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Shared Landscapes, Contested Borders: Locating Disciplinarity in an MA Program Revision

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SHARED LANDSCAPES, CONTESTED BORDERS
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It is not unusual to consider a discipline spatially as a "*space* defined or touched by a particular characteristic or force" (Wardle and Downs, this collection, emphasis added). This conceptualization makes visible the metaphor at play here: territories are demarcated and differentiated from neighboring environments by borders that can be more or less visible. In this chapter, we use our experience as faculty members invested in a substantive revision of an MA program revision to explore how that process of delineation opens up new questions about disciplinarity. We sought to create a generous curricular space within an MA degree, one that accounted for our own disciplinary expertise, the needs and interests of our students, and the vision of our university. As we did so, we were also constructing a curricular map of what Rhetoric and Composition looks like in the "locus of situated, locally responsive, socially productive, problem-oriented knowledge production" that MA-granting institutions might provide (Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon 2010, 258).[1]

Like critical cartographers, we grew to recognize the rhetorical power of curricular, historical, personal, and pedagogical maps, all of which surfaced as we moved through this process. We realized throughout the revision process that our representations of "the" discipline—the program we wanted to revise, the program we were building, our own educational experiences—were rooted in narratives. Like geographer Denis Wood (2010), we began to understand the connection between mapping and narrative, and we started to envision mapping processes as a form of storytelling.[2] We also grew to realize that our own experiences are always necessarily representational and situated, just as Peter Turchi (2004) asserts that maps cannot be neatly

classified as reference texts, because they are representations of data. We came to understand that multiple maps could be made from the same data set, allowing us to reorganize information to see knowledge in new ways. That is, "maps suggest explanations; and while explanations reassure us, they also inspire us to ask more questions, consider other possibilities" (11). For us, mapping in newer ways—particularly through threshold concepts—allowed us new insights and raised new questions. And we knew as we worked through this process that any one representation of the discipline in an MA curriculum is necessarily temporary, open to ongoing revision, and only as accurate as we can get it at this moment. Even cartographers allow themselves room for error; The United States National Map Accuracy Standards, for example, allow maps are up to 10 percent inaccurate (US Geological Survey 1947.). Making these pieces visible to one another allowed us to see the perspectives from which we approach the work of the discipline and opened new lines of inquiry into how to revise and create a program identity that is inclusive for the individually situated disciplinary members that comprise it.

In this chapter we examine the larger questions of disciplinarity against the backdrop of our efforts to revise our MA program in Rhetoric and Composition, examining the practical, personal, and theoretical implications of disciplinarity. We begin with an overview of the various invention, revision, and reflection strategies we used in our programmatic revision process—strategies shaped by our disciplinary knowledge. We then transition from the larger revision process to the issue of individual disciplinary situatedness, examining the opportunities and tensions that surface when individual narratives of disciplinarity are made visible. Next, we touch on new lines of inquiry for constructing program identity that emerged during this process. Finally, we offer several implications for considerations of disciplinarity that the curricular revision process has helped illuminate. The ways we worked through our process represent the very values of our discipline: flexibility, generosity, honoring identities, listening, revision, and accepting/living with discomfort in order to sustain an inquiry stance.

MAPPING THE PROCESS OF OUR MA REVISION

Before describing the specific steps of the process, we want to first provide context for our particular location and the exigence motivating our MA revision. Located in the capital of Idaho, a largely rural state, Boise State University is a public research institution that serves approximately

22,000 students, with almost as many master's (76) as bachelor's (84) degree programs. The majority of our MA students are native Idahoans; many are place bound because of spousal employment and/or other family commitments and historically have applied for part-time adjunct positions in our department after completing their degree. More recently, some have sought positions at the College of Western Idaho, the local community college established in 2009, upon graduation. A portion have pursued doctoral degrees or accepted full-time teaching positions at higher-education institutions elsewhere, and another portion have successfully pursued positions in industry.

In early curricular conversations, it was evident that we still valued aspects of the existing program and so did many of our students. However, some of us were concerned about the program's central commitments to prepare instructors to teach at two-year colleges or to pursue doctoral work. The number of available community college tenure-track or lecturer positions had dwindled severely and continues to do so, and we had concerns about a program heavily focused on preparing writing teachers for jobs that might be limited or nonexistent. In addition, the closest PhD programs in Rhetoric and Composition are in Nevada, Washington, and Utah, a significant impediment for our place-bound students. Therefore, we were unsure about fostering the development of scholars who may not have the option of leaving Idaho to pursue doctoral degrees and eventually secure tenure-track jobs.

Although our program had enjoyed successes during its short existence, we were mindful of Peter Vandenberg and Jennifer Clary-Lemon's admonition that sustained success of MA programs often hinges on the fact that "they fill a distinct need in their region or community, respond to specific job prospects or undergraduate needs, or emerge out of a particular institutional exigence (rather than a discipline-specific one)" (Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon 2010, 268). We speculated aloud about what it might look like to deeply reconsider our program with regional and community needs in mind. Recognizing the importance of our disciplinary knowledge in multiple contexts (business, legal, nonprofit, community), we wondered how we might reframe Rhetoric and Composition theories and pedagogies to make visible their wider implications and applicability. We wanted our MA students, regardless of their professional goals, to have more complex perspectives about the discipline and more ways to conceptualize what the work of the discipline could be and do.

Our MA revision process incorporated mapping strategies and metaphors from the beginning; however, that theme did not emerge until we stepped back to do the reflective work of writing this chapter. Looking

back at our conversations, we see a series of strategies aimed at creating both abstract and concrete maps of our larger discipline and our specific MA program. In retrospect, we can also see that the initial conversations unfolded in three main phases. We started with a big-picture mapping phase in which we analyzed the current program and identified our group's core values. Then, in order to translate that mapping into a vision statement and learning outcomes, we worked with threshold concepts. By using threshold concepts as our guide, we were able to blend the larger and more abstract map of our values with the specific language required to establish outcomes. When we transitioned into the development phase, we synthesized our earlier conversations into visual representations that helped us envision how our values and shared vision converge into a curricular path. With these visual maps, we were able to move forward into constructing our proposal for programmatic change.

Phase One: Big-Picture Mapping

Under the leadership of our discipline director Bruce Ballenger,[3] we had our first conversation about the MA revision in October 2013, beginning with a SWOT analysis as a way to evaluate the "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" in our current program. In this early phase of the discussion, we did big-picture mapping that helped us locate both the assets and the gaps in the MA. Early on we identified a key opportunity: we have diverse backgrounds and interests, but we share a core commitment to students, pedagogy, and learning. With our shared values as the foundation, we started to imagine a new, expanded program that would expose students to a wider range of rhetorical situations on and off campus. We discussed opportunities for more interdisciplinary collaboration, community outreach, and interaction with local political initiatives.

With this emphasis on rhetorical situations, we gravitated toward the term "writing specialist" as a way to create an anchor and identity for our new program. A program that focuses on writing specialists would emphasize flexibility, aiming to cultivate students' rhetorical thinking and provide them with opportunities to write for multiple audiences and purposes. The skills of a writing specialist, as we imagined them, would transfer into a range of professional settings. At the same time, it would provide students who wanted to teach or to pursue doctoral degrees an understanding of Rhetoric and Composition and its position in conversation with other disciplines. Locating and defining the concept of writing specialist were central to moving forward in our MA

revision process. Through this concept we could maintain our individual disciplinary identities, unified by the work of training and supporting writing specialists.

However, the SWOT analysis and our movement toward writing specialists revealed what would be underlying tensions throughout the process. First, we wondered whether we should change the program at all. Our MA program was not broken; in fact, there were clear strengths in the original design. Second, several faculty members were, reasonably, deeply connected to the program. They had done the hard work, only six years prior, of navigating significant opposition to get the program approved. Initially considered either unnecessary or threatening to other graduate programs, faculty members in the English Department resisted the proposal to create a separate emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition. In order to create a strong case for the program, faculty focused on two purposes: preparation for doctoral programs and training for two-year college teaching. They consulted with scholars and administrators at two-year colleges to shape curriculum and presented stakeholders with specific data on available jobs in two-year colleges and current trends in doctoral program admissions. Third, when we began the MA revision in fall 2013, there were several new faculty involved. These faculty had not experienced the resistance, conducted the research, or built the case for creating the original program. Some of the newer faculty felt out of place in the current curriculum. With fresh experience from the current higher-education job market, which is challenging enough for candidates with terminal degrees, their understanding reflected a different reality than the MA program had been designed to address just a few short years ago. As a group we value the diversity of our experience and training, but we have also come to realize that these differences can create roadblocks. Like many faculty groups, we had come together to address procedural or administrative issues, but we rarely talked about our values or our professional and scholarly commitments. We each held pieces of a map of Rhetoric and Composition, and we had a sense of those individual pieces, but we could not see how they coalesced into a whole and how we could create a legend that would clearly orient our students as they began graduate-level work in the discipline.

Phase Two: Articulating Threshold Concepts

As a way to honor and synthesize our many perspectives, we turned to threshold concepts for our next step. Key ideas or theories that are transformative to understanding, interpreting, and engaging in disciplinary

conversations, threshold concepts create openings for learners that result in new dispositions or ways of being (Meyer, Land, and Baillie 2010, ix–x). Once learned, a threshold concept is difficult to unlearn, creating a new stance in learners and a transformed relationship with a discipline, as learners are able to make connections they could not make previously. For our revision process, threshold concepts provided a way for us to balance the larger disciplinary values of Rhetoric and Composition with our specific context and individual commitments.

Early in the conversation, Heidi Estrem shared reading materials and provided theoretical framing to help the group understand threshold concepts.[4] After an initial brainstorming session, we each created an individual list of threshold concepts for Rhetoric and Composition, addressing five key areas: the essential knowledge, skills, and experiences in the discipline; the places where our students struggle the most; what we do instinctively as experts that novices do not; the ways of being in the discipline that are visible to us but invisible to novices; and the first essential thing that Rhetoric and Composition students should understand.

From the individual lists, Bruce compiled a master list of threshold concepts for students in our MA in Rhetoric and Composition program:

- Students both compose and study texts; writing is both an activity and a subject.
- The composition of texts and of their analysis is always rhetorical, undertaken for a range of purposes, in a variety of contexts, and for multiple audiences.
- The study of Rhetoric and Composition involves understanding how purpose, context, and audience influence genres of communication and how these can be used ethically and effectively to explore, inform, persuade, and delight.
- Rhetoric and composition is also a teaching subject, and we have a particular interest in applying new knowledge to sites where teaching takes place: the classroom, writing centers, community literacy projects, and so on.
- Rhetors may use their knowledge for self-expression but also recognize the importance of using what they know to identify and reshape cultural stereotypes that are embedded in certain writing and rhetorical practices.

These threshold concepts provided us another way to describe student learning in our context. We focused less on the threshold concepts that had been written for Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth's Wardle's book and more on what we notice in *our* MA students, on what

Vision Statement for the MA Program

- The program will prepare graduates to be "writing specialists" who can work effectively in settings that demand a flexible writing ability, an understanding of rhetoric and genre, and experience with collaboration.

- Graduates of the program will be prepared to work as academics, writing instructors in colleges or high schools, specialists in corporate settings, or leaders in non-profit organizations that focus on literacy practices.

- The program will emphasize *writing and rhetoric in action*, encouraging students to participate in literacy projects in the city and region. In addition to teaching writing, these projects might include internship with a government agency, work with a local non-profit, or participation in a campus initiative that promotes literacy.

- The program will encourage graduates *to see themselves as writers* as well as people who know how to study writing. Students will experience *composing as a creative activity* in a range of genres and formats, from creative nonfiction to digital texts.

Figure 11.1.

we see as critical knowledge for them. Our threshold concepts, then, echo those found in Adler-Kassner and Wardle through their emphasis on social context, rhetorical choice, and ethical means of communication—and yet begin with our understandings of our MA students, not a more abstract student or learner. Clearly this list is an incomplete representation; it does not capture the long conversation we had about MA students' struggles to place themselves in disciplinary conversations, for example, nor does it mention writing *processes*—certainly a value that permeates our program and teaching approaches. However, it took us outside of focusing on students at the *end* of a program and gave us a way to map the messy work of learning and acquiring disciplinary knowledge within a curriculum. Then, Bruce synthesized our lists into a first draft of the vision statement for our new program. Our threshold concepts, and the vision statement that emerged (figure 11.1), formed a temporary map that enabled us to transition into the next phase.

Phase Three: Creating Visual Maps

With a strong sense of our values, principles, and ideals, we transitioned into the logistical work of developing and implementing our new program. As a way to move from the idea phase into more concrete

Figure 11.2.

planning, we focused on visual rhetoric and design. Building on our work with threshold concepts, we created a draft plan for our new program, beginning with a chart that addressed program graduates' potential characteristics and employment opportunities as well as the program's current and projected audience. Next, we each wrote course descriptions for "dream courses" on notecards and spread them out on a table, moving and sorting the titles into categories to help us envision the new curriculum. Similarly, as figure 11.2 shows, we put our core values and outcomes on sticky notes and organized them into categories on the whiteboard as a way to visualize the alignment of our larger values and the emerging curriculum.

Another significant breakthrough in the overall design and organization of the program came when Dawn Shepherd synthesized themes from our conversations into a revision proposal that included seven visualizations: our current MA structure, current MA course breakdown, a table with four proposed course clusters, a comparison of the requirements for the current and proposed curricula, course offerings for academic years
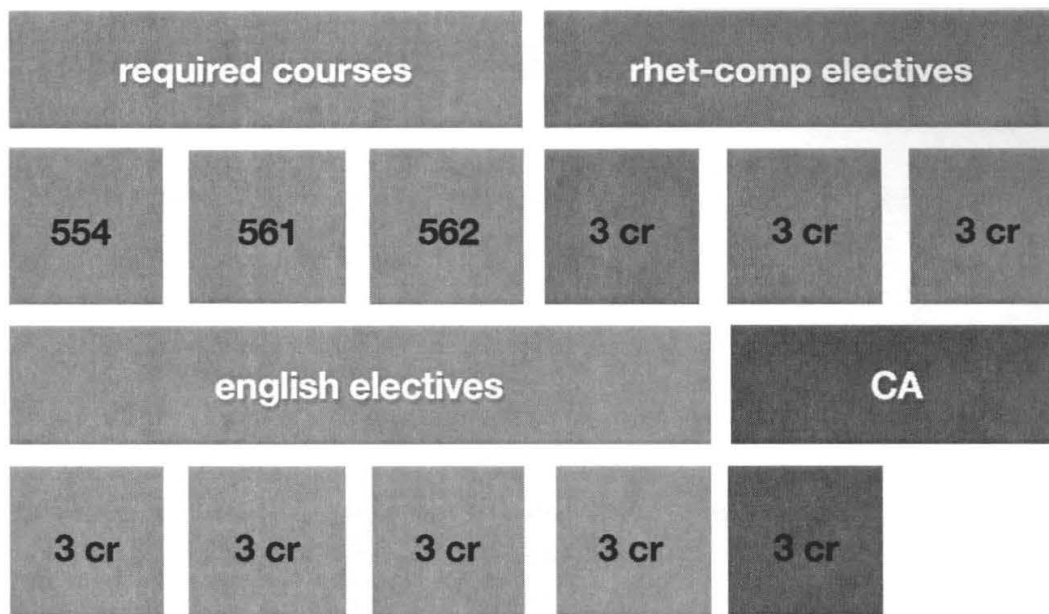
required courses			rhet-comp electives		
554	561	562	3 cr	3 cr	3 cr

english electives			CA	
3 cr	3 cr	3 cr	3 cr	3 cr

Figure 11.3.

2013–15, and a proposed two-year sequence of offerings. In these visual representations, she traced our discussions and presented a potential MA curriculum that reflected our shared values and encompassed our year of conversations. In one visualization (figure 11.3), she created broad categories for our current course offerings and color-coded them in order to demonstrate the distribution of program requirements. In another (figure 11.4), she used a table to compare current course requirements to the proposed four-cluster structure. Mapping our current curriculum and then comparing it with the new program allowed us to see more clearly our current location and our eventual destination.

In the four proposed clusters of courses, our existing required research methods, theories of composition, and theories of rhetoric courses were complemented with three new course categories: contemporary issues and institutional contexts in Rhetoric and Composition; issues in writing, teaching, and learning; and writing workshop. We could shape these courses based on our expertise and values, foregrounding for students how a particular course was situated in a larger disciplinary conversation. At the same time that this revised curriculum honored our expertise and values, it remained flexible enough to respond to developments in Rhetoric and Composition as well as higher education more generally. Like any map, our revised curriculum was a representation of data and not a compendium of hard facts.

From big-picture analysis of opportunities and obstacles, to vision statements and multiple paths, to visual organization and presentation

four clusters of courses

cluster	courses	description/information
foundations	554 561 562	existing theory and methods courses
contemporary issues and institutional contexts	583	reframed to cover current issues (e.g., contemporary rhetorical or composition studies theory, issues in higher ed, program administration, globalization, digital culture, etc.) from an R/C perspective From a former student: • "The theory courses give a good idea of how we got here and where we are, a new course could show us where we're going." • courses on "where writing is in the university" (e.g., FYWP, WID/WAC, WC) • "rhetorical analysis," "theory," "communication" for work outside academia (e.g., developing all-important "soft skills")
writing, teaching, and learning	converted current course number (563?) 598 or other pedagogy course	a sort of selected topics in teaching and learning, such as some that we already cover in our current structure (basic writing, multilingual writing) but also new topics (teaching writing and technology, gender and writing courses, new approaches to FYW, etc.) and/or courses from other disciplines (English ed) or departments (ed, psych, etc.)
writing workshop	567 (converted to academic writing and publishing) converted current course number (568?) 401G	a new required academic writing workshop and new writing workshop with different nonfiction focus (sort of a 401 for grad students)

Figure 11.4.

of information, our various mapping strategies provided ways for us to see/resee our conversations and move forward in new ways. Perhaps the greatest challenge of this process was the tenacity it required. We faced uncomfortable topics, to be sure, and listened to and respected one another. However, as the process continued for more than a year, we did not rush to be done with it. Rather, we tried a range of strategies that got us closer to our destination.

THE ONGOING PROCESS

During the year of in-depth conversation about our MA program, our personal values and commitments certainly played a role in the conversations (e.g., in identifying threshold concepts), but we did not create an intentional pause to name and discuss our personal interests until we started writing this chapter. We are aware of our individual disciplinary identities, but we rarely talk about them explicitly. We recognize one another's specialties and also know, implicitly, that each has loyalties to certain ideas about what it means to teach writing. To some extent, this loyalty begins with our commitments to our specialties, but the deeper, more emotional part is how we situate ourselves in the face of conflicts that are part of the history of any discipline.

To bring our commitments and individually held core values to the surface, we each wrote a short personal history statement in response to the following question: What are my disciplinary loyalties and why? In this prompt, we deliberately chose the word "loyalties" as a way to move toward the deeper layers of theories, emotions, and motivations that inform our work, and we included the why question as a way to encourage more reflection than we typically include in our bio statements. By writing and discussing these pieces, we illuminated some of the unspoken tensions that had been circumscribing our revision process, setting the stage to better foreground and negotiate our differences as we move forward. In addition, describing our personal histories and disciplinary loyalties helped us to prepare for our upcoming collaborative projects both as a Rhetoric and Composition faculty and with other local colleagues both in our department and across campus.

The narratives revealed locations: the physical locations in which we have worked, our generational and pedagogical locations within the discipline, and the individual and shared locations that we inhabit as a faculty group. When mapping our teaching and research pasts, we saw some overlap in New Hampshire, Arizona, and California, but the range extends from Nevada to Nebraska to Ohio to Michigan to North Carolina to Florida. Beyond the United States, members of the group have held teaching and research positions in Japan, Malaysia, and Spain. We have experience at four-year universities, at two-year colleges, at community organizations, and in the private sector. In these diverse locations, we each explored new theories and pedagogical practices; we found mentors who inspired us to push beyond our comfort zones; and, ultimately, we each shaped a place for ourselves in the world of Rhetoric and Composition. Even those of us who crossed paths at the same institution encountered different terrain, thus crafting our distinct disciplinary commitments. We realized that in collaborative disciplinary work, it is imperative to acknowledge the individual maps, as each collaborator brings a disciplinary history and situatedness that intersects with any conversation about "Rhetoric and Composition"—curricular or otherwise.

Writing the narratives created valuable space for individual reflection, and reading the narratives opened up new understanding and appreciation of our colleagues as specifically situated members of the discipline. The narratives provided insight into the mentors that inspire us, the theoretical frameworks that guide us, and the values that we bring into our teaching and scholarship. Making visible disciplinary histories and situatedness can complicate a line of inquiry, to be certain, but it also allows us to identify new opportunities for collaboration and to better understand

where tensions might exist or emerge. For example, in our case, some of us received nearly no rhetorical coursework in our PhDs. Reading the narratives side-by-side revealed core commitments shared by the entire group. For example, we all see ourselves as advocates for students, and we want our students to see themselves as writers and rhetors who can employ diverse literacy practices and navigate varied rhetorical situations. Our commitments to advocacy extend beyond the classroom and into community organizations, political and social movements, and everyday life. We honor what we learned from our mentors and we are all invested in the work of mentorship. As a group, we value writing and the power it holds for us and for others, regardless of our theoretical foundations; pedagogical approaches; or individual values, beliefs, and experiences.

While we can see powerful undercurrents that connect these narratives, we understand that our differences are just as important. For example, Karen Uehling was first to use the word "reading" in her narrative. Many of us focused on "reading" rhetorical situations, but Karen's background in literature brought our attention to text-based literacy practices and both the empowerment and alienation associated with literacy skills. By stepping back and considering larger disciplinary boundaries, Clyde Moneyhun's narrative encouraged us to ask the bigger, harder questions about specialization and identity (e.g., what do we gain and what do we lose in claiming *a* disciplinary identity?). Since the boundaries of disciplinary identity become visible in a MA revision process, Clyde's situatedness directed our attention to those boundaries as a site for inquiry and invention. Gail Shuck's reflections on *all* writing and rhetorical contexts as multilingual pushed us to think of how an ethics of inclusion might shape our approaches to teaching disciplinary subject matter and in developing more culturally aware program graduates.

The narratives also revealed that we differ in the way we label ourselves within the discipline, some of us claiming Rhetoric *and* Composition, with others placing emphasis on one or the other. Some of us refer to "Rhet-Comp," others to "Comp-Rhet," others to "Writing Studies." While this range of labels and associations is quite common, often beginning in graduate school, there are implications when it comes to larger questions of a programmatic revision. How, for example, can individual identities be aligned into a program identity without silencing members of the group? In other words, is it possible to develop a program that has a distinct (and "marketable") identity while still honoring the diverse interests and identities of the faculty? Naming these interests and identities; served as an essential step in addressing the larger questions. When invisible, differing disciplinary identities with their accompanying

beliefs, values, and assumptions can become theoretical and emotional roadblocks in collaborative work such as programmatic revision.

Since writing our narratives, additional factors continue to challenge our sense of the discipline in productive ways. Our colleagues in technical communication, for example, recently hired two new faculty members and proposed a substantive MA revision of their own. When we reviewed our proposed programs side by side, the previously clear distinctions between our two programs were no longer quite so distinct. Instead of needing to make an argument about the legitimacy of our discipline—something that our colleagues had to do during the first MA program proposal—we find ourselves currently writing course descriptions that are broad enough to be of interest to students in Rhetoric and Composition, technical communication, and English education. Further, conversations with colleagues in other areas of English Studies point to ongoing change and collaboration, moving us toward the prospect of larger disciplinary connections. These changes are happening as we speak, and our formerly insular programs are coming together in new ways, inviting us to view our discipline through the lens of related disciplines (and vice versa).

Each of us carries our varied graduate experiences at multiple MA- and PhD-granting institutions that have profoundly shaped us, and our disciplinary identities continue to evolve through experiences in institutional contexts after graduate school and in our current shared context at Boise State University. Although our disciplinary identities are not fixed and are always in process, there are certain map pieces each of us holds that remain with us even as our disciplinary identities continue to evolve and even though we may shift the way we position those map pieces. Writing our narratives provided a way to use the central tool of our discipline—writing—to visualize where we are standing as a faculty group. By making visible how we were situated individually, we could see where we are operating in shared spaces; where we are standing near each other but are not connected; and when we are standing in different spaces that do not easily connect. It is in the spaces that are difficult to connect where we may have important stakes as scholars and teachers of Rhetoric and Composition—terrain we cannot ignore if we want to navigate forward.

NAVIGATING THE BOUNDARIES OF RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

The process of constructing an MA curriculum reveals insights about the discipline writ large. First, we agree with Wardle and Downs that

"embracing disciplinarity does not mean giving up the qualities that make our field unique; it means building on them" (this collection). We also see how the process we have worked through locally echoes what Yancey has identified as occurring within our discipline: that "various scholars have been thinking about our disciplinarity . . . through diverse paths: historical, philosophical, and pedagogical" (this collection). Just as practitioners have explored the histories, philosophies, and pedagogies that make Rhetoric and Composition, then our localized process of committing to contours helps illuminate why curriculum-building matters—and why the work of identifying as a discipline matters, as well.

As we navigated our revision process, it was increasingly clear that a larger disciplinary identity provides cultural capital. Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs describe this kind of capital not as power wielded without purpose but as a way to maintain presence in conversations about resource allocation in local contexts (this collection). We work in an institutional culture that offers resources to distinctive, signature programs.[5] Creating a clear, focused MA curriculum ensures that we are visible because it represents a disciplinary currency that is understood on campus. If we abdicate disciplinarity, we run the risk of reverting to providing service to others without a central place for research and inquiry.

Second, just as others in this collection understand disciplinarity not as a static, fixed, modernist representation of knowledge but instead as a process that is dynamic and changeable, we see the more localized act of curriculum mapping as an ongoing process that can in turn shape our individual understandings of what Rhetoric and Composition are. Map making is rife with contradictions; for while critical cartographers understand it as an act that is admittedly "wrapped up in authoring and cementing meanings and visions of the world," it also includes the impulse to "interrogate what counts as a map, and what ways there might be to think about spatial relations or mapping practices 'otherwise' in ways that rewrite power relations and cartographies (Sparke 1995, 1998)" (in Harris 2015). An MA curriculum became the axis of the discipline writ large, our own individual experiences, and our students. Choosing to revise (or create) a graduate program commits us to stabilization while the creation process encourages us to remain restless within that commitment, aware that any existing commitment is just one representation of disciplinarity data.

Third, mapping and remapping our experiences of Rhetoric and Composition using different tools and perspectives can offer new insights to all engaged in conversations about disciplinarity. As we described above, we approached our curriculum revision using a variety of methods

as we sought to represent and rerepresent what we valued, what was possible, and what mattered most to us. One especially useful mapping process was that of identifying threshold concepts. Threshold concepts propelled our curricular discussions forward because they focus on describing student learning opportunities, on understanding. They provided a cartographer's eye view, hovering above course objectives to consider what experts know and do. That allowed us to chart the connections between us, tracing our shared values and commitments. Likewise, threshold concepts enabled us to move away from thinking about graduate education in terms of classes we might teach—or experiences we had as graduate students—to what students should learn. We view threshold concepts as Kathleen Blake Yancey does: that they are less canonical and more contingent, an "articulation of shared beliefs providing multiple ways of helping us name what we know and how we can use what we know" (Yancey 2015, xvii). Within Rhetoric and Composition, the effort to describe the threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015) are critically important in providing a map of our discipline.

Our MA revision process, as well as the experience of writing this chapter, illuminated even more clearly how similar and yet different our disciplinary maps are. Although we each would map the discipline differently based on our commitments, there are certain identifiable contours on every map that enable productive intersections for collaborative dialogue based on shared values and beliefs and other contours that ask us to slow down and examine what's at stake for us as situated members of the discipline. Our programmatic revision reminds us that welcoming students into Rhetoric and Composition is never solely about their learning; it's about our own as well. As we focused on student learning during programmatic revision, we were also positioned as learners—asking questions; reflecting on beliefs, values, and assumptions; and sponsoring new ways of thinking about writing, rhetoric, and teaching in one another. The learner stance is, perhaps, a hallmark of our discipline, as we aim to consider and reconsider the definition of writing, identify and explore new rhetorical contexts, and reflexively examine our teaching practices to ensure that throughout the process we have engaged in layers of inquiry and reflection: Who are we as individuals? Who are we as a program? Who are we as a discipline?

We are now putting forward a revised curriculum that we still continue to wrestle with in terms of how the curriculum will sponsor a stance of "writing specialist" in our graduates. The dynamic nature of our discipline as it responds to continual changes in writing and writing technologies coupled with our experiences remind us that programmatic

revision and disciplinary identity must be viewed as an ongoing process and a living thing.

Notes

We are indebted to the rest of our colleagues, each of which provided substantive input and feedback on this chapter, and without whom this writing process would have been no fun at all. Bruce Ballenger, Clyde Moneyhun, Michelle Payne, Gail Shuck, and Karen Uehling: you're the best.

1. As a faculty, we use a variety of labels (Composition and Rhetoric, Rhetoric and Composition, Writing Studies, etc.) to name our discipline. Since our MA program uses "Rhetoric and Composition," we have chosen to employ that label throughout this chapter.

2. In *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*, Denis Wood mapped the Jack-o'-lanterns, wind chimes, streetlights, etc., of his Raleigh, North Carolina, neighborhood. In this "narrative atlas," Woods creates maps that tell multilayered stories, allowing for new and deeper engagement with the place.

3. In our department, there are "discipline directors" with reassigned time to coordinate, for example, program development, curricular revisions, assessment, and student recruitment in that area. Our department's disciplines are Creative Writing, English Education, Linguistics, Literature, Technical Communication, and Rhetoric and Composition.

4. She provided the group with two documents: a handout that she had prepared for a campus-wide discussion about threshold concepts and the table of contents for part 1 of Adler-Kassner and Wardle's (2015) edited collection, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies.*

5. For example, as we began our curricular revision, Boise State began a process of program prioritization, under which academic programs were evaluated for their alignment with the university's mission and strategic plan. Programs were assessed based on five criteria: relevance, quality, productivity, efficiency, and opportunity analysis.

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