a place of learning and to encourage University faculty, staff and students to all see themselves as teachers and as learners prepared to challenge and be challenged by the ideas and experiences of the people with whom they share the campus and neighborhood" ("The University and Community Learning" 5).

Two specific questions on administering curriculum came up during my visit. The first is the principle of faculty autonomy; the second, the question of "ownership" of particular course designs.

Faculty autonomy with respect to teaching is historically an important principle in the department, which I fully endorse. However, it can be taken to an extreme if it cuts off the kind of communication over pedagogy that fosters shared principles and practices in a teaching community, especially where multiple teachers have responsibility for the same required course (Academic Writing) in which many constituencies have a stake and an influence. I think the pendulum did swing too far in that direction when Academic Writing was first introduced without a program-wide, systematic professional development initiative, and it became a habit for teachers to teach their sections in relative isolation. This is problematic enough with experienced teachers; it will become a serious challenge whenever the department hires new faculty.

The answer is not to reduce faculty autonomy, but to encourage a process whereby individual faculty invention can inform the curriculum while faculty communication can keep a collectively taught course or major from fragmenting into isolated parts. That is the goal of the process I have described for experimentation, assessment, and diffusion of successful ideas and strategies, developing consensus for broad changes in framework, but never imposing a single model on all teachers and instantiations of the curriculum in sections or courses.

Some members of the Curriculum Committee indicated they had struggled with the sensitive question of the extent to which individuals can "own" courses they have developed. When someone develops a new course, especially one reflecting personal expertise, perhaps in a highly specialized area, it is natural that he or she should feel a sense of ownership. That translates into wanting to continue teaching the course or to

prevent others teaching it who, perhaps, lack the expertise necessary to teach it well. It is often desirable when developing a course to experiment with it over several terms in order to perfect it. That said, ultimately decisions about course assignments must be made for the benefit of the department. Decision-makers must take into consideration the impact on students and the need to balance teaching assignments to meet various, possibly conflicting criteria: putting faculty talents to best use; ensuring variety in faculty teaching assignments; taking into account the kind of records faculty need to build for tenure or promotion applications; filling in for faculty on leave; and so on. No one "owns" a course— it is developed and approved by the university as part of a curriculum, and it is unwise to add a course to a curriculum that only one person is capable of teaching. If, as I suggest below, the department hires for versatility, it can expect faculty to learn how to teach new courses, with the aid of the original developer.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The process described generally in the previous section can be operationalized at different levels from an individual course designer to the department as a whole, but it is most often carried out by groups who have a departmental mandate to solve a problem, make decisions, develop proposals, or carry out other tasks on behalf of the department. These are typically standing committees, special committees or subcommittees, or task forces set up by department leaders or personnel committees, with consent (tacit or explicit) from the faculty at large. Sometimes, though, volunteer groups or individuals can develop ideas, read materials, or conduct experiments on their own which eventually enter the broader cycle of program development through diffusion or through a formal proposal. Many of the thematic ideas in earlier sections, as well as individual course designs, technology innovation, and participation in partnerships outside the department, fall in this more informal category.

To the extent the department decides to proceed with suggestions in this report for curricular renewal or reform, the faculty at large must conduct discussions to make the initial decisions which are prerequisites for the broad process of program renewal. These include prioritizing faculty time and departmental resources among the various potential projects and elements of the curriculum; distributing responsibilities to particular committees or other groups; planning schedules that determine the pace and intensity of various groups' work; and correlating decisions with external facts like available funding or administrative encouragement. While each group, once underway, will function semi-autonomously, it is important that their processes be coordinated, so that groups can share information where appropriate and their recommendations will in the end be mutually relevant and compatible. I would suggest that, once the faculty decides on particular goals, tasks, and assignments, it should establish a coordinating mechanism. For example, this could be a coordinating committee consisting of the department chair plus all chairs of committees or other groups working on a major curricular project, which would meet periodically to share information and problem-solve about potential conflicts, overlaps, etc. The coordinating committee would maintain a master schedule, make the committee work as transparent and accessible as possible, and (particularly but not only the department

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chair) take important responsibilities for liaison with administrators and units outside the department.

At some point, groups conducting focused research and discussions among themselves, like a Curriculum Committee, need to make recommendations for decisions that need broad review in the department, votes, and presentation to university committees, administrators, granting organizations, and/or higher bodies for approval. This requires departmental "deliberation"—a rhetorical concept that implies a slow, careful process that can be used to build agreement. Although "consensus" without dissent may not be possible, it is best, for curricular additions or changes that will affect everyone, to strive for very broad support by the time they are formalized. The pattern of program development that I've described, which incorporates persuasive mechanisms like dialogue, questioning, research and appeal to evidence, experiments and demonstration of success, is conducive to building such support.

In times of stability, a department can afford routines of governance that assume little conflict. However, governance in liminal periods like this one require practices adapted to deal with the conflicts, traumas, and passions that inevitably arise under conditions of accelerated change. Besides the processes of curriculum development and attitudes of respect and appreciation I have already advocated, I want to offer advice on a few other issues that were discussed during my visit.

What is the role and prerogative of committees when they take up tasks on behalf of the department? In general, all committee decisions in a department are at least reported to the full faculty, and often formal approval by faculty vote is required for the report. This process is usually sufficient for relatively routine tasks, or sometimes for sensitive decisions (involving confidential information) delegated formally to the committee. Under these conditions, departmental approval is typically a formality. However, for any substantive decision or proposed change affecting the department at large, committees can have no expectation that the faculty will automatically approve its choices, no matter how hard the committee has worked and how much expert knowledge it has developed. This is a rhetorical situation and the committee must treat it as such, not only when bringing the final proposal or decision to the faculty, but throughout the process of developing it. If the proposal or decision is going to be reviewed and approved by bodies beyond the department, consulting with external stakeholders and seeking allies should begin long before the proposal comes forward, rather than springing it on other faculties suddenly in a formal setting like the Senate, where it is likely to provoke pushback based on fear, misunderstanding, competing agendas, and so on. (That is one reason that I strongly urge the department to take this coming year to build support for the new M.A proposal before presenting it the following fall. Faculty members and administrators indicated that there is some general resentment of adding research and graduate studies to the traditional commitment to undergraduate teaching, and the faculty may need to address other concerns and objections specific to this M.A proposal or to the department.)

In these circumstances, within the department a committee with responsibility for planning, proposing, or recommending future actions or decisions should start by openly

soliciting opinions and ideas from the entire faculty in a variety of ways, for example, open meetings, surveys, informal interviews and discussions. As particular ideas come up and are drafted for action, the committee should keep communicating informally with department members, discussing potential choices with individuals and small groups outside the committee, based on their expertise or investment, to get feedback and test out the limits of consensus. It is particularly important to seek out the opinions of potential critics and dissenters. In the case of proposals to be judged ultimately outside the department, the committee should begin consultations with external stakeholders early in the process as well. These discussions will lead the committee to make revisions to meet some objections and plan responses and refutations to others. When the committee's ideas solidify enough to agree on a full draft, it should bring that draft to the faculty for discussion, and then take its feedback into consideration before returning with the final proposal, decision, statement (or whatever) for discussion and vote. At this point, ideally the committee should know enough about sentiment in the department to be able to put forward a motion that will pass. Because the proposal is already familiar, both the faculty and the committee will understand the various positions, what is at stake, what the various factions and positions are, and what kinds of arguments might be persuasive. Outbursts and emotional responses in department meetings happen most often when faculty are taken by surprise, especially when an unexpected and consequential proposal is suddenly presented for immediate action. Faculty resent the lack of consultation along the way and suspect the forced urgency that prevents deliberation.

Transitional times inevitably raise the issue of leadership. In the first place, transition is defined partly by the very fact that personnel changes are imminent: senior faculty retiring, administrators ending terms, maturing young faculty enlarging the pool of potential leaders. To these recurrent, natural changes, program renewal adds a new set of leadership challenges and leadership roles: assessment and the research it entails; curriculum and course design; building departmental consensus for change; professional development for new faculty and for continuing faculty teaching a new curriculum; fund-raising; forming partnerships with other units; the rhetorical labor of taking proposals through an approval process. These tasks require a broad range of talents. Part of leadership is to recognize who has which talents and match them to tasks and roles. It is a broad department responsibility, but especially that of the department chair and senior faculty, to plan for leadership well before a crisis arises and to cultivate the leadership abilities of younger and maturing faculty. This means not only giving them opportunities to play a leadership role on a committee or in a project, but also mentoring them in these roles with frank assessment and sympathetic advice, helping them to make plans, solve problems, assess their own performance, and learn from their mistakes. While some people have natural leadership abilities, leadership is also a learned skill. In a small department, it is important to recognize that almost everyone is a candidate for some level of leadership, and many reveal hidden potential when their nascent abilities are cultivated and nurtured.

FUTURE HIRING

I turn now to advice on future hiring, which is inextricably tied up with planning long-term for curriculum development and program renewal.

While on campus, I sensed that anticipation of future hiring decisions was centering around the departmental organizing terms and their (mis)identification with disciplines. I hope I have shown convincingly why that is not the most productive approach. Instead, I suggest the following criteria in proposing new faculty hires, as turnover permits, and in selecting among prospective applicants.

In general, in a small department hiring should build strengths on strengths rather than moving into unrelated new areas, unless it is expanding its total size or taking on new responsibilities. I have tried to describe these strengths and needs throughout this report. In general, the faculty should seek new faculty who will preserve the character and distinctive identity of the department while also helping it to evolve. In filling in gaps, priorities should follow identified needs for current or planned programs and their future directions. The purpose should be to correlate faculty appointments with curricular plans and initiatives rather than disciplinary background per se. These directions create needs for intellectual leadership, expertise, and perhaps administrative roles, and they also create opportunities for faculty research that will attract good faculty. Based on my analysis and recommendations for such directions, the department might seek faculty with expertise or knowledge in these areas:

1) Genre studies and writing in the disciplines, possibly professional communication and writing in the workplace; special interest in most promising disciplines for partnership (e.g., sciences, business, urban studies)

2) "Basic writing," ESL writing, and/or applied linguistics

3) First-year writing programs and writing centres (usually, generalist composition/writing studies background, sometimes WAC/WID interest); possibly administrative experience with one or both.

To these I would add for all new faculty hires a preference for a strong capability in evolving technologies, digital communication, and their uses in teaching. The department will be able to expect this from almost any new graduate in the fields it will be hiring in. Although I don't think it is necessarily an immediate priority, projecting into the future, ultimately it will be important to add faculty members with research specialties and scholarly expertise in these areas.

There is no need to predetermine the disciplinary backgrounds of candidates with these qualifications. Rather, whatever their training, the department needs to hire faculty members who will support the generalist integrations and dialogue among scholarly traditions that represent the department's strengths and distinctive synthesis. They should also share the social commitments to pedagogy and community learning that typify the faculty and institution. They should not be hyperspecialists in their research and teaching interests, but versatile, able to teach a range of courses and ready to take up new topics or approaches. With this kind of a profile in hiring descriptions, candidates most likely will bring some combination of strengths in disciplinary knowledge, research methods, and specializations.

The department should also consider leadership capacity and administrative savvy in future faculty. It is a delicate matter to decide how much faculty time should be allocated to formal administrative roles beyond that of department chair. The advantage of having the department chair also act as de facto head of all the curricular programs is that faculty time is freed up for research, teaching, and extracurricular work in the community or with partners around campus. However, this begs the question of where the intellectual leadership of each program will come from, and how centralized or diffuse that leadership will be. As the department revisits and assesses its established programs, it will need to decide what kind of administration or leadership arrangements each will need in the future. I do think that the first-year program, at least, will need some more formalized leadership structure when a new plan is decided on, perhaps coinciding with the election of a new department chair. This could be a committee whose members could take responsibility for professional development for teachers as well as intellectual development of the course, perhaps headed by a coordinator taking some administrative responsibilities now handled by the department chair. In the same time frame, the department will need to consider appointing a director for the Tutorial Centre, which may then be expanding its responsibilities.

Appendices