

University of Louisville

ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

1-2021

Writing program administration at public liberal arts colleges.

N. Claire Jackson
University of Louisville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd>



Part of the [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jackson, N. Claire, "Writing program administration at public liberal arts colleges." (2021). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 3617.
<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/3617>

This Doctoral Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. This title appears here courtesy of the author, who has retained all other copyrights. For more information, please contact thinkir@louisville.edu.

WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AT PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGES

By

N. Claire Jackson
B.A., University of New England, 2011
M.A. University of Maine, 2014

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences of the
University of Louisville in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English/Rhetoric and Composition

Department of English University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2021

WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AT PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGES

By

N. Claire Jackson
B.A., University of New England, 2011
M.A. University of Maine, 2014

A Dissertation Approved on

April 12, 2021

By the following Dissertation Committee:

Andrea R. Olinger

Bruce Horner

Susan Ryan

Rita Malenczyk

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Little Socks, my faithful companion for almost all of my
doctoral journey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Andrea Olinger, Dr. Bruce Horner, Dr. Susan Ryan, and Dr. Rita Malencyk. Thank you to Andrea for your constant feedback and guidance as dissertation director, Director of Composition, and co-author. I would not be the scholar and teacher I am today without your constant support. Bruce, thank you for being one the most careful readers of my writing I have ever worked with. Your ability to articulate what you see my work doing and what else I might consider has, without a doubt, made me a much better academic writer. Susan, thank you for your support and guidance in your Cultural History of Authorship seminar, where I first drafted what became my first single-authored journal article. And Rita, as the citations throughout this dissertation of both your writing and chapters from collections you have edited show, I have learned much from your scholarship. I am ever thankful you agreed to serve as an outside reader on this dissertation and for your support in developing this project.

I would also like to thank the various professors at the University of Maine and the University of New England whose support influenced my trajectory towards doctoral studies in Rhetoric and Composition: Dr. Pat Burnes, Dr. Dylan Dryer, Dr. Ryan Dippre, Dr. Laura Cowan, Dr. Susan McHugh, Dr. Jennifer Tuttle, and Dr. Michael Cripps. I wouldn't be here today if not for all of you. Similarly, I would like to thank my wonderful graduate student colleagues at both the University of Louisville and the

University of Maine. In particular, I need to thank Ola Swatek and Walker Smith. Thanks to you both for letting me vent about dissertation writing and the job market, and also for providing ample distractions from academia. My writing group—Amy Cicchino, Alisa Russell, and Gin Schwarz—have also been invaluable at keeping me accountable, which has been absolutely necessary while trying to write a dissertation during a pandemic. Erin Carney, thank you for all your help with my voice, which has made me much more confident on the job market, even if I'm not quite where I want to be yet. And to my Portland friends: Mia Freundlich, Jonathan Merrifield, and Kathryn O'Neil: Thanks to each of you for being true friends. I consider myself lucky to have you in my life.

I am forever grateful for the love of my two cats, Little Socks and Sam.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my mom, Roberta Jackson, for always loving me and showing me the value of an education, even when I didn't want to listen.

ABSTRACT
WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AT PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGES

N. Claire Jackson

April 12, 2021

This study provides a focused look at the possibilities of WPA work at public liberal arts colleges. Through surveys of and interviews with WPAs and critical discourse analysis of public documents, I identify common structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges (PLACs), explore WPAs' perceptions of what distinguishes writing program administration and writing instruction at these institutions, and distill the common values of public liberal arts colleges. I analyze the ways these values are articulated in mission statements and writing program websites and examine how WPAs draw on and, in some cases, resist institutional values as they develop or redesign writing programs. Survey data identifies some key differences between PLACs and private SLACS, which I speculate arises from their public status. Despite these differences, WPAs at PLACs felt a similar commitment to writing on their campuses and interview data provides insights into how WPAs worked to further formalize that commitment to writing. Furthermore, WPAs were relatively successful in advocating for programmatic efforts by appealing to the institution's commitment to a public liberal arts identity. However, these commitments were rarely articulated in public-facing documents. Thus, I

argue that WPAs should better articulate the importance of their writing programs and their contributions to fulfilling the university's larger goals. This argument has implications for WPAs pursuing institutional change, as it demonstrates how the revision of public-facing documents can shape dominant discourses on campus.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | iv |
| ABSTRACT..... | vi |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | xi |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | xii |
| | |
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Overview of Chapters..... | 14 |
| | |
| CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 14 |
| Histories of Composition and the Role of Rhetoric and Composition in the Liberal Arts..... | 14 |
| Studies of Particular Institutional Types..... | 19 |
| Competing Ideas of Liberal Arts Curricula..... | 22 |
| The Public Liberal Arts College Structure of Feeling..... | 28 |
| | |
| CHAPTER III: STRUCTURES OF WRITING PROGRAMS AT LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES..... | 35 |
| Methods..... | 36 |
| National Map of Public Liberal Arts Colleges..... | 42 |
| Structures of Writing Program Leadership..... | 48 |
| Writing Requirements..... | 54 |
| Faculty Development..... | 68 |
| Conclusions..... | 70 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER IV: WPAS’S PERCEPTIONS OF PLAC VALUES AND THE ROLE OF PLAC WRITING PROGRAMS..... | 73 |
| Methods..... | 75 |
| The Participants..... | 81 |
| WPAs’s Perceptions of the Public Liberal Arts College Ethos..... | 86 |
| Writing’s Role within the Public Liberal Arts College..... | 105 |
| Conclusions..... | 118 |
| CHAPTER V: INSIDER ACCOUNTS: HOW WPAS NAVIGATE TENSIONS IN INSTITUTIONAL VALUES..... | 122 |
| Methods..... | 123 |
| Dominant Tensions in PLAC WPA Work..... | 124 |
| Conclusions..... | 148 |
| CHAPTER VI: COMMUNICATING PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE VALUES: AN ANALYSIS OF MISSION STATEMENTS AND WEBSITES..... | 152 |
| Methods..... | 156 |
| COPLAC Values..... | 167 |
| Dominant Values Expressed in College Mission Statements..... | 172 |
| Writing Program Websites and Public Liberal Arts Values..... | 199 |
| Conclusions..... | 205 |
| CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH..... | 209 |
| Further Research..... | 213 |
| REFERENCES..... | 217 |
| APPENDIX A..... | 231 |

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| APPENDIX B..... | 233 |
| CURRICULUM VITA..... | 247 |

LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 4.1. Interview Participants..... | 81 |
| 4.2. Institutional Values with at least Four Total Occurrences..... | 87 |
| 5.1. Key Tensions Felt by WPAs..... | 124 |
| 6.1. Values Codes Applied at least 5 Times and Example Phrases..... | 160 |
| 6.2. Values Expressed in COPLAC Documents..... | 169 |
| 6.3. Values that Appeared in Mission Statements or Related Documents of at least 50% of Schools..... | 174 |
| 6.4. Important COPLAC Values that Appeared in Mission Statements or Related Documents of Fewer than 50% of Schools..... | 175 |
| 6.5. Values that Appeared in at least 25% of Writing Program Websites..... | 199 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| FIGURE | PAGE |
|---|------|
| 1. COPLAC Membership Status of Schools in the Sample..... | 43 |
| 2. Geographic Breakdown of all Schools in the Sample..... | 44 |
| 3. Geographic Breakdown of COPLAC Schools..... | 45 |
| 4. Geographic Breakdown of Non-COPLAC Schools in the Sample..... | 45 |
| 5. Histogram of Size of All Schools in the Sample..... | 47 |
| 6. Histogram of the Size of COPLAC Institutions..... | 47 |
| 7. Histogram of the Size of Non-COPLAC Institutions..... | 48 |
| 8. Departmental Home of WPAs..... | 50 |
| 9. Tenure Status of WPAs..... | 51 |
| 10. Comparison of WPA Responsibilities..... | 52 |
| 11. Frequency of Additional Faculty Support for WPA Work on Campus..... | 54 |
| 12. Frequency of Administrative Support for the Writing Program..... | 54 |
| 13. Frequency of Writing Requirements..... | 56 |
| 14. Frequency of Methods for Placing Out of Writing Requirements..... | 57 |
| 15. Changes to Writing Programs within the Last 10 Years..... | 58 |
| 16. Staffing of First-Year Writing..... | 59 |
| 17. Number of Faculty Histogram..... | 60 |
| 18. Sections of FYW Offered Histogram..... | 61 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 19. Frequency of Types of Outcomes Statements..... | 62 |
| 20. Amount of Control Instructors Have Over Syllabi..... | 64 |
| 21. Percentage of Programs with an Honors Option for FYW..... | 65 |
| 22. Types of Basic Writing Course Offerings..... | 65 |
| 23. Frequency of Methods of Placement in Basic Writing Courses..... | 66 |
| 24. Frequency of Amount of Required WI Courses..... | 67 |
| 25. Frequency of Types of Faculty Development Offered to Writing Program Faculty... | 70 |
| 26. Frequency of Types of Faculty Development Offered to Other Faculty..... | 70 |
| 27. Planned Upcoming Writing Program Initiatives Across the Sample..... | 72 |

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Two decades ago Sharon Crowley (1998) complained about the fact that “composition teachers speak of ‘the classroom’ as through this space is similarly constructed at Yale and at San Jose Community College” (p. 221). This recognition has led other scholars to pay more attention to the specific social and community contexts of writing instruction and how those inform what is rhetorically possible (e.g. Bizzell, 1992; Cooper, 2016; Ede, 2004; Reither, 1985). Similarly, scholars have also recognized that the majority of writing program administration (WPA) scholarship has focused on the large research universities where most WPAs received their graduate training with little attention to the specific local contexts that inform the WPA work, such as the particularities of budgets or other institutional constraints (Ede, 2004). Therefore, in recent years, many WPA scholars have specifically attempted to attend to different types of institutions, such as HBCUs (Jackson, 2018; Perryman-Clark & Craig, 2019) and community colleges (Klausman, 2008) in order to examine how WPA work is always contingent on local conditions.

Along these lines, there has been a growth of attention to the conditions of WPA work at small schools (e.g., Amorose, 2000; Carroll, Pegg, & Newmann, 2000; Gladstein, Lebduska, & Regaignon, 2009; Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Hanstedt, 2003; Hebb, 2005; Taylor, 2004). Many of the scholars who have researched WPA work and writing instruction at small institutions have attested that the assumptions the field of Rhetoric

and *Composition* makes about WPA work based on research conducted at large institutions do not easily translate to the material conditions of small schools (Amorose, 2000; Falbo, 2004; Folsom, 2001; Gladstein et al., 2009; Hanstedt & Amorose, 2004; Jones, 2004; Spohrer, 2006; Taylor, 2004) and thus they argue that more research on WPA work at small schools is necessary in order to both “make positions more accessible to graduate students and others new to this particular type of intellectual labor, and to provide a more transparent picture for those involved in evaluating the work of WPAs on campuses nationwide” (Gladstein et al., 2009, p. 13). While preparing graduate students to be successful WPAs at small schools is itself an important goal, especially when we acknowledge that most PhD students in English Studies will end up working in small schools (Folsom, 2001; Taylor, 2004), Amorose (2000) contends that the lack of research attending to small school WPA work “has proven detrimental to small- and large-institution WPAs alike” (p. 91). That is, he believes that because small-school WPAs have had to develop different approaches to writing program administration, large-school WPAs have missed out on opportunities to consider other ways of conducting their work and “strengthen[ing] their role within their institutions” (p. 91) Amorose and Paul Hanstedt reiterate this point in their 2004 introduction to the special issue of *Composition Studies*, “Composition in the Small College,” when they implore us to consider “if small-school culture might not provide alternative metaphors . . . metaphors which might also be useful at large schools” (p. 25). Therefore, a deeper consideration of WPA work at smaller institutions can not only fill in a gap in our knowledge about how WPA work is currently conceived and enacted, but can also help us reconsider how we might approach such work differently for different purposes.

Liberal arts colleges, as a distinctly American tradition, are particularly interesting sites of study because of the significant role they have played in the history of education in the United States. Their unique identity formed as they resisted the adoption of educational structures more similar to the German research university that many other US institutions underwent in the late 19th century (Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Pfnister, 1984). While liberal arts colleges are often critiqued as only catering to elite and upper-class students, they are derived from a commitment to providing a well-rounded education for all, which is represented by their proliferation in small frontier towns that, at the time of the schools' founding, needed to provide education for their youth (Dewey, 1916; Hayes, 2015; Marx, 2004; Pfnister, 1984). In fact, many supporters of the liberal arts tradition argue that providing this well-rounded education for all citizens is a necessary part of a healthy and functioning democracy (Dewey, 1916; Marx, 2004; Seery, 2002). A central component of the liberal arts education is a focus on broad and general education, rather than specific vocational training for a utilitarian purpose (Dewey, 1916; Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Hayes, 2015; Seery, 2002). Dewey (1916) argues that a broad liberal arts education can help students learn *how* to learn, and thus better prepare them for their future than any specific vocational training might. This commitment to general education makes liberal arts colleges especially interesting for WPA scholarship for two reasons. First, as I will discuss in the following chapter, this commitment has often included a focus on writing and language instruction across the curriculum (Dewey, 1916; Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012). Therefore, I see these goals of liberal arts education as in line with concerns in Rhetoric and Composition as we think about issues of transfer and writing development. I am particularly interested in *public*

liberal arts colleges because of their need to balance this commitment to a general education with greater pressures on public institutions to cut funding for the liberal arts and focus on job preparation (Bates, 2014; Hayes, 2015; Hutner & Mohamed, 2016; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Welch & Scott, 2016), a balance some have argued is not possible (Pfnister, 1984; Seery, 2002).

My dissertation begins to fill the gap in the literature I identified above by providing an overview of writing program structures at public small liberal arts colleges. While Gladstein and Regaignon's *Writing Program Administration at Small Liberal Arts Colleges* provides the first extensive look into the writing program configurations and ethos of *private* small liberal arts colleges, including the ways in which these institutions' practices differ from our field's common assumptions about WPA work, they provide no consideration of *public* small liberal arts colleges and how those might differ from the models they map out. While they note in their introduction that their project began simply with the question "What, exactly, does writing program administration at *private* small liberal arts colleges look like?" (2012, pp. xv, emphasis added), what I find surprising is the way the private status of these institutions frequently remains unmarked in their text. That is, while the brief introduction consistently retains the modifier "private," most of the book simply refers to "small liberal arts colleges," as does the title of the book and many of the chapter titles, such as the first chapter, "The Small Liberal Arts College Structure of Feeling," which begins with the statement that "small liberal arts colleges are an unusual type of higher education institution"(p. 5), before briefly reminding us on the next page they are considering "the culture and ethos of *private* small liberal arts colleges" (p. 6, emphasis added) and then again dropping "private" from the majority of

their references to the types of institutions they are considering. Moreover, in the call for further research in their conclusion, they say they “developed the leadership configurations [of SLAC writing programs] as a heuristic for understanding data from small college writing programs [note the lack of the word “private” here] . . . [But] We do not yet know how transferable they are to large institutions” (p. 210) before posing questions about how this work might be applied to the work of WPAs at larger institutions. What Gladstein and Regaignon do not ask is how transferable their findings about WPA work at private small liberal arts colleges are to the conditions at their public counterparts. Hanstedt and Amorose (2004) contend that “even among those schools we consider ‘small,’ there are many differences that must not be ignored,” and they note public versus private status as one of those important differences (p. 22).

While it is true that the majority of small liberal arts colleges are private institutions, public small liberal arts colleges have been pushing for more recognition. In his discussion of the evolution of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), Shuman (2017) dates what he calls “the discovery of a previously unrecognized segment of the American collegiate scene, the public liberal arts college,” to 1986, one year before the founding of COPLAC, when then-chancellor of the University of North Carolina Asheville “recognized that the character and mission and selectivity in recruitment and admissions of UNC Asheville as a college small by choice, focusing upon undergraduate liberal learning, made it an outlier in the University of North Carolina system” (p. 1), so he sought for similar institutions in the US. Currently, COPLAC consists of 29 colleges and universities across the United States and Canada.

Public small liberal arts colleges face unique challenges because, as Malenczyk and Rosenberg (2016) argue, their “identit[ies] [are] split in a way that of private colleges are not” (p. 153). That is, their roles within a larger state system and their histories as regional campuses or normal schools that emphasized college access and the value of a practical education continue to have a deep influence on campus culture and may constrain the ways they are able to enact a liberal arts mission (see also Fulford, 2009). One challenge in particular is that lower-income students and parents, concerned about job preparation, may be skeptical of a liberal arts education (Bates, 2014). While such concerns have occasionally been flagged as a threat to the very core of a liberal arts education (Pfnister, 1984), Bates suggests this is actually a strength of these institutions because public institutions “hav[e] to articulate connections between the disciplines and the ‘real world’” in order to demonstrate the functional use of this education (p. 209).

It is not just public liberal arts colleges that need to demonstrate the value of their education, however, because as all institutions face increased competition for students, they feel a deeper need to convince students, parents, and accreditors their institution is worthwhile. As such, WPA scholarship should be “critical *of* and critical *to*” institutional missions and attempts to live them out (Janangelo, 2016, p. xv). WPAs can use considerations of institutional mission to think about how our writing programs fit within our particular institutions, and linking writing program goals to the mission of an institution might help access additional funding or strengthen the role of the writing program in the wider institution (Schoen, 2019; Vander Lei & Pugh, 2016). More broadly, such consideration of the roles institutional mission plays in shaping our writing programs can also help us consider how local context influences writing instruction.

Because public small liberal arts colleges have unique—and often competing—missions among public institutions, they provide an especially useful consideration of the role such context plays in shaping writing instruction and how WPAs can make their programs “into sites of mission embodiment” where a school’s mission is “a purposeful and essential part of our institutional structures” (Schoen, 2019, p. 56).

The lack of attention to public institutions in the WPA scholarship on small liberal arts colleges has practical drawbacks as well. For example, the SLAC-WPA organization, which has no mention of private status in its name, includes private status as one of its membership criteria, despite a mission statement stating their goal “is to support the teaching of writing at small liberal arts colleges [again, note the lack of the word “private” here] where curricular histories, size, residentiality, and faculty structure present unique opportunities for teaching writing that accords with the intellectual, academic, and civic values often associated with a liberal education.” Public liberal arts colleges, then, remain excluded from this organization, despite potential similarities in “curricular histories, size, residentiality, and faculty structure,” which SLAC-WPA posits as the common factors. This exclusion from the SLAC-WPA organization prevents WPAs at small public liberal arts colleges from accessing a source of support which those cited above have argued small-school WPAs need, which caused frustrations among two of my interview participants. Moreover, WPAs at public small liberal arts colleges might be in greater need of support from those in similar situations because of the pressures of a state university system and competing discourses of efficiency and practicality of education (Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016).

In this dissertation, I intervene in such erasure by mapping out the writing program configurations of a sample of public small liberal arts colleges and analyzing the ways in which such programs are influenced by their institutional status. This work adds to understandings of how local context influences the development and enactment of writing programs. More specifically, attending to how public liberal arts colleges, in the face of shrinking state budgets, enact a commitment to liberal arts education, which typically includes a deep commitment to writing education, can help all WPAs and writing studies scholars consider new and different possibilities for writing program administration and writing instruction. Moreover, because of public SLACs' commitment to low-income and first-generation students, such a study helps all WPAs think about designing more equitable writing programs that address diverse sets of student needs.

In order to provide a broad understanding of the writing program configurations and work of writing program administrators at public small liberal arts colleges and the ways in which such programs enact the unique missions of these institutions, my study pursues the following research questions:

1. What are the structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges (e.g., writing requirements, administrative positions, campus entities involved, etc.)?
2. To what extent do the structures of writing programs at these institutions enact and reflect the liberal arts mission and values and what Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) call the liberal arts “structure of feeling”?
3. To what extent does the public nature of these institutions influence writing program structures? Moreover, how is the value of writing education marketed

and articulated to the public, especially in this era of austerity and shrinking state education budgets?

Overview of Chapters

Due to the expansiveness of this project, I take a mixed-methods approach to this study. Like Johaneck (2000), I believe that researchers should not choose methods based on their research preferences but rather they should choose methods that best answer the questions at hand, and that quantitative and qualitative research are both useful and provide us with different ways of knowing. Therefore, the chapters in this dissertation each draw on different methods to answer different aspects of the research questions above.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the scholarship informing this study in order to identify some of the dominant values of writing instruction at public liberal arts colleges. First, I briefly consider some histories of composition studies and competing ways such histories situate the emergence of rhetoric and composition in relation to the goals of a liberal arts education, arguing that the historical need to justify the development of composition courses in public universities has contributed to some of the contemporary positionings of writing programs at PLACs. From there, I provide an overview of studies focused on specific institutional types besides the research university, which has dominated rhetoric and composition scholarship, to demonstrate how my focus on public liberal arts colleges both follows a recent trend in the scholarship and also makes an important contribution through its attention to an often-overlooked institutional type. Next, I consider some of the prevalent debates among those who study the history and evolution of liberal education, particularly the debates between the need for a

classical education, such as one focused on the “Great Books,” and a more inclusive, non-Western-centric education; and the debate between a liberal arts education for its own sake (Dewey, 1916) and what one of my interview participants called an “applied liberal arts” education. This overview contextualizes current debates that PLACs are still having, as the interviews I discuss in chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate. Next, I turn to Gladstein and Regaignon’s (2012) explanation of the liberal arts “structure of feeling” (Williams, 1977). Lastly, I provide an overview of the limited scholarship on public liberal arts colleges specifically to identify what that scholarship suggests about how a public liberal arts college structure of feeling might be different from that of a private liberal arts college. While my reading of the literature suggests the PLAC structure of feeling contains the qualities Gladstein and Regaignon identified in their SLAC structure of feeling, the PLAC structure of feeling also includes a pronounced focus on college access, which is often in tension with ideas of selectivity and academic quality, and a commitment to community engagement.

Chapter 3 provides a bird’s-eye view of the structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges by drawing on the quantitative survey data I collected from WPAs. While this data is able to report on some of the ways writing programs at liberal arts colleges are structured, and speak to some of the ways they seem to operate differently from private SLACs, it is not able to speak to *why* PLAC writing programs may be structured in these ways. In this chapter, I identify some important trends from the survey data that show key differences from private SLACs, namely that PLACs are about twice as likely to have non-tenure-track instructors teaching first-year writing and much more likely to allow opportunities to place out of first-year writing. Moreover, I

report on a desire among all WPAs to further formalize their institution's commitment to writing.

Chapters 4 and 5 both draw on semi-structured interviews with WPAs at seven of the institutions in the sample from chapter 3. In chapter 4, I draw on claims by Malencyzk and Rosenberg (2016) and Fulford (2009) that public liberal arts colleges have a split identity to consider these WPAs' perceptions of the structure of feeling at public liberal arts colleges, finding that many of these WPAs perceive a more stable public liberal arts identity than previously identified in the scholarship. Analyzing some of the professed dominant values of public liberal arts colleges--such as diversity and inclusion, college access, strong relationships and a sense of community--and the role size plays in these values, I examine the ways in which these WPAs believe these values show up in their writing programs and the campus culture more broadly. From there, I explore the prevalence of a valued commitment to writing, which Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) explain is common among liberal arts colleges, and consider the ways these WPAs draw on that professed commitment to advocate for the development or revision of writing programs that are responsive both to their local contexts and what rhetoric and composition more broadly recognizes as effective writing pedagogy. Like Vander Lei and Pugh (2016) and Schoen (2019) suggest, I find that WPAs are relatively successful in their programmatic efforts, even in the face of tight funding, when they are able to align these efforts with the institutional mission.

In chapter 5, my attention turns to tensions in values felt across public liberal arts colleges. With a sustained focus on two WPAs, one of whom was at an institution with a pronounced push for standardization across all campuses in the state system and one who

had significant autonomy and access to resources, I examine how WPAs working in such different conditions can navigate tensions in values among their public liberal arts missions and in other dominant discourses of public higher education. Like Gladstein and Regaignon (2012), my interview data suggests an especially pronounced tension between faculty autonomy and central leadership. Moreover, I find that while leveraging the expressed values of the public liberal arts mission, an approach aligned with Amorose's (2000) notion of influence in which a small school WPA draws on opportunities to persuade others of the benefits of their proposed actions, is often a successful approach to preserving important writing program initiatives and resisting central mandates. However, there are also significant ways in which that identity, and the associated traditions, constrain what is possible for WPAs to enact or change.

Chapter 6, my final data chapter, turns away from interview data to examine the ways in which particular public liberal arts college values are linguistically realized in both institution mission statements and writing program websites. Using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003, 2012), I analyze how certain public liberal arts values, as they are codified in mission statements and writing program websites, are recontextualized through market discourses. I find that while writing program websites frequently draw on the role writing plays in a liberal arts education to justify the work they do, college mission statements embrace their commitment to a liberal arts education more ambiguously and often display significant tension between a liberal arts education focused on education for its own sake and the market demands for vocational training. More importantly, I note that while commitments to diversity and inclusion are invoked in mission statements in almost all of the schools in my sample, few do so in a way that

acknowledges power relations and inequity. Moreover, these commitments are rarely present in writing program websites, despite the claims from WPAs in the previous two chapters that these are central values of their writing program. My analysis reveals that these mission statements demonstrate significant tensions between a professed commitment to college access and a maintaining of the college's selectivity, reifying a binary between these two commitments previously identified by Fox (1999) and Horner (1999). I argue that such tensions between codified values constrain the effectiveness of such efforts for diversity, inclusion, or access, and that WPAs should do more to articulate the role their writing programs play in achieving such efforts.

Finally, my concluding chapter considers the project's implications for writing program administration. In it, I argue for a responsive approach to WPA work in which WPAs rhetorically align their programmatic initiatives with institutional values. Such an approach to WPA work also positions WPAs to have significant influence on the workings of their campus at large, as I argue that this rhetorical work by WPAs contributes to the reshaping of discourses that circulate on campus. In other words, engaging with institutional mission in the enactment of their writing program initiatives is a way in which WPAs can promote meaningful change on campus.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

“I have discovered that the public liberal arts colleges do not simply provide an alternative environment for teaching and scholarship, they actually embody an alternative set of academic values.” – Joel M. Sipress, “A Place Where Ideas Matter”

In this section, in order to situate my study within a scholarly tradition, I begin with a discussion of the history of composition as a discipline and the connections such history has with the components of a liberal arts education. After this, I provide an overview of scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition that has focused on particular institutional types, especially those that focus on institutional types other than the elite research university that dominates much of the field. Then, I briefly attend to some of the debates around liberal arts education that were relevant for my interview participants. Finally, I explain how Raymond Williams’s concept of “structures of feeling” has been applied to private liberal arts colleges (Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012) and how the research on public liberal arts colleges suggests such structures of feeling might be actualized differently.

Histories of Composition and the Role of Rhetoric and Composition in the Liberal Arts

Scholars in Rhetoric and Composition have long been interested in the historical origins of our field (e.g. Berlin, 1984, 1987; Connors, 1997; Crowley, 1998; Miller, 1991). Within such histories of the field of composition, the purported relationship between the field of composition and a liberal arts education varies. For example, in his

discussion of the development of composition at Harvard, Brereton (1995) argues that as Harvard adopted the German model of the research university, and thus abandoned the “old liberal arts ideal [which] stressed the essential unity of knowledge” (p. 5), a model which “simply had no models for rhetoric and composition on the university level” (p. 6), rhetoric and writing instruction went “missing” from the new curriculum, which led to the rise of the first-year composition class to fill the void left by abandoning the liberal arts education model. Masters (2004), however, notes that many early arguments about “freshman English,” and writing courses more broadly, conceive of such courses as a central part of a liberal education. For example, he cites Guth (1962) claiming that “‘Freshman English,’ which at its least inspiring dwindles into a service course, can be a crucial part of the students’ liberal education” (p. 107) and notes that Robert Gorrell called the production of “liberally educated persons by means of one or two semesters’ worth of study constitutes one of . . . the ‘major miracles’ expected of Freshman English” (p. 107). Moreover, foreshadowing the debate between the role of “vocational” study within the liberal arts curriculum, Masters cites the minutes from a 1955 meeting discussing the writing major at Wheaton, which read: “Our [writing] major is not vocational, but intended to give a liberal education with an appreciation of good techniques . . . Our emphasis is different, and better. ‘Vocational’ education is not considered evil . . . but it is inferior to the ‘liberal arts’” (p. 106). My reading of the literature suggests three factors leading to these differing accounts of the relationship between composition and the liberal arts, which are 1) the strong role rhetorical education played in the traditional liberal arts curriculum; 2) the tensions between literature and composition within early English departments; and 3) the need to justify the development

and inclusion of composition courses within public universities. All three of these factors are deeply intertwined, and I will explore them together in the rest of this section.

As mentioned already, before the import of the German research university model, early American colleges were structured in ways that preceded what we now understand as the liberal arts college model, and as I will discuss below, this was “fundamentally opposed to the vocational values that we now associate with professional training” (Trachsel, 1992, p. 33). For many historians of the field of English, this necessarily included a focus on the study of literature, which Graff argues was viewed “as a form of acculturation for ‘the cultivated gentlemen’” (qtd. in Trachsel, 1992, p. 33). If we take such early American colleges as a model for contemporary liberal arts colleges, however, it is important to recognize that writing instruction *was* already central to the curricula at many of these institutions. As Brereton (1995) makes clear, despite the creation of English A at Harvard in 1869, this course “did not introduce English composition . . . to the American college; . . . there was extensive instruction in rhetoric and writing at Harvard and elsewhere well before 1869” (p. 9). As Brereton explains,

The tradition, pre-Eliot writing program, like that at most colleges, required a mix of oral and written composition throughout all four years of college, with a single rhetoric course to provide a theoretical grounding in the principles of effective prose, usually by way of brief examples from the English classics. Students did not learn to write in a single course, but got instruction at all stages of their academic careers. (p. 9).

As Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) note, private small liberal arts colleges are more likely to have WAC programs than they are traditional FYW programs, and that is clearly

a result of this history of writing instruction happening at all stages of a student's education. In his history of writing in the academic disciplines, for example, Russell (2002) argues that the WAC program established in the 1930s at Colgate started the WAC movement that happened at other SLACs, despite its inability to maintain enough support to become a permanent fixture of the university. Thus, while the development of composition as a discipline, and as a stand-alone course, has come to be seen as part of the movement away from a liberal arts college model, it is important to recognize that writing instruction has always been a key component of many of those institutions. Furthermore, for some composition scholars (e.g. Bizzell, 2017; Kinneavy, 1969), the history of the development of composition is deeply intertwined with the history of a liberal arts education and "can be seen as a process of learning to think about one's own thinking" (Bizzell, 2017, p. 453.)

However, through the bifurcation of "English studies" into the disparate fields of Literary Studies and Rhetoric and Composition, the former has become much more associated with the liberal arts, while Rhetoric and Composition has often been associated with much more "practical" ends (e.g. Kinneavy, 1969). This association arose, in part, because of the discourse of the "literacy crisis" and the need to "solve" the problem of student writing (e.g. Russell, 2002; Trachsel, 1992). Trachsel discusses how Harvard's President, Charles Eliot, demonstrated the need for a required composition course by publishing examples of student illiteracy. She argues that the entrance exams seen at institutions like Harvard proved "the practical goals of literacy instruction were far more likely to be set by economic constraints and employment opportunities in the outside world than by a humanistic concern for the development and expression of

individual character” (p. 45). Thus, while literary studies was able to be valued as “an end in itself,” composition became the branch of English studies which was seen as “a means by which both academic and nonacademic ends might be achieved. While Masters (2004) argues English studies as a whole, including literary studies, had to “instrumentalize” itself by demonstrating its use to the university, he comes to a similar conclusion as Trachsel about how this affected the view of first-year writing, noting that the idea of the required first-year writing course caused “academic literacy [to be] inescapably reduced to a set of skills that students were expected to acquire” (p. 30), and thus composition was viewed as a discipline that served outside demands, including literacy demands outside of the university. According to Masters, the creation of English A at Harvard was in part so students could “further their careers as managers, journalists, teachers, engineers, musicians, or performers” (p. 34).

Importantly, however, such accountings of how literary studies came to be associated with the liberal arts while composition became associated with “practical” or “instrumental” instruction are deeply tied to the histories of research universities. Donahue and Falbo’s (2007) archival research on writing instruction at Lafayette College, a liberal arts college, paints a different picture—one in which literary studies and composition are viewed “in mutual reciprocity and reinforcement” (p. 39). Their chapter focuses on Francis A. March, who is often discussed in histories of literary studies, and their research uncovers he had a significant interest in the teaching of writing as well, leading them to classify him as “an early compositionist” (p. 39). In short, their reading of the descriptions of his English courses (which predate Harvard’s English A) in early course catalogs show that he did not “wrest English literature away from rhetoric”

(p. 46) as others have argued, but that he tried to situate his literature courses within a curriculum already heavily focused on rhetoric and writing instruction, arguing that “writing be used to teach literature” (p. 47) because of his view as “writing as a vehicle for thinking” (p. 47). This discovery leads Donahue and Falbo to conclude that “any claims about the origin of literature as distinct from composition are suspect” (p. 53), and this claim perfectly demonstrates the need to attend to institutions other than the research institutions which have dominated the history of composition. Thus, in the next section, I provide an overview of studies of particular institutional types which have informed my study.

Studies of Particular Institutional Types

Many of the histories of the development of composition discussed in the previous section have tended to privilege the elite research university, but more recent work has recognized that the field needs to attend to a more diverse range of institutional types if we want to make broad claims about the development of writing education (Gold, 2008). Therefore, recent work has turned to the histories of composition at women’s colleges (Gold, 2008; Gold & Hobbs, 2014; Ritter, 2012), historically black colleges and universities (Gold, 2008; Jackson, 2019), and normal schools (Ostergaard & Wood, 2015). While it has typically been assumed that different types of institutions simply adapted their curricula from those practiced at elite universities, Gold (2008) argues that such schools developed their own pedagogical traditions to meet their own unique needs. Thus, Ostergaard and Wood (2015) argue that attending to “how composition and rhetoric was valued and practiced differently within different educational contexts” (p. 3) is necessary because these institutions served a more diverse student body than the elite

universities typically studied. Examining why and how our field has privileged some accounts of composition history over others “can lead our field to more critically examine our present-day best practices, disciplinary values, and unacknowledged assumptions about teachers and students of writing” (Ostergaard & Wood, 2015, p. 18).

It is not just historiographic work that has attempted to broaden our field’s attention to a more diverse sampling of institutions; recent scholarship has also examined the current state of writing instruction and writing program administration at underrepresented universities. For example, while not solely focused on HBCUs, Perryman-Clark and Craig (2019) emphasize the importance of studying HBCU writing programs in order to understand the roles of both Black WPAs and Black students in shaping university writing programs. Such work, they suggest, is necessary to examine the way racist logics continue to inform our institutional practices and to re-center the needs of Black students and faculty. In a different attempt to attend to often overlooked institutions, Isaacs (2018) argues that her empirical study of 106 state comprehensive universities (SCUs) is necessary because “these institutions grant baccalaureate degrees to half the students enrolled in public US four-year colleges and universities and 28 percent of all students attending private or public four-year colleges or universities” (p. 5) and so it is necessary to understand the conditions of writing instruction as these institutions simply because of the large number of students they serve.

While the public small liberal arts colleges this dissertation examines make up a small piece of the higher education landscape, it is frequently argued that an important role of public small liberal arts colleges is to increase access for both low-income students and first-generation students (Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Paino, 2014;

Urgo, 2014). Therefore, even if such institutions are serving a small percentage of the overall student body nation-wide, they provide a valuable site for understanding how to develop and enact accessible writing programs that serve the needs of diverse students. Isaacs (2018) argues that her study of SCUs is valuable to anyone seeking to understand the national state of writing instruction, and I would argue that such an understanding requires paying attention not just to our most common universities, but also those that strive to reach diverse groups and underrepresented students. Considering universities beyond those that primarily serve privileged groups of students allows us to think about the ways in which they developed particular pedagogies and practices to serve particular student needs.

Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) study of 100 private small liberal arts colleges provides an important contribution to WPA scholarship because, they argue, liberal arts colleges typically contain extensive support for writing on campus. As they acknowledge, SLACs are twice as likely to have WAC programs than other institutional types. They explain that Composition historians have often attributed the WAC movement's origins to liberal arts colleges, and they tie these origins to the fact that liberal arts colleges have historically demonstrated a strong commitment to undergraduate education and an expectation that all faculty would take part in the development of students' writing abilities because of the importance of writing in all disciplines (p. 17-19). While their study provides an important look into how particular writing program configurations and practices arose out of the particularities of the shared history of SLACs, it seems that some of their findings might only be applicable to private institutions. For example, in their chapter on staffing FYC, they note that SLACs typically have the majority of their

courses taught by tenure-track faculty because “the philosophical and material questions about staffing writing courses center on issues of intellectual expertise rather than labor conditions” (p. 121). As this dissertation demonstrates, such a claim is simply not true for many public liberal arts colleges that exist as part of state systems and are continually facing the same budget cuts as their peer institutions. Therefore, I contend that further studies of writing at liberal arts colleges, especially ones that include public institutions, can help writing studies scholars to identify different and innovative approaches to writing program administration that attempt to navigate strong commitments to writing education while dealing with shrinking budgets and other results of austerity politics.

Competing Ideas of Liberal Arts Curricula

Following the trend of studying multiple universities of a particular institutional type identified in the previous section, this dissertation looks specifically at institutions that consider themselves public liberal arts colleges. However, one difficulty in identifying public liberal arts colleges is the competing ideas of what a liberal arts curriculum entails. Allan O. Pfnister begins his 1984 article “The Role of the Liberal Arts College: A Historical Overview of the Debates” by lamenting that “The free-standing liberal arts colleges and the university-based liberal arts colleges have been placed increasingly on the defensive over the past decade as study in professional and more applied fields has become more attractive to postsecondary students” (p. 145). When first encountering this article, I found it telling how contemporary this lament sounds. Pfnister even concludes, while critiquing this turn away from a “pure” liberal arts education, that “the greater threat to the liberal arts appear[s] to be not dissolution but transformation” (p. 146) and the increasing comprehensive and/or vocational focus of liberal arts colleges

actually means the death of the liberal arts tradition. On the other hand, Oakley (1992) argues that in such arguments “the very terms ‘liberal education’ and ‘liberal arts’ are frequently used without any recognition of the changing meanings attributed to them across the centuries” (p. 39) and that “contemporary anxieties about curricular incoherence, creeping vocationalism, hyperspecialization, loss of cultural unity, and an alleged failure to mediate the accumulated richness of the Western cultural heritage are often highlighted by the imposition on the past of a golden age of educational harmony, instructional integrity, curricular coherence, intellectual stability, and truly liberal educational values” (p. 40). In other words, according to Oakley’s history, there has never been an agreement upon what exactly a liberal education entails and the contemporary debates about liberal education have been present almost as long as the idea of a liberal arts education itself. Thus, while I will not attempt to settle on a definition of a liberal arts education in this section (Oakley suggests all ideas about “what constitutes a liberal education” in 20th century America contain “formidable complexity” and “considerable confusion” (p. 62)), in this section I will outline two of the prominent debates that seemed to be central for the WPAs I interviewed for this study. First, I will discuss the debate between the “great books” liberal arts curriculum, which centers a Western-centric approach to literary studies as a necessary component of a liberal arts education, and the calls for more inclusive curricula and decentering of Western perspectives. Second, I will take up the role of vocationalism that so concerns Pfnister, particularly in considerations of education for its own sake, as Dewey (1916) and others have centered as the necessary conditions of a liberal arts education and the debate for what one of my participants called a more “applied” notion of the liberal arts.

Traditional “Great Books” Classical Education vs. Inclusive Curricula

I identified above the ways in which a liberal education has come to be associated with literary studies. Part of this association, not discussed above, is the fact that many proponents of liberal education argue for the idea of “Great Books” curriculum, which focuses on the classics of the Western canon, and this approach has also led to critiques of the ways such an education centers Western-centric ideals and contributes to the marginalization of other histories and traditions. For example, despite arguing that many liberal arts colleges have failed to deliver on their lofty ideals of providing education for everyone, Seery (2002) defends the traditional “Great Books” curriculum by suggesting the reason such texts remain relevant is simply their timelessness, arguing “they continue to produce original student papers and brand new insights year after year . . . they keep such *questioning* [the ability to question, for Seery, being the heart of the liberal arts] alive and going” (p. 27). Moreover, he decries attempts at diversifying the curriculum and including texts from diverse authors as mere “tokenism” and suggests such curricula are more about “affirming” minoritized students rather than teaching “criticism” (p. 30). Such claims taking place amongst an argument for the need for liberal arts education to be made accessible to all students is ironic, as it positions the Western canon of texts as universal, while texts by minoritized authors are unable to overcome associations with identity politics and an overreliance on the author’s subject position. That is, these claims work against the call for making liberal arts education more inclusive he thinks he is advocating.

Responding to the debates around a “Great Books” curriculum, Martha Nussbaum (1997) not only argues such curricula are designed *only* for the needs of a particular

group of students, but she also claims that for “the Greeks [who] are frequently brought onstage as heroes in the ‘great books’ curricula . . . there is nothing . . . more unanimous than the limitations of such curricula” (p. 33). Therefore, while Nussbaum is also arguing for the need to make a liberal arts education accessible to all—something she also notes SLACs have often failed to do—she thinks diversifying the curriculum is a necessary component of such an approach, arguing that subjects and texts “that would not have been in the curriculum twenty-five years ago, are supplying essential ingredients for citizenship [an oft-touted goal of a liberal arts education]” (p. 13). Moreover, she suggests the still common Western-centric focus of such curricula is limiting because “We cannot afford to be ignorant of the traditions of one half of the world, if we are to grapple well with the economic, political, and human problems that beset us” (p. 114). While such arguments do at times argue for the benefit of diversity through market logics, they also echo some of the concerns brought up by some of my participants, especially Hannah, who note that the liberal arts college is often associated with Whiteness because of the history of such Western-centric curricula, yet that the central goals of learning how to question and synthesize ideas across disciplines are obviously beneficial goals. For Hannah—like for Nussbaum—then, there is value in diversifying the curriculum so that the goals of a liberal arts education are not presented as just for white, upper-class students.

Education for Education’s Sake vs. Applied Liberal Arts

While Nussbaum is less alarmist than Pfnister and some others about the idea of expanding and diversifying the curriculum of a liberal arts education, she is similarly concerned that an increasing focus on vocationalism is diluting the spirit of such an

education (p. 297). This concern is central to the second debate I want to cover in this section: the debate between a liberal arts education focused on education for its own sake versus the calls for a more “applied” focus to the liberal arts. Many authors have argued that a liberal arts education should have no other goal than that of education for its own sake and the development of thinking and questioning (e.g. Dewey, 1916; Freedman, 2003; Hayes, 2015; Nussbaum, 1997; Seery, 2002). However, I find it necessary to point out that such arguments are not truly free from vocational or economic logics. Dewey himself argues that a liberal arts education is *better* preparation for the future than a vocational education because it teaches how to learn and how to adapt to new situations, thus he positions this type of education as more valuable to students wishing to succeed in the economic marketplace. Therefore, in some ways I think this debate reifies a binary that is not truly tenable. However, some proponents of liberal arts education, like Seery (2002), do argue for a liberal arts education truly divested from market concerns and only focused on “leisure” and “the joy of reading.”

Unlike Seery, some have been advocating for a more applied liberal arts curriculum in which the value of a liberal arts education is more readily apparent so it can be marketed towards students, parents, and taxpayers. As mentioned elsewhere, Bates (2014) argued this is necessary for public liberal arts colleges, specifically, because of their relationship to state education budgets and commitment to low-income, local students. Similarly, Attewell and Lavin (2012) note that both liberal arts majors and liberal arts colleges are often less attractive to low-income students because of these very real economic concerns. As they explain:

Clearly the private economic benefits of higher education loom very large in the minds of many students in community colleges and in non-elite 4-year colleges. Undergraduates who are the first in their families to have attended college typically view higher education as a route to upward mobility, a shot at a credential, a stepping-stone to a well-paying job. Merely getting to college represents a major achievement, and working one's way through college is often a struggle. These students have seen at close range what it means to work at minimum-wage jobs or raise a family on a low income, and most are strongly committed to rising above that station. Consequently, while some non-traditional students are nevertheless drawn to liberal arts majors, the majority play it safe and opt for majors with clear career paths. (p. 99)

Whatever one may think of such motivations, it is clear they dominate the concerns of many of our students in the current economic crisis and dismissing such concerns, as theorists like Seery do, seems to only be possible from a place of economic privilege. Thus, Attewell and Lavin conclude that "If the liberal arts are to flourish, they will have to do so intertwined with the heavily vocational orientation that dominates American undergraduate life" (p. 93). While alarmists like Pfnister claim such an intertwining spells the death of the liberal arts, Hayes (2015) suggests this is nothing new, noting that as vocational concerns arose in the 1800s, especially among HBCUs, many schools "had as [their] objective the provision of both liberal arts education and training the trades" (p. 19). Thus, the trend towards an applied liberal arts direction, as called for by scholars like Attewell and Lavin, as well as my participant Holly, does not need to mean abandoning the traditional goals of the liberal arts, but rather, by demonstrating and articulating *how*

such goals are useful towards the practical motivations that might be driving students to such institutions. Now that I have contextualized these debates that inform my study, I will turn to a consideration of the structure of feeling of public liberal arts colleges, as identified by the literature on these institutions.

The Public Liberal Arts College Structure of Feeling

In their analysis of private small liberal arts colleges, Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) draw on Raymond Williams's (1977) concept of *structure of feeling* to define the shared values and practices of SLACs, despite the many differences across institutions. Reacting to the ways culture and society are typically described in the past tense without attention to their emergent properties, Williams defines structures of feeling as "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" (1977, p. 132) through their relations to other more formal belief systems and the social elements that influence them. He explains that the social experiences that create structures of feeling are "still *in process*, often, indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating" and are often not recognizable until "they have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations" (1977, p. 132). What Williams is attempting to recognize in this explanation is the fact that social life often reflects conflicts and tensions between certain values and ideological beliefs, and while such beliefs might be taken as a result of our individual consciousness, they have arisen out of particular material and historical conditions. Therefore, it is only through our relationships to institutions and cultural structures that such values and beliefs are shaped. As individuals take up or react against particular values, new values slowly become formalized into these institutions. Gladstein and Regaignon argue that

because this concept attends to the material and historical conditions that create values and belief systems, it “provides a way to understand...how the shared values and assumptions of small colleges are grounded in their material conditions and history” by examining how these institutions “have always and continue to formalize particular values” (2012, p. 7)

While Gladstein and Regaignon repeatedly note there are many important differences across the 100 institutions they examine, they identify the following shared qualities as key to the SLAC structure of feeling: 1) a focus on community, including between student and faculty, leading to strong connections between curricular and extracurricular practices; 2) a commitment to undergraduate education, especially around language and writing instruction; and 3) an especially pronounced tension between faculty autonomy and central leadership. These three components of the liberal arts structure of feeling, they argue, are what allow the possible configurations of writing programs they identify at SLACs to take shape in the ways they have. These values they have identified are consistent with the values explicitly discussed in scholarship focused on public liberal arts colleges. Sipress (2014), for example, argues that “[t]he dominant values of the academy encourage faculty to see national and international disciplinary peer groups as the primary source of professional identity and intellectual community . . . [but] [o]n a public liberal arts campus, by contrast, one finds meaning and community primarily from the students, faculty, and staff one encounters every day” (p. 24). He outlines the ways in which developing a strong community with cross-departmental colleagues and his students was essential to his work at University of Wisconsin-Superior, thus demonstrating that strong commitment to local community. Moreover, all

members of COPLAC have been recognized for a similarly strong commitment to undergraduate education through their practices of maintaining at least some small seminar classes and teaching-focused faculty (Shuman, 2017).

While the examples above highlight that PLACs seem to share many of the explicitly articulated values of private SLACs, there are several complicating factors that cause such values to be lived and expressed in a more pronounced tension with other competing values. For example, while Gladstien and Regaignon consider the “shared genealogy” (2012, p. 7) of private SLACs to be a major factor in the common values and practices that allow them to articulate a specific small liberal arts college structure of feeling, public liberal arts colleges have had a variety of different pathways to their current status as liberal arts colleges (Shuman, 2017) and thus lack that shared genealogy of private SLACs. That is, “some of today’s state related public liberal arts colleges have been private, some religiously affiliated, some have been municipal, some county sponsored, and some federal” (Shuman, 2017, p. 4). This varied history is important because, as Malenczyk and Rosenberg (2016) note, “institutions that try to reinvent themselves always carry the burden of their history” (p. 153). For example, they explain that Eastern Connecticut State University’s history and split identity as both a liberal arts college and a regional state university focused on education at a good value causes it to have a much more fractured identity than that of private liberal arts colleges (p. 153). Similarly, in her study of a WAC program at a public small liberal arts college, Fulford (2009) found that the felt senses of institutional identity that faculty and administrators carried conflicted with the school’s public representation as a liberal arts college.

Perhaps a more complicating factor than their varied genealogy is that COPLAC seems to have never settled the question of when an institution becomes a public SLAC: should institutions join COPLAC when they had substantially achieved the status of small rigorous public undergraduate liberal arts colleges. . . or should they be admitted if they indicated they wished to move in that direction? Or, as a third alternative, should they be invited in the circle of COPLAC if they aspired to the status of other members, and had taken significant steps in that direction, but were not there yet. (2017, p. 8)

Shuman acknowledges that some members were admitted to the organization after making some progress towards enacting a liberal arts college model if they showed continued aspirations to move in that direction. As such, members of COPLAC may be at different stages on their development towards liberal arts college status, or perhaps have reached a different balance between the former values tied to their institutional history and the liberal arts ethos towards which they aspire, suggesting more variety than we might see across private institutions. It is for these reasons that a study of public small liberal arts colleges can provide a useful look into how institutions formalize specific values through their everyday practices.

While public liberal arts colleges share the three qualities to the structure of feeling of feeling Gladstein and Regaignon identify (though the later chapters of this dissertation will identify how they are articulated somewhat differently), there are two other distinctive qualities of the public liberal arts college ethos identified in the literature. As Urgo (2014) states, “In short, these institutions are committed to class mobility” (223), and they demonstrate this commitment through a focus on increasing

college access. Practically, this commitment arises simply from the fact that they are significantly cheaper than their private counterparts, and the expense of the latter—which Urgo argues frames liberal arts education as “akin to wealth, as private property, the purview of privileged young people from equally well-educated families” (222)—necessarily excludes many possible low-income students. That is, while it is true that many private SLACs do also profess a commitment to college access, it has been frequently noted that the mere expense of these colleges has led to a failure of the realization of that commitment (e.g. Marx, 2004; Volk & Benedix, 2020). Malenczyk and Rosenberg tie this commitment to access—a commitment they also value—at Eastern Connecticut State University to the institution’s history, noting that prior to its adoption of the liberal arts mission, it was viewed as a school you go to if you can’t get into University of Connecticut. Thus, “Eastern’s identity is split in a way that of private colleges is not: said identity resides in part with Eastern’s new mission but also in part with its history and continued identity as a regional state university, where value and practicality coincide” (153). As I explore later in this dissertation, this commitment to college access is often presented in a way that suggests it is in tension with notions of quality, which perhaps arises from this notion that some PLACs were regional campuses perceived to be of lesser quality than the state flagship.

Another key aspect of public liberal arts colleges is that, while private liberal arts colleges typically “imagined themselves as something more like an oasis, set apart for shaping mind and character in young people of their particular kind” (Epp & Spellman, 2014, p. 11), public liberal arts colleges have viewed themselves as playing a larger role in the community around them. As Epp and Spellman argue, PLACs “have begun to take

seriously the roles of neighbor and citizen. . . They partner with local municipalities, schools, and cultural and social-service agencies in projects that match their resources, expertise, and faculty and student energies with community needs” (p. 12). Thus, central to the public liberal arts college ethos is a commitment to community engagement and social responsibility. Of course, community engagement is not a trend unique to PLACs; thus, in considering this aspect of the public liberal arts college structure of feeling, it is useful to acknowledge Delucchi’s (1997) idea of the “myth of uniqueness” among liberal arts college. That is, while I recognize many other types of institutions are also committed to community engagement and serving their surrounding community, the fact that Spellman (2010) argues such practices “capture the spirit of the COPLAC mission” (p. 58) of blending academic pursuits with public interests suggest this commitment to the surrounding community greatly impacts the ethos of public liberal arts colleges. Spellman provides a few examples of the ways in which COPLAC schools have embraced this mission, such as Evergreen State College’s attempts to improve correctional facilities by bringing “students and faculty to detention facilities as mentors, tutors, and instructors to the young men held there” (p. 58). Shuman argues such a focus on the local community is due to the fact that public liberal arts colleges “have almost always served a more local student population -- almost always predominantly from the State of their locale, and often focusing on particular regions of their states” (p. 4), thus this focus on community engagement seems to be deeply tied to the commitment to increased college access for local, low-income students as it is presented as a necessary outgrowth of serving this population. Furthermore, Shuman (2014) notes that because of this local population, public liberal arts colleges “often have academic programs focused

on local matters” (4). As I explore later in this dissertation, this commitment to curriculum focused on serving the local community affects the programs and assessment measures at these institutions.

Having identified these key components of a public liberal arts college structure of feeling, this dissertation examines how writing programs adopt, adapt, and/or resist their institution’s mission and ethos in ways that shape the institution’s structure of feeling. While sharing many similarities with the small liberal arts college structure of feeling Gladstein and Regaignon identify, there are also times when it is enacted in quite different ways, as the schools’ liberal arts values are at times in circulation among competing discourses common in public higher education. These competing discourses are present in both the ways liberal arts values are drawn upon by both WPAs and upper administrators and the ways such values are presented in institutional documents like mission statements and writing program websites. Before turning to the circulation of these values, the next chapter will present an overview of the typical structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges.

CHAPTER III
STRUCTURES OF WRITING PROGRAMS AT PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGES

Following the models of Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) and Isaacs (2018), this chapter provides a bird’s-eye view to the structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges. Drawing on data from a survey distributed to WPAs at 32 public liberal arts colleges, I present the common structures and configurations of writing programs at this institutional type. This data is important for any writing studies scholar interested in the state of writing instruction in the United States because, to my knowledge, no scholar has specifically attended to how writing programs are configured at public liberal arts colleges specifically, as the perceived binary between research universities and private SLACs renders them all but invisible. However, there are two perceived drawbacks to this approach. First, as discussed in the methods section below, the difficulties in identifying schools that consider themselves public liberal arts colleges and my survey’s reliance on responses from interested parties have rendered my sample significantly smaller than other studies that have attempted to consider writing program configurations across a single institutional type (e.g. Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Isaacs, 2018). Second, as Isaacs (2018) explains, the bird’s-eye approach taken here “does not tell you *why* phenomena have occurred; it simply tells you *what* has occurred” (p. 9, emphasis in original). That is, by relying on quantitative survey data and descriptive statistics, this

chapter reports on what writing programs at a small sample of public liberal arts colleges looks like, but it does not speak to why they are figured in the ways that they are.

However, by reporting on this data, I speak to some of the ways writing programs at public liberal arts colleges look and operate differently than the private SLACs reported on by Gladstein and Regaignon.

Methods

In attempt to provide a broad snapshot of structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges, this chapter analyzes quantitative data from a survey distributed to WPAs or other administrators at 32 public liberal arts colleges.

Identifying the Sample

My sample of institutions for this chapter consisted of 32 schools, 25 of which are full members of the Council of Public Liberal Arts (COPLAC), 1 which is a provisional member of COPLAC, and 6 which do not belong to COPLAC but identify themselves as public liberal arts colleges (see Appendix A for a list of the schools in the sample). To build this sample, I first selected the 28 US institutions that were current members of COPLAC as of the fall of 2019. I chose to exclude the one Canadian member of COPLAC, as I was concerned that differences between US and Canadian discourses and structures of higher education may make the conditions at this school markedly different from the rest of the sample, thus making it difficult to account for how representative this one institution is of liberal arts colleges in Canada. The 28 US-based COPLAC members were an obvious place to begin in developing my sample of schools because their membership in this formal organization demonstrates a commitment to and valuing of their liberal arts mission—that is, membership “can be interpreted as a decision of the

college's leaders to publicly assert the school's . . . institutional identity" (Fulford, 2009, p. 55). I eventually excluded two more members of COPLAC, Eastern Connecticut State University and Evergreen State College. ECSU was excluded because the WPA at this institution is a member of my dissertation committee and my director and I questioned the ethics of having a participant serve as a dissertation reader, and Evergreen was excluded because initial analysis of their website and course catalogs revealed they do not have any course requirements at all, thus making the institution a difficult site in which to study writing program structures. Sometime after building my initial sample and before I began my data analysis, Southern Oregon University was removed from the list of members on COPLAC's website, thus it is included in the list of non-members in Appendix A.

I was also interested in including schools that identify as public liberal arts colleges that are not members of COPLAC. This inclusion seemed important in order to consider the extent to which membership in COPLAC may or may not influence the ways in which the schools articulate their liberal arts mission to the broader public, which I discuss in chapter 6, as membership in COPLAC could provide a ready list of benchmark institutions for WPAs and other institutional leaders. Unfortunately, I found no easy or reliable way to account for how many public liberal arts colleges exist in the United States or to find any comprehensive list of them. For instance, while Carnegie does provide different categories of BA-granting institutions based on "the proportion of bachelor's degree majors in the arts and sciences and in professional fields" (qtd. in Fulford, 2009, p. 55), these categories do not accurately map onto schools that identify themselves as liberal arts colleges (and also does not account for size), likely because

public liberal arts colleges frequently demonstrate a tension between their liberal arts mission and former mission statements or other circulating discourses around education at their institution, or with the discourses circulating within the state system to which they belong (Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016).

By searching for public institutions on *US News and World Reports'* list of National Liberal Arts Colleges, I was able to identify nine institutions that are not members of COPLAC but classified by US News and World Reports' as liberal arts colleges. I ultimately excluded four of these nine institutions. Charter Oak State College was excluded because is it a fully online school that serves adults returning to college and had no information on its website about a writing program or writing requirements. I was initially unable to find any information about University of Maine at Machias's writing program as well, so I contacted the WPA at the flagship campus of University of Maine, who I know personally, and he told me UMaine-Machias had recently downsized their faculty and seemed to have lost both their WPA and a formal writing program in the process, so I excluded this school from the sample as well. The last two schools, University of Puerto Rico – Cayey and University of Puerto Rico – Ponce, were excluded because their websites are fully in Spanish, a language I do not speak.

While searching *US News and World Reports* helped to identify these non-COPLAC public liberal arts colleges, this should still not be taken as an exhaustive list, as some COPLAC members were listed as regional universities, rather than national liberal arts colleges; thus, there are likely some public liberal arts colleges I missed. In an attempt to account for this, I also used Google to find other lists of public liberal arts colleges. While most that came up only included COPLAC members, CollegeXpress's

list of “Great Public Liberal Arts Colleges” included two institutions I had not yet identified—College of Charleston and Southern Utah University—whose mission statements confirm commitments to a liberal arts education, though I have decided not to include them because their student populations both exceed 10,000 students. While any numerical cutoff is somewhat arbitrary--especially considering some of the other schools in my sample, including those that are members of COPLAC, might be larger than those included in other studies focused on small colleges--it has been recognized that definitions of “small” schools remain particularly ambiguous (Gladstein et al., 2009; Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Hanstedt & Amorose, 2004; Shuman, 2017). The SLAC-WPA organization requires all members have a student body of no greater than 3,500 students, yet MLA typically recognizes schools with enrollments lower than 5,000 students as “small” colleges (Hanstedt & Amorose, 2004). While Shuman (2017) makes it clear he views “small school values” as necessary criteria for membership in COPLAC, and most members of COPLAC have enrollments lower than MLA’s cutoff—Shuman notes their median size is 4,000 students, and some are smaller than 800 students—he does acknowledge that a couple members have enrollments higher than 8,000. Both Shuman (2017) and Hanstedt and Amorose (2004) argue that attempting to define what counts as a small college numerically is a futile effort, as what count as “small” in one area that has a particularly large flagship state university might seem “enormous” in comparison to other schools. Instead, they suggest attending to the school culture and a commitment to small school values, explained above, to identify “small” colleges. However, because College of Charleston and Southern Utah University are larger than

even the large outliers in COPLAC, I felt less able to defend their inclusion in a list of what I am considering small schools.¹

Lastly, after noticing that Kentucky State University was listed on Wikipedia's list of liberal arts colleges in Kentucky—an inclusion which I was unable to justify after reading their mission and values statements²—and informed by Perryman-Clark and Craig's (2019) call for WPA work to attend more closely to HBCUs, I read the mission and values statements of all 39 public HBCUs listed on *US News and World Reports*. Through doing so, I was only able to identify two institutions—Elizabeth City State College and Cheyney University of Pennsylvania—that currently maintain a focus on liberal arts education³.

Data Collection

After identifying the sample described above, I built a survey using the University of Louisville's BLUE software to distribute to WPAs at each school in the sample. The survey was adapted from those distributed by Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) and Isaacs (2018) and asked about the following areas through both limited choice and open-ended questions: how the WPA position is classified, its home department, and the general responsibilities of the WPA; the administrative structuring of the writing program; the writing requirements (FYW and WAC or other writing-intensive courses); the staffing of writing courses, including questions about faculty autonomy and development; and the overall role of writing on campus. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey questions.

¹ Interestingly, they both also used to be members of COPLAC but withdrew their membership.

² Although, this exclusion was an error on my part, as KSU has since joined COPLAC, which I discuss in chapter 6.

³ Bowie State University included an institutional history that said it used to consider itself a state liberal arts college before it decided to focus on becoming a comprehensive university; thus I did not include it.

Before distributing the survey, I attempted to identify the WPA at each institution. While Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) note that WPA roles at private liberal arts colleges might not always be explicit, and thus identifying the WPA was not always easy, I expected public institutions to have more clearly defined administrative roles. This was an incorrect assumption, however, and I was not able to identify a clear WPA from searching the websites at 14 of the 32 schools in my sample. For those schools I contacted either the chair of the English department (if the writing requirement was housed in English), the director of a general/interdisciplinary studies program (if the writing requirement was housed in this program), or, in three cases, the only faculty in rhetoric and composition listed on the faculty website. The contacts I identified received an email requesting their participation and the survey was open for four weeks (from March 16 to April 13, thus during the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States). They received a reminder after 2 weeks and again after 3 weeks if they had not yet completed the survey.

Responses to the survey were more limited than I hoped for, with only 12 participants completing the survey. However, a 13th emailed me to say her institution did not have a writing program (despite the fact they have a website for a writing program which lists her as the director. I asked about this in a response to her email but never heard back). This indicates either a 37.5% response rate if I exclude the email from the 13th participant, or a response rate of 40.6% if I include that response. With only 12 schools to analyze, this chapter cannot speak to broad trends in structures of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges in the way I had hoped. However, the quantitative

analysis in this chapter can still provide an initial look into how writing programs at public liberal arts can be structured.

Data Analysis

In order to organize and summarize the data I collected in ways that speak to how frequent certain practices are, I used descriptive statistics (Holcomb, 1998) to analyze the data. First, I imported all the data into Microsoft Excel. In Excel I created charts for each of the quantitative questions to visually represent the frequency of different answers in attempt to make visible the patterns across the data (Haswell, 2012). Not all charts were chosen for inclusion in this chapter, however, as occasionally the visualization of the data did not seem as necessary (for example, when 92% of respondents gave one answer and 8% gave another, it often felt just as informative to state that data point rather than include another chart). When relevant, I also calculated the mean and median answers to report the central tendency of the data point.

National Map of Public Liberal Arts Colleges

Before turning to the responses to my survey, I would like to say more about my sample more broadly to provide a national map of public liberal arts colleges. As figure 1 below demonstrates, 81% of the 32 public liberal arts colleges I identified are either full or provisional members of COPLAC. While I outlined some of the difficulties of identifying public liberal arts colleges that are not members of COPLAC in the methods suggest, this data does suggest it is possible COPLAC members consist of the majority of colleges that do identify themselves as public liberal arts colleges, as only 19% of the public liberal arts colleges I was able to identify have no affiliation with the organization. However, until recently, and for reasons I have not seen explained, COPLAC limited

itself to only one member institution per state (Shuman, 2017). This limitation might explain why some of the non-COPLAC members I identified are in states that already have a COPLAC member (e.g. Purchase College, University of Wisconsin-Parkside), yet the fact the removal of this rule has not resulted in a large influx of membership suggests there are not a large number of public liberal arts colleges that are not currently affiliated with COPLAC.

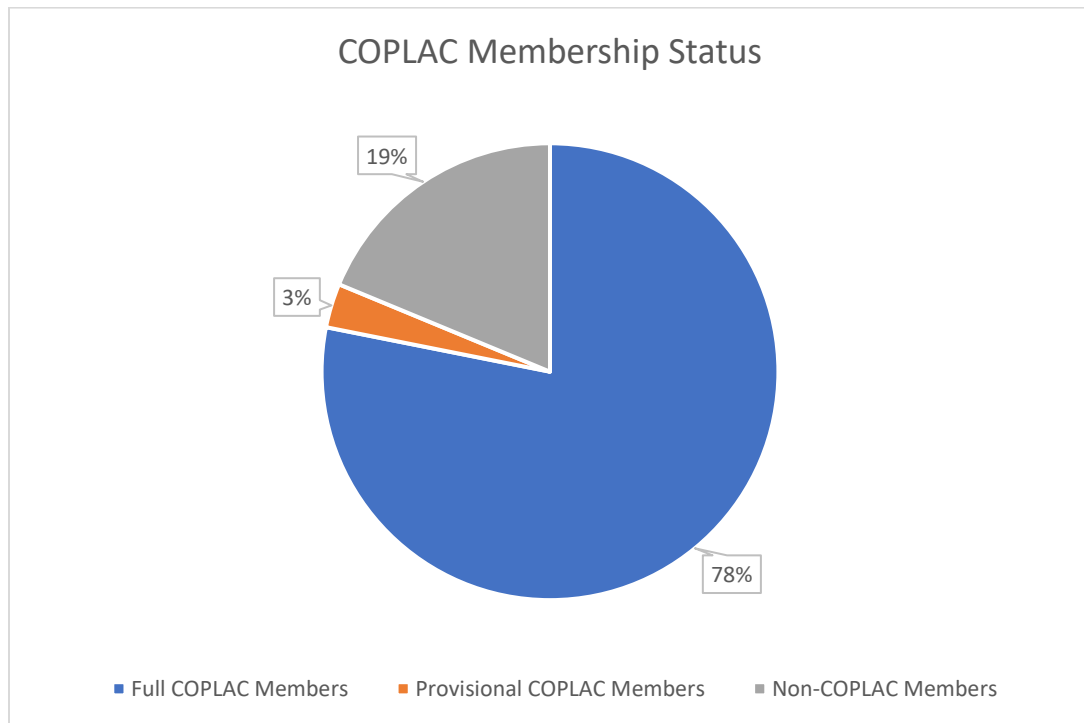


Figure 1: COPLAC Membership Status of Schools in the Sample.

As figure 2 demonstrates, 69% of these 32 public liberal arts colleges are on the East Coast, with 35% in the Northeastern & Mid-Atlantic states and 34% in the Southeastern states. About half of the remaining 31% are in the Midwest, leaving only 15% of public liberal arts colleges in the Western or Southwestern states. These percentages remain almost identical if I limit the breakdown of geographic region to just COPLAC members, as figure 3 demonstrates. The increase of public liberal arts colleges that are not members

of COPLAC in the Western states, shown in figure 4, is only due to the fact there are no Southwestern public liberal arts colleges that are not members of COPLAC, and the percentages of schools in the other regions remains similar to the other two datasets.

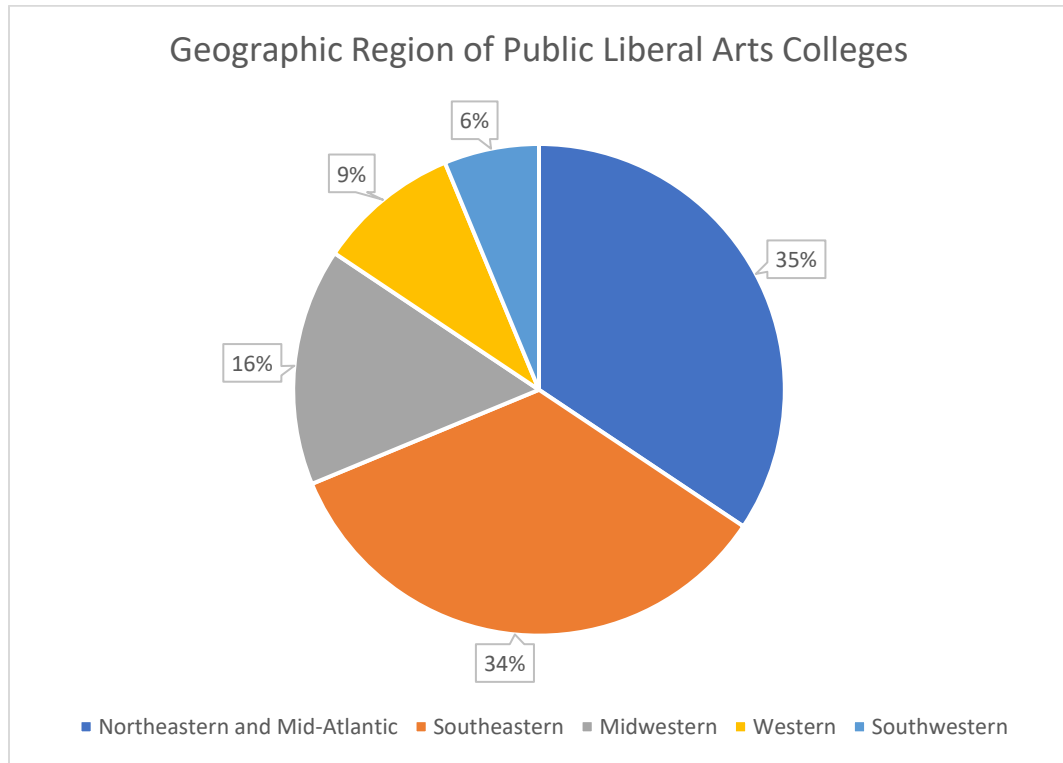


Figure 2: Geographic Breakdown of all Schools in the Sample

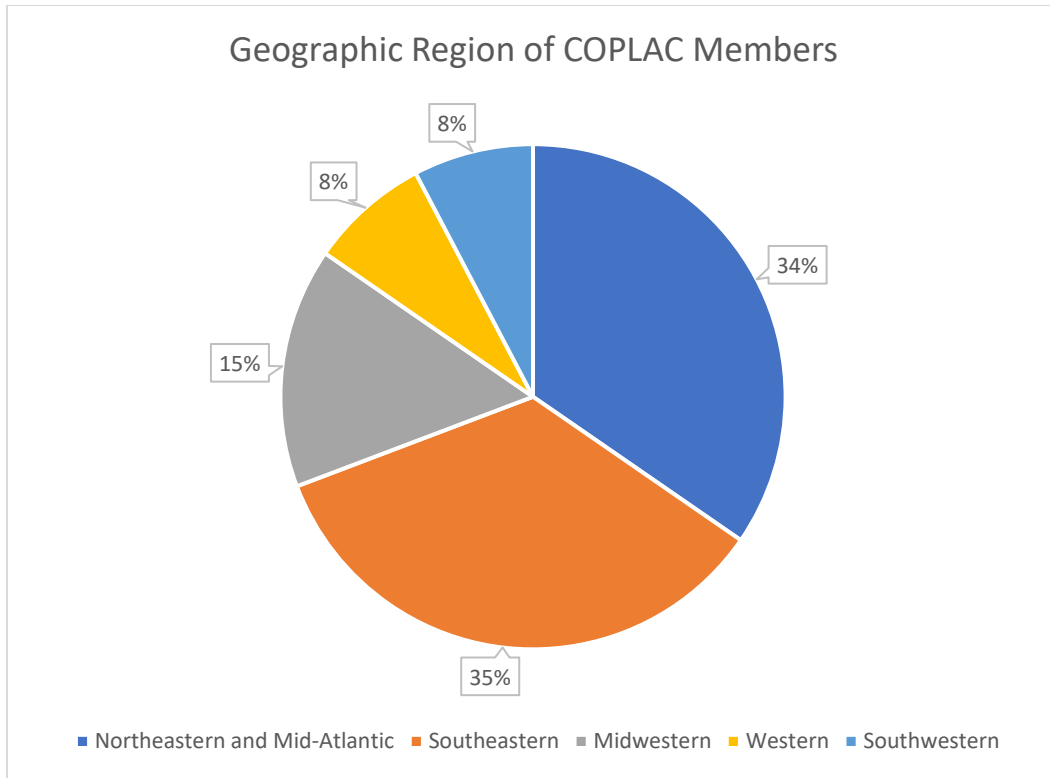


Figure 3: Geographic Breakdown of COPLAC Schools

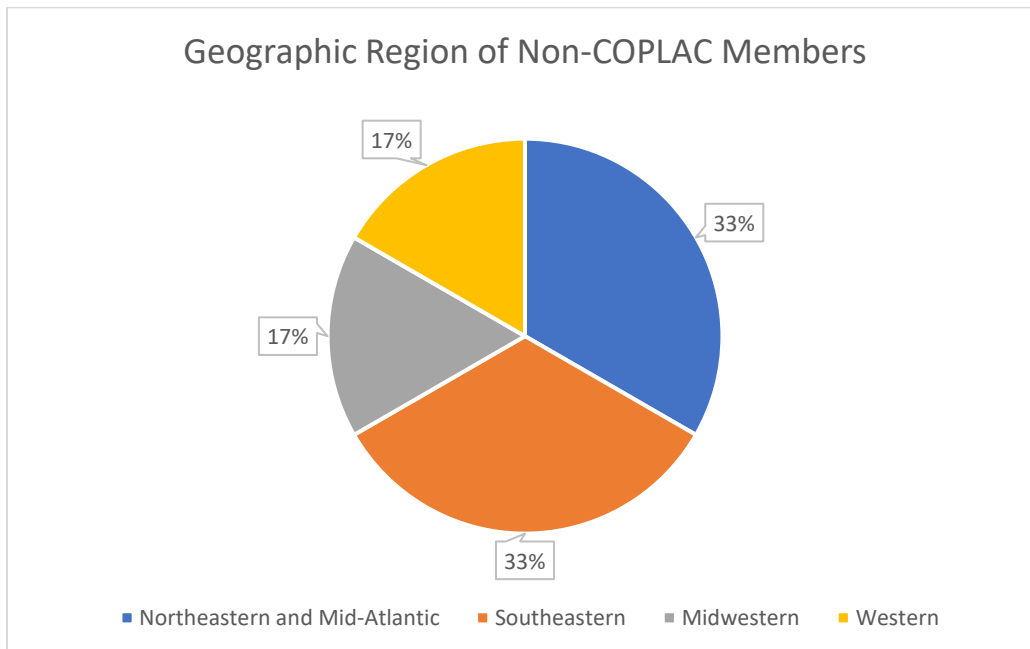


Figure 4: Geographic Breakdown of Non-COPLAC Schools in the Sample

As mentioned above, Shuman (2017) states the median size of COPLAC schools is 4000 students. Figure 5 shows a histogram of the size of the institutions in my sample, and analysis of these sizes shows that on average the schools in my sample are slightly smaller than Shuman identified, with the mean size being 3480 students and the median 3438. When I limit the sample to just COPLAC schools (as shown in figure 6) there is a slight increase in the mean (3553 students), yet the median increases by only one student (3439), thus this increase in the mean is likely due to the single outlier in COPLAC with over 9000 students. At the non-COPLAC schools (shown in figure 7), the mean number of students is 3160 and the median is 3188. These numbers are important because they show that, while some public liberal arts colleges are larger than the 3500-student threshold for membership in SLAC-WPA, on average public liberal arts colleges are around that same size. As figure 5 shows, 56% of the schools in my sample are smaller than 4000 students and 78% are smaller than 5000 students, MLA's cutoff for "small school" classification. Therefore, I see no reason to exclude public liberal arts colleges from discussions of "small liberal arts colleges" more broadly.

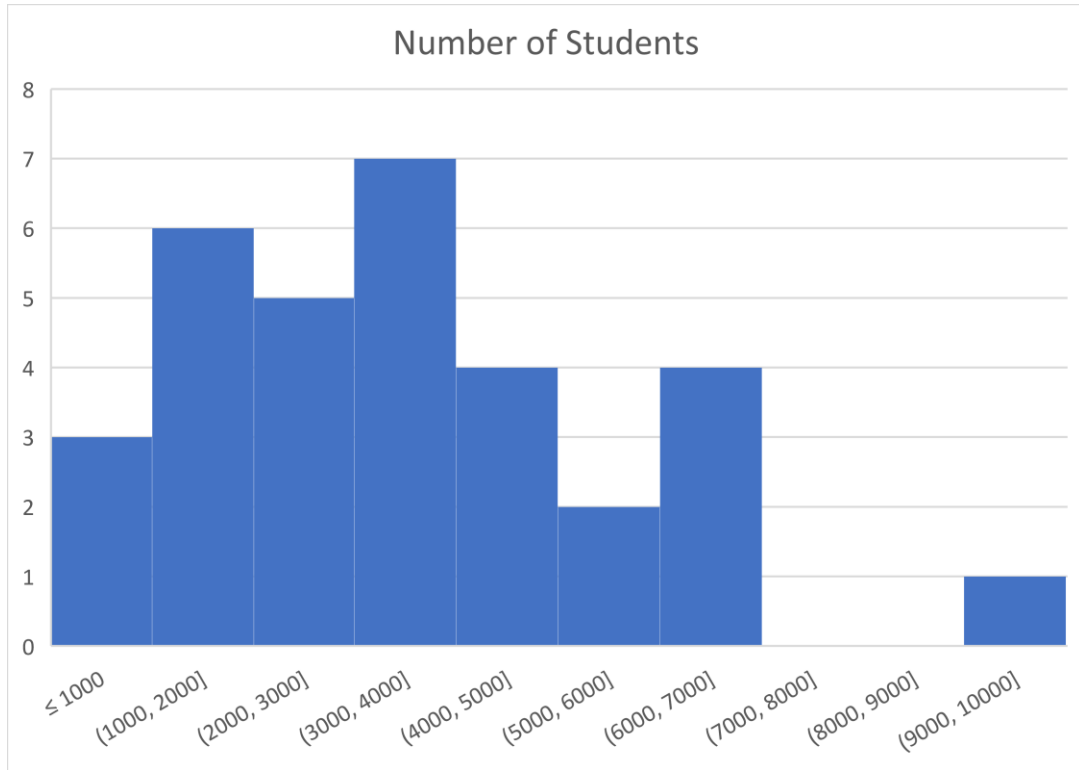


Figure 5: Histogram of the Size of All Schools in the Sample

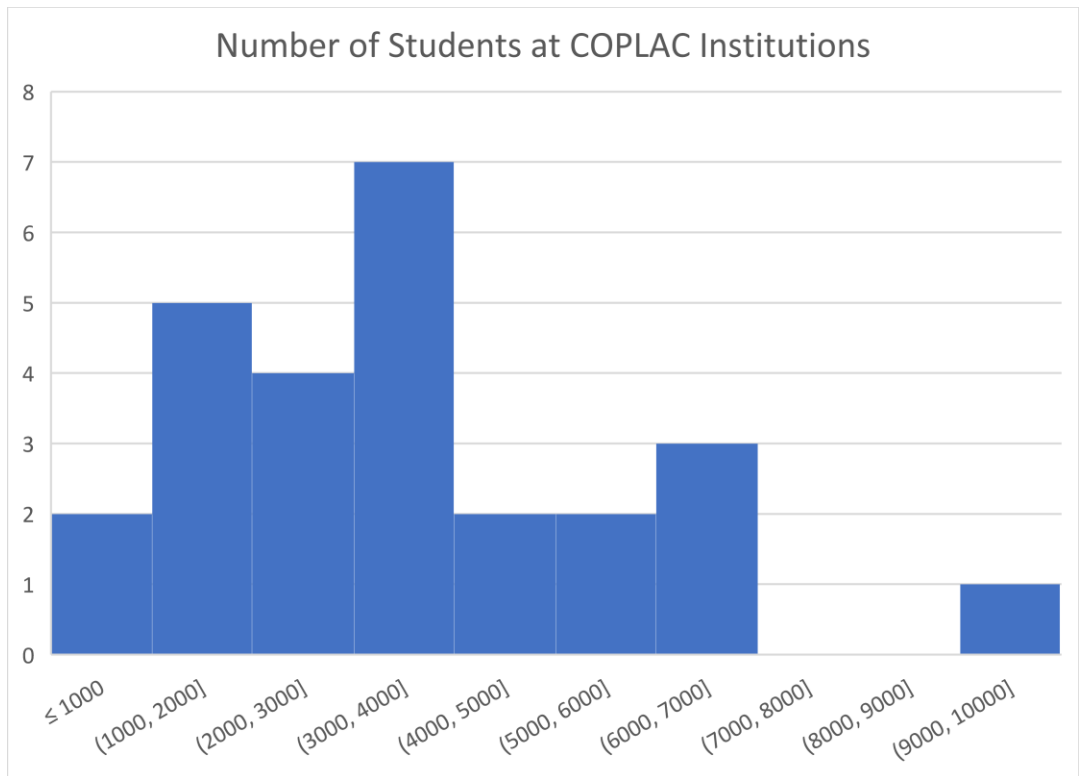


Figure 6: Histogram of the Size of COPLAC Institutions

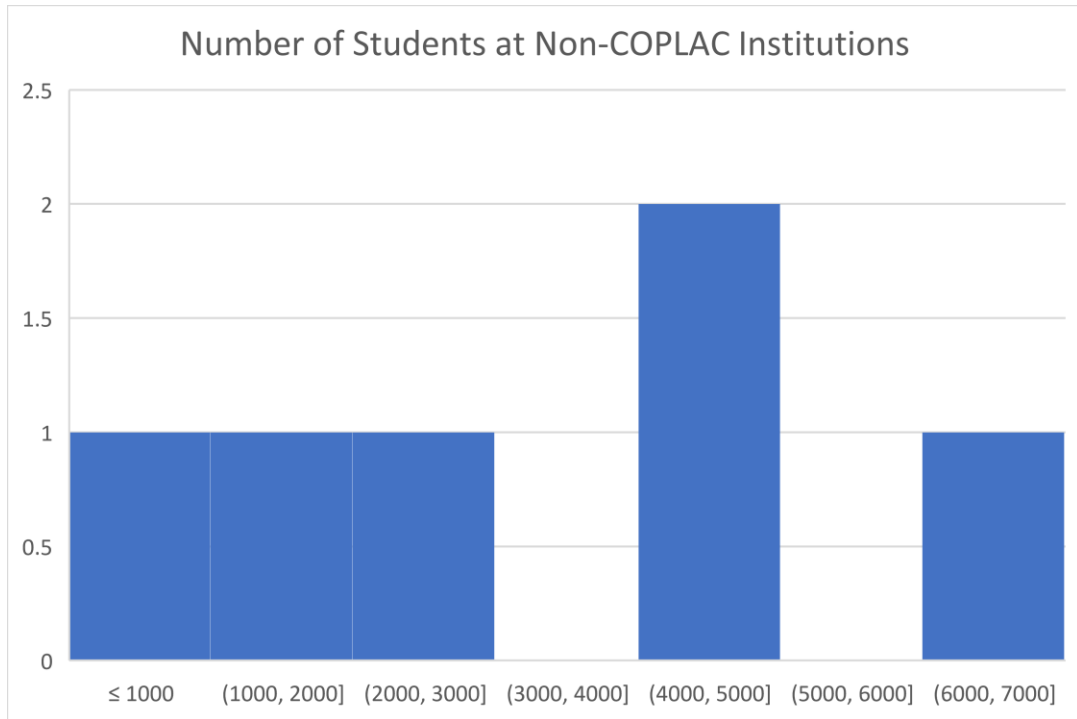


Figure 7: Histogram of the Size of non-COPLAC Institutions

Structures of Writing Program Leadership

While in the previous section I analyzed the larger sample of PLACs that I distributed my survey to even if I did not receive a response, in this section and the rest of the sections in this chapter, I turn to the smaller sample of WPAs who responded to my survey. In this section, I consider the structures of leadership at PLACs. As Gladstein & Regaignon (2012) argue, “understanding the culture of writing requires understanding the configuration of leadership of the writing program” (p. 66). While they acknowledge this may seem like an obvious claim, they expand on it by insisting that a consideration of the relationship between the culture of writing and its leadership structure is necessary to “support, develop, or change” that culture of writing. Therefore, I will now report on the important characteristics of writing program leadership at PLACs, as indicated by my survey responses.

While they do not report data on the frequency of the departmental home of writing requirements, Gladstein & Regaignon's discussion of the strong commitment to writing across the curriculum and sometimes diffuse leadership of writing programs suggests that WPAs at private SLACs are more commonly outside of English departments because of a belief that one department should not be solely responsible for writing instruction. However, my data suggests this is not quite true of PLACs, as 59% (7 of 12) of writing programs are housed within either an English or an English and Foreign Languages department, as shown in figure 8. Notably, though, 17% (2 of 12) of writing programs are housed in an interdisciplinary program, a fact which has possibly arisen from a commitment to writing across the curriculum and an acknowledgement of the role writing plays in and across all disciplines. 16% (2 of 12) of writing programs are either an independent writing program or housed in a Department of Writing and Library Science, suggesting just as much support for stand-alone writing programs/departments across these institutions as there is for interdisciplinary studies programs. While these latter data points are interesting as they suggest institutional support for writing, the fact 59% of WPAs remain in English departments suggests there are more traditional configurations across PLACs than across private SLACs.

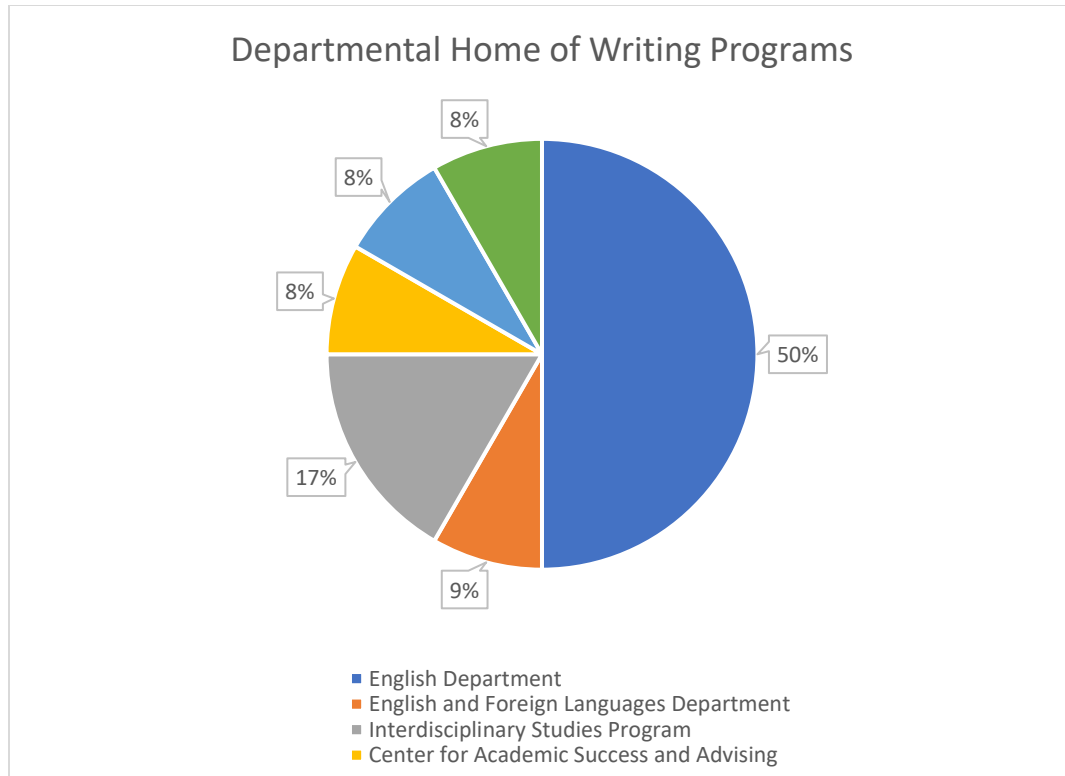


Figure 8: Departmental Home of WPAs

Figure 9 shows that 75% (9 of 12) of the WPAs at PLACs are in tenure-track positions, which is comparable to Gladstein & Regaignon’s SLAC data (73%) and the national data that does not account for institutional type (74%) they compare that data to (p. 78). Importantly, Gladstein & Regaignon, while careful not to advocate for keeping WPAs off the tenure-line, do note that their non-tenure-track WPAs do not feel limited by their NTT status—and, in some cases, feel not being tenure-track “shields” them in some ways (p. 85). As I explore further in chapter 5, this belief is echoed by Holly, a NTT WPA I interviewed, who insists her NTT status is “not for cheap reasons” and identifies how her NTT status affords her significant autonomy. Thus, while the fact that 25% of these WPAs are NTT is noteworthy, it does not necessarily give us a full picture of the job security and level of autonomy of these WPAs.

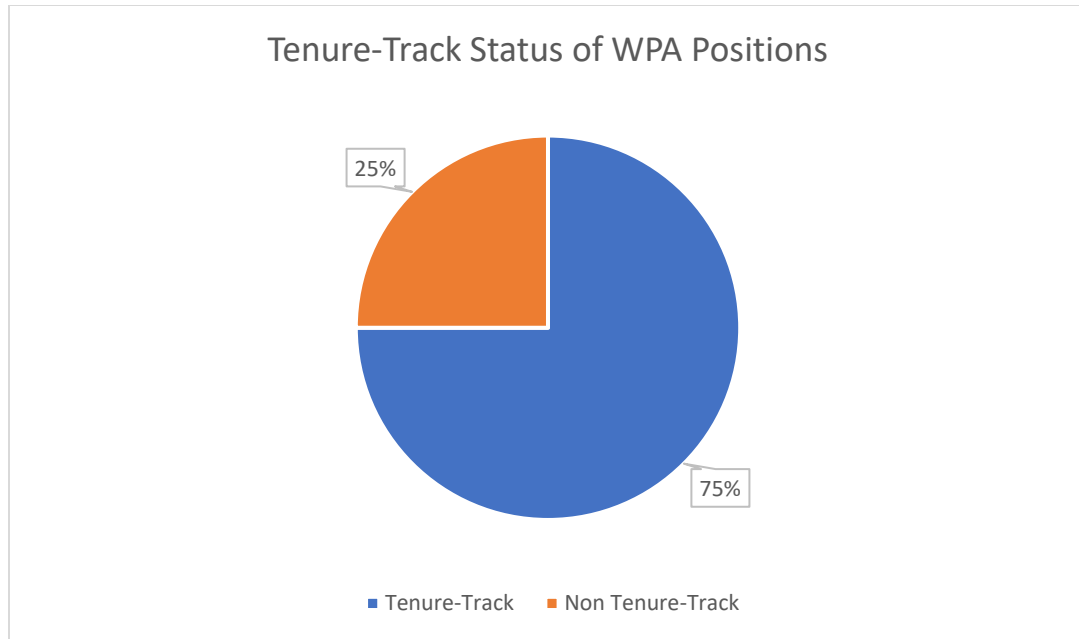


Figure 9: Tenure Status of WPAs

In their initial 2007 survey of SLAC writing programs, Gladstein and Regaignon found that “being ‘responsible’ for first-year composition constituted radically different work on different campuses” (p. 70), thus I asked my survey participants about the duties of their position. The frequency of their answers is displayed in figure 10, and there are two important findings in relation to the data Gladstein and Regaignon provide. First, 83% (10 of 12) of WPAs are engaged in faculty development activities, which is slightly smaller than the 95% from Gladstein and Regaignon’s dataset. While they note the lack of national data to compare this data to, they speculate that the widespread WAC culture of SLACs contributes to this frequency of faculty development. As some of my data below suggests, WAC seems less embedded into the culture of PLACs, and yet faculty development remains among the most common duties of the WPAs who responded to my survey (overshadowed only by the teaching of academic writing courses). However, what neither Gladstein and Regaignon nor I identified is how often that faculty development is

directed towards faculty across campus (as Gladstein and Regaignon seem to assume) and how often it is directed faculty whose primary duties include teaching of writing. That is, I find it just as likely that a robust and relatively large FYW program, rather than a culture of WAC, would contribute to the frequency of faculty development responsibilities.

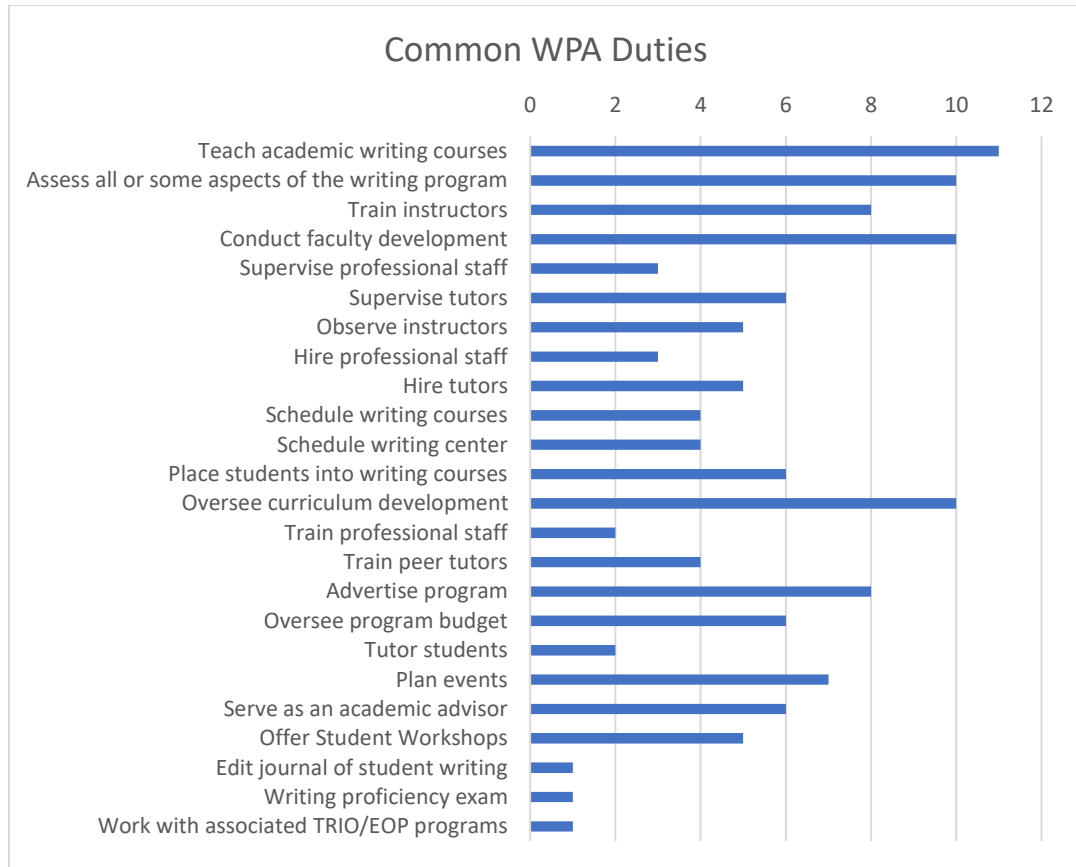


Figure 10: Comparison of WPA Responsibilities

Second, 50% (6 of 12) of the WPAs who responded to my survey included the placement of students into writing courses as part of their responsibilities. While this may seem like a common WPA responsibility, Gladstein and Regaignon found only 33% of their sample included this among their duties, noting that many SLACs do not have formal placement measures because of “their focus on students as individual learners,

each of whom can and should develop as a writer over the course of her or his education” (p. 73). As I will explain further in the next section, PLACs seem to require more emphasis on placement because of their status as public institutions.

Many of the WPAs who responded to my survey are lone WPAs with little support from either additional faculty or administrative assistants, as shown in both figure 11 and figure 12. 50% of WPAs identified no additional faculty support, and 50% also identified no administrative support. The frequency of either an assistant director, a director of another writing program (such as a WAC director), or a separate writing center director was 17% (2 of 12) each. Thus, half of these WPAs are the single “writing person” on their campus. In fact, as I discuss in the next chapter, Edward told me his title as “Writing Program Coordinator” arose out a desire to formally recognize the duties that automatically fell to him as the only writing specialist on campus. This status as lone writing specialist seems to be more typical of the smaller campuses, while the larger campuses are more likely to have additional support (Sonoma State, for instance, has three people in WPA roles). However, I would assume that even at smaller campuses, the lack of additional support creates additional challenges for WPAs, even when their campus is relatively supportive of the writing program.

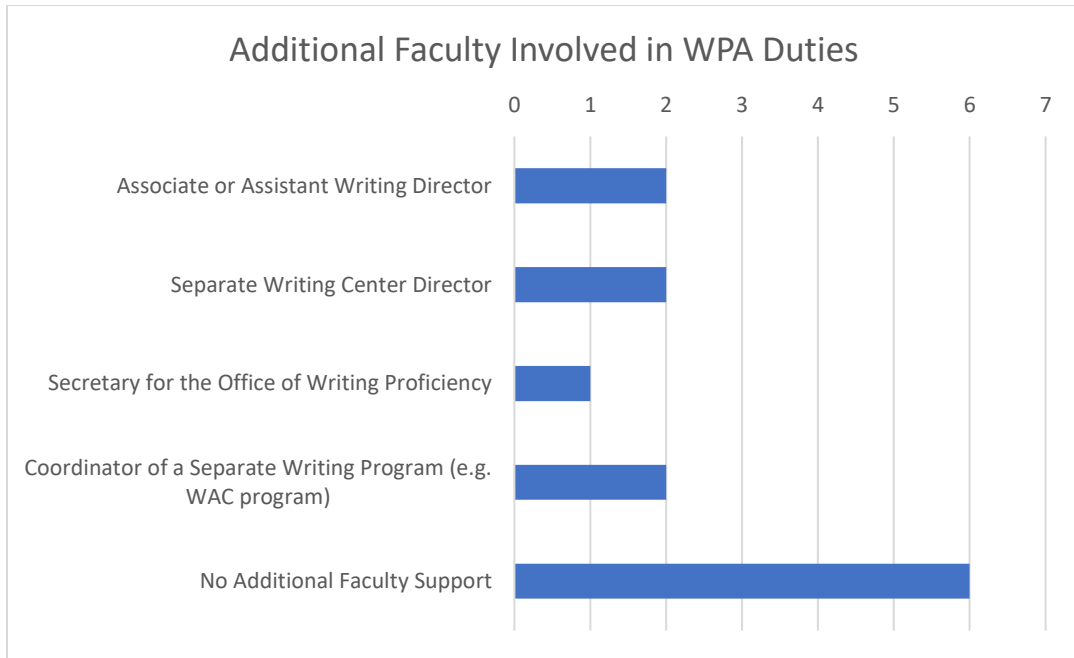


Figure 11: Frequency of Additional Faculty Support for WPA Work on Campus

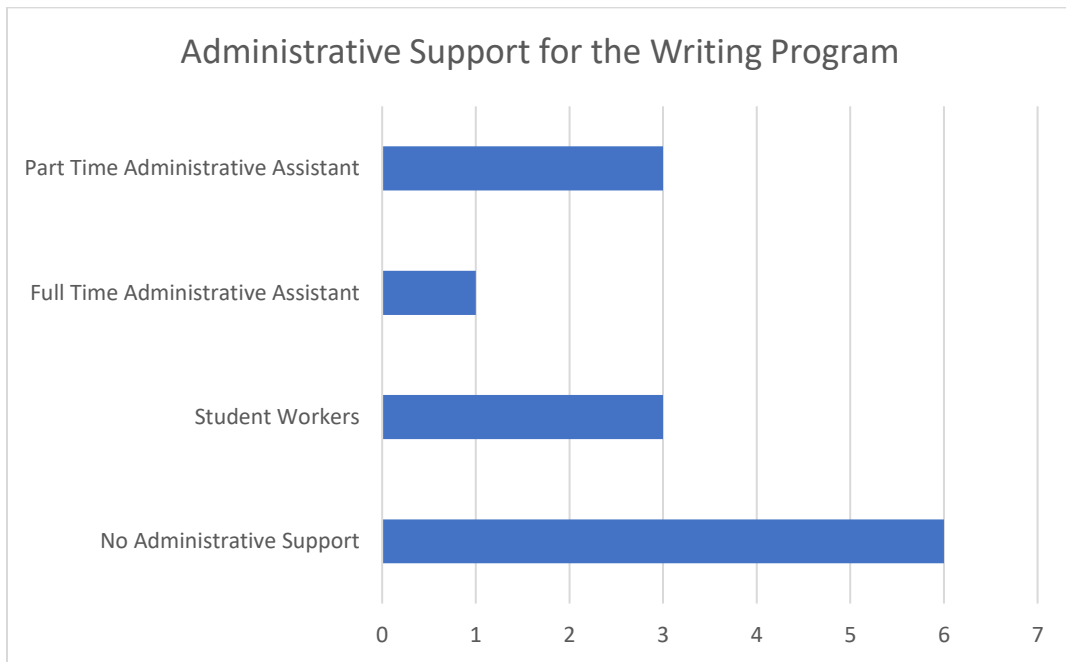


Figure 12: Frequency of Administrative Support for the Writing Program

Writing Requirements

As I was interested in the larger culture of writing at these schools, and not simply first-year writing, I approached this project with a capacious understanding of “writing

program administration,” considering the administration of any writing-related program (FYW, writing center, WAC/WID, writing major/minor, etc.) part of WPA work. Thus, my survey asked questions about all of the writing related requirements on campus. As figure 13 shows, however, there are few explicit writing requirements across these campuses after first-year writing (which I discuss further in the next chapter). There is a strong commitment to FYW, though, as it is a requirement in some form at 92% (11 of 12) of PLACs (50% require just one semester of FYW, and the other 42% require two semesters). In a stark contrast to Gladstein and Regaignon’s study, however, which found that FYW is often taught by faculty across the curriculum (which they call a First-Year Writing Seminar to distinguish it from a traditional FYW course), 83% of PLACs have a traditional FYW course taught by faculty in either English or Writing (compared to 38% of the private SLACs in Gladstein and Regaignon). Only 8% (1 of 12) of schools offered a FYWS, and as figure 15 shows below, this was a relatively recent change. Therefore, it seems that the development of FYW at PLACs has followed a similar history of that at other public institutions, rather than developing out of a strong WAC culture, which Gladstein and Regaignon claimed led to the FYWS at private SLACs.

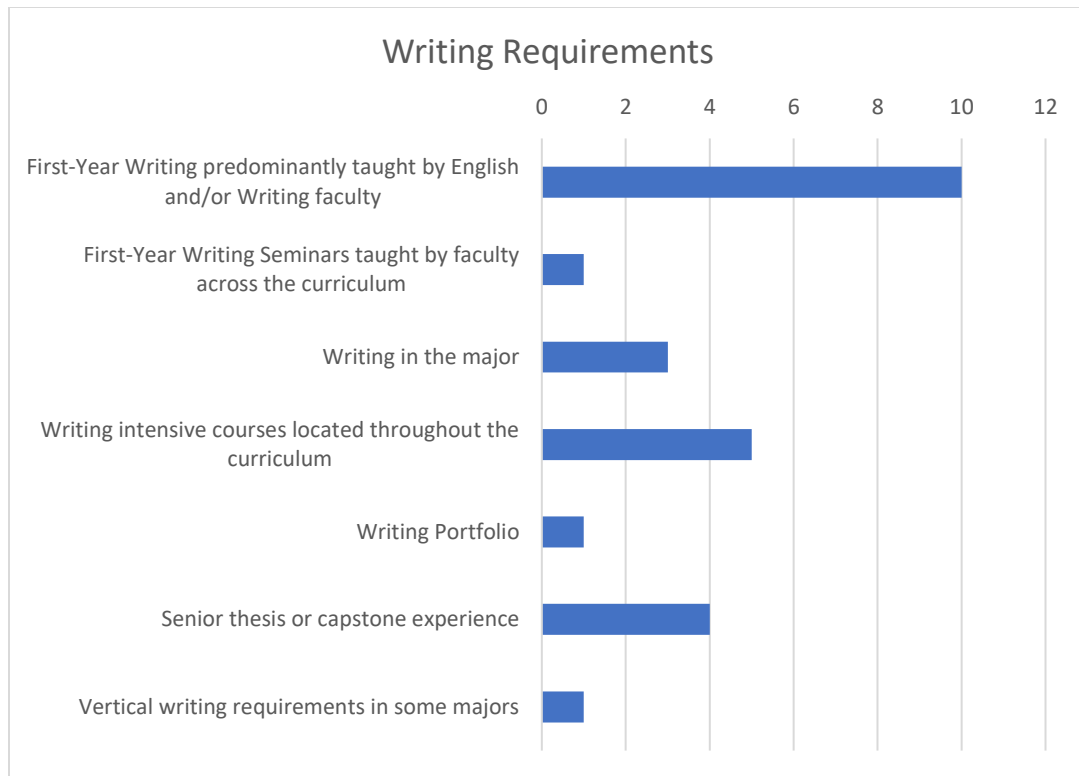


Figure 13: Frequency of Writing Requirements

Another stark contrast from the findings of Gladstein and Regaignon is the acceptance of transfer credit among these institutions. While Gladstein and Regaignon noted that very few of the schools in their sample offered opportunities to place out of their writing requirements, 92% (11 of 12) of the schools in my sample did. Figure 14 shows the frequency of the options available for placing out, with a certain AP score being accepted at all of the institutions that accepted such opportunities to place out of writing requirements. This difference is likely a result of the public status of the institutions in my sample, as often policies dictating the opportunity to place out of FYW, especially in response to an AP score, are set by the state, rather than an individual university (e.g. Malek & Micciche, 2017).

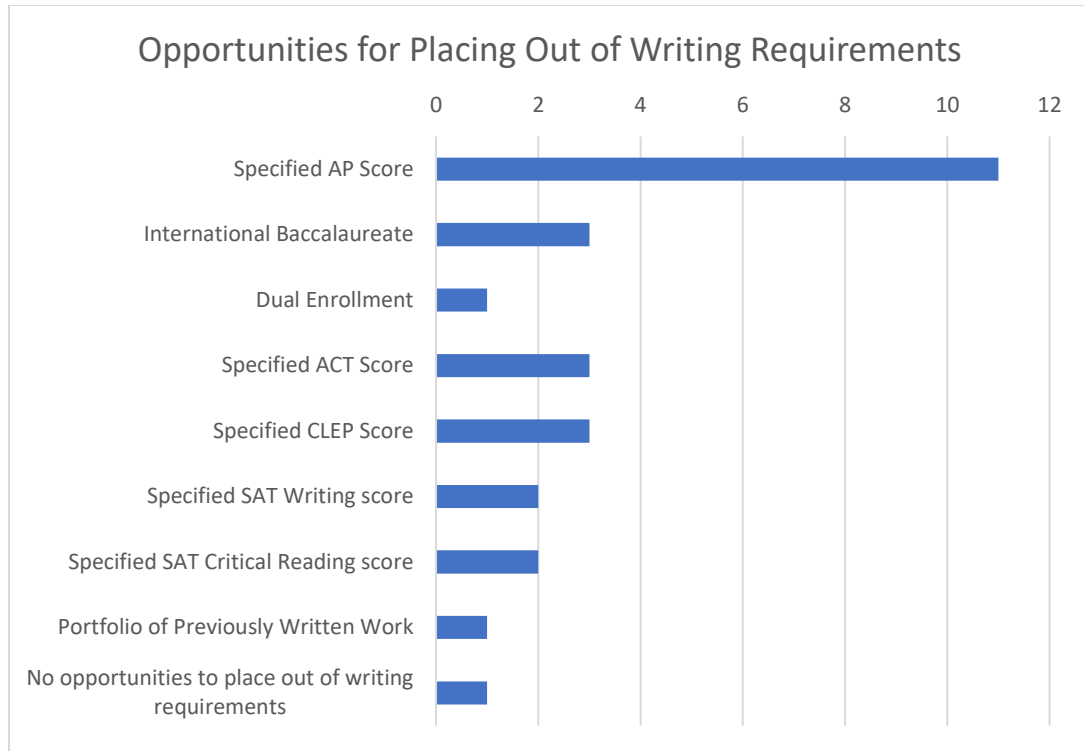


Figure 14: Frequency of Methods for Placing Out of Writing Requirements

Lastly, in my attempt to map out a picture of the formal culture of writing on campus, I asked WPAs about the changes that have happened to their writing program within the last ten years. As figure 15 shows, almost all of these changes involved formalizing the importance of writing instruction in some way, through the creation of new positions or new tenure lines, the development of new courses, a new writing center, etc. The two most frequent recent changes were the development a writing major or minor (50% of schools) and the creation of additional full-time positions (33%). I optimistically believe that such changes represent the strength of a commitment to writing on these campuses, as these institutions have seen it necessary to develop writing majors/minors and provide more institutional stability for those teaching writing courses. However, as I will explore in a moment, there is still more reliance on part-time contingent labor at these institutions than the private SLACs Gladstein & Regaignon studied.

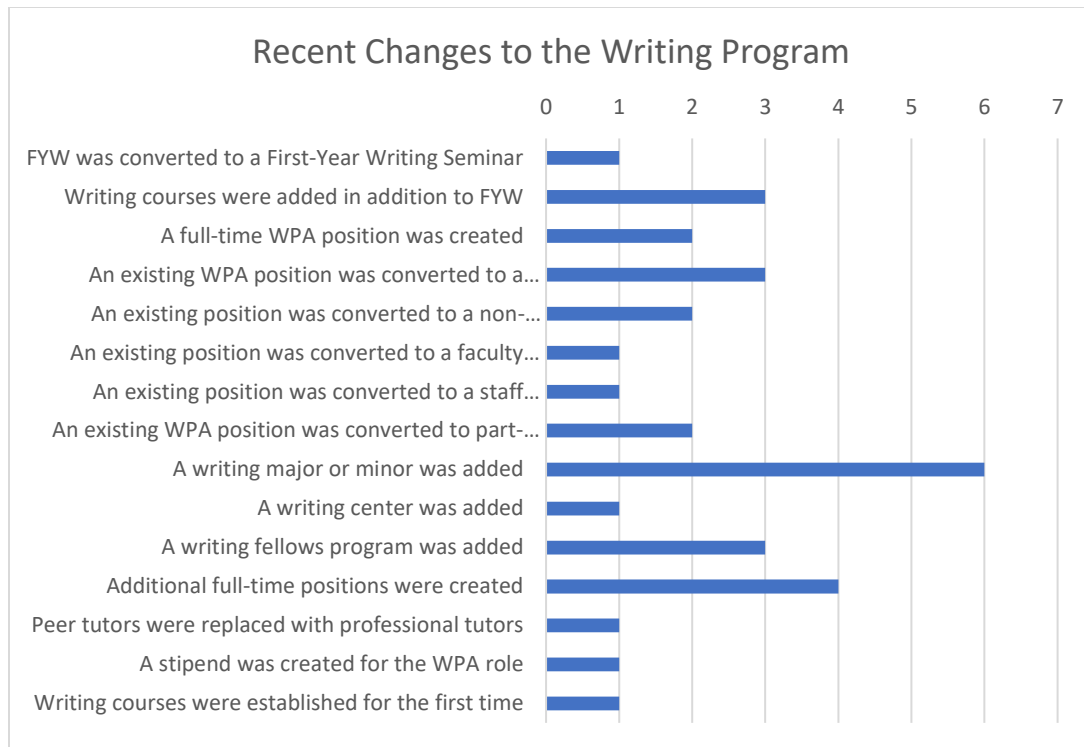


Figure 15: Changes to Writing Programs within the Last 10 Years

First Year Writing

I began this dissertation project because of a question about who staffed first-year writing courses at PLACs. Gladstein and Regaignon found in their study of private SLACs that SLACs very infrequently rely on adjunct labor for FYW and that on average 71% of FYW faculty at these institutions are full-time, tenure-track faculty, compared to just 16.9% nationally (p. 125). As an explanation for this statistic, they state that “the fact these are private institutions means that they control their own budgets. Small colleges have consistently devoted resources to maintaining the value they place on small classes taught by permanent faculty. As a result, the philosophical and material questions about staffing writing courses center on issues of intellectual expertise rather than labor conditions” (p. 121). I assumed, then, that because they do not control their own budgets, PLACs would not be able to maintain as many tenure-track faculty teaching FYW. As

figure 16 shows, this assumption was correct, as across my sample only 45% of the faculty teaching FYW are tenure-track. While this statistic is still significantly better than the 16.9% national statistic Gladstein & Regaignon cite, it is also significantly lower than the 71% tenure-track faculty they found in their study of private SLACs. However, there is a fair amount of FT-NTT faculty (24%), so reliance on adjunct (25%) or GTA (4%) labor is still relatively low. Ultimately, however, these data points suggest PLACs rely on contingent, underpaid labor more often than private SLACs⁴.

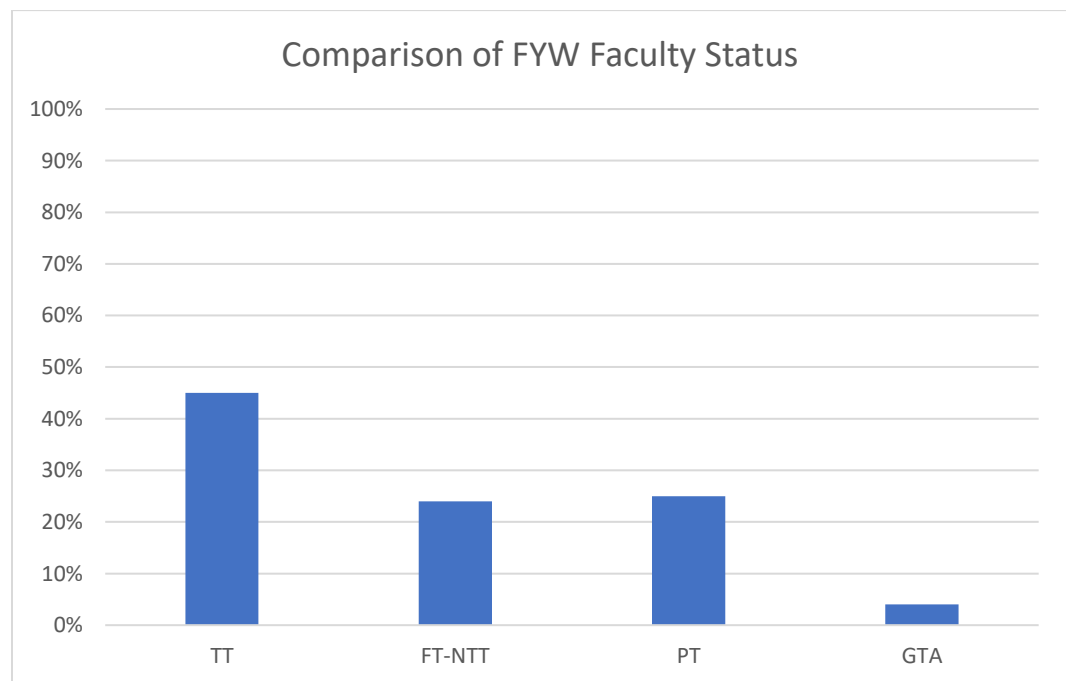


Figure 16: Staffing of First-Year Writing

Because the majority of the schools in my sample are quite small, there tend to be very few instructors who teach FYW. As the histogram in figure 17 shows, 50% of the schools who responded to my survey have between just 5 and 15 instructors. The mean number of instructors is 14 and the median is 12. Likewise, as shown in figure 18, few

⁴ Though it is worth questioning how Gladstein & Regaignon's dataset might have changed since its publication in 2012.

sections are offered each semester, with 75% of schools offering fewer than 25 sections on average. The mean number of sections offered is 22 and the median is 20. While I had also intended to ask about class size, I removed this question from my survey in a revision meant to decrease the length of the survey because I had assumed I would be able to find this data in course catalogs and on websites (every school I have worked at publicly lists this information). However, I was unable to find this data for many of the schools; thus I have no generalizable data about the size of these FYW courses, so I cannot compare that data to Gladstein and Regaignon’s findings or the national average, which is a gap in this study. However, I do know from my interview data that the largest school in my sample has a cap of 25 students in FYW, which the WPA expressed to me was definitely too large but smaller than other first-year courses on campus. Thus, there does seem to still be a commitment to offering small classes, at least for FYW.

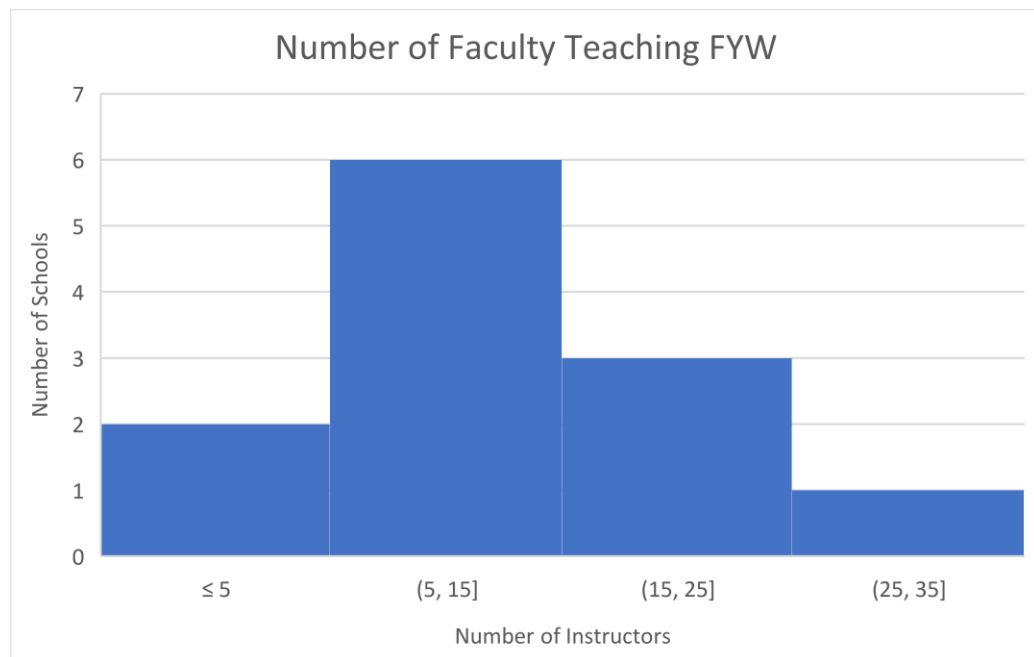


Figure 17: Number of Faculty Histogram

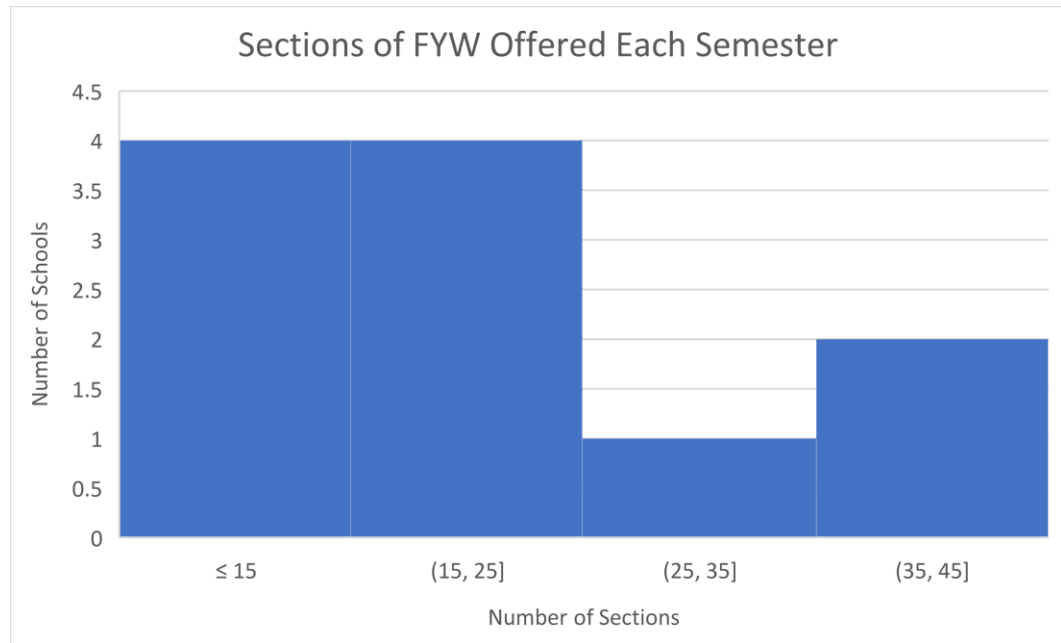


Figure 18: Sections of FYW Offered Histogram

In order to learn more about the goals of FYW on these campuses, I also asked about outcomes statements, and every WPA that responded to my survey noted there was an explicit outcomes statement in place—even the WPA who teaches at a campus with an optional FYW course noted there was a shared outcomes statement. As figure 19 shows, the most common type of outcomes statement (42%) was developed at the program or department level. In their explanations of these outcomes statements, WPAs were quick to point out that these statements often involved faculty input and were responsive to the local campus culture. One WPA stated that when they arrived on campus “the outcomes hadn’t been revisited in 20 years” but that through a faculty development grant they “got a group of our first-year writing faculty together to craft new outcomes, using the *WPA Outcomes Statement* and our own best practices as a guide.” Another noted that “writing faculty collectively drafted outcomes that derive from (1) the *WPA Outcomes Statement* and (2) the specific needs of the Interdisciplinary Studies program at the University,” a

statement which was echoed across many other responses, with some WPAs noting how they used the mission statement and/or the general education outcomes to influence the development of their FYW outcomes.

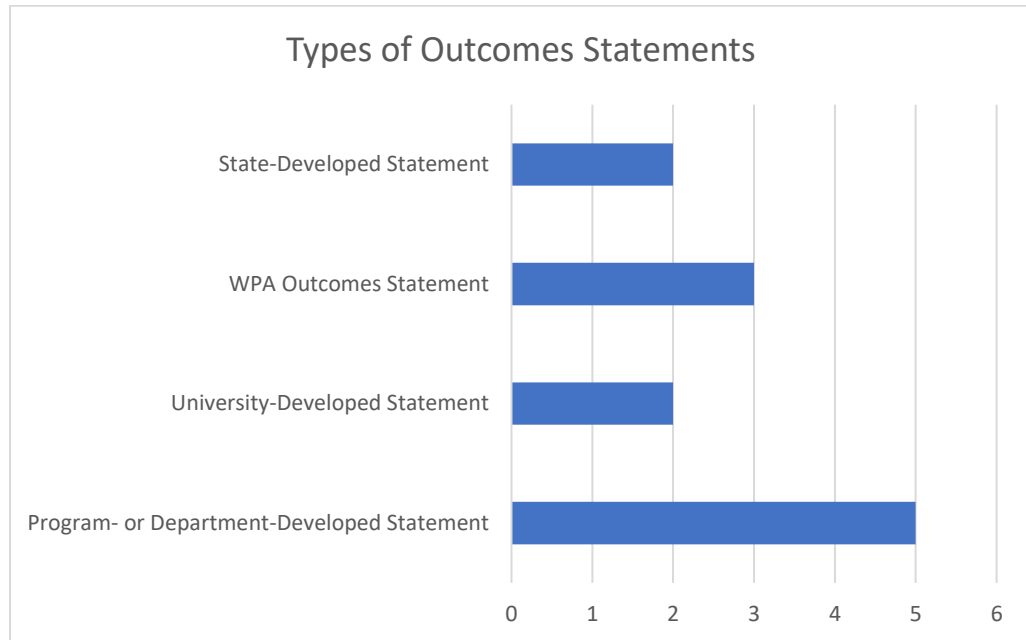


Figure 19: Frequency of Types of Outcomes Statements

Two respondents, however, noted that their outcomes were constrained by state-level policy, as shown in figure 19, which dictated the specific outcomes the FYW courses must strive towards. Similarly, a third WPA noted in their explanation of their program-specific outcomes that, while they were able to develop their own outcomes, they had to be responsive to system-wide GE outcomes. This responsiveness to state policy and state outcomes, especially when those state outcomes are prescriptive, is a clear result of the public status of these institutions, and thus demonstrates a significant way in which faculty and program autonomy may be more limited at PLACs than at private SLACs.

As part of this interest in faculty autonomy, I also asked about the amount of control instructors have over their FYW syllabi, which is represented in figure 20. Only 8% of schools provide a program-wide syllabus for instructors to use, while 17% allow instructors to completely develop their own syllabi. The majority of schools fall in-between these two extremes, with 50% providing some guidelines to instructors while also giving them some latitude with their syllabi, and another 25% allow instructors to develop their syllabi but require that they pass department or program approval. I would argue that these 75% of schools in between these two extremes of syllabi control represent the tension between faculty autonomy and administrative oversight Gladstein and Regaignon argue is especially pronounced at SLACs. One WPA even noted that, while instructors have some latitude, their department does not have guidelines for FYW syllabi because “the university itself has stricter standards for syllabi that take the place of anything we might want.” However, the amount of control faculty have does seem to vary based on their status. One WPA clarified, for example, that tenure-track faculty who teach FYW are allowed to develop their own syllabi but the NTT instructors and adjuncts have to use a department standard. Thus, questions of faculty autonomy seem inseparable from a consideration of faculty status.

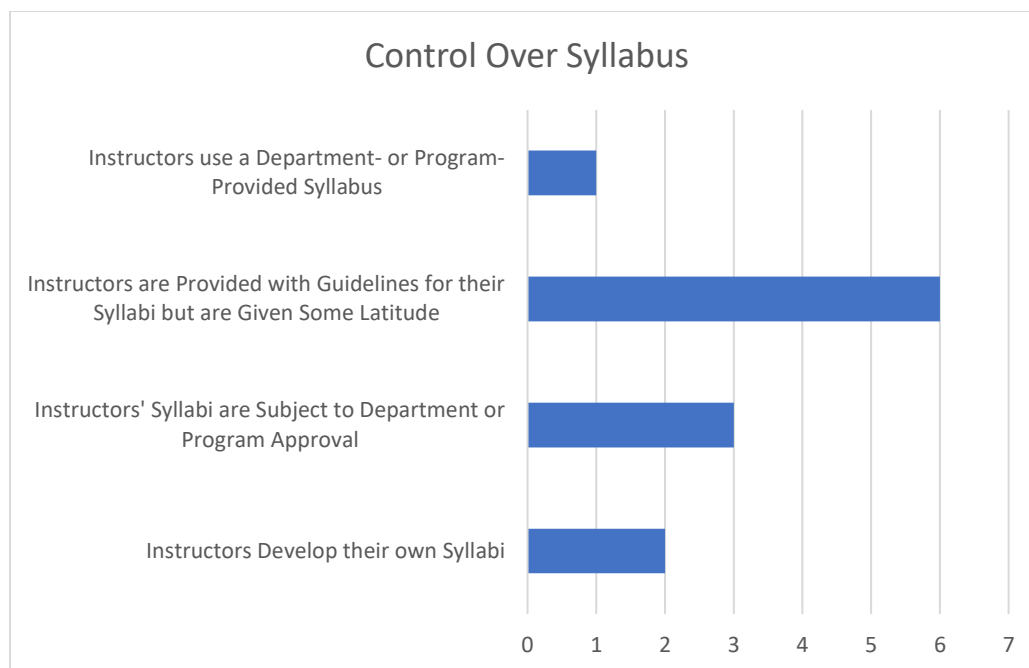


Figure 20: Amount of Control Instructors Have over Syllabi

Honors Options and Basic Writing

As mentioned above, a significant finding of Gladstein and Regaignon’s book is that private SLACs rarely have placement methods for FYW and just offer a single FYW course for all students. However, in response to my questions about honors options and basic writing courses, this does not seem to hold true at PLACs. As figure 21 shows, 34% of PLACs offer an honors option for FYW. More notably, as demonstrated in figure 22, 83% of PLACs offer some kind of basic writing course. 50% of the schools in my sample offer credit-bearing courses for students may need extra help in writing, while 33% offer non-credit-bearing options. Co-requisite courses appear to be significantly more popular (59%) than prerequisite courses (16%) or stretch courses (8%), though only 34% offer credit-bearing courses. As figure 23 shows, there does not appear to be any dominant placement method for these courses, with the most common method (SAT/ACT scores) only being used at 25% of schools.

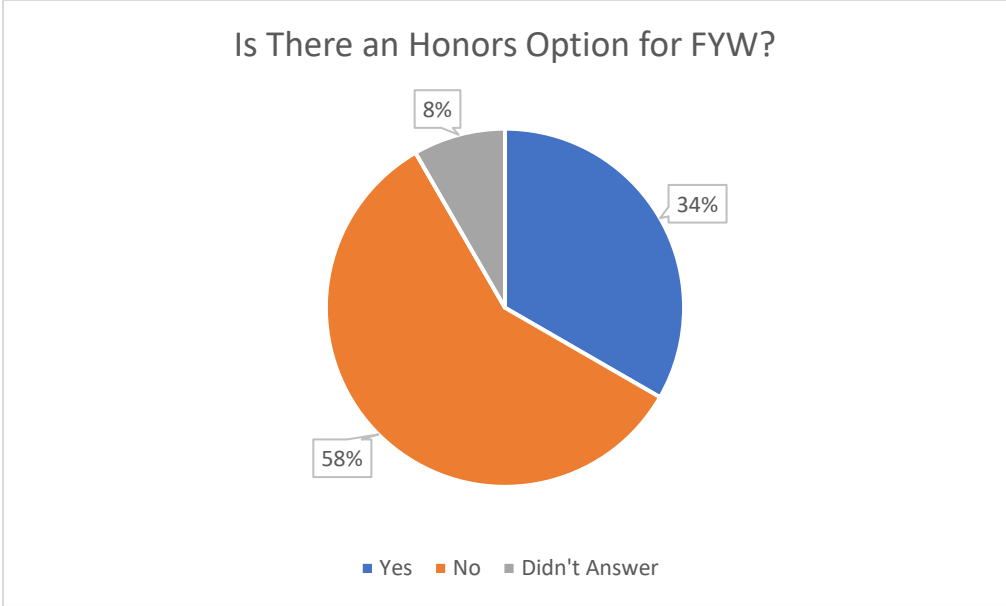


Figure 21: Percentage of Programs with an Honors Option for FYW

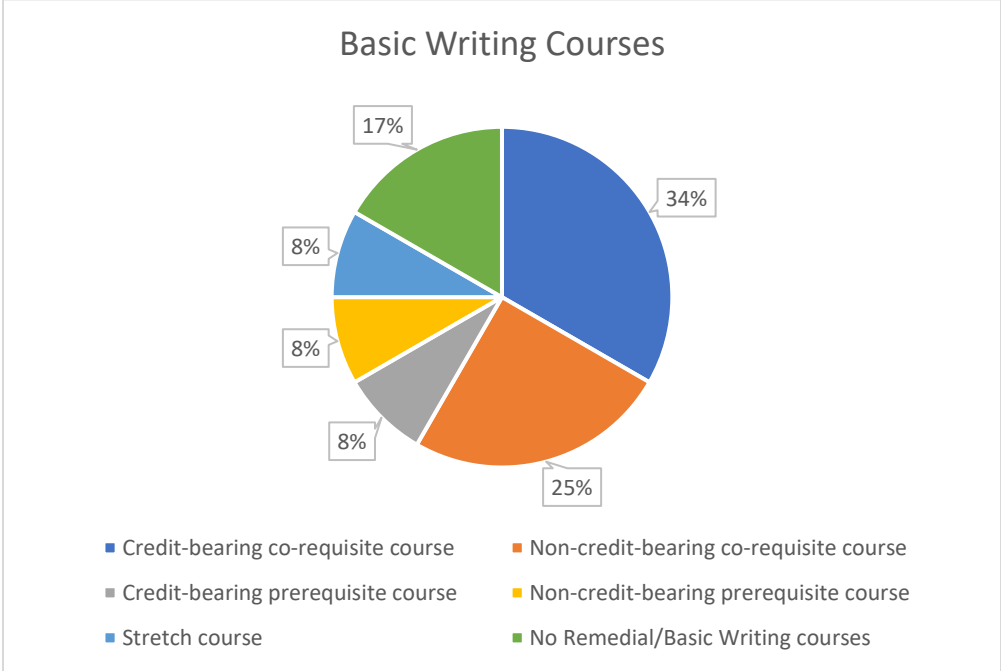


Figure 22: Types of Basic Writing Course Offerings

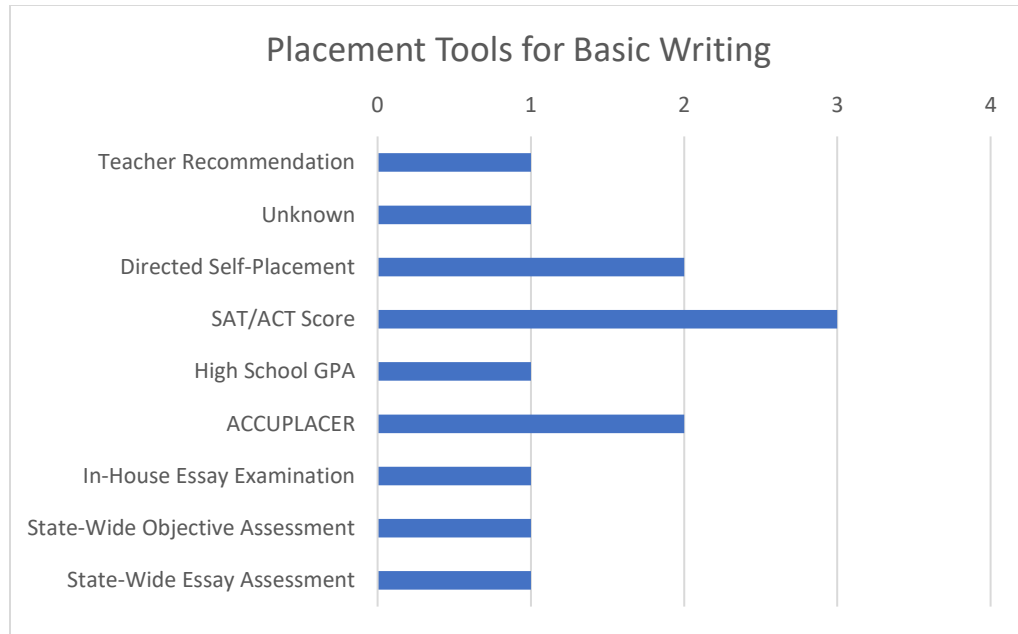


Figure 23: Frequency of Methods of Placement in Basic Writing Courses

Writing Intensive Courses/ Writing in the Major

While 42% of my respondents identified a writing-intensive course requirement and 25% identified a writing-in-the-majors requirement, only two respondents answered my question asking for more information on those requirements (though two said they were in the process of developing these courses, therefore could not speak to the requirements at this time); thus I have little I can say about what happens after FYW on these campuses. As figure 24 shows, 50% of schools require no writing courses after FYW (and 17% said it varied from major to major, so they could not speak about it in any general way), which contributes to the idea that writing instruction can be “taken care of” with one or two courses and then thought little about afterwards. While two respondents indicated there was a time requirement to complete these WI courses, one of those explained the requirement was “by senior year, ideally,” thus it is unclear whether or not there is actually a requirement in place, such as at the other respondent’s institution

where students must complete their WI requirements before earning 60 credits. I would similarly argue the lack of requirement for when such courses must be taken devalues the importance of such courses, as it suggests they are not part of a thoughtful vertical curriculum, but just courses students are required to take whenever they can fit them in. However, 25% of schools indicated that faculty who have their courses designated writing-intensive receive an additional stipend, suggesting that these courses are materially valued at some of these institutions.

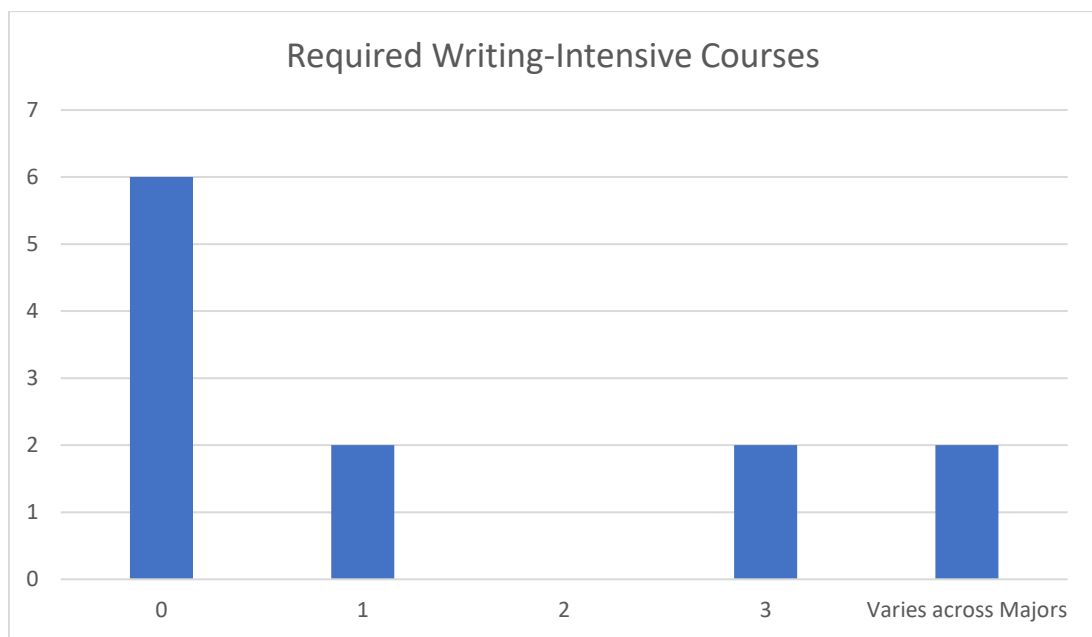


Figure 24: Frequency of Amount of Required WI courses

In response to my question asking for more information about the WI courses, one respondent wrote that they “must have a written research component, must have significant revision and feedback opportunities for submitted writing, syllabus must be approved by interdisciplinary WI committee.” These requirements for a course to be approved as “writing-intensive” are promising, as the inclusion of “significant revision and feedback opportunities” suggest that on this campus, “writing-intensive” does not

mean more writing is simply assigned, but rather than writing instruction is happening in these courses. The existence of an interdisciplinary writing committee also speaks to a recognition of the importance of writing across campus. The second respondent who answered this question only told me there was a required second-year course on professional writing which was “similar to first-year writing only with emphasis on the different professional genres, collaboration and technology for collaborative writing, and global communication practices.” I did not have the opportunity to interview this respondent, so I was unable to learn more about how this professional writing course fit into the culture of writing on campus.

Faculty Development

Because Gladstein and Regaignon heavily emphasize the role faculty autonomy plays on SLAC campuses, as well as a tendency to have faculty from across the disciplines teach FYW, and because many of the WPAs in my sample are the sole Rhetoric and Composition scholar on their campus, I wanted to learn more about the faculty development that PLACs offer. Similarly, I was expecting that on many campuses, instructors would have little formal training in composition. However, 50% of PLACs specifically train their instructors in composition. While this number still seems low to me, I was pleasantly surprised to see composition explicitly valued as a discipline on 50% of these campuses, because the commitment to writing prevalent in SLACs does not always translate to a recognition of composition as a discipline (Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012). Although, the types of faculty development I identify as common below may raise questions about the extensive of that training, especially on campuses where the WPAs are solo writing specialists.

As mentioned above, faculty development is among the most common duties of WPAs at PLACs, and while I did not ask how often that faculty development was directed towards writing program faculty versus faculty across campus, I did ask participants to clarify what types of faculty development they offered towards either group, as shown in figures 25 and 26. It is clear from these two figures that WPAs offer more types of faculty development to writing program faculty than they do faculty across campus; however, the three most common types of faculty development—one-on-one consultations, optional workshops, and informal meetings—are the same for both groups. While the percentages do differ slightly, I find the fact these are the three most common types for both groups interesting, as the emphasis on *optional* workshops, *informal* meetings, and individual *consultations* suggests this faculty development happens in much more informal ways than required workshops, formal observations, or a required seminar. Amorose (2000) explains that WPAs at small schools often do not have the same type of authority that WPAs at larger institutions have, and thus need to rely more on their “influence,” which he explains is fostered through the development of strong relationships with other members of campus, to enact change. I would speculate, then, that this trend towards informal or casual faculty development has arisen from a focus on influencing faculty towards “best practices” in writing instruction, as PLAC WPAs may have little authority to dictate what others do in their classrooms.

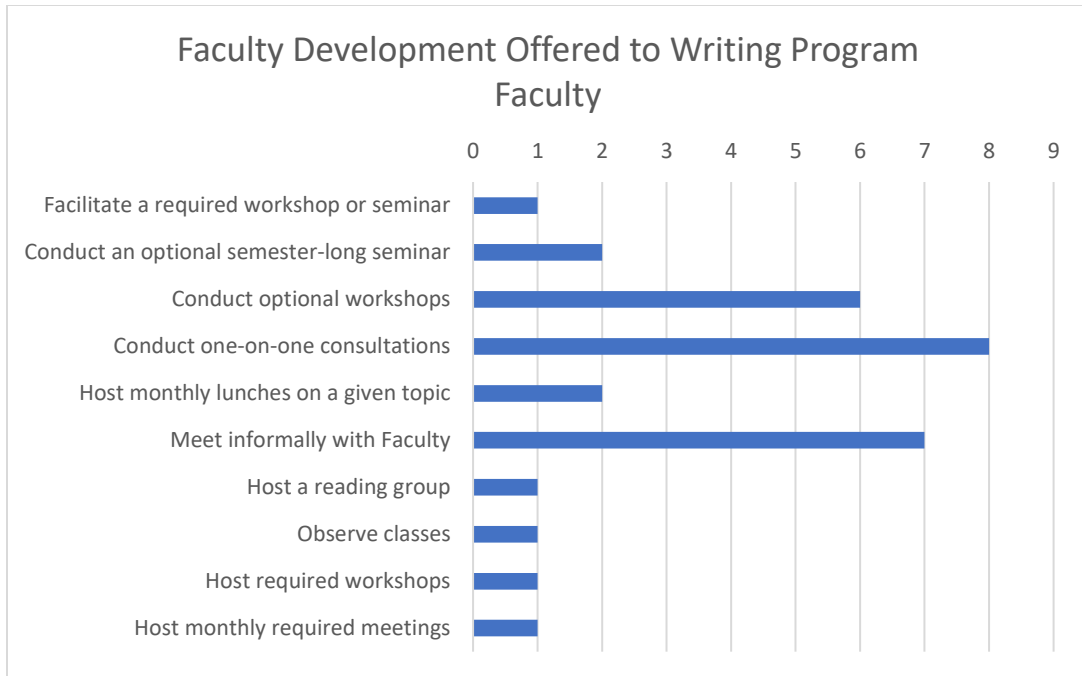


Figure 25: Frequency of Types of Faculty Development Offered to Writing Program Faculty

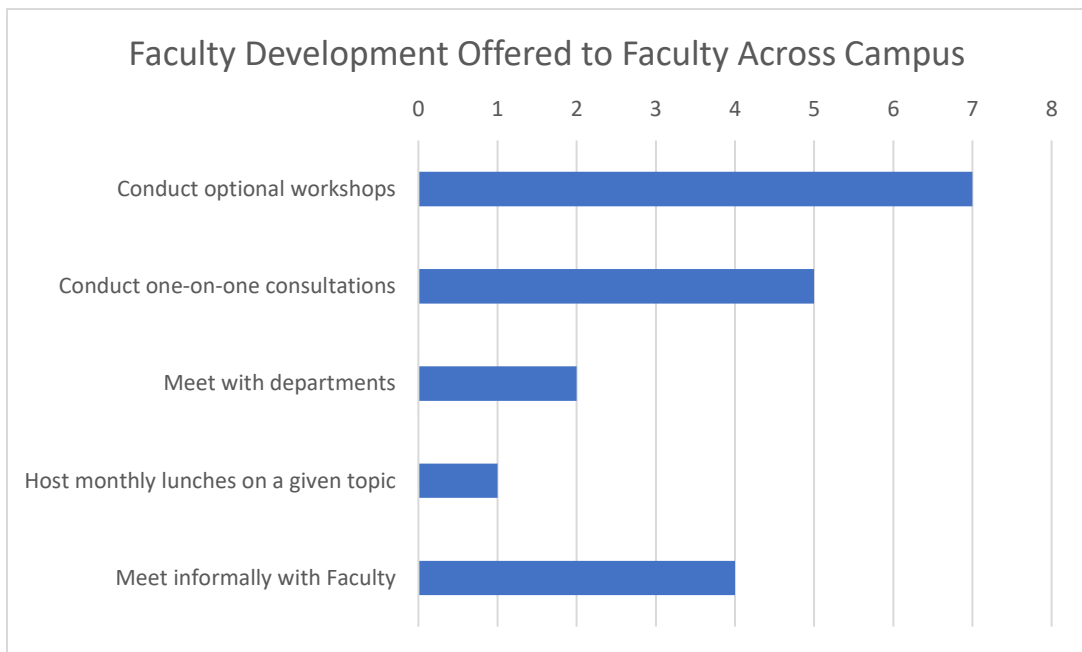


Figure 26: Frequency of Types of Faculty Development Offered to Other Faculty

Conclusions

In this chapter I have reported on the trends my limited sample reveals about the ways in which writing programs are structured at public liberal arts colleges. While, as I note in the introduction, this emphasis on the trends in program structures is simply meant to report on *how* writing programs are configured and cannot tell us much about *why* they are structured in these ways, I have speculated along the way that some of the ways aspects of PLAC writing programs seem to differ from private SLACs are a result of their public status. For instance, PLACs are about twice as likely as private SLACs to have non-tenure-track instructors teaching first-year writing and much more likely to allow opportunities to place out of first-year writing. These facts are likely a result of the precariousness of state higher education budgets and the need to be responsive to state and system-wide policies about transfer credits/placement. Moreover, PLACS are significantly more likely to have writing programs housed in English departments with English faculty teaching FYW than private SLACs are, suggesting they have followed a development more similar to that of FYW programs at other public institutions than the WAC-focused development Gladstein and Regaignon identified at private SLACS. However, archival research into the history of the development of these programs is needed in order to confirm these speculations.

As I will explore more in the next chapter, PLACs see themselves as being heavily invested in increasing college access, which may explain why they are significantly more likely than private SLACs to offer basic writing courses. However, while offering extra support for students who may need more instruction or practice with writing, the fact that at 33% of these institutions these courses are non-credit-bearing is a problem that creates an additional barrier to access.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to turn to figure 27, which reports on the plans WPAs had for upcoming writing program initiatives. While this was an open-ended question, so there was little commonality among responses, the figure is promising in that almost all of the responses include ways to further formalize the institution’s commitment to writing. That is, WPAs want to do things such as develop or increase partnerships across campus for writing-intensive courses, formalize WAC/WID initiatives, develop a campus-wide writing celebration, or continue to develop writing minors. These answers show that WPAs at PLACs are committed to supporting a robust culture of writing at these campuses, something I will discuss more in the next chapter.

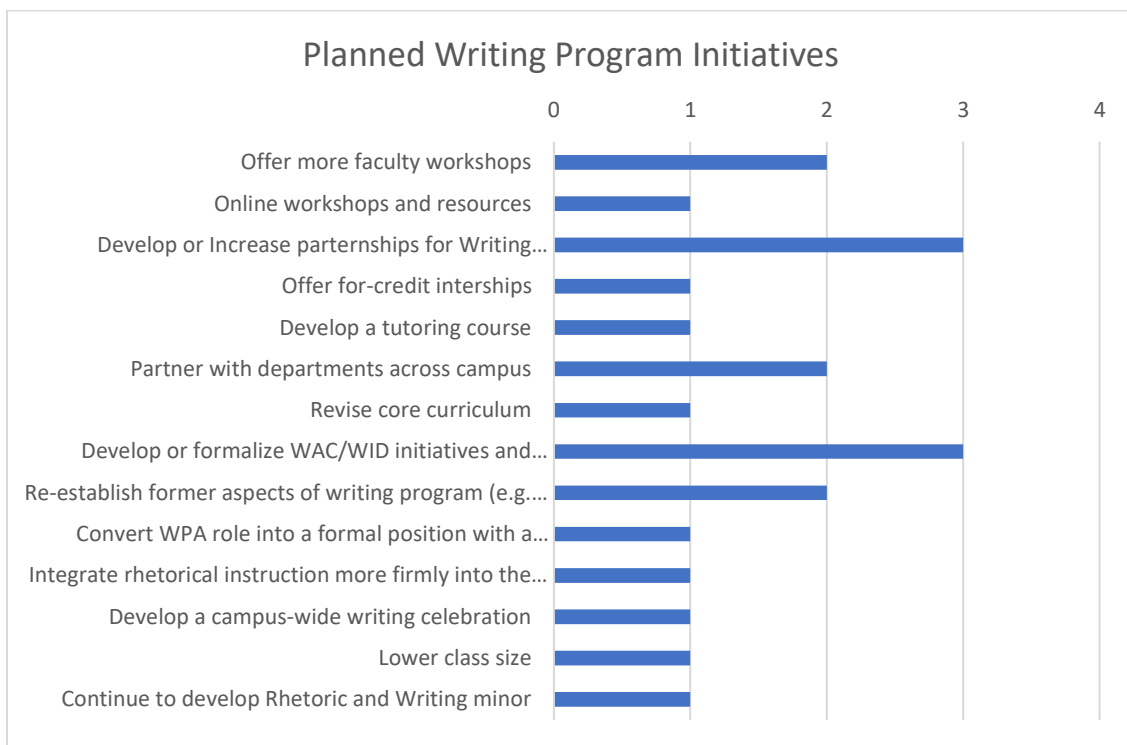


Figure 27: Planned Upcoming Writing Program Initiatives Across the Sample

CHAPTER IV

WPAS'S PERCEPTIONS OF PLAC VALUES AND THE ROLE OF PLAC WRITING PROGRAMS

“I think one of the ways to define a liberal arts college is that we’re always debating what the meaning of the liberal arts are . . . But I think a lot of us came to the college, I can speak for a few of my colleagues and myself, because we saw this as an opportunity to bring the strengths of liberal arts education to a population of students who may not have access to it.” – William

“When I came here there was already a WAC program, but there was no WAC Director. Again, a group of 15 faculty, everyone from biochemistry professors to education professors, to business. One of our most active members is a business professor. They got together and they’re like, ‘We need to talk about writing.’ This moment, it’s classical liberal arts in that everybody’s coming together. They’re talking about their curricula. They’re talking about the ways that it differs and coalesces in relation to writing.” – Lillian

In their introduction to *Roads Taken*, Epp and Spellman (2014) suggest that faculty play an important role in shaping institutional mission at public liberal arts colleges. While not focused specifically on public liberal arts colleges, this claim is echoed in recent Composition scholarship (Janangelo, 2016; Schoen, 2019; Vander Lei & Pugh, 2016) which argues that WPAs should be more attentive to how institutional missions are articulated across the institution, especially within their writing programs, as doing so can allow them to solidify the importance of the writing program to the university as a whole. What these arguments have in common is that, rather than just viewing institutional missions as “vague window-dressings” (Schoen, 2019), or as mandates from upper administration or the state legislature, they ask faculty to consider

their roles in shaping the embodiment and enactment of the values expressed in the mission statement. While a university may make a stated commitment to diversity and inclusion in their mission statement, for example, WPAs play an essential role in developing writing programs that foster these values.

It is true, however, that faculty are not always fully attentive to the role the institutional mission plays in their work. Sipress (2014) discusses a time during his tenure as Faculty Senate president at University of Wisconsin-Superior in which the accrediting board asked how the UWS's recent membership in COPLAC, and their public liberal arts mission, influenced institutional practices. As he explains, "the campus had yet to come to a common understanding of and vision for the public liberal arts mission" (p. 24) and neither administration nor faculty were able to provide clear examples of this. This example demonstrates how, as Schoen (2019) states, mission statements "sometimes fail to account for significant aspects of an institution's lived ethos" (p. 51), despite the fact that they are meant to express the values of a university. However, Sipress notes that such questioning led to several discussions on the issue, including five concrete initiatives that they felt "allowed all departments and programs to feel a sense of ownership over the public liberal arts mission" (p. 25).

Therefore, while in chapter 6 I will attend to the values expressed in institutional mission statements, it is crucial to attend to "values as they are actively lived and felt" (Williams, 1977, p. 132). While Schoen (2019) notes the possibility that WPAs may feel a perceived conflict between the institutional mission and the mission of the writing program, each of my interview participants saw the writing program as playing an

important role within their institution's public liberal arts mission.⁵ Moreover, with the exceptions of Rebecca and Caitlin, they all saw the institution as a whole fairly consistently committed to this mission, despite the findings from Fulford (2009) and Malenczyk and Rosenberg (2016) that demonstrate tensions between a public liberal arts mission and other dominant values that circulate on campus. Many even expressed feeling proud to work at a public liberal arts college. Despite such positive and consistent views from WPAs about public liberal arts missions, it is still important to consider how such values are being codified institutionally and then enacted within writing programs. Therefore, to examine how institutional values are actively lived and felt within campus writing programs, in this chapter I draw on interview data from WPAs at seven COPLAC institutions to consider both what they see as the dominant values of a public liberal arts institution and how they see these writing programs enacting and shaping these values. I conclude with a more focused examination of two of the seven WPAs to consider the ways public liberal arts values can be both a benefit and a hindrance to attempts at WPA work.

Methods

In order to explore how WPAs are navigating their roles at public liberal arts colleges, this chapter draws on interview data from interviews with a subset of my survey respondents.

Selection of Participants

⁵ I see this as a potential limitation to my research. It seems those who responded to the survey and agreed to interviews seemed to feel a strong commitment to this institutional mission, leaving me to wonder if the many who did not respond felt differently.

Eleven survey respondents said they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview in their answers to my survey questions, and I conducted interviews with seven of these respondents. I initially contacted 7 respondents; however, I was only able to successfully schedule interviews with 6 of these 7 survey respondents. The four participants I did not initially contact included one participant who was not actually the WPA, one who left all the qualitative questions blank, one whose qualitative answers strayed from the questions asked, and one whose initial answers seemed similar to others I had already contacted. As new questions about the importance of school size emerged from these six interviews, as explained below, I decided to include the last participant whom I initially excluded because of her position at a larger COPLAC institution.

The seven participants I initially contacted all provided statements in their qualitative answers that I wanted to follow up on. In some instances, this was simply because of an intriguing statement made by the respondent. For example, in response to my question about what initiatives the participants wanted to introduce to their writing program, William noted a desire to implement a WAC/WID program and wrote that “The problem with student writing at the institution is not the first year writing course but what does not follow the first-year course,” a statement which I felt needed clarification if I was to learn more about the culture of writing at his institution. Similarly, Holly wrote that “There is a lot about [her institution] that is unique. I know everyone says that about their own institution, but really, it is,” and she offered to say more in an interview, an offer I could not resist.

In other cases, I contacted participants for an interview because something about their qualitative responses suggested they would provide an interesting perspective. For

example, both Lillian and Edward noted that they were the first WPAs at their institutions, so I felt they would be especially productive to talk to about how WPAs navigate institutional values. As I continued to code institutional documents (see chapter 6) and analyze the quantitative survey data, I also noted some interesting writing program components at particular institutions which also prompted me to contact the survey respondents from those institutions for follow-up interviews. For example, two institutions required writing proficiency exams during the junior year, something that seemed an outlier among my larger sample, so since I had a survey response from each of these schools, I contacted them both for interviews.

During my interview with Caitlin, a WPA at a school with an enrollment of about 6,000 students, thus making it larger than most cutoffs for “small” schools (Hanstedt & Amorose, 2004) and the mean size for COPLAC members (Shuman, 2017), Caitlin repeatedly noted that her institution does feel like a small school in many ways, which I will discuss in more detail below. Because of these responses, and COPLAC’s early insistence that small school values are an important aspect of their membership criteria (Shuman, 2017), I realized I wanted to explore this issue of size more deeply. I only had one other survey respondent from a school larger than the 5,000 cutoff for most definitions of small schools, but I was fortunate in that the respondent was from what is currently COPLAC’s largest member with an enrollment of about 9,000 students. Therefore, after my interview with Caitlin, I also contacted Hannah, the WPA at this larger school and conducted an interview with her, bringing my total interview participants back to 7.

Interview Protocol

All participants were interviewed over Zoom, and interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were both audio- and video-recorded. In total, the seven interviews were approximately 436 minutes, and there were 123 pages of transcripts. I used semi-structured interviewing techniques with a series of questions I developed in response to the survey data these respondents completed (see previous chapter) and my initial coding of institutional mission and values statements and writing program websites (see chapter 6). While these questions varied, they all explored the following themes: the institution's history and status as a public liberal arts institution; the culture of writing on campus; the current setup of the writing program and how that relates to particular institutional values; and the rationale behind recent or proposed changes to the writing program. As semi-structured interviews move between planned questions and open conversation (Prior, 2004, p. 188), I would often allow the participants' answers to influence the direction of our conversation and the particular details we discussed.

Recognizing that writing program administrators can benefit from developing programs that reflect their institutional mission (Janangelo, 2016; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Schoen, 2019; Vander Lei & Pugh, 2016), in all but two cases (Holly and Hannah), a portion of the interview followed a text-based interview protocol (Prior, 2004) focused on the institution's mission statement and/or the writing program's website. In Holly's case, I intended to include some text-based questions; however, because there was so much to discuss about her institution's uniqueness, mentioned above, we simply ran out of time. I did not plan a text-based portion of the interview with Hannah because, by the time I contacted her for an interview, I felt many of my participants were relaying similar ideas; thus, I may have reached data saturation

(Saunders et al., 2018), and I mostly wanted her perspective on her institution's culture as the largest member of COPLAC, and how it may differ from the smaller members I had been looking at. The text-based portion of the interviews always began with a look at the institution's mission statement. First, I typically asked how familiar they were with the mission statement—and all said they were very familiar. Unfortunately, I failed to ask them to elaborate on that familiarity before pulling the mission statement up, as asking them to explain the mission in their own words would have provided interesting data. Instead, in some cases, I had specific questions about the mission statement that arose from the data I already examined, while in others I would simply ask them to discuss how the values expressed in these statements showed up in their writing program. In several cases, interview participants had been part of efforts to revise the mission statement, so they were able to answer questions about what particular words and phrases were added in the last revision and why. In all but one case (Edward), the institution also had a website for at least a portion of the writing program, so I would next share this side-by-side with the mission statement and ask the participants discuss how the values expressed in the differing documents overlapped and/or converged. I would also often ask about particular phrases (e.g. the writing proficiency exam at Caitlin's institution is articulated as part of the institution's promise of delivering a comprehensive liberal arts education) and the rationale behind those.

Analysis of Transcripts

After completing the interviews, I had them transcribed through a transcription service. After I received the transcripts, I began coding using Dedoose. Because I was interested in the ways institutional values were lived and expressed by participants, I used

values coding (Saldaña, 2016), as explained in the introductory chapter, to identify the values about education and writing that these WPAs expressed, as well as the values they saw themselves in conflict with. As Saldaña acknowledges, values are not always explicitly expressed, so while I had often tried to ask participants to clarify their answers to explicitly state the values undergirding their positions, I also had to infer what values seemed to be influencing what they told me about their writing programs and/or their institutions. Occasionally, when I saw values in tension, as might be expected at a public liberal arts institution (Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016), I would code for that tension, such as the code “Programmatic Unity v. Faculty Autonomy” (see next chapter for a discussion of these values in tension). While many excerpts include multiple values codes, excerpts vary in length because I ended an excerpt when I perceived participants shifting away from the values they were just describing to something new. Thus, one excerpt may be two paragraphs long in a transcript if the participant remained focused on one value, while another excerpt may be only a sentence or two if the participant switched to something new quickly.

After completing the values coding, I coded the transcripts a second time using structural coding, which “applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 97). This type of coding was useful to analyze similarities and differences across data that were not necessarily connected by the same values. Because my research was interested in how WPAs navigate the enactment of their writing programs, examples of structural codes that I applied included “Development of Programs” when interview participants discussed their experiences developing new programs or revising current ones and “Challenges of Public

Status” when participants indicated difficulties they faced in their jobs as a direct result of the public status of the university. Categorizing the data through these structural codes allowed me to look at all examples of WPAs revising a FYW requirement, for example, and see if similar values were in tension across interviews or if particular WPAs had unique experiences.

The Participants

While I would consider each of my seven interview participants as a WPA in some form, they also each held a unique position within their institution. Because the particularities of their positions provide some detailed insight into potential configurations of writing programs public liberal arts colleges, I will provide a brief description of each participant and how they are situated in relation to their institution as a whole and the writing program specifically before providing a deeper analysis of the interviews. All names are pseudonyms. Table 1 provides a brief summary of this data.

| Name | Job Title | Reports To | Type of Institution | Enrollment as of Summer 2020⁶ |
|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Lillian | Director of Writing | English Department | Northeastern COPLAC Institution | 1,452 |
| Hannah | Writing Program Director | English Department | Western COPLAC Institution | 9,201 |
| Caitlin | Writing Program Administrator | Provost’s Office | Southwestern COPLAC Institution | 6,102 |
| Holly | Director of Writing | Provost’s Office | Southeastern COPLAC Institution | 837 |

⁶ According to *U.S. News & World Report*

| | | | | |
|---------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Edward | Coordinator of Writing | Interdisciplinary Studies Program | Southwestern COPLAC Institution | 904 |
| Rebecca | Writing Center Director | English Department | Southeastern COPLAC Institution | 3,669 |
| William | Director of the Integrative Studies Program | Integrative Studies Program | Northeastern COPLAC Institution | 3,569 |

Table 4.1: Interview Participants

WPAs within English Departments

Lillian is the Director of Writing at a Northeastern COPLAC institution, which has a current enrollment of 1,452 students. She has been in this position for about six years, and she is her institution’s first WPA. However, before she joined this institution, there was an interdisciplinary WAC group made up of faculty in different departments who were interested in the teaching of writing. This WAC group recognized the need for a formal WPA and advocated for a new line in the English Department that could serve in this role. In her six years in this position, Lillian has developed a Writing Studio and her college’s first-year writing program. Currently, English is one of her college’s largest majors, and most of the students concentrate in writing.

Hannah is the Writing Program Director at a Western COPLAC institution with an enrollment of 9,201 students, making it the largest of COPLAC’s current members. She has worked at this institution for two years, and previously worked at a prestigious private liberal arts college. As Writing Program Director, she is on a tenure-track line within the English Department and oversees the first-year writing program. Hannah’s institution has another WPA position, the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Coordinator, who oversees a state-wide writing requirement that can currently be fulfilled either through an exam or writing-intensive courses. While the GWAR

Coordinator is also situated within the English Department, it is a part-time NTT position.

Caitlin is the WPA at a Southwestern COPLAC institution with an enrollment of around 6,102 students. She has served in this position for three of her seven years at the institution. While she has a tenure-track professor line within the English department, and reports to the chair of English in that capacity, in her WPA role she works directly under the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Provost. In clarifying this split role for me, she emphasized that the writing program is not housed within English, despite many people's assumptions that the writing requirements are decided upon by the English Department. Her institution currently offers a first-year writing requirement, as well as a writing proficiency exam that students must take in their junior year. Despite being classified as a public liberal arts college, her institution's largest programs are in the health sciences, and she explained that many non-traditional students returning for a degree in the health sciences view the writing exam as an unnecessary obstacle. Caitlin has worked to develop writing-intensive courses that can replace the writing proficiency exam, and these courses were being piloted at the time of our interview.

WPAs outside of English Departments

Holly is the Director of Writing at a Southeastern COPLAC institution with an enrollment of 837 students, and she has held this position for six years. While her position is non-tenure-track, she clarified that this was "not for cheap reasons." Rather, in order for the WPA position to be created quickly, it had to remain outside of the three existing academic divisions at her college, and there is a rule about not being able to receive tenure in a discipline that is not offered within one of the three divisions. Because

she remains outside of the three academic divisions, she reports directly to the provost. While Holly's institution does not offer any required courses, the writing program does offer Writing about Writing courses for first-year students who wish to learn more about writing, as well as a few other writing courses. They are also currently developing a Rhetoric and Writing minor.

Edward is the Coordinator of Writing at a Southwestern COPLAC institution with an enrollment of 904 students. While his tenure-line is split between the Interdisciplinary Studies Program and the English Department, as Coordinator of Writing he reports to the Interdisciplinary Studies Program which houses the required writing courses. However, in describing his position, he stated that he was "not a traditional WPA, because we don't have a traditional writing program." Instead, he views himself as a "minor authority," a point I will explore in more detail below, and notes that his title of Coordinator of Writing was only created a year ago to recognize the various duties he was already responsible for as the only Rhetoric and Composition faculty member on campus. While he noted that this prevents him from making significant changes to the writing program at his institution, he has created a journal of academic student writing to celebrate the writing students do on campus, both in the writing classes and across the disciplines.

Writing Center Directors with Some WPA Duties

Rebecca is the Writing Center Director at a Southeastern COPLAC institution with an enrollment of 3,669 students. While there is a different Writing Programs Director, I had initially contacted Rebecca when I sent out my survey because the writing center's website suggested they oversaw her institution's writing proficiency portfolio, a writing requirement for juniors. Unable to find information about the Writing Programs

Director, and knowing that often at small liberal arts colleges, WPA and WCD positions overlap (Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012), I assumed she also oversaw the first-year writing program. While I was incorrect, she still holds many other duties I would consider under the purview of a WPA. For example, while the Writing Programs Director does “all the data and assessment stuff” with the writing proficiency portfolio, Rebecca does work with faculty across campus to help them develop writing assignments that can meet the requirements for the portfolio, and of course works with students who are preparing for the portfolio. She also holds several other campus workshops to help faculty learn how to discuss writing in their classes. Thus, while she may not be overseeing the specific writing courses at her institution, she plays a large role in faculty development around writing.

Directors of Interdisciplinary Studies Programs

William, my final interview participant, is not a traditional WPA, but rather the Director of his Northeastern COPLAC institution’s Integrative Studies Program, an interdisciplinary core program which houses many required courses, including the first-year writing requirement. While his institution used to be larger, enrollment has seen a steady decline and is currently at an enrollment of 3,569 students. While there is a person within the Integrative Studies Program who more directly oversees the writing requirement—whose title is the Coordinator of the Thinking and Writing Program-- William did previously serve in this role, and he continues to work with the current Coordinator and the Director of the Center for Research & Writing to provide faculty development on writing. When he joined the college in 1998, they offered a traditional first-year writing course, which, during his time, has been converted to a first-year

writing seminar (Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Moon, 2003) in which faculty from across the disciplines, rather than just English faculty, teach a course centered around a sustained writing project examining central questions of their disciplines. This course currently serves as the only writing requirement.

WPAs's Perceptions of the Public Liberal Arts Colleges Ethos

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a key difference between private liberal arts colleges and public ones is that public liberal arts colleges' "identit[ies] are split in a way that of private colleges are not" (Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016, p. 153). Shuman (2017) explains the many different paths members of COPLAC took to become public liberal arts colleges—often beginning as normal schools, regional comprehensive universities, community colleges, etc.—and Fulford (2009) demonstrates the ways the ethos of a former institutional identity can persist long after an institutional rebranding and constrain the ways public liberal arts missions are enacted. As such, I anticipated more difficulties identifying a unified structure of feeling across public liberal arts colleges than what Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) are able to identify across private SLACs. Therefore, a significant portion of the interviews discussed what it means to be a public liberal arts college—or, at least, how their institution is enacting a public liberal arts idea. This common conversation generated the structural code Discussion of PLAC Identity ($n = 25$), which was applied at least once in every interview. Moreover, as also discussed in Chapters 1 and 2--and as the quote from William that opens this chapter suggests—there is little consensus on what a liberal arts education entails. At least once during each interview, participants began to describe how they understood a liberal arts education, leading to the structural code Definition of Liberal Arts ($n = 27$).

Of course, these structural codes frequently co-occurred with many of the values codes, as conversations about PLAC identity or an attempt to define the liberal arts necessarily relies on invoking the values the interviewees associate with the liberal arts. Table 4.2 shows the values codes with at least four total occurrences and the frequency with which they were applied to the transcript for each interview. Table boxes are shaded gray when a code appeared to visualize how many of the seven WPAs I interviewed addressed this value. While the Commitment to Writing code appeared the most frequently in number of total excerpts by far, that code will be the main focus of the next section, so it receives little attention here. In this section, I discuss how the WPAs I spoke to understand what it means to be a public liberal arts college and how some of the other most common values identified in this table inform their institution’s approach to a liberal arts education.

| Code | Lillian | Caitlin | Edward | Hannah | Holly | Rebecca | William | Total |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| College Access | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 24 |
| Commitment to Writing | 12 | 2 | 10 | 0 | 11 | 7 | 12 | 54 |
| Interdisciplinarity | 10 | 2 | 11 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 37 |
| Campus Community | 8 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 21 |
| Inclusivity / Diversity | 2 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 21 |
| Student Agency | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 12 |
| Connections to Local Community | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| Civic Engagement | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 |
| General Education | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| Career Preparation | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 8 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Creativity / Arts | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Student / Faculty Relationships | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Student Research | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 8 |
| Affordability | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Undergraduate Teaching | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Student-Centered Learning | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Critical Thinking | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Social Justice | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Global Citizenship | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

Table 4.2: Institutional Values with At Least Four Total Occurrences

Because of the claims mentioned above that public liberal arts colleges have a split identity, in this section I consider how the WPAs I interviewed understand both the liberal arts and their institution’s commitment to a public liberal arts education. Many of these WPAs felt their institution worked with what they felt was a more expansive notion of the liberal arts—one that includes fields outside of traditional notions of the liberal arts, is both more interdisciplinary and more practical, and is more diverse. Through these explanations, participants also invoked several of the most common values identified in Table 4.2, such as interdisciplinarity, commitments to college access and diversity and inclusion, strong relationships between students and faculty, and the importance of both the campus and the local community. Thus, in this section I also explore the ways in which those values intersect with participants understanding of their institution’s public liberal arts identity.

Expansive Notions of the Liberal Arts

Despite William's insistence that we are constantly debating the meaning of the liberal arts (a claim echoed by educational historians such as Oakley (1992), who notes that there has *never* been agreement about what a liberal education entails), and despite the differences among the institutions within the small sample I discuss in this chapter, the WPAs I talked to seemed to hold fairly similar ideas about the foundations of a liberal arts education, as well as the role of a public liberal arts college specifically. What makes this similarity interesting is that the ideas about the liberal arts these WPAs held were much more expansive than some more traditional notions of the liberal arts that focus primarily on the humanities and Western-centric curriculum (e.g. Seery, 2002). Rather, like Oakley (1992), these WPAs understand their institution's approach to the liberal arts as including not just "the fine arts, foreign languages, literature and the social sciences" but also "mathematics, the biological and physical sciences and psychology, as well as area and interdisciplinary studies" (p. 195). For example, while William discussed that a "really restrictive" view of a liberal arts education might just entail Humanities disciplines such as literature, philosophy, or history, his institution has "really broadened that to say, well, sociology and anthropology, biology for example" can be approached in a liberal arts fashion by focusing not just on the content of the field, but rather, by examining the core questions researchers ask within these disciplinary frameworks and how to think about such types of questions—a process he equates to what Compositionists might call an "inquiry-based course." In his mind, this type of course "exemplifies the liberal arts" as it initiates students into the role of an active and lifelong learner. Rebecca similarly noted the role disciplines outside of the humanities can play in a liberal arts education, as she explained that her institution's "nursing program is

excellent and . . . very devoted to the fact that nursing is a liberal art and not just a science.”

Many public liberal arts colleges began as normal schools and still maintain a heavy emphasis on education degrees. While Cohen (2014) and Oakley (1992) both position education degrees as separate from the liberal arts mission because of their vocational emphasis, both Lillian and Hannah saw these goals as intertwined, thus providing another example of how a degree typically seen as purely vocational has been subsumed into the understanding of the liberal arts that circulates at these campuses. Lillian explained that even when it was a normal school, her institution had a “fairly liberal artsy sort of curriculum” that focused on experiential and experimental learning, while also emphasizing close student and faculty relationships. Therefore, she believes that this institution “started as very focused on the liberal arts curriculum . . . without explicitly calling it that” even while its primary goal was teacher preparation. This liberal arts emphasis continued as it transitioned to a state school, even before they explicitly rebranded as a public liberal arts college. While Hannah explained that part of her institution’s mission is to prepare students to be members of their communities and active citizens in a democracy, which are typical liberal arts college goals, she noted that there’s also an emphasis, arising from their normal school history, in preparing teachers. She stated this was “very much a part of the identity” of her institution, and that the education degree is an “integrative undergraduate degree” primarily focusing on “multi-subject teaching credential[s]” for elementary and middle school teachers. Her explanation suggests that the focus on integrative, interdisciplinary learning commonly associated

with the liberal arts is maintained in their education degree, thus differentiating it from a degree that is purely vocational.

The inclusion of disciplines not traditionally conceived of as liberal arts within the notion of the liberal arts that circulated at these institutions seemed to be an outgrowth of the heavy focus on interdisciplinarity at their respective institutions. When Lillian explained that her college was currently in the process of revising their core curriculum, she stated that “Obviously, a core curriculum that focuses on integrative learning and helping students make connections across different disciplines is integral to liberal arts education,” and, in the view of the WPAs I interviewed, this focus on integrative, interdisciplinary learning permeates the curriculum at each of their institutions. While Caitlin notes that, despite her institution’s identity as a public liberal arts college, their largest academic programs are not what we would traditionally consider liberal arts programs, she feels there is a strong interdisciplinary general education program. Rebecca’s institution seemed to have the most tension between its liberal arts identity and its role within the state system, which I will discuss in more detail below. As a result of this tension, the chancellor often pushes for getting rid of programs with few students in the major. However, she noted that faculty immediately pushed back on this idea, recognizing that such a view is

really detrimental to being a liberal arts university, that the mission of that is to look at how these things are interconnected and to recognize that, if you’re in engineering, but you can’t think critically or analytically in the ways that the humanities offer, or if you’re in business and you haven’t had those basic ethics courses, or if you’re in international business and you haven’t taken history

classes . . . well, you need some of the humanities stuff in those more technical degrees. That's important. That's part of our mission to connect those.

This emphasis on interdisciplinarity is perhaps most explicitly recognized at Holly's institution, where degrees do not list the particular discipline students majored in, but rather note that they received a "Bachelor in Liberal Arts."

Holly also provided an important insight into why these institutions may be expanding their definitions of the liberal arts, both by including disciplines not traditionally considered part of a liberal education and considering the role a foundation in the liberal arts can play in a more vocational degree. As she explained, her institution had moved in an "applied liberal arts" direction, which she feels should be a direction all liberal arts colleges move in. While some scholars have made the argument that an "applied liberal arts" focus dilutes the central goals of a liberal arts education (e.g. Oakley, 1992; Pfnister, 1984; Seery, 2002), Holly's explanation of this direction was aligned with many tenets of a liberal arts education. In clarifying what she meant by an "applied liberal arts" direction, she explained

there's more intentional academic programming designed to help students transfer their knowledge from college to whatever their next step is. For a long time, that next step was just assumed to be graduate school, and now we know that's not always a good choice for a lot of people. If that's not their choice, we need to help them be prepared to do whatever it is they want to do. We're not saying we're going to be career prep, but you want to go start your own business and do something like social justice with that? Fantastic, let's help you get what you need while you're here to go do that thing.

Holly's explanation here centers transfer as the primary goal of an applied liberal arts direction. While transfer is at times dismissed as utilitarian and too focused on specific outcomes (e.g. Eodice, Geller, & Lerner, 2016), transfer has long been a central tenet of a liberal education, even if not expressed in those terms. For example, Dewey's (1916) *Democracy and Education*, which is often cited as one of the quintessential arguments for an American liberal arts education, frequently argues against "vocational" training, suggesting that education "is its own end" (p. 33). In defending this argument, Dewey insists that education for its own sake will "insure the continuance of education [and] [t]he inclination to learn from life itself" (p. 33). In other words, Dewey insists that education focused simply on the desire to learn will prepare individuals to continue learning throughout their lives and adapt to new situations, whereas training for a particular career will produce a narrow, non-transferable education. Some more contemporary liberal arts scholars have argued a focus on "applying" a liberal arts education aligns too closely with such vocational ends (e.g. Hayes, 2015; Pfnister, 1984; Seery, 2002); however, Oakley (1992) reminds us that the coherent sense of a liberal arts education that authors like these invoke never truly existed, and Delucchi (1997) identifies a shift towards more professional curricula in liberal arts colleges since at least the 1970s. Therefore, Holly's argument towards an "applied liberal arts" curriculum which focuses specifically on transfer is aligned with many of the long-standing debates about what the goals of a liberal arts education should entail. For many of these WPAs, then, their understanding of a public liberal arts education was not just a more expansive notion of the liberal arts that included more disciplines beyond the humanities and social sciences, but it also involved providing a liberal arts education that students could more

readily understand the practical applications of. Such an understanding aligns with Bates's (2014) claim that public liberal arts colleges need to work harder to market the use of their education to students, parents and other stakeholders.

Commitments to Diversity and Inclusion with a Focus on College Access

Furthermore, the definitions of liberal arts that circulated on these campuses, as the WPAs understood them, was not only more inclusive of non-traditional liberal arts programs, but also seemed to reflect the institutions' commitments to inclusivity and diversity. While these are values private liberal arts colleges have also sought to advance, they have frequently fallen short in doing so (e.g. Marx, 2004; Volk & Benedix, 2020). This argument is not to suggest public liberal arts colleges are perfectly realizing commitments to inclusion, diversity, and college access, either: Edward noted that his institution still had still some defenders of a traditional approach to teaching the Western canon; similarly, Hannah explained that faculty at her institution, while more diverse than the prestigious private liberal arts school she taught at before, were still predominately white, which means whiteness is still probably significantly influencing their curriculum and campus culture in ways they might not even realize. However, several of the WPAs in my sample felt that a commitment to inclusion of marginalized students was a strength of both their institution and their writing program. For instance, Hannah explained that, while she would have argued whiteness and liberal arts education go hand-in-hand before she arrived at the COPLAC institution she now teaches at, she has since seen there are different ways to realize a liberal arts education. She notes the expansive and interdisciplinary approach to Ethnic Studies at her institution, which has given her the impression that "the liberal arts are actually a way of giving students of color space, time,

and access to texts that reflect their own experiences.” That is, rather than trying to replicate a Western canon, faculty at her institution work to provide texts that are culturally responsive, and “the kind of writing [they] ask students to do is much more about them getting a chance to reflect their personal experience and combine that with critical and cultural texts that represent [diverse] experiences.”

Moreover, many of these WPAs felt their institution’s commitment to college access strengthened the quality of the liberal arts education they were able to provide. For example, Edward and Caitlin both agree that a more diverse and inclusive education is a necessary part of a liberal arts education. Edward explains the “increasing push” at his campus to recognize that “being a good liberal arts curriculum means creating people who are not just students, but active civic participants in the world. Dealing with that means dealing with how global citizenship looks now, which I think means having more multicultural awareness,” something that is not possible within a traditional Western-centric liberal arts curriculum. Because of these WPAs’s understandings of diversity, inclusion, and college access as necessary components of a liberal arts education, these values influence their administrative and pedagogical practices as they attempt to support all learners. For example, WPAs engage in informal research about students’ prior experiences with reading and writing, develop cohort models for minoritized students, or enact stretch programs to provide writers with more time develop their writing abilities.

While not specifically focused on the curriculum, Hannah explained that while her institution, like many COPLAC institutions, historically drew most of its student body from the small rural towns nearby, they have started attracting a more geographically diverse student body. Moreover, because the region they are situated in

has been rapidly increasing in racial diversity, the institution was officially designated as an HSI a few years ago. Hannah argued that this increase in racial, ethnic, class, and geographic diversity among the student population fostered the ability for all students to be exposed to broader perspectives, which “is so important as part of that liberal arts education.” Again, this is not to suggest these institutions are perfectly realizing commitments to inclusion or access, simply by an increase of diversity in the student population; for instance, Caitlin notes the ways her institution’s writing proficiency exam privileges white, native-English-speaking students. However, the WPAs I spoke to saw the commitment to diversity and inclusion as going hand-in-hand with the public liberal arts commitment, thus aligning themselves against arguments to preserve the Western canon as a necessary approach to the liberal arts.

As the quote from William in the epigraph of this chapter suggests, part of these schools’ focus on inclusion involves increasing college access, which was also the only values code that was applied across all seven of my interviews (see Table 4.2). While the relative affordability of these institutions compared to private SLACs plays a large role in their accessibility, which most of my participants acknowledged, affordability was not the only understanding that the WPAs had of what college access entails. For instance, while discussing how accessible his institution is, William explains, “Students can come here . . . without having excelled in high school.” While this statement could raise fears that access means a dilution of academic “quality,” a tension I explore in chapter 6, that does not seem to be how William understands this meaning of access. Rather, he recognizes the importance of providing a quality liberal arts education to students who, for whatever reason, may not be able to be accepted into some of the most prestigious

private SLACS. Holly provides a strong example of how her writing program designs curriculum focused on college access that can perhaps also address some of the academic reasons students may not have “excelled” in high school. She says, about her writing program:

I think that we really focus on finding out what students’ experiences were before they started at our college particularly through that summer study, and then we use that information to design programming for that particular cohort. If we find that a lot of students did not experience a lot of reading in high school, then we will start designing activities, workshops, instruction. I think just being, who are our students, where are they coming from? Asking them to tell us about their experiences and then using that information rather than some sort of blanket, like, this is just what students are these days.

This example demonstrates a clear way access is framed in Holly’s writing program in a way that goes beyond just accepting a wider range of students and offering them more affordable tuition. That is, committed to student success, Holly’s program identifies the needs of particular cohorts of students and develops course programming that is responsive to those needs. Rather than accepting students and then expecting them to adapt to a pre-existing curriculum, Holly’s program provides students with the specific instruction they will need to be successful at the university.

While above I mentioned how Hannah’s institution has attempted to diversify the curriculum through the inclusion of more culturally-responsive texts, which she ties to initiatives for inclusion and access, she also explains two initiatives in her writing program that demonstrate commitments to access and inclusion that go beyond a simply

additive approach to diversity. First, she mentions their “Summer Bridge” program and says,

I think ours is particularly invested in community and building a community for four years. We also have EOP, the Education Opportunity Program that's quite active on our campus. And the writing program has a partnership with EOP.

We're part of the EOP Academy, which means that students are cohorted and take their first-year experience class and their English class together in the same cohort, and they're in that cohort for the full year, their first year. I would say those things are definitely reflective of our emphasis on access in the writing program in particular in addition to that partnership with EOP, and we're also working to establish partnership with PUERTA [Preparing Underrepresented Educators to Realize their Teaching Ambitions] in preparing underrepresented groups to become educators. It admits students and puts them in PUERTA cohorts for the first year starting in their first year, but they are mostly Hispanic. I think it may be entirely Hispanic self-identifying students⁷ . . .who have expressed interest in becoming teachers. They get cohorted, they get support starting in the first year, and so we're working to build a similar model to EOP where those students can be cohorted together [in writing classes].

In this example, Hannah highlights a couple different programs on campus designed to support underrepresented or marginalized students and the ways her writing program works with them to support these students throughout their writing courses. Similarly, she also notes that while most schools in her state system use a co-curricular model in which

⁷ Hannah noted a few times she “hates” this phrase but is using it because it’s what the data she receives uses.

students who need extra support for writing take an additional lab course alongside FYW, her institution uses a stretch model in which students have the option of a two-semester version of FYW. She has been a strong advocate for the stretch courses and states that she thinks they better achieve goals of college access than co-curricular models do. When I asked her to explain this position, she said,

My reading of literacy research says that literacy development requires both time on task and time generally to develop that even with additional time on task, you can only get to a certain point before you are inundated or overloaded. That calendar time is also necessary for the development of literacy. Co-curricular models give you the time on task. . . But the difference is that they don't get calendar time for development. That all happens in the same semester. For me, that means that the stretch actually makes space for more kinds of learners, more kinds of challenges to be addressed, students to develop patterns and habits.

I share Hannah's explanation here not to enter into a debate about whether or not a stretch or co-curricular model is a better approach to support students who need more writing instruction. But rather, I find it important that Hannah's rationale for a stretch model is about designing a support system that she understands will support "more kinds of learners." The stretch courses her program offers, then, are yet another example of the way her program supports her institution's commitment to college access. Like the examples from Holly and William above, this explanation demonstrates an understanding of college access as doing more than just changing admission standards or offering lower tuition, but also providing necessary support systems to all types of students so that they can be successful at the institution. Unlike approaches to inclusion or access that position

these values as separate from academic quality, which both Fox (1999) and Horner (1999) criticize, what the participants described in this section have in common, then, is a belief that a quality liberal arts education entails strong commitments to diversity and inclusion and college access. Moreover, they understand that additive approaches to diversity are not enough to foster true inclusion or equity (e.g. Ahmed, 2004; Giroux, 1993; Tienda, 2013; Watts Smith & Mayorga-Gallo, 2017) and identify structures at their institution and within their writing program that are part of an effort to make their institution more inclusive and equitable.

Small(-to-Medium) Size and the Importance of Campus and Local Community and Strong Faculty-Student Relationships

Lastly, as mentioned above, many of COPLAC's institutional documents identify the small size of many of their members as being important to the organization's identity⁸. For many of my interview participants as well, the small size of their institution was often identified as a strength and something that facilitated their ability to collaborate well with faculty across disciplines and develop strong relationships with students. Two of the WPAs I interviewed, however (Caitlin and Hannah), are at schools larger than 5,000 students, which is a typical cutoff for small schools. While Shuman (2017) does note that some COPLAC members are larger than this, he still insists that "small school values" (such as strong student/faculty relationships and a close-knit campus community) inform the ethos of these schools, as I explain in chapter 1. Thus, I wanted to understand if WPAs at these two larger schools felt their institution embodied such values. Before I could even ask this of Caitlin, however, she referred to her institution as a "very small

⁸ However, more recent membership criteria use the phrase "small-to-medium-size," a point I discuss in chapter 6.

school,” noting that this allows small class sizes and a “traditional SLAC feel.” I responded by noting their current enrollment of over 6,000 students and that I have not seen a definition of a small school that includes that many students, yet she insisted the school felt small. In explaining the ways her institution feels like a small college, she stated that “students . . . have access to their professors. Like I said the classes are small and professors are available in their office. . . [a]ll classes are being taught by faculty. We have a few adjuncts. Students even in those freshman courses are having access to permanent faculty members.” Like Shuman, then, Caitlin relies on strong relationships between students and faculty—in part informed by the fact that the university employs few contingent faculty—and the fact that class sizes are small to defend the small school ethos of her medium-sized school. It should be noted that these values also reflect the strong commitment to undergraduate teaching that Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) indicate are central to the small liberal arts college structure of feeling.

After Caitlin emphasized the small school feeling of her institution, I felt it was important to get Hannah’s perspective on the small school values at her campus, as it is currently the largest member of COPLAC, as mentioned above, at around 9,000 students. While an enrollment of 9,000 students is still what many classification systems would consider a “medium” sized school, like Caitlin’s is, the fact that Hannah’s institution is about 50% larger than the next largest school in my survey sample⁹ suggested to me that there may be significant differences in campus culture. When asked about COPLAC’s focus on small school values and how she felt her institution, as a member of COPLAC, might embody those, Hannah said:

⁹ Put another way, the enrollment at Lillian’s, Edward’s, and Holly’s institutions combined is about the same as the difference between Caitlin’s and Hannah’s institutions.

I have not thought about that before except in the context of class sizes. There is a real emphasis at [this institution] . . . it really emphasizes personal relationships between faculty and students. Advising on our campus, we have professional advisors on our campus, but by and large, advising for students starting in their first year happens inside departments with full faculty, with tenure-line faculty. What that means is that the relationship between students and a faculty member guides the students' work through their whole four years. That's the goal. I think that is really about embodying the small school mentality.

While Hannah admits she had never thought about this before, thus suggesting the “small school mentality” she identifies might not be as prevalent at her institution—or at least not as important to her as it was for Caitlin, who identified her school as being “very small” before I could bring it up—her response emphasizes similar values as those that Caitlin drew upon when describing the small school ethos at her school. Like Caitlin, Hannah primarily frames this small school mentality through close relationships between faculty and students. However, unlike Caitlin, who mainly emphasizes the lack of contingent faculty as the evidence her institution works to foster these relationships with tenure-line faculty, Hannah instead draws on the fact that advising for first-year students mostly happens with tenure-line faculty. She later mentions how much advising she does as the director of first-year writing. Hannah also notes that the small class size at her institution seems to be a part of embodying this small school mentality, as it also helps to build these relationships, although she quickly notes that course caps in FYW, at 25, are still too large. Small class size, especially for FYW, is not necessarily unique to small schools; however, it is one of the small school values Shuman (2017) identifies as being

important to COPLAC. Both Caitlin and Hannah seem to agree, then, that their medium-sized institutions are embodying the small school mentality that COPLAC supports through a commitment to developing strong relationships between students and faculty.

As demonstrated in Table 4.2, the strong sense of campus community was felt by many of these WPAs ($n = 21$), and this is also an indicator of what Shuman identifies as small school values and something often touted as a benefit of SLACs. What seems to be unique among these public liberal arts colleges—or at least something they *perceive* as unique about themselves—is the connection they have to the local community in which the college is situated ($n = 11$). Shuman does note this is common among public liberal arts colleges, and many of the WPAs I spoke with also felt this was an important aspect of their identity, often in ways tied to the “smallness” of the school itself. For both Lillian and Hannah, this connection to the local community was a strong factor in the development of the school *as* a public liberal arts college. Lillian says, for example, that the transformation of her institution to a public liberal arts college was their “way of taking advantage of an amazing new museum of contemporary art that is actually in [this town] . . . We wanted to rebrand ourselves not just as a state university, but as a liberal arts institution, because, again, there were all these creative forces that all of a sudden showed up in this dying factory town.” These connections have been maintained, and she explained that many students do internships at the museum or at local publishing houses. Hannah offered a very similar origin story, noting that “there’s a sense that [the county her school is located in] is somewhat rural . . . It was home to a lot of communes . . . So there’s a background and history . . . of this mixing of rural life and commune artistic life, and so that’s the founding ethos.” While both Lillian and Hannah latch onto circulating

narratives about how creative forces in the local areas lead to the establishment of these institutions as public liberal arts colleges, Hannah specifically ties this to the *ruralness* of the community itself, thus emphasizing the way these connections are part of the relatively small nature of these schools.

Many of the WPAs I spoke with had examples similar to Lillian's to demonstrate how the institution currently has strong ties to the local community, but Rebecca provided perhaps the clearest example. She first notes that her small campus in a small town provides a perception of a safe and welcoming community, noting that many parents "will feel safer about sending [their children] to us because there's not a lot of ways to get into trouble." But she then goes onto to explain that

The other thing that's putting pressure on us for [more] STEM [programs] is our geographical location. We're close to . . . a huge nuclear facility. It employs a lot of people in this region, and I mean, from all fields. We graduated a couple of students in English who are going into communications there, or who are working in a design or instructional role there. So, it draws a lot of people. The other thing oddly that draws or that we get a little of pressure and a little bit of sort of social, geographical pressure to build some degrees is golfing. So our MBA, a lot of our business and our MBA, those degrees are in golf course management. So, I mean those are some geographical things that are sort of intangible, like you said, they direct our courses in some way because they're what's being sort of required, are being encouraged by our geographical location.

Like Shuman argued is common among public liberal arts colleges, Rebecca's institution has been developing program responsive to the rural region the campus is situated in. Of

course, programs unique to a particular region are not unheard of at other types of schools—the University of Louisville, for instance, offers a degree in Equine Business Management. However, that does not change the fact that members of these institutions *believe* it is unique to their institutional type. Both Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) and Delucchi (1997) note that liberal arts colleges often have a *perception* of uniqueness that is not always accurate. Thus, I would argue this strong sense of a connection to the local community, as part of the “smallness” of the institution, is an important aspect of the public liberal arts college structure of feeling, regardless of whether or not it is truly unique to this institutional type or size.

Furthermore, because of this perception of uniqueness, it is likely that none of the values discussed in this section are truly unique to public liberal arts colleges and members of other institutional types, whether a private SLAC or a large research university, might argue such values are also central to their core identity. At the same time, however, what these interviews reveal is a set of common values among WPAs at public liberal arts colleges that include what they believe is a more inclusive and practical liberal arts education, a demonstrated commitment to college access, strong faculty-student relationships despite the size of the university, and a unique integration into the local community surrounding the institution.

Writing’s Role within the Public Liberal Arts College

As Table 4.2 in the previous section displays, Commitment to Writing was the most frequent values code across these transcripts when considering total number of excerpts, and it appeared frequently for each participant except Hannah¹⁰. This frequency

¹⁰ The fact that I applied this code 0 times during Hannah’s interview should not be taken to mean that she, or her institution, views writing as unimportant—rather, because I was focused on more specific

is little surprise, since the bulk of my interview questions asked about writing instruction and writing programs.

As many scholars have explained, situations in which writing is valued but not necessarily in a formal or systematic way—is common at liberal arts colleges. That is, those who write about the benefits and/or histories of a liberal arts education often emphasize the importance placed on writing at such institutions, such as Zakaria’s (2015) claim that “the central virtue of a liberal education is that it teaches you how to write, and writing makes you think” (p. 72). Gladstein and Regaignon (2012), however, note that while many of the SLACs they study have longstanding commitments to writing instruction, many are undergoing (or could benefit from) efforts to make that commitment to writing more explicit and intentional. For example, Lillian was the first WPA at her institution and she developed the school’s first-year writing program. As her quote in the epigraph to this chapter shows, however, faculty at this institution had a strong commitment to writing before creating a WPA position and an FYW program—in fact, she says it was because of this commitment to writing that faculty advocated for the need to create her position. Prior to her hiring, this commitment was realized through the informal WAC group she mentioned, in which faculty from various departments came together to discuss how to best teach writing in their courses. Holly described a similar experience, noting that before her school decided to hire a WPA, faculty were committed to writing instruction. However, after a QEP which focused on developing seminars for first-year students that included writing assessment, including a pre- and post-assessment

questions in her interview, as explained in the Methods section, our conversation just took a different direction. In fact, her institution has more writing requirements of undergraduates than all but one of the other institutions in the sample for this chapter, and, as mentioned above, it also has two people serving a WPA role, suggesting there is a strong commitment to writing even if we did not discuss it.

that noted improvement in student writing, administrators recognized the value in having a formal writing program and a person to oversee that program.

At the seven institutions I discuss in this chapter, we can see a similar picture. That is, there tends to be a strong commitment to writing on this campus, even if that commitment is not always enacted in the most even or productive ways—many participants discussed what William refers to as the “Excluded Middle” where there is a strong FYW program and a senior thesis but little formal writing instruction in between, for example. Similarly, Edward, Holly, and William all discuss how some faculty across the curriculum, because they value writing, engage students in frequent well-designed writing assignments, while other faculty do not, producing uneven writing instruction in this “excluded middle.” Each of these institutions have taken different approaches to formalize that commitment to writing, and while some WPAs wanted to continue to develop or revise programs to more systematically and effectively enact that commitment to writing instruction to prevent some of the unevenness I just described, most felt the current structures were aligned with their institutional ethos and liberal arts values.

This Commitment to Writing also frequently co-occurs in the interview transcripts with the second most frequent code, Interdisciplinarity (total co-occurrence = 11), and this intersection is important for understanding the campus-wide commitment to writing these institutions (at least nominally) have. The WPAs I interviewed view interdisciplinarity and the ability to make connections across various disciplines as a central component of a liberal education, and most of them expressed the role writing plays in developing this ability. For example, Edward explained that he views writing as “integral to knowing your discipline, and knowing what your discipline does, and the

way your discipline traffics in knowledge and things like that,” adding that this view of writing is “widely accepted, at least nominally, at [his] school.” This explanation echoes William’s rationale for the revision of a traditional FYW course to a FYWS at his institution, mentioned above. For William, there is a “real power” in having a FYWS taught by faculty across the disciplines because it allows students to “recognize the work of writing within a particular disciplinary framework” and come to understand how writing helps us understand what we know. Caitlin also expressed similar views when asked about the statement on the website for her school’s writing proficiency exam that stated the exam makes sure “that the University...is providing the kind of liberal arts education [her institution] promises.” As she explains,

I think writing is an important skill that matters regardless of what discipline you are or what career choice you’re ultimately going to have. So I think that is probably the idea behind that statement, is that this shows outwardly that we care about communication and writing. . . . So I think that regardless of where, what students plan to do when they leave our first year writing classes, regardless of what they decide to do, writing is going to matter.

While these opinions about the importance of writing made by WPAs may not be novel to those of us in Composition Studies, what I see as important here is that all three of these WPAs identify that commitment as central to the university (at least nominally, as Edward clarifies) and central to the liberal arts commitment these universities make.

Many of the WPAs I spoke with felt there was already a commitment to writing on their campus, but that the commitment to writing could be better formalized or systematized. Thus, most of my interviewees had been engaged in attempts to further

formalize that commitment to writing during their tenure as WPA, either through faculty development, revisions of existing programs, or development of new programs. In order to provide specific examples of how WPAs leveraged the existing campus commitment to writing to advocate for their attempts to better formalize writing instruction, in this section I focus on the experiences of Lillian and William, as they provide clear examples of how a shared sense of institutional mission and a campus-wide commitment to writing can foster the development and revision of strong writing programs.

Lillian: Validating Existing Commitments to Writing

As mentioned above, Lillian was the first WPA at her institution, and her position was advocated for by the WAC group that already existed to discuss writing across campus. As WPA, she has worked to strengthen the first-year writing program and the writing center. She notes, for example, that the first-year writing class that preceded her did not really have outcomes but was rather focused on “this is what you have to assign,” so she worked to develop programmatic outcomes. Lillian explains that this program development work was relatively well-received because of the ways writing was already valued on campus. As she explains:

There was already a culture of writing existing. I feel like what I did was to systematize it a little bit, and to move it outside of just the English Department so that faculty from across campus--again, my connection to the WAC group, right?-understood what we were doing and why we were doing it. That way--there's always a comment, “Well, they should have learned this in college writing.” I've gotten that a lot in my past. There doesn't seem to be that much of that here

because they know what we're doing in college writing, and what we can and can't do.

What this statement shows is that, as WPA, Lillian felt she did not need to convince others about the importance of writing instruction, writing outcomes, or even a writing center. Rather, she just needed to help other faculty understand why writing was approached in certain ways in first-year writing or in the writing center.

Helping others understand the role of FYW and the writing center was made easier by the existing culture of collegiality and commitment to writing on campus. For instance, Lillian said,

I feel like having the collegiality, having the interdisciplinary people already talking about writing has made it much easier for me to sell our wares. It's great. As far as our writing studio, which is what we call our writing center, the faculty from across campus are our biggest advocates. In a lot of places, it's like the English Department sending their first-year writers, but the majority of people that we get are from all different...It's from all 25 different majors that come in. It's because there are faculty that are advocating for the writing studio because they were part of the implementation process. They helped me build and brainstorm. We would meet and I would ask questions.

Faculty across campus, then, already viewed writing as important and as an interdisciplinary exercise. As Lillian says here, this made it much easier to "sell" what the writing program was doing. Moreover, because Lillian included them in the implementation process, they were invested in the development of the writing center and

deeply understood its role and purpose, thus they routinely send students there, which is different from Lillian's sense of what happens at other universities.

Lillian has been able to continue to draw on this existing culture of writing and the valuing of interdisciplinarity to push for the development of writing intensive courses as her institution revises their core curriculum, a process that was underway when we spoke. She states that "Obviously, a core curriculum that focuses on integrative learning and helping students make connections across different disciplines is integral to liberal arts education" and because she views writing as necessary to approach to learning, she wants the core curriculum to include at least two more writing intensive courses. As she notes, she initially assumed that writing instruction was built into the majors because "this is a liberal arts institution" but later learned that this is not the case and that the WAC group desires to systematize that writing instruction more because while some majors have it built in, others do not. Therefore, she and the WAC group view the core revision "as a chance to, again, validate many of the faculty members who are in WAC, who are already doing writing intensive courses, to work with that, and to integrate it more explicitly into the curriculum." This validation came, in part, through a survey she designed with the WAC group because they "had this sneaking suspicion that people were already teaching writing intensive classes, but they weren't named that. We wanted to see how many existing courses were writing intensive, so that it'd be an easy sell as we revise the core curriculum."

Lillian's experiences outlined here demonstrate the ways the system building she engaged in as WPA was primarily formalizing the work that was already happening. That is, because faculty at her institution already envisioned writing as integral to a liberal arts

education, her development of writing courses, FYW outcomes, and the strengthening of the writing center relied only upon demonstrating how those programs would contribute to institutional goals—she did not need to convince others these *were* important goals. While she frequently refers to her advocacy in economic terms, such as the repeated references to “selling” her programs to admin or other faculty—which is perhaps a result of the precarious funding at her institution (see next chapter)—she notes it is often an “easy sell” because of the existing culture of writing and the fact she is able to build upon the work faculty are already doing in regards to writing instruction.

William: Extending Thinking and Writing to the Majors

William spoke at length about both the conversion of the traditional FYW course that his institution used to have to a FYWS, mentioned above, as well as current attempts to systematize writing instruction across the “excluded middle” of the curriculum. He told me that when he first arrived at this college in 1998, there was a “typical” FYW course that was taught by members of the English department, focused on “genres, modes, compare and contrast.” William explained, though, that because this course was taught by English faculty, “it was mostly a literature-based course.” The course was redesigned, however, when the college underwent the development of its interdisciplinary Integrative Studies Program. As William explains:

One of the things that happened when we started talking about the Integrative Studies Program and changing general education was thinking about writing as more than a responsibility of the English department. Many of us were very frustrated with the ways in which we just had a single course, and that single course, it’s not only what the course is, but the expectations that were projected

onto it. [After the designation of a writing task force] we started thinking about could we design a course that wouldn't just be owned by the English department? . . . And so the Thinking and Writing course grew out of that conversation . . . We recognized there was something very powerful about a course that would be taught by faculty in the disciplines.

What I see as important in William's explanation of this Thinking and Writing course is the movement from a course owned and taught by English faculty to one that exists outside of departmental boundaries and taught by faculty across disciplines, which represents the typical SLAC commitment to writing across the curriculum.

Moreover, William ties the goals of this course--the way it helps students "recognize the work of writing within a particular disciplinary framework"--and the fact that it is taught by tenured faculty in the disciplines to the college's commitment to undergraduate research. A focus on undergraduate research is common for SLACs and is particularly affirmed by many COPLAC institutions (e.g. Trawick-Smith, 2014). As William explains, the Thinking and Writing course's focus on writing within a particular discipline

has to do with also our tying the course to a culture of undergraduate research that we were trying to promote at the college. And so the idea that they would be doing meaningful research in an area of knowledge or understanding, and that writing was central to learning in that context, and that has and continues to be very powerful.

He expanded on the way this course is tied to that culture when I asked him to explain the line on the Thinking and Writing course's website that states the course "exemplifies" the college's liberal arts mission. William explained that

It exemplifies it because the liberal arts in many definitions that circulate on this campus, have to do with thinking clearly and well, and that, that thinking is most often . . . [it] usually takes place within a particular disciplinary framework where certain kinds of questions are being asked . . . Right? How do you think about the sorts of key questions? Those are the liberal arts questions. And so the course by having . . . Well, one of the original ideas for the course was really that we wanted first year students to be studying with people who are passionate about particular kinds of research questions, and that they'd actually do real research with real researchers in particular disciplinary contexts as opposed to being taught writing as sort of separate or as preparation for the real work.

Through this explanation, William's institution's commitment to writing is explicitly tied to the liberal arts definitions that circulate on his campus. That is, writing is positioned as a way to think through the key questions of a discipline. Students engage in this reflective work by engaging in "real research" with people in the field. That is, writing is not presented as a way to simply report on information learned, or a way to engage in assessment of knowledge, but a critical tool in learning disciplinary thinking and modes of inquiry. Therefore, the development of this Thinking and Writing course to replace a literature-based FYW course primarily served to better align with the goals and values of the college's liberal arts mission.

William believes that both faculty and students really enjoy this course and find it useful for the development of student writing. However, as mentioned above, after this course there is no other formal writing instruction. While this information is mostly anecdotal, William reports that students “do have a really challenging experience with writing in their first year, and they often really don’t have them again until their senior year,” so the college is currently thinking about ways to develop scaffolded experiences in writing across all four years. He sees this work as “a continuation of [the Thinking and Writing] aspiration” but notes that

We don’t necessarily want to just have, okay, so students just need to tick off more boxes in a general education program, but rather, I think what we’re trying to do is to figure out a way to map the kinds of experiences that students are now having, both in general education and the discipline, and to see if we can find ways in which to cultivate other departments maybe that haven’t developed or aren’t as further along.

Similar to Lillian’s approach, then, this mapping would include drawing on the departments that have integrated writing instruction more fully—William notes public health and health sciences as an example of an exemplary sequence of writing courses in the major—to provide models for departments that haven’t systematized a strong commitment to writing instruction yet. This approach draws on the work already being done by faculty at the institution to provide resources for faculty and departments who might not have “the resources or maybe . . . the motivation to make concrete curricular changes.” Ideally for William, these new courses would work very similarly to the Thinking and Writing course but provide “equally challenging writing experiences within

their majors.” That is, he wants students to have scaffolded writing experiences that continue to focus the role writing plays in disciplinary thinking, rather than treating writing as “secondary to the subject or the content.” Therefore, William frames the development of writing curricula in the majors as a continuation of the liberal arts mission that informed the development of the Thinking and Writing first-year seminars.

The Importance of Mission to Programmatic Efforts

These accounts from Lillian and William demonstrate the ways the WPAs I spoke to saw their work developing or revising programs as aligned with the institution’s larger mission. While I have focused on those two WPAs specifically, as they spent the most time talking about the creation or reconceptualization as writing programs, this was a common trend across my interviews. Rebecca, for instance, explained that she had recently been working directly with the university mission statement, as the writing center she runs was being assessed by the academic services committee for the first time this year, and that to prepare for this assessment, she had been directly linking her activities as writing center director to the values expressed in the mission statement. She notes that when she asked the services committee for guidance on how to prepare for the assessment, they were unsure because the writing center had never been assessed before. Rebecca explained, then, that all she could think to do was to “use the mission statement” She said,

So I looked at “commitment to transformative teaching” and trying to find out how we could prove that we’re support services for that. Do some of the workshops, with value, integrity, honesty, and accountability. So looking at each

of those statements of university values and the mission statement, how could I find a way that the writing center was actually contributing to this.

She noted that she had not yet heard the results of this assessment—attributing the delay to the way COVID upended the semester—and that she expects some administrators may “want numbers,” which she hasn’t yet figured out to provide, but that she believes tying her programs to the mission statement at least “anecdotally sort of say[s], ‘Okay, here’s what we’re doing to try to do this.’” While she did not clarify what she means by “this,” the context of this answer suggests she’s referring to the ways the writing center attempts to fulfill parts of the university mission. Rebecca, then, like Lillian and William and the other WPAs I spoke with, intuitively recognizes that aligning her efforts in the writing program with the university mission statement emphasizes the importance of those efforts to upper administration, as scholars in Rhetoric and Composition have begun to argue (e.g. Janangelo, 2016; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Schoen, 2019; Vander Lei & Pugh, 2016).

I do acknowledge, however, that, the limited responses to my survey might have contributed to the strong sense of the importance of institutional mission among my interviewees. That is, because Schoen (2019) found WPAs can be hostile to the idea of institutional mission, some of the WPAs I reached out to who did not complete the survey may have less of an affinity towards their institution’s public liberal arts mission—or at least might not be as attentive to it in their ongoing programmatic efforts. While the WPAs who responded to my survey and request for an interview all seemed to feel both strongly and positively about their institution’s public liberal arts mission, I cannot assume this to be true for all WPAs at public liberal arts colleges. Further research is

needed to consider how campus culture influences the development and enactment of writing programs, both at the institutions I consider here and those where a WPA might be less invested in institutional mission.

Conclusions

Informed by arguments that public liberal arts colleges have to navigate a split identity that private SLACs do not (Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016), this chapter began by exploring the perceptions of the public liberal arts college identity held by these WPAs before turning to the role writing played on their campus. Unlike the arguments about the split identity of PLACs, however, the WPAs I interviewed all appeared to have fairly consistent ideas about the what the public liberal arts mission at their institution entailed and felt that it was an important aspect of their institution's identity. As I have noted, however, I do question if this is a result of the low response rate to my survey, and I wonder if WPAs who did not take the time to respond feel less investment in their school's public liberal arts mission.

For most of these WPAs, a central tenet of a public liberal arts education is a commitment to diversity and inclusion, made readily apparent by the significantly lower cost to attend than private SLACs. In his chapter in Epp and Spellman's *Roads Taken* (2014), Joseph Urgo argues this is the primary benefit of public liberal arts colleges, noting that the high cost of attendance for private SLACs (and the fact they can only accept a certain amount of low-income students on scholarships because the institutions are tuition-dependent) has made them inaccessible to low-income students. For example, in their recent book *The Post-Pandemic Liberal Arts College: A Manifesto for Reinvention*, Volk and Benedix (2020) note that private SLACs currently admit fewer

students from the bottom 60% of income earners than they do the top 1%, which corroborates this argument from Urgo. Moreover, Urgo argues this inaccessibility has led to an understanding of SLACs as a place of privilege and wealth in the public imaginary. This argument echoes Hannah's statement that before working at a public liberal arts college she associated the liberal arts with whiteness and privilege, an association that, she has now recognized from working at a public liberal arts college that has recently become an HSI, is not necessarily how liberal arts colleges have to be. My interview participants similarly validated these claims that public liberal arts colleges are more accessible to low-income students and other marginalized students who may be priced out of attending a private SLAC.

Of course, simply admitting more students from marginalized backgrounds to a campus does not necessarily make that campus more inclusive or equitable. Volk and Benedix (2020) argue that while private SLACs have worked to increase their "compositional diversity," these attempts have only been marginally successful, and are only one small step in working towards real systemic change. This systemic change, they suggest, has been minimal at SLACs, which still often reinforce patterns of anti-Black violence, specifically. As I will explore more in chapter 6, many of the public liberal arts colleges in my sample also frame diversity in "compositional" terms, thus the extent to which they engage in systemic change still remains a question. While this chapter has explored some of the attempts to address inequality and fulfill campus commitments to social justice, equity, and inclusion, more research is needed to consider how effective such programmatic efforts have been on these campuses. That is, while the relative affordability of public liberal arts colleges likely does make them more accessible to low-

income students than private SLACs, this affordability alone is not enough to ensure such environments are truly inclusive of students from marginalized identities and actively works against systemic inequality. While many of my participants did feel their campuses, and their writing programs, were inclusive, research into the experience of minoritized students on these campuses is necessary to make this claim definitively.

Similarly, the size of these schools, for these WPAs, facilitated strong faculty relationships and connections to the local community. While some organizations for private SLACs have established size requirements—and Volk and Bendix (2020) argue that if you increase the size of a SLAC, it will no longer be a liberal arts college—COPLAC has resisted such size requirements, instead focusing on what Shuman (2017) calls “small school values,” most notably faculty-student relationships and small class size. Caitlin and Hannah, the two WPAs at medium-sized schools I spoke with, felt these strong student-faculty relationships were an important aspect of their identity and were part of how their institution embodied a “small school” feeling. Moreover, like Shuman (2017) and Urgo (2014) have argued, some of these WPAs felt their small size helped these campuses interact more directly with their local community, through service learning or regionally-responsive programs. While I note above that such programs might not be unique to small schools--what is important is that these WPAs *feel* they are unique. However, Volk and Benedix (2020) do argue that while private SLACs generally do build a strong a campus community, they have not fully realized a useful commitment to the local community in which they are situated, thus it remains possible this is a meaningful difference between public and private liberal arts colleges. While my interview participants felt this was an important aspect of their institution’s identity, and

one which set them apart from both private SLACs and larger institutions, more research would be necessary to examine how successful these commitments to the local community are and how they are realized more concretely through the writing programs, let alone if they are enacted in ways more meaningful than typically seen at private SLACs.

Lastly, like Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) found in the private SLACs they studied, the institutions these WPAs worked at all had a professed commitment to writing, even if that commitment was not always fully or effectively systematized. As the cases from Lillian, William, and Rebecca that I draw on in the final section of this chapter show, many of these WPAs were successful in efforts to further formalize this commitment to writing because other faculty members were also invested in writing instruction and they were able to argue for the importance of such efforts by aligning them with the college's mission and their professed commitment to writing. Because of shrinking state budgets for public education, I had expected to find more difficulties advocating for the importance of writing-related initiatives on campus. Of course, tight budgets certainly were referenced in these interviews, but most participants seemed to find ways to work around such budgets to implement the programmatic initiatives they felt were necessary. While these cases may suggest this was a relatively easy task, in the next chapter I examine some of the ways WPAs had to navigate conflicting values, sometimes working against upper administration, in order to advocate for maintaining, reforming, or developing new programs.

CHAPTER V
INSIDER ACCOUNTS: HOW WPAS NAVIGATE TENSIONS IN INSTITUTIONAL
VALUES

In the previous chapter, I examined the perceptions of PLAC identity held by seven WPAs at public liberal arts colleges and then considered the role their writing programs play in enacting that institutional ethos. Continuing my concern with how faculty play an important role in shaping institutional values by the way they engage with the institution's mission (Epp & Spellman, 2014; Janangelo, 2016; Schoen, 2019; Vander Lei & Pugh, 2016), this chapter will consider how WPAs navigate perceived tensions at the public liberal arts colleges in which they work. By focusing on WPAs' attempts to enact, align with, or resist institutional values, this chapter acknowledges Williams' (1977) assertion that an institution's structure of feeling is a social experience that "is still *in process*" (p. 132) and that an attempt to understand a structure of feeling requires an examination of internal relationships. That is, this chapter will consider how values are codified at the institutional and writing program level through the interactions between WPAs and other stakeholders, primarily upper administration.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this project began with an assumption that public liberal arts colleges might experience more difficulty in enacting a consistent liberal arts mission than private liberal arts colleges because of their role in a state system in an era where state education budgets are constantly under threat and informed by discourses of

austerity and career preparation. Moreover, as both Fulford (2009) and Malenczyk and Rosenberg (2016) note, the values enacted through a liberal arts mission may be in tension not only with the dominant values of a state education system, but also with other values that circulate on campus as a result of previous institutional identities. However, for my participants, this was not always the case. To provide an analysis of the different amounts of tension between values felt by my participants, this chapter primarily focuses on two interviewees: Hannah, whose campus is part of a large state system undergoing multiple efforts at standardization across campuses, who has to frequently navigate between enacting a public liberal arts identity and meeting mandates for uniformity and standardization across the system; and Holly, who seemingly had significantly more autonomy and access to funding than the other WPAs I interviewed. After a consideration of these two disparate situations, I draw some brief connections to other participants to offer some conclusions about the relationships between institutional identity and WPA work.

Methods

This chapter draws on the same interviews I conducted for the previous chapter (see previous chapter for a discussion of selection of the participants and interview protocol). As I explain in that chapter, I coded the transcripts using both values coding and structural coding (Saldaña, 2016) and, because of the assumption about tensions in values mentioned above, the values codes also included codes for that tension, such as the code “Programmatic Unity v. Faculty Autonomy” which signals a place in the transcript where both of those values appeared in tension. The previous chapter explains in more detail how codes were decided upon and applied, and then focuses on the institutional

values WPAs felt were important. In this chapter, I consider the tensions that appeared and how WPAs navigate them.

Dominant Tensions in PLAC WPA Work

Table 5.1 shows the key tensions that appeared across the interview transcripts and the number of excerpts in which they appeared for each participant, as well as a total across interviews. The bottom row includes the total number of excerpts devoted to tensions in values for a particular WPA. Boxes are shaded gray whenever at least one excerpt appears to make it easy to visualize how many faculty experienced a particular tension.

| Code | Lillian | Caitlin | Edward | Hannah | Holly | Rebecca | William | Total # of Excerpts |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Programmatic Unity v. Faculty Autonomy | 3 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 17 |
| Upper Admin / State System Oversight v. Faculty / WPA Autonomy | 0 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Departmental Territory | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| Inherited Curriculum / Problems with Previous Approaches to Writing | 0 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Expectations for Writing Programs from Other Faculty | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|
| Ideas of Classic Liberal Education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Resistance to Change | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total Excerpts | 3 | 13 | 12 | 17 | 11 | 3 | 5 | 64 |

Table 5.1: Key Tensions Felt by WPAs

In their chapter identifying what they call the “small liberal arts college structure of feeling,” Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) identify a pronounced tension between faculty autonomy and central leadership as one of the key pieces of that structure of feeling. They do explain that this is not to suggest that tensions between faculty autonomy and administrative leadership are not present on most, if not all campuses, but rather that they feel especially pronounced on small liberal arts colleges. I frequently noted this in my coding of interview transcripts as well, as a tension that appeared in all seven interview transcripts was that of Programmatic Unity v. Faculty Autonomy. I applied this code when the WPA’s leadership, specifically, was in tension with faculty autonomy, such as whether or not the WPA should mandate particular textbooks or assignments or allow faculty choice. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as many in Composition Studies can see benefits from having a coherent writing program (e.g. Klausman, 2008), but each of these WPAs had something to say about the tension between creating a coherent program and respecting faculty autonomy.

While the code I described in the previous paragraph was used to identify when there was tension between the WPA’s leadership and faculty autonomy, I had a separate but related code for when tension appeared between upper administrative leadership and the WPA’s autonomy specifically, or the autonomy of faculty more broadly. Unlike the private SLACs Gladstein and Regaignon consider, however, there were also times when

tension seemed to appear between faculty autonomy and oversight from the leadership of the state system, rather than upper admins on campus. Moreover, sometimes this upper administrative oversight seemed to affect the WPA's attempts at their administrative works, not just the faculty type responsibilities Gladstein and Regaignon are concerned with. However, these lines were not always clear or distinct, so I found it easier to use the combined code of Upper Admin / State System Oversight v. Faculty / WPA autonomy. As table 5.1 demonstrates, this code was applied to slightly more total excerpts than the Programmatic Unity v. Faculty Autonomy code, but only appeared in four of the seven interviews.

The other tensions WPAs felt (concerns with departmental territory (e.g., who does Composition belong to?)), an inherited curriculum they had reservations about, expectations for what writing programs should do from other faculty, ideas about what a classic liberal education should entail, and a general resistance to change), while significant, appeared much less frequently in number of total excerpts. While the number of excerpts is not a perfect measure of time spent in the interview discussing a concern, as excerpts varied in length depending on how soon an interviewee pivoted to a topic that deserved a new code, the large drop of frequency in excerpts for these tensions does roughly correspond to the amount of time focused on them across all seven interviews.

In the remainder of this section, I will discuss how two WPAs—Hannah and Holly—have navigated some of these tensions on their campuses. While I will draw on interviews with the other WPAs as relevant, my rationale for an extended focus on Hannah and Holly is two-fold. First, as table 5.1 demonstrates, 17 of the 64 excerpts (26.6%) that focused on tensions in values appeared in the interview with Hannah. While

again, this percentage is not a perfect measure of the amount of interview *time* spent on these concerns, after noting this large number, I returned to the transcript with Hannah and noticed that our conversation suggests that Hannah felt some of these tensions much more strongly than other WPAs, as we continued to return to them throughout our interview. Second, while the interview with Holly still included a fair amount of discussion about some of these tensions (with more excerpts than the interviews with Lillian, Rebecca, or William), Holly actually discussed how little tension she felt between her values as a WPA and that of the upper administration at her institution. Therefore, by focusing on these two WPAs, this section highlights the extremes of trying to align a writing program with institutional values by focusing on a situation in which a WPA frequently felt her values were in tension with upper admin or her state system, and one in which those values frequently aligned.

Hannah: Maintaining a Liberal Arts College Identity Despite Standardization Across Campuses

The interview with Hannah revealed the most tensions between competing values or forces, containing 26.6% of the excerpts coded for dominant tensions. However, as table 5.1. shows, these tensions were clustered around only three specific concerns: Upper Admin / State System Oversight v. Faculty / WPA Autonomy ($n = 9$); Programmatic Unity v. Faculty Autonomy ($n = 5$); and Ideas of a Classic Liberal Education ($n = 3$). Because the third code appeared just 3 times, mostly in reference to the ways her institution embodies a more expansive and diverse view of the liberal arts, as I described above, and the fact that each of these three excerpts are relatively short (about two to three sentences long), I will focus this discussion on the first two. As

indicated by the first code, the largest tensions prevalent in Hannah's job were the result of being part of a very large state system—which is something private liberal arts colleges do not have to navigate. Frequently, she felt mandates from the Chancellor's Office were at odds with what she felt was best for her programs and her students. In perhaps the most sobering part of our interview, she said:

One of the lessons of being a WPA is realizing how little you have actual control over, and how little you even have a say in, and trying to negotiate those in ways that benefit your students and benefit your faculty. My experience is that the vast majority of time, what's good for faculty is good for students and vice versa. And so those two things aren't at odds very often. But often, what's best for them is at odds with the direction and the requirements we're getting from external sources.

This statement came at the end of our discussion about two mandates from the Chancellor's Office that Hannah felt were at odds with the goals and values of both her writing program and her institution and her attempts to navigate them. These mandates included a decrease in the number of credit hours for the FYW course—a move made to make sure students could more easily transfer from one institution in this state system to the other—and a change in rules for placement of students. As the quote above might indicate, she had little choice in whether or not she implemented these mandates. However, despite her assertion that WPAs have little say in what goes on, her responses to these mandates provide one example of how WPAs can navigate such competing forces as a state system focused on standardization, on the one hand, and, on the other, a unique liberal arts identity.

The first mandate from the Chancellor's Office, which was focused on transferability, was a change in the general education curriculum. Hannah explained that, while her institution has a very "idiosyncratic" way of doing things, the Chancellor's Office is able to dictate some things that all campuses must do, and one of the areas they oversee is the general education program. In many of the campuses in this state system, all general education courses were 3 credit hours. However, at Hannah's institution, some gen ed courses were 3 hours while others, including FYW, were 4 credit hours. According to Hannah, this "made it hard to be a transfer student" at her institution; thus the Chancellor's Office dictated this change because of the state system's focus on transferability between institutions. As I will explain below, this change in the credit hours for FYW influenced a change in the expected curriculum for the course, and Hannah noted the way this change in response to a mandate from the state system was in tension with the school's liberal arts identity. She explained that

There's this real sense of faculty should do what they want, their classes are their domains, we need to leave space for creativity and freedom, and that's really important and that's sacrosanct on campus. And so my first two years here, which were the two years where we were responding to this executive order, were really fraught in this way because it was no easy task trying to negotiate their identity or our identity as public liberal arts with an emphasis on individuation and choice and freedom with the Chancellor's Office executive order, which was aimed at transferability, honestly.

While, again, I recognize that WPAs at all institutional types can likely identify the difficulty of navigating an executive order that runs counter to what they value in writing

programs or writing instruction, I see echoes here of Gladstein and Regaignon's argument that tensions between central leadership and faculty autonomy are especially pronounced at small liberal arts colleges. That is, in Hannah's explanation here, the Chancellor's Offices' mandate interferes with faculty autonomy in a way that is at odds with some of the institution's core values. Thus, we see a pronounced tension between the central leadership from the state system and faculty autonomy, and I would argue that because this particular mandate arose as a result of issues of transferability across a state system, this tension is likely more pronounced for many public liberal arts colleges than it is at private SLACs because of an increase in the layers of central leadership and an increased need for conformity across a variety of institutions.

This decrease in credit hours of the FYW course meant faculty lost one contact hour with FYW students a week, which prompted changes in the curriculum of the course. Hannah notes that before this executive order, they were able to come up with their own course outcomes, yet now those outcomes had to align. Therefore, the FYW program had to drop its final unit and the associated outcomes tied to oral communication. More importantly, however, Hannah explains how she changed the curriculum more directly to respond to the loss of the credit hour:

We were expected to keep the 6,000-word minimum, which is the transfer threshold inside the [state system]. I said no to keeping the 6,000-word minimum. It might get me in trouble later, I don't really know. All our faculty are still assigning more than 6,000 words, but I didn't feel like we could reduce a class by 25% in terms of contact hours and not also reduce the word count and project count requirements by at least 25%. So, that's what I did. Now we have a 4,000-

word minimum, everybody is assigning more than that. In individual classes, it won't be a challenge, but I suspect the Chancellor's Office will be not pleased when they recognize this. I have done it in public, so nobody can say anything to me about it. I wasn't sneaky. It's in all our stuff.

In this passage, Hannah describes resisting the state system's expectation for a certain word count, as she didn't feel it was ethical to expect faculty to assign the same amount of work in response to a decrease in time with students—and, as she also mentioned, a decrease in pay, as faculty were now paid for 3 credit hours instead of 4. Despite this move to protect her faculty, she notes this might get her in trouble later; however, this explanation still shows how, as a WPA, she was able to resist some of the expectations of the state mandate and have an influence over the expectations of her program.

Despite her attempts to change the curriculum in a way that protected faculty, some of the changes in the curriculum did, by necessity, conflict with the student-centered values public liberal arts colleges embody. As she continues to explain the decrease in contact time and expected word counts, Hannah says:

But that change was really difficult on a class outcomes level. That one-hour contact time was often where faculty built in one-on-one meetings with students, and additional time for feedback in the class, and workshopping, and those sorts of things that are so vital to teaching first year writing. Now that time has to be taken from somewhere else, and that's really, really hard . . . The other thing that happened is that they didn't lower our class sizes, they're doing all the same work with the same number of students.

Because of the decrease in class time, then, writing faculty now found difficulty maintaining the same amount of one-on-one interactions with students that are both vital to the type of student-centeredness expected in both writing pedagogy and a public liberal arts ethos. Moreover, this reduction also decreases the building of strong faculty/student relationships that liberal arts colleges argue is one of their strengths—and which Hannah, as described above, argues is a main reason why her institution, despite its size, still feels like a small school. Therefore, the fallout from this mandate from the Chancellor's Office, which arises from a desire for uniformity in writing classes across institutions within the state system, caused the FYW program at Hannah's school to sacrifice some of its public liberal arts college values.

While the program revised its outcomes in response to this mandate, it's important to note that they do not adhere to a standardized curriculum, and Hannah also discussed the ways she resists the Chancellor's Office pushes for more programmatic unity across the FYW curriculum. Hannah recognizes the impulse behind such a requirement, as she believes a unified curriculum can make the job easier for WPAs, especially in regards to programmatic assessment, noting that a "heterogeneous model is much, much more difficult and time intensive to be an administrator." However, she approaches her job as WPA as that of a consultant, explaining that while she will recommend textbooks or writing projects to faculty, she will not require them because she believes a "model of individual faculty teaching in the ways that they feel best prepared to teach is better for our students, it makes for better feedback on their writing, it makes for students having a more positive experience and for faculty having a more positive experience" because "the world is a better place when they get to be who they

are versus trying to fit into a box that wasn't made for them." More importantly, Hannah described such attempts at a uniform curriculum as being antithetical to a push towards diversity and inclusion. She states that "the problem when you have a uniform curriculum, it's almost always white, upper-middle class male defaults because that's who's in [WPA] jobs." Hannah believes that our field has "a default that excludes a ton of our students and our colleagues," and she argues this is a bigger problem when you have a standardized curriculum than it is when faculty do what they choose and the WPA is there to consult. By positioning herself as a consultant, rather than someone who prescribes curriculum, Hannah has been able to resist impulses from the Chancellor's Office for a standardized curriculum and instead adhere to an approach that she believes reinforces ideals of faculty autonomy, student-centeredness, and diversity and inclusion.

As we discussed her institution's commitment to college access, Hannah also explained the FYW program's directed self-placement approach and how this approach is also in tension with some of the desires and initiatives that come from the Chancellor's Office. That is, while her institution uses directed self-placement, it still must acknowledge and respond to the system-wide attempts at placement through different measures. She explains the chancellor's office placement measures in this way:

They use something called multiple measures for creating placement categories. So using a student's general GPA, then subject specific GPA in math and in English, SAT placement scores. There's this thing I'm missing. There's a school score for difficulty that is proprietary and weird. Some schools are harder than others, so a 3.0 at some schools is better than a 3.0 at other schools. . . That's what the Chancellor's Office gives campuses. It's like here's the placement

information, so you can be placed in one of four categories, “GE Exempt,” which means they already have AP credit or they took a community college course before we got their first transcript to [our institution] . . . For us, that would mean they think they should go right into the one semester Comp class. “GE Ready with Support Recommended” and then “GE Ready with Support Required.” According to the Chancellor’s Office, those two category students should go into the stretch class.

While Hannah notes this process is better than the “racist and sexist” English Placement Test that preceded it, she says she still does not like this placement process, especially because as a WPA she doesn’t have access to how the algorithm sorts students into these three placement categories and describes it as a “black box.”

However, Hannah also notes the way her FYW program has resisted these placement measures, noting that her English department and several others in the state system fought against them. In explaining how her program’s DSP process responds to this placement score from the Chancellor’s Office, she says:

I can’t control whether students see their placement categories. If I had my way, they’d never see them. But the Chancellor’s Office sends them directly. But now they come with a note that says at [our institution], “you get to make the decision about what course you want to be in” . . . Our DSP is aimed at allowing students to get a recommendation and make a decision after about three hours.

The process Hannah describes involves having students read a short text and write a response to it. After this process, students “take a self-efficacy survey where they think about the reading and writing they just did” and their confidence as a reader and writer.

They then “get a recommendation based on their self-efficacy score. But it’s only a recommendation. Then they get information about both of their options plus our tutorial program.” Her explanation of this process shows how Hannah’s FYW program has taken the placement information from the Chancellor’s Office and worked it into one source of information among many that students have access to in deciding which placement would be best for them. That is, rather than simply being placed as a result of this score, students can weigh this score in relation to the self-efficacy score they develop reflecting on their reading and writing experiences, as well as the information they have about their options, and decide whether they would prefer the stretch course or the single semester FYW. While Hannah does note she would prefer students didn’t see the score from the Chancellor’s Office at all, this explanation provides an example of how WPAs can strategically assert their institutional values in response to a misguided initiative from upper administrators in a state system.

Of course, the DSP model Hannah’s program has applied has not been without pushback from the Chancellor’s Office, as they would prefer campuses to use the model they pay for. However, Hannah views this DSP approach as central to her campus’s approach to access, and she draws on that stated commitment to access to defend it. She explains:

I have, in my first few years here, continually been making arguments, fending off the pressure we get, the pressure our academic program’s Associate Vice President gets from [the Chancellor’s Office] every single year around this, so I’ve been making this argument a lot. But for me, the main point of this is that the [state system] has publicly, at the campus level and at the chancellor’s level, said

that equity gaps are of huge concern, that it is important for us to be an access-based set of institutions. And DSP is the best way that I know based on the research that I have to make sure that students are not caught up in systems and tests that we know are biased against students in particular zip codes, students of color, female students, students with particular learning abilities and styles. . . It's also about access for students with disabilities and access for students with learning differences.

Hannah's experiences of continually having to advocate for her program's DSP approaches demonstrates both the benefits and the challenges of being of a WPA at a public liberal arts college. That is, we can see the way she is under pressure from a centralized Chancellor's Office pushing for uniformity to adapt measures that she sees as counter to her institution's core values. However, because college access is not just a stated commitment of her campus, but the state system as a whole, she is able to leverage the state system's commitment to access as a necessary reason to support DSP. While a WPA at a private liberal arts college may not face the kind of pressures Hannah is describing here in these same ways, they also would not be able to leverage a system-wide commitment to access in their defense.

Moreover, Hannah explains that her system has an English Council in which members from English departments across the system work together. While I had expected this council would contribute to a push for uniformity, Hannah explained that it was actually quite the opposite. As she explained,

The conversation we often have [on the English Council] is like, what uniformity do we think the Chancellor's Office is pushing for, and how can we provide data

that shows that a range of approaches is actually what's working? There is a real sense on English Council, and I assume the statewide Senate too, but I haven't been a part of it, that campuses have distinct identities and distinct populations and distinct needs. A lot of what . . . English Council does is push back against uniformity from the Chancellor's Office.

Hannah then told me that the English Council provided a uniform defense of DSP—even from the campuses that don't use DSP—in response to the Chancellor's Office's placement measure described above because of its recognition that “individual campuses know their students better, and know their needs better, and have a better sense of what will work for them.” Therefore, while Hannah experiences a significant amount of pressure to conform to initiatives from a state system—much more than any of my other interview participants articulated—her position in this large state system also provides her various sources of support that would not be accessible to WPAs at private colleges that operate on their own.

Holly: Formalizing Writing's Value while Existing Outside of Traditional Departments

In contrast to Hannah, who demonstrated the ways mandates from a state system can significantly interfere with purported institutional values, Holly describes the way being a WPA at a public liberal arts college that commits itself to the importance of writing allows her a lot of freedom to administer the program in ways she believes are necessary. While a quantitative analysis of table 5.1 suggests a significant number of the excerpts coded for dominant tensions (17%) were from Holly's interview transcript, the content of those excerpts reveals that she often did not feel some of those pressures in ways she expected to—especially in regards to Upper Admin / State System Oversight,

which I will discuss below. It seems her largest difficulties arose from the fact that her position is non-tenure-track, and from expectations from other faculty about how writing instruction should be conducted. However, she did not seem to think these were significant barriers to her work. Therefore, while I will discuss those difficulties below, I will mostly focus on the ways being a PLAC WPA allowed Holly significant freedom to design and administer a writing program that fit her vision.

As mentioned above, Holly's position is non-tenure track; however, she clarified this NTT status was "not for cheap reasons." Rather, the WPA position was conceived outside of the three academic divisions at her institution, and all faculty positions outside of these divisions must be NTT. Since Holly works outside of these divisions, she reports directly to the provost, and she notes that, while she was initially skeptical of taking a NTT position, "[b]ecause of who the provosts have been, it has actually worked out really, really well to be non-tenure track and to be under their auspices" but she does note that under "[a] different provost, it might be different." Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) discuss how some of the NTT WPAs in their study felt that their NTT position actually gave them "the freedom to work across and for the institution without having to focus on publication or gaining tenure" and could more easily "work with the diffuse leadership structures of these institutions in order to effect change" (p. 84). Thus, while they insist they would never argue for a position to be off the tenure-track, they suggest the configurations of leadership at SLACs do not easily map onto our field's common understanding that TT positions are more desirable than NTT positions, and Holly's feelings about her NTT status are a good reminder of this.

While—as I will discuss in a moment—there were some issues that arose from Holly’s NTT status, she mostly felt the configuration of her position supported her work as a WPA. When I asked her what she enjoyed about working directly under the provost, after she told me she “loved” this configuration, she said,

Oh my gosh, so many things. I have access to information. I meet every other week with the assistant provost and then if I want to meet with the provost, I schedule a meeting with the provost. If I want to know what’s going on, I can find out. If I want to understand how something works or why that decision was made, I have access to that. Then when I need things, they both have been great about finding the money to give it to me, to help me do whatever.

As she notes in this statement, because of the configuration of her position, Holly has direct access to a lot of information and direct access to those who oversee and approve her budget. She states that she has had strong relationships with both provosts she has worked under, has a lot of autonomy, and a “really healthy budget.” In fact, throughout the interview, when I would ask how she advocated for funding for certain initiatives, she told me she just asked the provost for the money and it was approved. While the ease in which she was able to access funding for initiatives she thought were important makes her an outlier among my interviewees, the specifics of Holly’s position demonstrate how an institution’s commitment to writing can translate into significant autonomy for a WPA, even when part of a large state system.

In many ways, however, this autonomy Holly has seems to stem from the unique setup of her institution. Not just a public liberal arts college, her institution is considered

the “state honors college” for the state system it belongs to. When asked to clarify what this identity as the state’s honors college entails, she explained:

I think the idea is that we provide an all-honors experience. Every student gets the senior thesis, every student has the one-on-one faculty advisor. All of our students do a January independent study period. . . They do undergraduate research all four years. We offer the sort of high-impact practices that an honors program would offer except it’s for everybody. . . To me what it means is that our students get an \$80,000 education, that’s what it costs the state per graduate, and they don’t pay that . . . we have the highest percentage of Pell Grant recipients in our population out of the state.¹¹

This identity as the state’s honors college also played directly into how the institution’s commitment to writing was realized. As Holly’s writing program had one of the most extensive websites of the writing programs in my sample, I was surprised to learn from her survey answers that there were no required writing courses at her school. I asked about this, noting I got the sense from the website there was a “very strong commitment to writing on campus.” She told me, however, that she thinks this lack of required courses is “not about a lack of commitment to writing, it was just that the belief was we’re an honors college, so certainly students should be able to figure it out and be able to write a senior thesis by the time they graduate.” While she acknowledges that our field knows it isn’t true that students “just figure it out,” she also points to the senior thesis and the fact

¹¹ She also notes that when the school was formed, other schools in the state system did not have their own honors college. Now that all the major schools do, there have been multiple attempts to absorb her institution into a larger school in the system.

many faculty felt they included writing instruction in their courses as also indicative of that commitment to writing.

As mentioned above, they created the WPA position and developed this writing program in response to a QEP that demonstrated students' writing scores on rubrics improved when they had explicit writing instruction. While it was a surprise to me that the response to this QEP didn't include requiring the writing courses, the lack of a requirement fits with the ethos of the college. Holly explains that

Students don't sign up for courses ahead of time. They come back to school and we have two days of mini classes where faculty basically present their classes and the students kind of shop from that with their faculty advisor and they come up with a contract for the semester. Students will say, I'm going to take these four classes, but I only have to pass three of them, so that option for failure is built into the system. . . We don't have scaffolded classes, so there's not a clear sense of this is a first-year level class, kind of a big free for all.

This model makes it difficult to envision a required first-year course for all students.

However, Holly does note that there is now talk about requiring students to take either the first-year writing courses she has developed or what they call a writing-enriched course, which is a course in another department taught by a faculty member who has undergone professional development around the teaching of writing. While this change is not certain yet, she attributes it to the fact that many faculty, who were already committed to writing, have seen the benefit to students who receive writing instruction prior to their course.

The fact that many faculty at her college believed they already were committed to writing and writing instruction has caused some problems for Holly, however, and these

problems are exacerbated by her NTT status. She explained that many of the faculty have passionately held beliefs about what writing instruction should look like that are not necessarily informed by anything we do in Rhetoric and Composition. While Holly did not struggle with an inherited curriculum she had issues with, which was a significant issue for Edward and Caitlin, the way the writing program was realized before Holly held this position did inform some of the expectations about the work she should be doing on campus. She even explained that some of these expectations became apparent before she arrived on campus, telling me that before she even started her position, a faculty member who she had not yet met emailed her with her interpretation of writing across the curriculum and why their institution should not implement it.

Most notably, Holly explained that some faculty wanted the writing courses she developed to be a grammar class, and said,

The writing center was the writing program for a long time and then this was the first iteration of something that wasn't just the writing center. The woman who had the job for 30 years or some ridiculously long time had basically met individually with thesis students and would line edit their theses. The faculty didn't have to do it and they felt great about that. I was like, 'That's certainly not going to continue to happen because I don't line edit.' I was like, 'Why are you line editing? You should stop it.' Just a lot of preoccupation with grammar and mechanics and stuff like that.

In response to her resistance to line-editing theses and teaching a grammar course, one faculty member on her advisory committee who Holly described as antagonistic asked how they could know the writing classes she was teaching were working. Holly describes

being perplexed by this response because of the fact that no one ever asked how they knew anyone else's classes were working. She then explained that "Throughout the whole time, the writing program has been held to a much higher standard in terms of documenting our efficacy, telling the story of what we do, proving that we were valuable."

When I asked Holly why she thought the writing program is held to a higher standard than other courses, she referenced her NTT position. While she explained how this NTT position is actually beneficial in some ways, discussed above, she then told me

The suspicion was these are non-tenure track faculty. [The tenure-track faculty] call themselves "regular faculty" and then there's everybody else. . . It's really a small group of us who are faculty but not tenure track, and therefore, we are lesser. We need more scrutiny and we need more people watching us.

While she notes that sometimes even new "regular faculty" are hazed in a similar way, what this statement reveals is that, despite the benefits of her position being NTT and outside of the academic divisions, there is still a hierarchy in which NTT faculty are not as valued or respected as much as their tenure-track colleagues. Without a doubt, Holly had significantly more autonomy and access to resources than any of the tenure track WPAs I spoke with, which demonstrates how an institution's commitment to writing can be helpful even to NTT WPAs. However, in light of this scrutiny that arises because she is not "regular faculty," I cannot help but conclude that in her case, a tenure-track position might help quell some of this scrutiny and oversight she is subjected to.

On a positive note, however, Holly does acknowledge that there has been a shrinking pool of faculty who question the value and importance of her writing program.

In part, she contributes this shrinking pool to a lot of hiring of younger faculty who “came up through colleges with writing across the curriculum and writing centers” who “don’t need to be convinced they should be teaching writing, they just want help in figuring it out.” But she also notes the significant autonomy and financial support she has as being helpful in demonstrating the value of her courses—not to mention the fact that students have responded well to the courses, noting that her development of a new Rhetoric and Writing minor is in part due to the fact that students want it and have been petitioning for it. She explains that faculty have seen the value in the writing program over the six years she has been there, as students who have taken the first-year writing courses are able to discuss writing and adapt peer-review skills, for example, when they move into other courses. While hostile faculty have questioned whether her writing courses were working, I would argue the fact she has been allowed the autonomy and financial resources she has needed to implement the writing program in the ways she feels are best has demonstrated this, as it is for those reasons she has been able to develop a program that faculty and students have responded so positively to. As Holly attributes this autonomy in part to the lack of “an additional layer between [her] and the people [she] really need[s] to be talking to,” her situation demonstrates the benefits of an interdisciplinary writing program that reports directly to upper administrators instead of being housed in an English or Humanities department.

Other Participants: Leveraging PLAC Identity as a Tool for WPA Influence

The above narratives about Hannah and Holly demonstrate the ways aligning writing program initiatives to an established institutional ethos can be beneficial for WPAs. That is, despite the fact that Holly’s college did not have a writing program

before she arrived, Holly was provided with significant autonomy and funding to build multiple programs and initiatives because a belief in the importance of writing instruction was central to her institution's identity. Similarly, Hannah was able to resist initiatives from the Chancellor's Office by aligning her modes of resistance—like the directed self-placement—as central to the institution's identity as a public liberal arts college. While I highlighted Hannah to demonstrate the ways the public liberal arts identity can be used to maintain practices aligned with that identity, this practice was common across the interviews. As just one example, when I asked how Edward's school continues to justify funding team teaching for all their courses in interdisciplinary studies (the program in which the writing requirement is housed), he said, "I think we're anxious about that identity loss that would come with cutting things like team teaching. The idea is, that's who we are, so we won't do it."

However, there were also instances in which notions of institutional identity constrained what was possible, and this was perhaps most notable with Caitlin and her institution's required writing proficiency exam, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Caitlin said that she did not fully support the writing proficiency exam, explaining that it was something she inherited, and she describes it as being "dug in" as part of the institution. While she notes that part of the reason it is valued among upper administrators is that it provides easy—if not fully valid—data on students' writing abilities, she also explains that

There's a little bit of like folklore that surrounds this exam about how it started. . .

Maybe that some prominent people in [the local area], donors, people like that, saw a letter or a thank you note written by a graduate and they couldn't even

write. So we've got to have something to assure that our [students can write] . . . I don't know if it's really true, but that's kind of the [inaudible] story that circulates.

This bit of folklore is especially important because Caitlin's institution, like many PLACs, is seen as directly serving the local community. Thus, the fact that this folklore relies on the way community members were concerned about the writing abilities of graduates carries particular weight. Because Caitlin's institution promises a liberal arts education that includes strength in writing that serves the community, this folklore entrenches the value of the exam by positioning it as necessary to institution to fulfill this promise. When Caitlin and I talked, she mentioned that she has been piloting writing-intensive courses to replace the exam, but that admin expects her to provide data that demonstrates these courses are at least as useful as the exam.

Moreover, despite the significant autonomy I attribute to Holly, it is clear that my participants confirm Amorose's (2000) assertions that small school WPAs rarely have the "power" WPA literature frequently assumes WPAs to have, noting that small-school WPAs often only have "symbolic authority" and instead must work towards influence, which he says "relies on opportunities for persuading or convincing" rather than making "threats or promises" (pp. 99-100). Influence, Amorose argues, is most beneficial for WPAs on a small campus with a sense of shared liberal arts values, as there is likely to be little disagreement about the importance of writing instruction on these campuses, thus the goal of the WPA is to influence "the way colleagues and administrators invest in them" (p. 101). Edward almost echoes Amorose's words about small-school WPAs only

having “symbolic” authority when he describes his position as that of a “minor” authority. When asked why he uses that term, he said,

It’s because the title, Coordinator of Writing, doesn’t really give me much power. Like we’ve been saying, it’s just the catch-all for a number of duties the one Rhet/Comp specialist on campus might hold. I don’t have a whole lot of executive power to mandate stuff as Coordinator of Writing. I can make recommendations, and I get along well with my colleagues, so they generally go over well. I’m not in a position to say, ‘Here’s what the writing program at [this institution] ought to be, let’s do this instead.’

What I want to note in this statement is the way he pairs making recommendations with “getting along well” with his colleagues. This aligns with Amorose’s notion of influence, as Amorose explains how the small school climate allows WPAs to make meaningful relationships with people across campus, increasing the range for persuading them to the WPA’s side. Even Holly, I would argue, relies on such influence, despite her significant autonomy, as she frequently describes her close personal relationships with the provosts and her acknowledgement that hostile attitudes towards her from other faculty have decreased as they’ve seen the benefits her courses have for students. Thus, while the PLAC WPAs I interviewed may have limited “authority” or “power,” what these interviews demonstrate is how they can influence stakeholders on and off campus by building positive relationships and demonstrating the ways in which their proposed initiatives benefit the mission of the institution at large.

Moreover, unlike the arguments by Fulford (2009) and Malenczyk and Rosenberg (2016) that suggest a somewhat unstable liberal arts identity that was frequently at odds

with other institutional values and previous identities, the WPAs I spoke with all seemed to view the liberal arts identity as central to their institutional ethos, which I explored more deeply in the previous chapter. This more stable identity felt by these WPAs, then, likely contributed to the amount of success they had in tying particular initiatives or practices to their institutional values. That is, if there was tension around the belief in student autonomy Hannah appealed to when advocating for DSP, or tension around the importance of interdisciplinarity that informed the team teaching Edward's institution relied on, these initiatives may have been less successful. Notably, however, these values were relatively consistent on these campuses. As I say in the previous chapter, a possible limitation of my research is that the WPAs who responded to my survey and request for interviews all felt the liberal arts identity was a strong part of their campus culture, and the significant amount of WPAs who did not respond might feel different and thus face more tensions or difficulties than those I spoke with.

Conclusions

The examples in this chapter highlight the significant tensions between faculty autonomy and central leadership that Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) identify as a central component of the small liberal arts college structure of feeling. They explain that this tension, in part, arises from the fact that, while instructors are often provided with significant autonomy as teachers, they have increased roles in faculty governance and service because of the small size of the campus. Thus, Gladstein and Regaignon describe faculty at SLACs as “simultaneously autonomous agents and expected to dedicate significant time and energy to the institution, its policies, and its future” (p. 21). This tension, they argue, leads to a “philosophical preference” for collaborative decision

making, rather than executive administration. Again, Gladstein and Regaignon note these tensions between faculty autonomy and central leadership are likely present on all college campuses, they argue they are *especially pronounced* at small liberal arts colleges. What the examples in this chapter demonstrate is that such tensions are even more pronounced at public liberal arts colleges because of the additional layers of central leadership while the institution tries to hold onto the liberal arts identity that purports to recognize faculty autonomy. Hannah's case is an especially good example of this, as she notes the ways mandates from the Chancellor's Office, meant to apply to all institutions in her state system, interfered with the understanding of faculty autonomy that circulated on her campus.

Lastly, the public status of these institutions provided financial difficulties, but also some perceived protections from larger financial threats. While the example of Holly above presents a case in which a WPA had frequent and easy access to funding, this was not true for the majority of these WPAs, as access to resources and funding was a perpetual problem. This lack of funding is unsurprising, as state funding for public institutions in 2018 was \$6.6 billion lower than it was in 2008 (Mitchell, Leachman, & Saenz, 2019), partly as a result of the austerity rhetorics that have infused higher education, leading to a market logic that shifts cost away from the public to private consumers (Scott & Welch, 2016). Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) suggest private SLACS are in a slightly less precarious financial situation than public institutions, a claim echoed by William as he notes he often collaborates with English faculty at private SLACs and that he does not have the same resources they do. However, frequent news reports of the closing of SLACs may suggest otherwise, and many editorials at the

beginning the COVID-19 pandemic questioned whether or not private SLACs would be able to survive past the pandemic.

Many of the WPAs I spoke with, however, felt that, despite the current financial crisis of public higher education, public liberal arts colleges were likely better off than private SLACs. For example, Holly noted that while private SLACS were “historically better funded,” she thinks private SLACs are now “in more precarious positions than we are because we’re not tuition dependent.” Lillian, who seemed to have less access to funding than Holly, portrayed a similar picture, as she explained that it seems to her that there are a lot fewer public liberal arts colleges closing as a result of funding cuts than there are private SLACs¹². For both of these WPAs, then, they saw some protection for their campuses viability *because* of their connection to a state system, despite troubling financial situations of public higher education.

What seems to provide these campuses with that relative stability Holly and Lillian note seems to be their unique institutional identity. Scott (2016) argues that “Compositionists can appeal to the values that are shared among faculty, students, and parents who, by and large, value personal relationships and face-to-face interactions between students and faculty, and curriculums that are open-ended and responsive enough to provide opportunity for unanticipated discovery and creative innovations” (p. 216). The WPAs I spoke with—as well as other faculty and admins on campus—all seemed to work to appeal to these values by connecting their initiatives and practices to the mission and values of the institution. As mentioned above, Edward noted the team-

¹² While I have not been able to find any data that may support or refute these claims, it is perhaps of note that all the editorials I have seen about the financial dangers SLACs face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are all operating on the assumption they are private, and therefore “tuition dependent,” in a way Holly is insisting public liberal arts colleges are not.

teaching of his school's interdisciplinary studies program was such a significant part of the school's identity that even when they had to have "uncomfortable" talks about budget cuts, no one ever considered removing this aspect of the program, and he contrasts this to a nearby prestigious, private SLAC which had recently cut a significant amount of their humanities programming. Similarly, Lillian notes how Vermont had recently tried to close three of their state campuses, including the public liberal arts college, and then explained that "in [this state], there would be huge pushback" because of the way the local community values the institution and what it can provide their underprivileged students because of a "belief in the liberal arts." A major theme across these interviews, then, is that WPAs can advocate for necessary funding or initiatives by rhetorically aligning such initiatives with the values of the institution. While mandates from upper administration may continue to work against those values, such alignment can provide a productive avenue of resistance for WPAs, as Hannah's case demonstrates. In the next chapter, I will analyze the extent to which writing program websites align with the institutional values expressed in institutional mission statements to consider how this work happens on a textual and programmatic level.

CHAPTER VI
COMMUNICATING PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE VALUES: AN ANALYSIS
OF MISSION STATEMENTS AND WEBSITES

“Faculty in the Writing Program consider their courses ‘heirs of the ancient liberal art of rhetoric.’ The study of rhetoric began in Greece, about 2,500 years ago, as the art of using language persuasively.” – Fort Lewis College, “Liberal Arts Core,” 2016-2017 Catalog of Courses

“As a significant assessment tool, the Writing Proficiency Exam presents the University with a unique opportunity to determine whether students have the necessary skills to achieve success, to provide timely instruction when they don’t, and to ensure that the University community is providing the kind of liberal arts education MSU promises. This commitment to critical thinking and writing not only benefits MSU students but enhances the value of a Midwestern State University degree.” – Midwestern State University, “Writing Proficiency Exam Requirement”

In the previous two chapters I discuss WPAs’ perceptions of public liberal arts college values and their attempts at navigating those values in a public education system that prioritizes corporate logics of cost efficiency and uniformity. While this interview data was useful in constructing a picture of how public liberal arts values are “actively lived and felt” (Williams, 1977), in this chapter I expand out from that interview data to consider the ways in which these values are linguistically realized in mission statements and writing program websites. An analysis of these documents provides a picture into how particular values are formalized through public-facing institutional documents.

Mission statements provide an especially important view into an institution’s values for a handful of reasons. Many scholars have positioned mission statements as a

useful document for articulating an institution's identity to parents, students, and other stakeholders (Janangelo, 2016; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Morphey & Hartley, 2006; Swales & Rogers, 1995). While their use in marketing the institution to such stakeholders has led to a critique of mission statements as part of the corporatization of higher education, which Schoen (2019) found as a common theme in WPAs' perceptions of mission statements, there are significant benefits to both the existence of mission statements and WPAs' familiarity with them. Morphey and Hartley (2006) for instance, contend that, along with the goal of communicating an institution's values to external stakeholders, "A clear mission helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to institutional imperatives and those that do not" and that "a shared sense of purpose [via a mission statement] has the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution and communicate its characteristics" (p. 457). They argue this is especially important for small institutions (see also Vander Lei & Pugh, 2016), because the codification of certain values can more easily be used to guide decision making—such as the creation of new programs—with the existence of a mission statement and because faculty can situate these programs as representative of the college's mission and core values. In his discussion of the revision of the biology curriculum at Morehouse College, Haynes (2002) makes a similar argument, noting that departmental goals that seemed to differ from institutional goals rarely achieved traction; thus, it was useful to develop a departmental mission that reinforced the goals of the institution at large. While this may seem like simply capitulating to the demands of upper administration, Haynes states that doing this work made the department feel more like "a community of scholars" than it ever had because of the new sense of shared goals and values.

In Rhetoric and Composition, similar arguments have been made about the usefulness of mission statements for WPA work. In his introduction to the edited collection *A Critical Look at Institutional Mission*, for example, Janangelo (2016), while noting the corporate role of mission statements, argues that an attention to mission statements helps WPAs recognize that “where they work impacts their work” (p. xiv) and calls for scholarship that attends to both the possibilities and struggles of aligning writing programs with an institutional mission. Similarly, Vander Lei and Pugh (2016) remark that when WPAs align their programmatic goals with that of the institution’s mission, “they position the writing program to become a valued part of the university (and thus a justifiable recipient of the university’s goods—budget, faculty, facilities)” (p.149). But more importantly, they argue that this work of programmatic alignment also positions WPAs to have influence over the way the institutional mission evolves, as engaging with the documents that articulate a university’s mission reveals the spaces in which conversations about the future of the mission happen. Lastly, they note how such attention to institutional mission can provide insight into how missions are shaped by external stakeholders, which I would argue is even more important at public schools like the ones I examine here, as they often have to conform to expectations from the state higher education system, a situation that I explored in the previous chapter.

More recently, Schoen (2019) surveyed WPAs about their attitudes towards institutional mission statements, finding that “many WPAs give it barely a thought” while others “are openly disdainful of it” (p. 46) While she notes the possibility that institutional missions might run counter to the work of writing programs, her survey results found that very few WPAs felt this to be the case. Therefore, she argues that

WPAs who are not in a position where their larger institutional mission interferes with their goals for the writing program might “consider how they could begin to work toward mission integration” (p. 47) for similar reasons as those outlined above; namely, that this work helps WPAs understand how their program fits into a larger institutional ecology, and also demonstrates how and why the writing program is beneficial to the institution at large.

To consider the ways in which such alignment is or is not taking place, my analysis in this chapter considers how institutional values are articulated in writing program websites. While it may be the case that many writing program websites are not updated frequently, Isaacs (2018) contends that how writing programs present themselves to the public is important. That is, while recognizing the limitations of, say, consulting a course description that may not have been updated for decades for an understanding of the full scope of a course, she argues such descriptions serve as a point of articulation among faculty, administrators, and students. Therefore, while the writing program websites may not provide a complete picture of the work happening in that writing program, they do reflect what a writing program explicitly and publicly values (or at least what they valued at one time).

Another frequent critique of mission statements—which I think is also applicable to writing program websites—is the way they seemingly rely on vague language that seems interchangeable or superficial—which leads to what Schoen (2019) refers to as a “window-dressing mission” (pg. 56) However, as Morphew and Hartley (2006) argue, while many mission statements do share similar language, they are often explicated “in decidedly different ways,” which leads to the same common phrases “having decidedly

different ‘flavors’ at different institutions” (pg. 468). Thus, in this chapter, I identify the common values across mission statements and writing program websites while also using critical discourse analysis to examine the way those values are invoked and framed in different ways across these institutions. Through an examination of three identified values (Career Preparation, Diversity and Inclusion, and College Access), I identify common themes in the way these values are discussed (or not) in both mission statements and writing program websites. I find that while COPLAC emphasizes the importance of what they deem “small school values,” member institutions just as frequently emphasize goals of career preparation, which they attempt to align with their liberal arts missions, despite the frequently perceived opposition between these goals. Similarly, while Diversity and Inclusion is emphasized in the mission statements at most public liberal arts colleges in my sample, a lack of focus on college access and a commitment to contradicting values makes it difficult to identify how a commitment to diversity and inclusion may be realized. Lastly, despite what the WPAs I interviewed in the previous chapters said about their own commitments to diversity and inclusion, these goals were rarely articulated in writing program websites, despite their prevalence in institutional mission statements.

Methods

The data analysis for this chapter began with the sample of schools that I distributed the survey to (see Chapter 3). However, for this round of data analysis, I added Kentucky State University to the sample, as sometime after I distributed the survey they were added to the members list on COPLAC’s website as a “Provisional Member,” along with Louisiana State University of Alexandria. LSUA did not need to be added to

the sample, as it was already included in my sample as one of the non-COPLAC members that identified as a public liberal arts college. COPLAC defines provisional members as “institutions [that] are working toward satisfying the criteria for full membership” (COPLAC, 2019) and states that provisional membership lasts for five years, at which time institutions must either apply for full membership or apply to renew their provisional membership status. Because I thought it might prove interesting to consider if provisional members of COPLAC articulate their values differently than established members or non-members—or how they are working to align their explicit values with those expressed by COPLAC—I decided to include KSU in this sample despite its lack of inclusion in the survey sample, so that I had more than one provisional member to consider.¹³ Moreover, KSU is an HBCU, and, as explained in Chapter 1, I felt the inclusion of HBCUs in this study was important, yet I had previously only been able to identify two HBCUs that considered themselves public liberal arts colleges.

Data Collection

I collected the mission statements for all 33 of these institutions, using Fireshot to store screenshots of the full website. When mission statements linked to other pages that seemed to play an important role in explicitly articulating the values of the institution, I included that website as well. For example, University of North Carolina Asheville’s mission statement identified three core values and then included a subpage for each of those values. Similarly, University of Wisconsin—Superior’s mission statement linked to a page titled “UW—Superior’s Commitment to our Liberal Arts Mission and Tradition,”

¹³ However, initial data analysis showed no noticeable patterns of difference between provisional members, full members, or even non-members in regards to the values expressed in their mission statements.

which also felt important to analyze for the dominant values of the institution. Northern Vermont University – Johnson was a unique institution as I considered what websites to include. Formerly two different institutions—Johnson State University and Lyndon State University, the former of which was a member of COPLAC—it became a single university in 2018. Despite COPLAC’s position that branch campuses cannot be members (Shuman, 2017), the Johnson campus has remained a member of COPLAC. Northern Vermont University’s website currently has a single mission statement, but then an “About” page for each campus. Because the Johnson Campus page stresses they are a “proud member institution of the council of public liberal arts colleges” and emphasizes the “high quality public liberal arts education in a student-centered environment” they provide, I included this page in addition to the broader mission statement of NVU, as it operated similarly to a mission statement in many ways.

I then searched for writing program websites at each of these institutions. In most cases, I excluded websites about core curriculum requirements/programs from this second round of data collection, unless the website for that core curriculum program devoted some specific attention to the role of the writing requirements, such as at Keene State College or Fort Lewis College. In the case of Keene State College, my survey respondent provided me with a link to a lengthy WordPress site discussing the first-year writing seminar, which I included as well. I was able to identify at least one writing program website for 22 of these 33 institutions.

I also collected a screenshot of COPLAC’s mission statement and downloaded two documents from their website: their membership criteria, last updated in March of 2019, and the document *COPLAC – The Evolution of a Vision 1987—2014* (Shuman,

2017) which provides a history of COPLAC's origins and a discussion of how the organization has evolved. While originally published in 2014, this history also included a 2017 addendum by Bill Spellman, the Executive Director of COPLAC at the time.

Coding of Mission Statements and Writing Program Websites

After loading the screenshots of these websites and the PDF of *The Evolution of a Vision* into Dedoose, I used Values Coding (see Chapter 4) to identify the core values expressed in the three COPLAC documents. I started with these documents because of their role as a "boss text" (Smith and Turner, 2014). That is, because of their role as establishing the dominant values of the larger institution (COPLAC), they play an important role in shaping other institutional texts, especially considering that one of COPLAC's membership requirements is that member institutions have "[a] mission statement that makes clear the institutions' emphasis on the liberal arts and sciences and on liberal education" (COPLAC, 2019).

After identifying the core values expressed by the three COPLAC documents mentioned above, I began coding the mission statements and related websites of all 33 institutions. While I began with the codes identified from the COPLAC documents, I did occasionally have to add new codes as these institutions expressed values that were not necessarily those made explicit by COPLAC. This divergence is expected because of the complicated relationship public liberal arts colleges may have in relation to their institutional history or expectations from their state's public college system (Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016). Of course, it is also normal for each individual institution to have a broader set of values than those expressed by a council they belong to, even if they have attempted to align their values with that council. Furthermore,

because values coding also requires paying attention to the values that are not explicitly articulated (Saldaña, 2016), my coding also required identifying values that were implicit in these documents. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the value code “Accountability,” which was frequently used when writing program websites were referencing articulation agreements, general education requirements, or university policies, as this represents that accountability to other campus units and university and state policies is valued in some way.

After coding the mission statements and related pages for the 33 institutions in my sample, I then coded the websites related to the writing programs or writing requirements for the 22 institutions for which I was able to find such pages. For some institutions—such as Sonoma State University, which has a webpage devoted to its FYW requirement, another page devoted to the writing exam that serves a graduation requirement, and a third page devoted to describing the university’s writing requirements as a whole—this process involved analysis of more than one website. Again, I used the values codes developed from the previous documents. However, there were four values I found expressed in the writing program/writing requirement websites that were not identified in earlier documents: Writing Skills,¹⁴ Service to the University, Faculty Autonomy, and Second Language Competency.¹⁵ Table 6.1 displays each values code applied at least 5 times across this sample and an example phrase which received that code.

| Values Code | Example |
|-------------|---------|
|-------------|---------|

¹⁴ I did have “Communication Skills” as a code for the mission statements, which appeared in mission statements for 14 out of 33 schools, but “Writing Skills” felt important to add to identify when writing was being talked about specifically.

¹⁵ I only ended up applying this code to one writing program website, but it was an explicitly stated value of that program

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Access | “Provide accessible higher education to students from a wide variety of backgrounds” |
| Accountability | “All courses seeking WI designation must meet the school curriculum guidelines” |
| Affordability | “Our destination is unmoving – to offer an exemplary and affordable public residential education” |
| Applied Knowledge | “We encourage our students to develop . . . the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings” |
| Broad/General Education | “We believe that the disciplines of arts, sciences, and professional studies empower individuals with broad knowledge” |
| Campus Community | “The entire College community works together to advance knowledge and inspire students to be socially responsible and globally aware citizens who are prepared for an enriched life and success in the world” |
| Career Preparation | “The University of Wisconsin-Superior fosters intellectual growth and career preparation within a liberal arts tradition” |
| Challenging/Rigorous Education | “committed to providing students with rigorous undergraduate and graduate education” |
| Civic Engagement | “The University of Illinois Springfield provides a uniquely student-centered educational experience in and out of the classroom through . . . impactful civic engagement that prepares graduates to contribute fully to society” |
| Civility | “Mutual respect, civility, and cooperation” |
| Collaboration | “Through small class sizes, close collaboration, and high-impact experiences...” |
| Commitment to Local Community | “. . . and continue our heritage of service to New Hampshire and the New England region” |
| Communication Skills | “Students apply intellectual and practical skills to think critically and communicate effectively” |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Critical Thinking | “Students apply intellectual and practical skills to think critically and communicate effectively” |
| Cultural Enrichment | “We promote economic vitality, sustainability, cultural enrichment, and social well-being” |
| Diversity and Inclusion | “MCLA is committed to creating a campus climate and culture of mutual respect that represents and honors diversity in our society. We celebrate this diversity and affirm the dignity and worth of all people. We intentionally integrate topics of social, cultural, and physical diversity in the curricular, co-curricular, and work life of our community” |
| Economic Development | “Collaborate across settings to support economic and workforce development” |
| Educational Value | “. . . nationally ranked for quality and value” |
| Extracurricular Learning | “We understand intellectual disciplines and specific courses of study interact dynamically in academic and co-curricular experiences” |
| Faculty Autonomy | “. . . the pedagogy that best suits the instructor’s goals” |
| Faculty Development | “Collaborate with faculty to identify what resources, if any, are needed to support faculty offering WAC-related courses” |
| Faculty/Student Relationships | “Strong relationships among students, faculty, and staff” |
| Global Citizenship | “MCLA prepares its graduates to be practical problem solvers and engaged, resilient global citizens” |
| Graduate Education | “Our vision for graduate students builds on this undergraduate foundation, using traditional and innovate instructional methods to foster growth” |
| Inquiry and Reflection | “It is only within this context that students will experience the necessary openness and curiosity for experimentation and inquiry needed to solve today’s complex problems” |
| Integrity | “ Integrity: We conduct ourselves with honesty, professionalism and respect for others, accepting responsibility for the |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| | ethical consequences of our ideas and actions” |
| Intellectual Freedom | “ And it be further resolved: The SSU Academic Senate recognize the academic freedom of the University community to raise and critically discuss controversial ideas” |
| Interdisciplinarity | “This program will feature interdisciplinary team-teaching and will extend throughout the undergraduate experience” |
| Lifelong Learning | “We value and embrace life-long learning and inquisitive pursuits” |
| Marketing/Brand Identity | “Two of the respondents noted that membership in the consortium was an important step in raising the repute of their institutions and giving them a clearer brand identity” |
| Openness to Change | “Notwithstanding, it must also welcome change and quality improvement.” |
| Personal Development | “Balanced development of mind, body, and character” |
| Prestige | “As the region’s premier public liberal arts college . . .” |
| Public Status | “These early graduates were pioneers who first brought the benefits of public education to the region’s children regardless of their race, social status or economic standing” |
| Quality of Education | “The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges is championing the cause of liberal arts education of superior quality in the public sector” |
| Residential Environment | “Our beautiful residential campus on the banks of the St. Mary’s River inspires our work, our play, and our commitment to the environment” |
| Retention | “Truman’s retention and graduation rates are consistently among the highest in the state” |
| Selectivity | “St. Mary’s College of Maryland is Maryland’s honors college, a selective public liberal arts college” |
| Service Learning | “Engage in appropriate inter-institutional relationships and community partnerships |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| | to enhance educational and service opportunities” |
| Service to University | “Our composition courses serve the interests of the entire MU academic community” |
| Small Class Size | “Like the best private liberal arts colleges, USAO offers small classes” |
| Small-to-Medium Size | “The small campus environment fosters relationships” |
| Student Leadership | “Ramapo College of New Jersey prepares students to be successful leaders for a changing world” |
| Student Motivation | “Diverse, motivated, and talented students, staff and faculty are actively recruited and retained” |
| Student Responsibility | “We encourage our students to develop a clear sense of personal and social responsibility” |
| Student Talent | “To provide a learning environment suited to the needs of academically and artistically talented students” |
| Student-Centeredness | “In everything we do, our students come first” |
| Sustainability | “Respecting each other and our environment—we are an open, inclusive, supportive, and sustainable community” |
| Tradition | “Today, UM holds fast to the principles that we were founded upon and the mission that we’ve always upheld” |
| Transfer | “Foster students’ abilities to confront scientific, social, and environmental challenges through transferable skills in critical thinking, communication, and technical knowledge” |
| Undergraduate Teaching | “Challenging undergraduates not only to master existing bodies of knowledge but also to extend the frontiers of knowledge through original research” |
| Uniqueness | “Celebrating more than a century of service as Oklahoma’s only public liberal arts college” |
| Writing Skills | “First-Year writing plays a vital role in preparing MCLA students for the different writing situations they will encounter in both their academic classes |

| | |
|--|--|
| | and as 21 st century citizens writing in the world” |
|--|--|

Table 6.1 Values Codes Applied at least 5 Times and Example Phrases

Critical Discourse Analysis of Publicly Available Data

While the values coding served as a systematic way to categorize the dominant values held by COPLAC, its member institutions, and other public liberal arts colleges, it is important to remember that values are influenced by and enacted through the activities we engage in and the institutions to which we belong (Fairclough, 2003, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). As a result, after identifying these values, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA), which examines how specific linguistic features realize and enact particular discourses, to analyze how these values are linguistically realized through the discourses of liberal arts education that circulate through and among institutional documents.

While chapter 4 considered, in part, the relationship WPAs have towards their mission statements, CDA attends to what Fairclough calls the “internal relations” of texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 36) to examine how such social practices are made possible through texts by a focus on specific linguistic details. This involves considering the semantic and grammatical relations between words and longer phrases and patterns of lexical relationships. With a focus on intertextuality, CDA also looks at how meanings change as different genres are linked together and the assumptions necessary to make meaning of a text. For example, Tardy (2015) uses CDA to analyze discourses of globalization on university websites. In her analysis, she looks at common words associated with globalization (e.g. “global”) and the words commonly paired with those concepts (e.g. “global community,” “global marketplace”) to identify themes in those pairings. She also pays attention to what themes seem to be absent from these concepts. Following Tardy’s

approach, in this chapter I consider the common word and phrase pairings with some of the dominant expressed values to analyze how such values are realized and understood, as well as the ways of understanding them that remain absent.

An important aspect of CDA is not just an analysis of the discourses in use but a critique or evaluation of the way such discourses produce or reinforce “social wrongs” (Fairclough, 2003, 2012; van Dijk, 2015). A common focus for Fairclough (2003, 2012) is how language operates within “New Capitalism” and the social wrongs enacted through New Capitalist discourses of globalization or economic crises. After identifying the social wrong, critical discourse analysis seeks to identify both the obstacles in addressing that social wrong and possible ways to address it (Fairclough, 2012, p. 13). Because of this focus on social wrongs, Huckin et al. (2012) argue that CDA is a useful methodological approach to examine “the interplay between university politics and first-year writing programs (p. 118) because of its ability to emphasize how power is rhetorically wielded in educational settings and how that influences decision-making processes. For example, they cite David Ayer’s study of budget websites at state universities and how, through CDA’s focus on intertextuality, Ayer illuminates how university chancellors were able to rationalize budget cuts through linking of different genres to “create new managerial forms of legitimation” (p. 114). Moreover, in her study of a WAC program at a public liberal arts college, Fulford (2009) draws on CDA to analyze changes in key terms as ideas circulate across different texts (e.g., changes from using “students” to “clients”) or the hybridization of different discourses (e.g., pairing language focused on measuring student skill with rhetorics of writing to learn), all of which both reflected and instigated changes in institutional beliefs and values. Her

findings reveal significant tensions between competing discourses, such as those concerned with the utility/practical value of higher education and liberal arts education discourses that emphasize education for its own sake (see Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Tardy, 2015 for other considerations of tensions between competing discourses). Drawing on these methods, I consider how the values expressed in COPLAC's documents and institutional mission statements are recontextualized as they enter into or interact with other discourses in the writing program websites and other institutional documents through an analysis of common verbs, adjectives, and phrase pairings that are used throughout these documents.

In the following sections I identify the core values expressed in some of COPLAC's public documents, noting a small shift in the way institutional size is valued and a pronounced tension between a commitment to college access and a valuing of selective admissions. I then identify the values expressed in mission statements for at least 50% of the schools in my sample, as well as the dominant COPLAC values that appeared less frequently. After identifying these values, I analyze and critique some of the common ways in which the valuing of Career Preparation and Diversity and Inclusion (along with Access) are articulated. Lastly, I turn to the values expressed in writing program websites to discuss the ways these schools situate their writing education as a central part of the institution's liberal arts identity and I critique the lack of emphasis on Diversity and Inclusion in these websites.

COPLAC Values

In this section, I analyze COPLAC's mission statement, their *Membership Criteria* (2019) and Shuman's (2017) *The Evolution of a Vision*, which outlines the

history of COPLAC, because I understand these documents as “boss texts” that inform the mission statements of member institutions. Key to this analysis is the shifts in emphasis on the importance of size, the role of the public status of COPLAC institutions, and a tension between college access and selective admissions.

Table 6.2 identifies the values I coded in the three COPLAC documents, as well as their frequency across these three documents. Four of the first five codes in the table (Undergraduate Teaching, Small-to-Medium Size, Broad/General Education, and Campus Community) are perhaps no surprise and require little discussion, as they are all commonly expressed values of liberal arts colleges (e.g. Bates, 2014; Shuman, 2017; Sipress, 2014; Urgo, 2014). That is, liberal arts colleges tend to focus on providing a broad education to undergraduate students in a welcoming campus community. They also tend to value their small size, as this element allows for developing the close-knit campus community they prioritize. However, it is important to note that my code for size was ‘Small-to-Medium Size,’ as COPLAC’s valuing of size has shifted some across these documents. In *The Evolution of a Vision*, Shuman (2017), as discussed previously, stresses that small size was important to the founding members of COPLAC. As he later acknowledges that some of the current and former member institutions have student populations above common thresholds for “small” colleges, he notes the difficulty of quantifying what makes a college small, and instead stresses small school values—small class size, strong relationships among faculty and students, etc. (all components of the close-knit campus community valued among liberal arts colleges). The current *COPLAC Membership Criteria* (2019) take a different approach to size, however: “COPLAC institutions have typically been small-to-medium sized, but there are no size criteria” (p.

1). Not only do we see a shift here in the language used to describe size (from “small” to “small-to-medium”), but it is directly stated that size is not a determining factor.¹⁶

| Value | Frequency in Mission Statement | Frequency in Membership Criteria | Frequency in <i>The Evolution of a Vision</i> | Total Frequency |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|
| Undergraduate Teaching | 1 | 3 | 7 | 11 |
| Small-to-Medium Size | 0 | 1 | 7 | 8 |
| Broad/General Education | 0 | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| Public Status | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| Campus Community | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Selectivity | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Access | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Career Preparation | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Civic Engagement | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Faculty/Student Relationships | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Residential Environment | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Student-Centeredness | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Commitment to Local Community | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Diversity and Inclusion | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Extracurricular Learning | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Lifelong Learning | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Marketing/Brand Identity | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Personal Development | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Prestige | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Service Learning | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Student Motivation | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Transfer | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Uniqueness | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Affordability | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Challenging/Rigorous Education | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Critical Thinking | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Faculty Development | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Global Citizenship | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Inquiry and Reflection | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

¹⁶ However, I do still think it’s important to note that both College of Charleston and Southern Utah University, both with student enrollments over 10,000 (higher than the largest COPLAC institution) chose to leave the organization. In an email exchange with a COPLAC board member, I was told they chose to leave because they no longer felt their missions aligned with those of COPLAC, which would be interesting to explore in further research.

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Interdisciplinarity | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Small Class Size | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Value of Education | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Table 6.2 Values Expressed in COPLAC Documents

Before discussing how often these values appear across the 33 mission statements and my analysis of the ways in which those values are framed, I also want to point out a handful of other values that appeared across these three COPLAC documents. As table 6.2 shows, “Public Status” is the fourth most frequent value articulated. While it is unsurprising that the Council of *Public Liberal Arts College* is stressing the importance of the public status of their member institutions in their marketing materials and membership criteria, I do find the frequency with which this value is expressed noteworthy before a consideration of how it is taken up by such member institutions. Interestingly, I did not code “Public Status” at all while coding COPLAC’s mission statement, as while they use the term “public liberal arts” college a handful of times, they say little about the *importance* of that public status. In *The Evolution of a Vision*, however, this public status is framed as being “more complex and faceted than it first seems” (2017, p. 3). Shuman discusses how the public status is important because it represents a commitment to their local student populations—which he positions as different from a private liberal arts college’s focus on geographic diversity. He argues that this allows such schools to play an integrated role within their local communities, noting that many member institutions have academic programs devoted to local concerns, such as “Appalachian literature and culture; Great Plains Native American history and language; Pacific Northwest marine ecology; and the like” (p. 4).

While Shuman does not discuss college access much, others have noted that public status is important to public liberal arts colleges as the affordability of the

institutions allows them to more readily commit themselves to increasing college access (Bates, 2014; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Sipress, 2014). An important tension I see among the values identified in these COPLAC documents is that between Access ($n=3$) and Selectivity ($n=5$), the latter seeming much more important to Shuman. In the history he provides, this is one of the first values he notes among early COPLAC members, noting their emphasis on “selectivity in recruitment and admissions” (p. 1). This concern with selectivity (and also with prestige) perhaps arises from many of these institutions’ previous reputations as campuses of lesser quality than the state flagship (Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Shuman, 2017). Later, Shuman notes how this emphasis on selectivity came to be tied to the public status of these institutions, noting that, before settling on the name Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, the initial members referred to themselves as “the small public ivies” (p. 2). He does note that this term was not embraced by everyone, because of the “elitism” they associated with the Ivy League.

As mentioned above, I would argue this focus on “selectivity” is actually at odds with a commitment to college access. While the term “college access” is frequently used in reference to low-income and first generation students, hence why I tie it to affordability above, I conceive of access as defined by *The Glossary of Education Reform* (2014), which explains that the term “refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure—or at least strive to ensure—that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education” (para. 1). This definition notes that students may experience barriers to full access to educational opportunities because of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, etc. Therefore, as assessment tools and admission standards often reproduce societal hierarchies (e.g.

Micceri, 2007; Rooney and Schaeffer, 1998), I would argue emphasizing selective admissions (which Shuman contrasts with “open admissions” (p. 5)) undermines attempts at increasing college access. That is, while the affordability of such institutions may make them more accessible to lower income students, it is likely these lower income students are still being asked to assimilate to white, middle-class identities through the expressed emphasis on selectivity—and this may also create a barrier to access even for students who can afford tuition. It is important to note, however, that all four excerpts I coded for Selectivity among the COPLAC documents were in this history (Shuman, 2017), and the *Membership Criteria* instead focused much more on access. For example, the first paragraph of COPLAC’s *Membership Criteria* states that the organization represents “access, affordability, and community engagement” (p. 1) The fourth criterion which they list then says that member institutions must “demonstrate a diverse, equity-minded, and inclusive campus environment that fosters student success and graduation and offers intentional opportunities to first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented populations” (p. 2). It is clear, then, that the organization expects member institutions to commit to increasing college access for underrepresented populations, especially first-generation and low-income students, which I have been arguing runs counter to goals of “selectivity.” However, because selectivity played a vital role in the history of the organization, this tension between these values likely plays an important role in the structure of feeling at public liberal arts colleges, especially those that have been members since the beginning of the organization.

Dominant Values Expressed in College Mission Statements

In Table 6.3 I identify the values that appeared in at least 50% of the mission statements and related documents from the 33 schools in my sample. While there a handful of new values—that is, those that were not apparent in the COPLAC documents—a quick glance at this table shows some clear similarities: Undergraduate Teaching is still the most common value, and the only one emphasized in all 33 mission statements; Broad/General Education and Campus Community are still among the most often expressed values as well. There are, however, a few notable differences that I want to discuss in this section. To emphasize these differences further, Table 6.4 shows some of the important values from the COPLAC documents that appeared in fewer than 50% of the mission statements. While COPLAC emphasize the importance of small-to-medium size—or at least the values they associate with small-to-medium sized schools—this seemed much less important to the institutions, as it was rarely emphasized as important to the school’s mission, values, or history ($n = 6$). More notably, almost two-thirds of the institutions in my sample emphasize Career Preparation in these mission statements, a value many have argued is antithetical to the goals of a liberal arts institution (e.g. Dewey, 1916; J. M. Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Hayes, 2015; Pfnister, 1984; Seery, 2002), yet the table 6.3 shows that this value was emphasized in only two fewer schools than Student-Centeredness, the central value COPLAC associates with small-to-medium sized schools. Therefore, I will first consider how these mission statements approach career preparation as central to their mission and attempt to integrate it into their public liberal arts college identity.

Following that, I will analyze how commitments to Diversity and Inclusion and Access are framed and discussed. While above I discussed the focus on Selectivity in the

COPLAC materials, and the tensions I saw between this value and that of Access, I found that emphasizing the selectivity of admissions or recruitment was much less important to these individual institutions. (Selectivity only appeared in two mission statements, so is not included in the tables below). There are echoes of this concern in the ways some mission statements stressed how motivated or talented the institution's students were (the codes Student Motivation and Student Talent were each applied to 9 and 7 mission statements, respectively). What these mission statements do emphasize frequently is a commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, appearing in 94% of mission statements. I will consider Access, which only 52% of schools emphasize in their mission statements, along with this consideration of Diversity and Inclusion, as I see a commitment to college access being a necessary component of meaningful diversity and inclusion efforts because of the definition of access I provide above. That is, attempts at increasing or prioritizing diversity and inclusion cannot be effective if the institution is still inaccessible to many.

| Value | Percentage of Schools |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Undergraduate Teaching | 100% (33 schools) |
| Personal Development | 97% (32 schools) |
| Campus Community | 94% (31 schools) |
| Diversity and Inclusion | 94% (31 schools) |
| Civic Engagement | 91% (30 schools) |
| Quality of Education | 85% (28 schools) |
| Commitment to Local Community | 82% (27 schools) |
| Broad/General Education | 79% (26 schools) |
| Global Citizenship | 76% (25 schools) |
| Prestige | 70% (23 schools) |
| Student-Centeredness | 70% (23 schools) |
| Career Preparation | 64% (21 schools) |
| Service Learning | 64% (21 schools) |
| Uniqueness | 64% (21 schools) |
| Challenging/Rigorous Education | 61% (20 schools) |
| Public Status | 61% (20 schools) |

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Critical Thinking | 52% (17 schools) |
| Tradition | 58% (19 schools) |
| Inquiry and Reflection | 55% (18 schools) |
| Access | 52% (17 schools) |

Table 6.3 Values that Appeared in Mission Statements or Related Documents of at Least 50% of Schools

| Value | Percentage of Schools |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Extracurricular Learning | 45% (15 schools) |
| Faculty/Student Relationships | 45% (15 schools) |
| Lifelong Learning | 45% (15 schools) |
| Affordability | 33% (11 schools) |
| Transfer | 33% (11 schools) |
| Interdisciplinarity | 27% (9 schools) |
| Student Motivation | 27% (9 schools) |
| Residential Environment | 21% (7 schools) |
| Student Talent ¹⁷ | 21% (7 schools) |
| Small-to-Medium Size | 18% (6 schools) |

Table 6.4 Important COPLAC Values that Appeared in Mission Statements or Related Documents of Fewer than 50% of Schools.

Career Preparation and the Pursuit of Meaningful Work

While the table 6.3 shows that Career Preparation was only emphasized in 21 of the 33 mission statements I analyzed, it seems one of the most important values to discuss because of the fact that many advocates of liberal education see career preparation as antithetical to the goals of a liberal arts education, as previously discussed. That is, while some values were emphasized more frequently, it is notable that just under two-thirds of the public liberal arts colleges I examined stress a value often positioned as the opposite of a liberal arts education (e.g. Dewey, 1916; J. M. Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; Hayes, 2015; Pfnister, 1984; Seery, 2002). Despite this tension between career preparation and a

¹⁷ While “Student Talent” wasn’t a value coded in the COPLAC documents, I think in some instances it is a way to denote the “Selectivity” of the institution—an issue I discuss below.

commitment to the liberal arts, career preparation is discussed more frequently than other common liberal arts values in these mission statements, such as the strong relationships between faculty and the students, the residential environment, or the small size of the campus. To understand why career preparation is referenced so frequently by these institutions, it is important to analyze the discourses being invoked to frame and discuss career preparation within these mission statements.

Career Preparation Integrated into a Liberal Education. As Fairclough notes, competing discourses can often be found together in the same passages, and this is especially evident in some of these mission statements. That is, discourses of career preparation are often situated *within* discourses of liberal arts education, such as in Keene State College’s mission statement, which states that “Keene State College prepares promising students to think critically and creatively, to engage in active citizenship, and to **pursue meaningful work.**” In this mission statement, the goal of “pursu[ing] meaningful work” is situated alongside typical liberal education values of “think[ing] critically” and “engag[ing] in active citizenship.” Despite the fact that these are often framed as competing discourses, such listing conveys the idea that career preparation is part and parcel of a liberal arts education. Moreover, framing it as preparation for “meaningful” work suggests that the type of career preparation they provide is an outgrowth of the active and productive citizenship that liberal arts colleges attempt to foster—that is, they are not just preparing students for a job, but preparing them to make “meaningful” contributions to society through the work that they do.

We can see similar moves being made in the mission statements of Henderson State University and Midwestern State University, as both institutions similarly situate career preparation as a central outcome of their liberal arts education:

We value the transformative power of liberal arts education to develop in each student critical and creative skills including problem solving, analytical thinking, and effective communication that **will lead to successful careers**, fulfilling lives, and lifelong learning. (Henderson State University, Vision and Mission)

Through an emphasis on teaching, augmented by the opportunity for students to engage in research and creative activities alongside faculty and to participate in co-curricular and service programs, Midwestern State prepares its graduates **to embark upon their careers** or pursue advanced study. . . The understanding that students gain of themselves, others, and the social and natural world prepares them to **contribute constructively to society through their work** and through their private lives. (Midwestern State University, Mission Statement)

In both of these mission statements, the purported benefits of a liberal arts education are what is said to lead to adequate preparation for a career. In Henderson State's mission statement, "critical and creative skills," which their liberal arts curriculum works to foster, are what "leads" to successful careers. While Midwestern State doesn't focus as much on the tangible skills of a liberal arts curriculum, their mission statement suggests that the properties of a small liberal arts college—that is an emphasis on teaching, one-on-one work with faculty, and opportunities for co-curricular learning—are what prepare students to "embark upon their careers." Most interestingly, like I argued the phrase

“meaningful work” does in Keene State’s mission, both of these mission statements frame a successful career as part of being a contributing member to society. Henderson State, for example, doesn’t just state the skills mentioned above will lead to successful careers, but rather “successful careers, fulfilling lives, and lifelong learning.” More directly, Midwestern State states the personal development liberal arts colleges claim as a strength (“the understanding that students gain of themselves”) will prepare students to “contribute constructively to society through their work and their private lives.”

These statements frame a successful or meaningful career as a necessary component of being an active citizen, and as inherently linked to an individual’s identity (such as when Midwestern links their work to their private lives, or as when Henderson links “successful careers” and “fulfilling lives”). Such framing is part of the discourse of economic productivity that Wan (2014) argues become especially pronounced in institutions of higher education during times of economic anxiety. She explains that these vocational goals are often tied with notions of a “productive citizenship,” yet that these goals are difficult to reconcile with traditional liberal arts values. She also notes that as access to college expands, so have “pressures for colleges to vocationalize or at least answer calls to make themselves relevant, which seems logical given that a broader population of students would result in a higher imperative for employable skills after graduation” (p. 152; see also Delucchi, 1997 for a discussion of the trend away from liberal arts to professional curricula as a result of shifts in the labor market). This attempt to make themselves “relevant” through a focus on “vocationalizing” is exactly what the institutions are doing with mission statements like these, as some of the dominant liberal art values that Dewey and others have argued should be embraced for their own sake and

for personal fulfillment are being co-opted in terms of how they can contribute not just to active citizenship, but also to “meaningful” careers in which graduates can “contribute” to larger society through their labor. In the following sections, I examine how some of these institutions attempt to frame that vocationalization through a relationship to their liberal arts values.

Professional Degrees Supported by the Liberal Arts. While the schools above positioned career preparation as being part of the liberal arts education they provide, another common way of discussing career preparation emphasized the way professional degrees which focused on preparation for a particular career were *strengthened by* a liberal arts education. This approach is demonstrated by the three mission statements below:

- To offer a limited number of **career, professional, and specialized degree programs**, which would be **especially strengthened** when combined with an interdisciplinary, liberal arts foundation. (USAO’s Mission and Objectives)
- The overriding mission of the University of Montevallo, unique in higher education in Alabama, is to provide to students from throughout the state an affordable, geographically accessible, “small college” public higher educational experience of high quality, with a strong emphasis on undergraduate liberal studies and **with professional programs supported by a broad base of arts and sciences**, designed for their intellectual and personal growth in pursuit of **meaningful employment** and responsible, informed citizenship. (About UM – The University of Montevallo)

- The mission of Truman State University is to offer an exemplary undergraduate education to well-prepared students, grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, in the context of a public institution of higher education. To that end, the University offers affordable undergraduate studies in the traditional arts and sciences as well as **selected pre-professional, professional, and master’s level programs that grow naturally out of the philosophy, values, content, and desired outcomes of a liberal arts education.** (Truman – Mission Statement)

In each of these mission statements, it is acknowledged that these schools do not offer degrees only in the liberal arts, but also “selected” or “a limited number” of professional degrees. These degrees, however, do not stand on their own. Rather, they are “especially strengthened by” or “supported by” the liberal arts education the school provides. These phrases bolster the need for the liberal arts—that is, they emphasize that the liberal arts will improve these few professional degrees—and they also suggest the liberal arts commitment these schools profess is infused into the whole curriculum, not just particular majors. This joint commitment to both professional degrees and a “broad base” in the liberal arts sets up claims like those we see in Montevallo’s mission statement that these programs are “designed for [students’] intellectual and personal growth in pursuit of meaningful employment and responsible, involved citizenship” in which the preparation for “meaningful employment” is listed alongside typical goals of liberal arts education.

Moreover, while Delucchi’s (1997) study of mission statements found it is common for institutions to emphasize a liberal arts education even when more than 40% of the degrees they offer are not liberal arts degrees, the modifiers “selected” and “a

limited number of” suggest an anxiety about offering a large number of professional degrees. Truman’s mission statement, for example, shows how some of these institutions justify their programs that stray from the liberal arts. That is, Truman is not just offering “selected” professional degrees but is also suggesting these degrees “grow naturally out of” the liberal arts education they provide. This phrasing again emphasizes the interconnectedness between their professional programs and their liberal arts education by suggesting these programs are not a grafted-on addition to the curriculum but rather a “natural” outgrowth of the university’s commitment to the liberal arts.

Transferable Skills as Career Preparation. Many proponents argue that the value of a liberal arts education’s focus on education for its own sake, rather than preparation for a single career, lies in the fact that this teaches students how to learn, providing them with a variety of transferable skills (e.g. Dewey, 1916). It was common in these mission statements, however, to stress how the transferable skills these schools provide them with is essential preparation for their careers, most clearly demonstrated by this statement from UW-Superior:

“The University of Wisconsin-Superior fosters intellectual growth and **career preparation** within a liberal arts tradition that emphasizes individual attention, embodies respect for diverse cultures and multiple voices, and engages the community and region.”

...

Our goal is not to prepare our students for a single job. Our goal is to equip our diverse students and graduates with the essential, transferable knowledge and applied skills that will best prepare them for successful and rewarding lives and

careers in an ever-changing global society. (UW-Superior’s Commitment to our Liberal Arts Mission and Tradition)

UW-Superior outright declares that their “goal is not to prepare students for a single job,” yet only after emphasizing that they “foster intellectual growth and career preparation.” In addition, they state that their goal is “equip” students with “essential, transferable knowledge and applied skills” that will prepare them for “careers in an ever-changing global society.” Thus, UW-Superior is not rejecting career preparation, but rather, using parallelism (“Our goal is not...Our goal is...”) to demonstrate how their approach to career preparation is more “successful and rewarding” than a specialized professional degree. Moreover, the term “ever-changing” modifying the “global society” students will be prepared for careers in invokes an instability in the skills necessary to be economically competitive, again highlighting the need for this “transferable knowledge” to be successful.

Career Preparation to Serve the Local Community. Lastly, as mentioned above, Shuman (2017) sees a commitment to the local community as a core value of COPLAC schools, and 82% of the schools in my samples emphasized this in their mission statement. In some mission statements, this commitment to the local community was used to frame the emphasis on career preparation these schools had, as demonstrated below:

- Offer high-quality academic programs rooted in the tradition of a liberal education in the arts, sciences, **and professions, responsive to the occupational, civic and cultural needs of the region**, and actively seek the continued input of all stakeholders. (UWP – Mission & Vision)

- Post-baccalaureate programs bridge the gap between theory and practice with a focus on regional needs, **preparing graduates for professional advancement**, lifelong intellectual pursuits, and informed participation in today’s complex society. (About Georgia College)

UWP provides a “liberal education in the arts, sciences, and professions” that they insist is “responsive to the occupational, civic, and cultural needs of the region.” The listing in this sentence again links career preparation with common goals of a liberal education (both “arts, sciences, and professions” and “occupational, civic, and cultural needs”) and it also insists the academic programs they offer are in response to regional needs (including the occupational needs). Thus, any professional programs offered can be explained as responsive to the needs of the local community. Similarly, Georgia College states that their post-baccalaureate programs are “preparing graduates for professional advancement” (along with other goals in a similar type of listing as seen above) and notes that these programs have “a focus on regional needs.” Therefore, such programs that exceed the typical bounds of a small liberal arts college are framed as both important to the public stakeholders of these institutions and necessary to realizing the institution’s commitment to the local community. What all of these missions demonstrate, then, is an attempt to reconcile a valuing of career preparation with liberal arts values that stress the importance of education separate from career goals.

Commitments to Access, Diversity, and Inclusion

As mentioned above, and shown in Table 6.2, a commitment to diversity and inclusion is one of the most prevalent values expressed in the mission statements I analyzed, appearing in mission statements for 31 of the 33 schools. Diversity and

inclusion are terms that, without definition, can remain vague or shallow, which makes an analysis of how these terms are invoked in mission statements necessary. Moreover, many institutions continue to fail to fully realize such commitments (Newkirk, 2019; Tienda, 2013), thus I am interested in the specific commitments these institutions are making towards diversity and inclusion. As I mentioned above, while appearing less frequently, I also want to consider commitments to college access alongside commitments to diversity and inclusion because I see a commitment to access as a necessary step in realizing commitments to diversity and inclusion and preventing such statements from being part of a “window-dressing” mission. Therefore, below I will consider how diversity and inclusion statements are framed before moving to how commitments to access are discussed, and how such commitments might support (or not) attempts at increasing diversity and inclusion.

The most common verbs preceding phrases about diversity include: “committed to,” “honoring,” “focused on,” “fosters,” “promotes,”. As I will discuss more below, these verbs avoid acknowledging the necessity of institutions to *create* or even *maintain* a diverse and inclusive campus. That is, saying they “foster,” “honor,” or “promote” diversity and inclusion suggests the university is already diverse and inclusive and the institution only needs to respect and celebrate the diversity and sense of inclusiveness that already exists. While some campuses surely are already diverse, the fact that many marginalized students, faculty, and staff continue to face discrimination on campus suggests that simply “honoring” or “promoting” the diversity present is not enough, and universities must do more to create diverse and inclusive environments. While it is expected that mission statements will remain vague, Wan (2014) reminds us that the

values identified in them still influence university policy, and unlike the verbs “create” or “maintain,” which are aspirational and suggest action on the part of the university towards creating diversity and inclusion initiatives, when a university states they are “focused on” or “committed to” diversity and inclusion, there is little emphasis on what the institution’s role might be in equity and inclusion efforts. Such statements reflect Ahmed’s (2004) notion of the non-performativity of anti-racism declarations. That is, as Mirza (2006), drawing on Ahmed, explains, “Simply ‘being diverse’ means such new universities need not commit to ‘doing diversity’” (p. 104) as their declarations of celebrating diversity are positioned as a significant “measure of good performance” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 104). Moreover, “diversity” itself remains such a vague term, that it may also simply refer to categorical representation such as regional diversity, thus further avoiding attending to issues of power relations and inequality.

Many of the mission statements that emphasize the diversity/inclusiveness of an institution do so by positing the university’s commitment to diversity as a benefit to the students on campus. While this was a common approach across institutions, my analysis in this section will prioritize statements from the minority-serving institutions, such as Sonoma State University (an HSI), Elizabeth City State University (an HBCU), Kentucky State University (an HBCU), and Fort Lewis College (a Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institution), as one might expect such institutions to make a more pronounced commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In some instances, the commitment to diversity is framed as a benefit by emphasizing the way such a commitment prioritizes the needs of students from a diverse background, such as in Sonoma’s commitment to diversity, one of their three core values:

Sonoma State University strives to create a campus climate in which the desire to build trust among people is widely shared, and opportunities for **enhancing diversity and a sense of community are encouraged and supported**. We stand committed to fostering and sustaining a **pluralistic, inclusive environment that empowers all members of the campus community** to achieve their highest potential without fear of prejudice or discrimination. (Sonoma State University, “Diversity”).

In this statement, Sonoma State commits to *enhancing, encouraging, and supporting* diversity, and also to *fostering and sustaining* an inclusive environment. These five verbs suggest the campus is already a diverse and inclusive environment (though the diversity can be “enhanced”) and the institution’s role is to support and sustain that diversity. The reason for this commitment, according to this statement, is to provide a campus experience which “empowers all members of the campus community” so that students can “achieve their highest potential without fear of prejudice or discrimination.” Thus, Sonoma State is framing this commitment to diversity as necessary for the success of their marginalized students—that is, without this commitment students may be prevented from reaching their highest potential. However, the fact they claim to be “sustaining” this environment suggests the campus is already “without . . . prejudice or discrimination,” which potentially closes off any work the university needs to do to create such an environment.

In other instances, a commitment to diversity is not positioned as being about supporting the success of marginalized students, but rather about improving the education

offered by the university, such as in these statements from Elizabeth City State University and Kentucky State University:

- Diversity – **Diversity of viewpoints, experiences, and backgrounds** are critical tools of a quality education in our global marketplace. (“About ECSU”).
- We encourage respect for the dignity, **diversity** and right of individuals. We welcome all students who commit themselves to learning, knowing that **students and faculty with diverse perspectives** enhance our classroom experience. (KSU, “Mission, Vision, and Core Values”).

While these two statements use different linguistic structures, both posit diversity as being about improving the educational experience. ECSU states diversity is one of the “critical tools of a quality education” whereas KSU states that diversity “enhance[s] our classroom experience.” Nowhere in the ECSU statement do we see a commitment to fostering a diverse institution, like we did in the statement from Sonoma State, and KSU simply states that they “encourage respect” for diversity, and that they “welcome students who commit themselves to learning” because they know diverse perspectives will be beneficial. It is possible that, because HBCUs have a long history of being diverse and inclusive institutions (Jewell, 2002), such commitments were deemed unnecessary to make. However, only emphasizing how the diversity on campus improves the educational experience—as true as that may be—contributes to the marketing discourses discussed above, as ECSU highlights by suggesting the diversity on their campus is one of the “critical tools of a quality education *in our global marketplace.*” This circulation of “diversity” through market logics represents what Giroux (1993) describes as a

rearticulation of “politics and difference into the stylized world of aesthetics and consumption” (p. 6). As he explains, focusing primarily on racial diversity, such a rearticulation erases any notions of racial conflict or social justice and positions racial difference as merely a celebration of aesthetic differences. Smith and Mayorga-Gallo’s (2017) study of the principle-policy gap in racial justice prevalent among white millennials demonstrates this problem well, as their interviews reveal how white millennials purport to value diversity, they continue to reject policies like affirmative action because they view diversity as “acceptance of all types of differences” with “no need to focus on the power asymmetries and unequal access to opportunities that arise due to specific, structurally contingent differences” (p. 897).

Lastly, other universities combine these two approaches by emphasizing how a commitment to diversity supports students, while also noting how it improves the education they are able to offer, as demonstrated by this statement from Fort Lewis College:

Value a diversity of cultures and perspectives as a source of intellectual strength and **strive to create an inclusive, equitable environment** in which students flourish and become resilient. (Fort Lewis College, “Mission & Core Values”).

Here, while “a diversity of cultures and perspectives” is valued “as a source of intellectual strength,” much like the ways ECSU and KSU emphasize how diversity can improve the “classroom experience” or the “quality of the education,” Fort Lewis still recognizes that they have to “create an inclusive, equitable environment” so that students can “flourish and become resilient.” While the final phrase suggests their students from

diverse backgrounds are not already “resilient” (that is, they need to “become” resilient), this statement, more than any others examined in this section, recognizes that while increased diversity will improve the educational experience, it is still the responsibility of the university to *create* an inclusive and equitable environment, and not enough to just “respect,” “promote,” or “honor” the diversity already present.

Ideological Diversity and Commitments to Free Speech. Many university mission statements also stress the importance of ideological or viewpoint diversity, as shown in a few of the statements analyzed above, especially when ECSU lists diversity of “viewpoints” before “experiences” or “backgrounds.” This emphasis on ideological diversity appears in a few other mission statements as well:

- We must continue to foster **a deep commitment to supporting diverse communities and appropriately encouraging frank and honest conversation.** Our commitment leads us to envision a future where **all UNC Asheville students, faculty, and staff know they belong regardless of their race and ethnicity, age, religion, disability, socio-economic status, gender expression, gender and sexual identity, national origin, culture, and ideological beliefs.** (UNC Asheville, “Diversity and Inclusion”).
- We foster a sense of belonging within a campus community that **values diversity of intellectual thought, experiences, and identifications.** (About Georgia College).

While UNC Asheville wants to “continue” to support diverse communities, they want to do so at the same time as “encouraging frank and honest conversation.” Moreover, they

include “ideological beliefs” in their list of qualities that should not affect whether or not a student feels they belong. Georgia College similarly wants to foster “a sense of belonging” for all members of campus, but like ECSU they list “diversity of intellectual thought” before “experiences” or “identifications.”

On the surface, commitments to make sure students of all ideological beliefs feel welcome at the university may seem appropriate. However, I argue such commitments are actually counter to commitments to inclusion because of a growing consensus that terms like “ideological” and “viewpoint” diversity are coded statements to defend discriminatory speech and can actually be used to undermine diversity and inclusion initiatives (Dutt-Ballerstadt, 2018; White & Crandall, 2017). For example, if conservative students are allowed to share and promote homophobic beliefs because of a university’s commitment to “ideological diversity,” this actively creates an unsafe environment for queer students, thus undermining any true commitments to “inclusion.” Moreover, such commitments to ideological diversity demonstrate how diversity “can be conscripted into the service of relations of identity and difference that promote an apolitical egalitarianism veiled in an appeal to international harmony” (Giroux, 1993, p. 8). That is, by including ideological diversity among the lists above of marginalized identities, such differences are depoliticized and positioned “in categorical rather than relational terms” (Giroux, 1993, p. 15). Thus, while “frank and honest” conversations about topics like racism, homophobia, sexism, cissexism/transphobia, ableism, etc. are certainly important, welcoming *all* viewpoints/ideologies into those discussions is actually harmful to inclusion and equity through its erasure of history and power relations.

This tension is highlighted as a few universities also include statements defending free speech on their websites:

It is equally important not to stifle the dissemination of any idea, even if other members of our community may find those ideas abhorrent. Individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so, without fear of being bullied, threatened, or silenced. (New College of Florida, “Mission Statement”).

The University of Virginia’s College at Wise is committed to respecting and protecting the constitutional right of free speech. It recognizes the centrality to its academic mission of an environment that protects the open exchange of ideas and freedom of individual expression” (“UVA Wise Mission & Goals”)

A community where freedom of expression is protected; differences in others’ ideas, values, and experiences are respected; and where civility is positively affirmed” (Northern Vermont University, “Community Values”).

Again, such statements are increasingly being recognized as coded statements in defense of discriminatory ideas and they contribute to the marketplace idea of diversity which ignores power relations described above. These problems are especially highlighted in the statement from New College which states it is important “not to stifle the dissemination of *any* idea” (emphasis mine), even if some may find those ideas “abhorrent.” It is important to question what these “abhorrent” ideas might be, and why New College is committed to protecting them and how doing so might undermine any efforts at creating an inclusive environment. NVU shows more tension, in that they want to “protect” and “respect” all ideas, while also “affirm” civility. The frequency of commitments to

diversity that include viewpoint or ideological diversity and the frequency of commitments to free speech along with those diversity and inclusion commitments, then, suggests these mission statements do not recognize that discriminatory speech is inherently uncivil and thus leave unexplored the inherent conflict between allowing “any idea” to be voiced and the creation of an inclusive climate.

Accessible—But Still High Quality. As mentioned above, while college access was invoked as an important value less frequently than the more vague “diversity and inclusion” was, I see realizing access as a necessary step towards true inclusion, as a university cannot be truly inclusive if it is not accessible to all by removing barriers that may prevent equitable participation from certain student demographics. Moreover, COPLAC documents and other scholarship frequently identify access as one of its common values (Bates, 2014; Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016; Shuman, 2017). Therefore, I contend that a consideration of how diversity and inclusion efforts are linguistically realized requires a consideration of the framing and discussion of commitments to access, even if less frequent. What is most commonly suggested in the mission statements that invoke access is an anxiety that “accessible” means “of lesser quality.” This anxiety is realized in two common ways. The first approach is by emphasizing that, despite being accessible, these institutions are still high quality. Examples include:

- **Access:** We believe a high quality liberal arts education should be **available and affordable to all who aspire to it** and are prepared for its challenges. MCLA is committed to providing this opportunity. (MCLA Mission and Values Statement).

- We counter the common perception that quality is not affordable. Year after year **USAO is nationally recognized for its affordability, upward social mobility**, as well as the rigor of its academic approach. (USAO’s Mission and Objectives).
- COPLAC institutions like UW-Superior provide **students from all backgrounds access to** outstanding, affordable, well-rounded liberal arts educations. (UW-Superior’s Commitment to our Liberal Arts Mission and Tradition).

MCLA states, in their explicit commitment to access, that what should be “available and affordable to all” is not just a liberal arts education but a “high quality liberal arts education. The modal auxiliary verb “should,” when stating that this high-quality education “should be available and affordable to all” indicates a perception that this type of education is *not* typically available to all—and that such a high-quality education is possible without being accessible to all. USAO, on the other hand, explicitly acknowledges this perception, starting their statement by saying they “counter the common perception that quality is not affordable.” Through their listing of qualities the school is “nationally recognized” for, they include two traits I associate with accessibility, “affordability” and “upward social mobility” (implying their education provides working-class students with the means of accessing more economic advantages) before including “the rigor of its academic approach.” The conjunction “as well as,” as opposed to “and,” puts emphasis on this rigor, suggesting it is different from the other two items on the list, again acknowledging that the rigor and quality of its education is somehow noteworthy because of its affordability and accessibility. While in some ways

emphasizing the quality of the accessible education these institutions provide makes sense as a response to conservative arguments that accessibility lowers standards (Fox, 1999), Horner's (1999) discussion of the discourse surrounding open admissions suggests this binary between accessibility and academic quality is damaging even when it appears in arguments for open admissions and accessibility. As he explains, arguments for open admissions at CUNY "claimed to maintain the role of the university in preserving and reproducing 'academic excellence' but . . . add to that a different role for the university accommodating a different kind of student. Such arguments thus maintained the terms of the binary while offering a narrative resolution" (p. 10). The mission statements cited above offer a similar narrative of resolution, as quality is positioned as something already achieved by these institutions that they are now offering *to* students previously restricted from accessing a high-quality liberal arts education.

UW-Superior's emphasis on quality and accessibility is more subtle than the other two I discussed, as it lists the qualities of its liberal arts education ("outstanding, affordable, well-rounded") in a simple fashion that includes traits of accessibility ("affordable") along with those associated with quality ("outstanding" and "well-rounded"). However, the noun phrases this statement uses again highlight that quality and accessibility are not a typical combination. The subject of this sentence is not just "UW-Superior" but "COPLAC institutions like UW-Superior" By relying on their membership in COPLAC—and prioritizing COPLAC as the subject, stating UW-Superior is just one example—this statement suggests a prestige contingent on membership in a parent organization (in fact, COPLAC was described as "prestigious" a few sentences before the one I quoted and said to be "championing the cause of liberal arts education of superior

quality”). That is, despite whatever UW-Superior’s reputation might be as a small state school, they link themselves to an organization associated with prestige and quality to emphasize the high quality of their education. Moreover, it is not just the simple object “students” that have “access to” this high-quality education but “students from all backgrounds,” once again emphasizing that this quality education is accessible to all.

Accessible...to Students with Merit. While the schools discussed above try to highlight the quality of the education they provide to counter a perception that accessible means not of high quality, the second common approach to addressing this tension was not by emphasizing the quality of the education they provide, but rather by emphasizing the “merit” of their students. That is, these schools turn this tension outward by insisting that their students who may be from non-traditional backgrounds or marginalized groups were still talented and motivated enough to be at this school. Below are four examples, two from different documents from Truman State University, as this was the school that emphasized the merit of their students the most:

“Truman State University is here to open opportunity, promote access and social mobility, foster excellence, recognize merit, and do all things that urge our students to make themselves productive, free and equal.” (Truman – Mission & Vision).

Truman will act to preserve our democracy by **educating ‘the whole mass of people’** by:

- **Ensuring access to an increasingly diverse student population** while maintaining its commitment to **academic excellence** through recruitment and

mentorship of students **capable of succeeding in an academically challenging environment**; and

- **Expanding its reach to students who aspire to complete a Truman education, yet arrive through non-traditional paths.** (Truman – Vision Statement).

For undergraduates, **our vision is to offer academically capable students from all sociodemographic backgrounds an affordable, life-enriching ‘honors college’ experience**” (About UM – The University of Montevallo).

Shepherd University provides services to all qualified students. Our staff and faculty are available to students and are committed to respecting and **meeting individual needs.** (About Shepherd – Shepherd Core Values).

The “Mission & Vision” from Truman State University uses a similar listing technique as described above. In this particular list, Truman states it will “open opportunity, promote access and social mobility” but also “recognize merit.” While it is unclear in this statement how they will recognize merit, or what particular types of merit they are envisioning, the longer “Vision Statement” provides a clearer picture. In the bulleted statements about how they will achieve their commitment to access, the first statement explains that they will do so by “[e]nsuring access to an increasingly diverse student population while maintaining its commitment to academic excellence.” The conjunction “while” suggests it would be possible to ensure access to diverse students without maintaining a commitment to academic excellence—or that academic excellence is achievable when that education is not accessible to a diverse study body. More importantly, the way they plan to maintain this commitment is “through recruitment and

mentorship of students capable of succeeding in an academically challenging environment.” This commitment to maintaining academic excellence, then, is shifting responsibility away from the institution, as they may not necessarily be planning to increase their support services for students who may be struggling or to improve their academic programs. Rather, they just plan to recruit students they already view as “academically capable.” Thus, Truman State University’s vision statement is emphasizing that “ensuring access to an increasingly diverse student population” does not mean accepting students who are not “capable,” yet it remains unclear how they are defining “capable.”

In the mission statements for the University of Montevallo and Shepherd University we see modifiers to the word “students” that convey similar messages as the language in Truman’s vision statement. While UM wants to provide an affordable education “from all sociodemographic backgrounds” and Shepherd wants to “provide services to all . . . students” in these statements “students” is preceded with the modifiers “academically capable” and “qualified,” respectively. Each of these statements, then, makes it clear that they do not intend to accept students who are unqualified or incapable—the students must have enough merit to be there. These statements are counter to a commitment to access, then, because as Fox (1999) explains a “lack of skills only rarely explains failure. Instead, failure is usually caused by a complex web of social and political circumstances” (p. 11).

Overall, these statements reveal an anxiety that providing college access to larger groups of students—or to students who have previously been excluded—means lowering standards or accepting unworthy students. Yet as Fox (1999) argues, standards “often

inhibit access” (p. 2), and without a thorough examination of the assumptions undergirding standards currently in place, commitments to economic and social access will not be achieved. This anxiety about access lowering quality aligns with the concern about the “selectivity” of COPLAC institutions in Shuman’s history that I outlined above. As Horner (1999) explains, such an anxiety makes such commitments to accessibility and affordability vulnerable, as it positions them as a “potential drain” on the institutions’ quality. In his example of a statement on CUNY’s open admissions from the New York City Board of Higher Education which positions “ethnic integration” as potentially opposed to “academic excellence,” he argues:

This set of assumed oppositions becomes more evident if we imagine alternative ways the Board could have framed the issues. For example, the Board could have justified re-examining its programs and structures and admitting the new students as a means by which to *achieve* “educational integrity” rather than presenting the admission of the new students as something threatening that integrity. That the University should “provide for remedial and other supportive services for all students requiring them,” as the Board advises in its statement on Open Admissions, could be taken as a policy directive appropriate to any school regardless of its admissions policy rather than one made necessary strictly by a policy of open admissions, and it could be described as one integral to rather than distinct from maintain and enhancing academic excellence” (p.11, emphasis in original).

Such an argument is relevant to the mission statements quoted in this section, as they also fail to recognize support services for all students as means of *achieving* quality. Rather,

they position accessibility as a potential threat to quality and limit their admissions to students who can already demonstrate an undefined notion of “merit.” In many ways, this opposition between accessibility and selective admissions is counter to a commitment to access as it suggests only certain students are capable of achieving the desired outcomes of an education at this institution. That is, these universities are not accessible to *all*; they are accessible only to certain students. Moreover, because admission tools replicate social biases, emphasizing the merit or qualifications of students without elaboration may suggest the institution is doing little to counteract or overcome those biases

Writing Program Websites and Public Liberal Arts Values

After coding and analyzing the university mission statements, I turned my attention to the 22 writing program websites I collected. Table 6.5 displays the frequency of the values I identified in these writing program websites. It is surely no surprise that “Writing Skills,” a code I added for the writing program websites, appeared in the writing program websites for all 22 schools. The second-most frequent code was Undergraduate Teaching, appearing in program websites for 17 of the 22 schools. Again, I do not find it surprising that writing program websites purport to value undergraduate teaching, especially at liberal arts colleges, which are said to prioritize undergraduate teaching over other commitments. Therefore, I will not provide a detailed discussion of this values code.

| Value | Percentage of Schools |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Writing Skills | 100 % (22 schools) |
| Undergraduate Teaching | 77% (17 schools) |
| Accountability | 64% (14 schools) |
| Transfer | 64% (14 schools) |
| Broad/General Education | 55% (12 schools) |
| Critical Thinking | 55% (12 schools) |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Student-Centeredness | 41% (9 schools) |
| Personal Development | 36% (8 schools) |
| Career Preparation | 32% (7 schools) |
| Civic Engagement | 32% (7 schools) |
| Communication Skills | 32% (7 schools) |
| Inquiry and Reflection | 32% (7 schools) |
| Quality of Education | 32% (7 schools) |
| Small Class Size | 32% (7 schools) |
| Applied Knowledge | 27% (6 schools) |
| Challenging/Rigorous Education | 27% (6 schools) |
| Diversity and Inclusion | 27% (6 schools) |
| Interdisciplinarity | 27% (6 schools) |
| Student Motivation | 27% (6 schools) |

Table 6.5 Values that Appeared in At Least 25% of Writing Program Websites

The code Accountability simply refers to instances in which the writing program website identifies that they are fulfilling a state and/or university mandate (as this shows they value accountability to these stakeholders), thus I do not find it interesting to discuss in this section either. Nor do I find a discussion of the ways transfer is invoked on these websites a valuable discussion to have here, as a deeper analysis into syllabi and assignments would be necessary to fully understand how these programs are committing themselves to fostering transfer. Instead, I will discuss how these writing program websites situate their programs within a commitment to a liberal arts education before turning to the noticeable lack of references to Diversity & Inclusion or Access among these writing program websites, despite the prevalence of such values in university mission statements.

Writing as Central to the Liberal Arts

As mentioned above, many of these writing program websites position themselves as central to the institution's liberal arts mission. As one of many examples, Truman State University's website states that

Students who successfully complete Writing as Critical Thinking will understand and appreciate **the central role writing and critical thinking play in becoming an active student of the liberal arts.** (Truman State University, “Liberal Studies Program (LSP): Essential Skills”).

While there are many examples of this rhetorical move, the two quotes in the epigraph of this chapter provide, perhaps, the most striking examples of how these writing programs envision themselves as central to the liberal arts missions of these schools:

- **Faculty in the Writing Program consider their courses “heirs of the ancient liberal art of rhetoric.”** The study of rhetoric began in Greece, about 2,500 years ago, as the art of using language persuasively. (Fort Lewis College, “Liberal Arts Core,” 2016-2017 Catalog of Courses)
- As a significant assessment tool, the Writing Proficiency Exam presents the University with a unique opportunity to determine whether students have the necessary skills to achieve success, to provide timely instruction when they don’t, and **to ensure that the University community is providing the kind of liberal arts education MSU promises.** This commitment to critical thinking and writing not only benefits MSU students but enhances the value of a Midwestern State University degree. (Midwestern State University, “Writing Proficiency Exam Requirement”)

In the description from Fort Lewis College, which comes from a website devoted not just to the writing program but their entire “Liberal Arts Core,” they describe the writing courses as “heirs of the ancient liberal art of rhetoric,” thus suggesting their courses stem

from a long liberal arts tradition. More importantly, the definition they then provide for rhetoric is Western-centric, situating the study of rhetoric as “beg[inning] in Greece, about 2,500 years ago.” While this statement again situates the writing courses as part of a long liberal arts tradition, it also seems to contradict the “diversity of cultures and perspectives” that Fort Lewis college purports to value in their mission statement, discussed above. In other words, this definition contributes to a devaluing of rhetorical traditions from other cultures as it situates rhetoric as arising from Greece.

Midwestern State University, which does not have a website for their writing courses but does for their required writing proficiency exam, takes a different approach to situating this writing requirement within the liberal arts tradition, yet one that has similar problems. In a list of “opportunities” the WPE “presents” to the university, they include that it “ensure[s] that the University community is providing the kind of liberal arts education MSU promises.” The verbs “ensure” and “promise” in this statement highlight the way MSU is relying on their core liberal arts values to cast this exam as beneficial to the students as it provides evidence that the university will fulfill this commitment to providing a liberal arts education. Moreover, by saying that it will ensure that the “University community,” rather than, say, the English department, will provide this education, it is suggested that the responsibility for writing instruction lies with that entire “University community.” However, what I wish to explore is the suggestion that a timed writing exam is necessary to “ensure” a “liberal arts education.” As I argue extensively above, COPLAC and many of its member institutions suggest that what makes them unique is the ways in which they make a liberal arts education accessible to all. And yet, there is significant evidence that timed writing exams are *not* accessible to all students in

the same ways (e.g. Principe & Graziano-King, 2008; Weigle & Friginal, 2015).

Therefore, stating that an inequitable assessment measure is necessary to “ensure” a liberal arts education undermines many of the goals of inclusion and accessibility I discuss above. In the next section, then, I will consider the ways the writing program websites at the public liberal arts colleges I analyzed fail to demonstrate the same commitment to diversity and inclusion or college access that is represented in many of the mission statements analyzed above.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Access in Writing Program Websites

A significant gap across these writing program websites were commitments to diversity & inclusion and access, especially considering their significance in institutional mission and values statements. Access, you will note, does not appear in table 6.5, in which I listed the values that appeared in at least 25% of writing program websites. This is because, despite being positioned as a central value of COPLAC member institutions, which I discuss above, it was only present in two of the 22 writing program websites I analyzed, and neither of these appearances were significant. Sonoma State includes a “Disability and Accommodations Statement” page for their writing proficiency exam, which I coded as access, and SUNY Geneseo notes that “All courses must be open and accessible to all students in the College, i.e. no section will be reserved for particular majors.” While I coded this statement from SUNY Geneseo with Access because it mentions courses must be “accessible to all students,” it is clear from the example they provide—that sections will not be reserved for particular majors—that they are not necessarily thinking about accessibility as a move towards inclusion and equity here. Therefore, I would contend that none of these 22 writing program websites make a

significant commitment to access. This, of course, does not mean such a commitment is not present, yet by not articulating it on these websites, these programs are giving the impression it is not as important as the values they do take the time to discuss.

Diversity and Inclusion fared slightly better than Access in the writing program websites, appearing in websites for six of the 22 schools. Each of these six instances were in lists of program outcomes, and like SUNY Geneseo's statement which I coded for Access, they did not all approach diversity in ways we might normally associate with that term. For example, MCLA has an outcome that students will be able to "critically and carefully read a diversity of texts." Again, this statement specifically uses the word diversity, but only in reference to the texts read; thus, it does not make a sustained commitment to diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups within the writing program or the institution at large. The three diversity outcomes that do draw on the term in typical ways are Shepherd's outcome of "an understanding of ethnic/cultural diversity" and Fort Lewis's outcome that students "demonstrate knowledge of the a) diversity of past and present human cultures and b) physical and natural world." It is important to note, however, that while this diversity outcome at Shepherd University is a listed outcome of the FYW class, for Fort Lewis, the diversity outcome mentioned is listed only as an outcome of the entire "Liberal Arts Core"; thus it may not necessarily be expected to be addressed in FYW. While codifying such a commitment to diversity within learning outcomes definitely conveys the importance of these values, it has to be questioned why these values do not appear elsewhere in the writing program websites—especially considering the ways Fort Lewis's definition of rhetoric undermines commitments to diversity and inclusion, as I argue above. Thus, since 94% of the public liberal arts

colleges in my sample profess commitments to diversity and inclusion in their mission statements, yet this value is rarely articulated in writing program websites, these writing programs can and should do more to situate how, as a program, they work to fulfill this commitment to the university and to their students, an argument I elaborate below.

Conclusions

My analysis above shows significant tensions between competing values within the mission statements of public liberal arts university, namely those between a commitment to diversity and inclusion without an explicit emphasis on increasing attempts at improving inclusion or college access, a strong commitment to ideological diversity which can work against such attempts at inclusion, and an attempt to balance career preparation with more common goals of a liberal arts education. While the WPAs I interviewed in previous chapters felt their goals aligned with those of the institution at-large, writing program websites did not as frequently articulate these same values. To conclude this chapter, this section summarizes those tensions and silences while providing some suggestions for future research and for revisions to writing program websites.

COPLAC has a stated commitment to Diversity & Inclusion and College Access, both of which are included in the membership criteria as necessary for member institutions to include. Diversity and Inclusion is emphasized as a core value of the institution in 94% of the mission statements I analyzed, suggesting these institutions are explicitly aligning themselves with this goal frequently. As I demonstrate above, however, while a few institutions note the ways they will “create” or “maintain” a diverse and inclusive environment, most are suggesting the university is *already* diverse and

inclusive enough and the only action the university needs to take is “promoting” or “celebrating” that diversity, or they suggest that simply recruiting and admitting students from diverse backgrounds will achieve these goals of diversity and inclusion on its own. Furthermore, some institutions also include “ideological” or “viewpoint” diversity as one of the types of diversity they want to promote or increase, and/or they include commitments to free speech which argue that all ideas must be respected. As I argue above, some statements often actually work against attempts to create an inclusive environment, as there need to be limits to what ideas and viewpoints are acceptable to be expressed if a campus environment is truly going to be inclusive to all students.

Because diversity and inclusion initiatives often remain ineffective because of resistance to moves beyond “symbolic gestures” (Newkirk, 2019), I argue above that the goal of increasing college access is one necessary step in realizing a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Only 52% of the institutions in my sample, however, identify college access as a core value in their mission and vision statements. While COPLAC documents note the affordability of such institutions (which they tie to their public status) as being one of the ways in which they increase college access, college mission statements emphasized affordability even less frequently (only 33% of schools). This raises questions about how COPLAC is identifying this commitment to college access as it evaluates its members.

Moreover, these commitments sometimes appear in tension with a valuing of “selectivity.” Shuman (2017) repeatedly identifies COPLAC institutions as being “selective,” even contrasting their “selective admissions” with “open admissions.” As I mention above, this might have to do with the fact that many of these institutions are also

trying to work against notions that they are inferior versions of the state flagship school (e.g. Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016). As I stated above, this notion of “selectivity” is inherently at odds with goals of increasing access, and we can also see the tension between these values in the ways in which they are positioned together in mission statements. While I did not see any direct references to how selective the institutions were in mission and vision statements (though this may appear in other institutional documents), many of the mission statements I analyze above demonstrate this tension through their suggestions that while their university is accessible, it is still “high-quality” and attracts motivated and talented students. Even further, some suggest the institution is accessible only to qualified students, suggesting limits still exist on that accessibility. Further research into student and faculty demographics and the perceptions of the campus culture held by students and faculty who belong to marginalized groups would be needed to examine the ways in which these institutions are realizing (or not) commitments to college access.

Similar to the tensions between inclusion and access and selectivity, these mission statements also frequently demonstrate tensions between common liberal arts values and expectations that the school will prepare students for careers. The latter goal is to be expected, as institutions have increasing pressures to demonstrate the relevance of their education in a tightening economic market (e.g., Delucchi, 1997; Janangelo, 2016; Scott and Welch, 2016; Wan, 2014). Through their attempts to tie preparation for successful careers to other goals of the institution or explain how their professional degrees are supported by the liberal arts education of the institution, these mission statements situate these differing values as aligned. Further research into curricula and breakdown of

degrees awarded at these institutions could provide insight into how these institutions are navigating these different educational goals.

Lastly, the writing program websites I analyzed situate the goals of their programs within the institutions' larger goals of providing a liberal arts education about 55% of the time. This suggests that the majority of these programs do, at least partially, see their goals as aligned with those of the institution at large. Recognizing Schoen's (2019) advice that WPAs should work to align their programmatic goals with the university's mission statement if they are not at odds, it is surprising that diversity and inclusion and college access appear so infrequently in these writing program websites—especially considering that the WPAs I interviewed mostly viewed these as goals of their programs (see previous two chapters). It is true that writing program websites may often be out of date, and additional research would need to be conducted to investigate the extent to which these commitments are being fulfilled by the writing programs themselves. At the same time, Isaacs (2018) argues that what writing programs *publicly* value is important. To further formalize a commitment to diversity and inclusion and college access, then, writing program websites can and should do more to situate their programs in relationship to these institutional goals on their public-facing documents. Not only would such moves further establish the writing programs as central to the university's mission, but, as Vander Lei and Pugh's (2016) suggest, they might put WPAs in the position of further influencing the way these goals are realized throughout the university.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In this dissertation, I have offered a look at the workings of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges in order to consider how institutional context influences the development and enactment of writing programs and how WPAs navigate competing institutional values as they design responsive writing programs. First, I identified a public liberal arts college structure of feeling, which builds on Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) small liberal arts college structure of feeling by adding a commitment to increasing college access, which is at times at odds with a desire to be perceived as a high-quality and selective institution, and a large focus on community engagement. After identifying this structure of feeling, I turned to an overview of the common features of writing programs in my relatively small sample, identifying some key differences from the private SLACs in Gladstein and Regaignon's sample, which I speculate arise from the public status of these institutions. These differences include the fact PLACs are twice as likely as private SLACs to have non-tenure-track instructors teaching first-year writing and much more likely to allow opportunities to place out of first-year writing. Despite these differences, WPAs at PLACs similarly felt their institution had a strong commitment to writing and were all involved in efforts to further formalize that commitment to writing.

While previous research has suggested the split identity of PLACs causes a more diluted commitment to liberal arts education than that of their private counterparts (e.g.

Fulford, 2009; Malenczyk & Rosenberg, 2016), the WPAs I interviewed for this dissertation identified a few common features of their public liberal arts identity, including a commitment to diversity and inclusion, a focus on college access, and a strong sense of community and relationship with the local community in which the campuses exist. These commitments echo the aspects of the public liberal arts college structure of feeling I had identified from the literature. Moreover, while I argue that my interviews demonstrate an even more pronounced tension between faculty autonomy and central leadership than at private SLACs and include additional layers of central leadership, such as state systems of higher education, WPAs were relatively successful in advocating for programmatic efforts by appealing to the values of the institutional mission, in part because these values included a professed commitment to writing. While funding was a “perpetual issue” for many, though not all, of my participants, writing program efforts were generally supported because of the role they played in advancing the institution’s mission.

Lastly, I turned to mission statements and writing program websites to analyze how public liberal arts values are linguistically realized in mission statements. This final chapter found that the mission statements of public liberal arts colleges reveal a tension between competing values. These tensions include: a commitment to diversity and inclusion that either fails to move beyond “symbolic gestures” or highlights ideological diversity, which works against efforts at inclusion that focus on the ending of inequality; a tension between college access and the “quality” or selectivity” of the institution; and a tension between common liberal arts values and a focus on “career preparation.” More importantly, while the WPAs I spoke with saw their work as aligned with the institution’s

mission writ large, the writing program websites did not frequently articulate the same values. Thus, I argue that WPAs should highlight the work their programs do towards increasing access and inclusion on their websites.

This study has several uses for writing program administrators at public liberal arts colleges. The report on common structures in chapter 3 may be useful for PLAC WPAs to see where their programs both align and diverge from trends across this institutional type. This identification can be useful in bolstering the aspects of their programs that make them unique but may also be useful in advocating for changes in the writing program that more closely align them with their peer institutions. For instance, WPAs at the 33% of PLACs that offer a non-credit-bearing basic writing requirement may find it useful to demonstrate that it is more common for peer institutions to provide students in basic writing with credit as they appeal to upper administrators to make this change. Moreover, as my interview data chapters demonstrate the ways WPAs were able to formalize writing program structures and navigate tensions among competing values at their institution, these chapters provide useful examples for how WPAs at public liberal arts college may leverage their institutional values to advocate for “best practices” in writing program administration and pedagogy. While most of the WPAs I interviewed had to navigate significant pressures from centralized leadership, and felt they had little authority as WPAs, PLAC WPAs in similar positions may follow Hannah’s lead, for example, in resisting system-wide mandates by demonstrating how different approaches more closely align with the shared values on their unique campus. Furthermore, while most of the WPAs discussed in this dissertation (with the notable exception of Holly) faced significant restraints due to limited state funding for higher education, by

demonstrating the important role the writing program played in the enactment of the institution's core liberal arts values, they were able to avoid some of these pressures and budget cuts. Thus, other PLAC WPAs may draw on these examples to preserve important aspects of their writing programs in the face of tight budget cuts.

This dissertation also has implications for WPAs more broadly. As I argue throughout, this study demonstrates that WPAs can successfully advocate for responsive programmatic design by rhetorically aligning their programmatic initiatives with institutional values. While I have demonstrated the ways in which multiple PLAC WPAs engage in this work, this is likely a useful strategy for WPAs at all types of institutions. As Porter et al. (2000) explain,

Universities are not likely to be swayed by arguments within particular fields and disciplines . . . In short, there exists a gap between global ideals and either local or systemic institutional change. Somewhere between the macro-level national critiques and the micro-level practices on individual campuses is space for an action plan informed by critique yet responsive to local conditions. (p. 616)

In other words, while university admin may not be swayed by arguments from Rhetoric and Composition about what approaches to writing program administration or writing pedagogy may look like, my dissertation demonstrates some of the ways WPAs may develop an action plan responsive to their local conditions by tying their initiatives to the local values of the institution.

Furthermore, in their explanation of institutional critique, Porter et al. (2000) state that while institutions may often seem unchangeable, they “do contain spaces for reflection, resistance, revision, and productive action” and they argue that individuals

(including WPAs) can “rewrite institutions through rhetorical action” (p. 613). For Porter et al., institutions are created and maintained through rhetorical systems and it is through rhetorical action that institutions are able to be changed. It is for this reason that my final chapter argues for more alignment between institutional values and writing program practices on writing program websites. By situating how their writing programs contribute to institutional commitments to increasing college access, for example, WPAs are able to not only solidify the importance of their writing program to such institutional commitments, and thus demonstrate the importance of the writing program and its initiatives to the university as a whole, but they also position themselves to shape the discourses around such commitments that circulate at the university. That is, however tangential documents like websites may feel to the real work of writing program administration, public-facing documents such as websites are a discursive place in which, in the words of Porter et al., “writing . . . can be deployed to promote change” (p. 631). This dissertation, then, makes a contribution towards approaches to institutional change by arguing for the necessity of WPAs engaging in the revision of public-facing writing program documents to shape dominant discourses on their campuses.

Further Research

While this dissertation has explored the work of writing program administration at public liberal arts colleges, there are several important avenues for future research that have emerged. First, due to the low response rate to my survey, more quantitative research into the common structures of writing programs at PLACs is necessary in order to determine how generalizable my findings are. That is, it remains to be seen whether the 12 writing programs I was able to map out represent common trends across writing

programs at PLACs or whether they remain relatively unique. Furthermore, while my survey data reports on the ways writing programs are configured, it says little about *how* writing programs came to be configured in this way. While the interviews I report on discuss some attempts at program design, the field could benefit from more historiographic work into the development of writing programs at public liberal arts colleges. As I speculate at points throughout this dissertation, the lack of a shared history, which Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) claim private SLACs have, among PLACs may contribute to an interesting diversity of paths towards current writing program structures. It would be interesting to consider how some of these institutions built upon their normal school roots, for instance, as they developed curricula to fit their new institutional identity.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation closes with a discussion of the ways in which some of my interview participants felt that, while shrinking budgets were a significant challenge they had to contend with, their public liberal arts colleges were more financially secure than many private SLACs *because* of their connection to a state system. As this research was conducted at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, and the pandemic has exasperated financial difficulties for many institutions, it may also be necessary to investigate how WPAs have had to shift their practices in response to the budget shortfalls that arose from this pandemic. In other words, it is very possible I spoke to these WPAs shortly before significant changes had to take place, and as the pandemic has now lasted much longer than many of us expected it would in May of 2020, it's likely the WPAs I spoke with did not see these potential changes coming. Moreover, since I was unable to find any data that corroborated or

contrasted their claims that PLACs were more financially secure than many private SLACs, research into the financial conditions of these different institutional types is necessary to determine the extent to which this is true, especially after 13 months of a pandemic.

Lastly, as I identify early in this dissertation, a core aspect of the public liberal arts college structure of feeling is a pronounced commitment to college access, yet chapter 6 reveals the way this value is often in tension with a valuing of selective admissions and academic quality in institutional mission statements—and often absent all together from writing program websites. However, as I mention throughout, many of the WPAs I spoke with felt their institutions and their writing programs were strongly committed to increasing college access. As I recognize that both websites and WPAs’s perceptions provide a limited look into the extent to which institutions are actually fulfilling commitments to college access, more research is needed to consider the extent to which PLACs are living up to this core value. An analysis of a larger repository of writing program documents, including syllabi, writing prompts, rubrics, program assessments, placement measures, etc. could provide a more balanced look into the work writing programs are doing than websites can alone. Furthermore, collecting data on admission criteria, admission rates, and student and faculty demographics could provide more insight into the representational diversity on campus and the extent to which the admissions are selective. Most importantly, to truly understand the culture of access on campus, interviews with historically underrepresented students would be necessary to provide their insights into how inclusive and accessible the campus is. If it is true that PLACs are more strongly committed to college access than other types of institutions,

such research could also provide WPAs with models for developing accessible and inclusive writing programs.

Overall, I hope WPAs continue to take up an interest in institutional context and the way institutional values shape the work we do in our writing programs. While public liberal arts colleges may make up a small sector of the higher education landscape in the US, their unique institutional identity can provide interesting insights into how institutional identity shapes WPA work and writing pedagogy. Moreover, because of their explicit commitment to increasing college access, more research into PLACs generally can help our field continue to interrogate how our work can foster college access and meet the needs of all of our students.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism. *Borderlands*, 3(2).
- Amorose, T. (2000). WPA Work at the Small College or University: Re-Imagining Power and Making the Small School Visible. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 23(3), 85–103.
- Bates, R. (2014). The Liberal Arts Leave the Ivory Tower and Enter the Trenches. In R. Epp & B. Spellman (Eds.), *Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good* (pp. 207–220). Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press.
- Berlin, J. A. (1984). *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth Century American Colleges*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Berlin, J. A. (1987). *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bizzell, P. (1992). Cognition, Convention, and Certainty. In *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness* (pp. 75–104). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Bizzell, P. (2017). William Perry and Liberal Education. *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*, 46(5), 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7zwb7k.10>

- Brereton, J. C. (1995). Introduction. In J. C. Brereton (Ed.), *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 18775-1925* (pp. 3–25). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Carroll, S., Pegg, B., & Newmann, S. (2000). Size Matters: Administering a Writing Center in a Small College Setting. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 24(5), 1–5.
Retrieved from <https://wlnjournal.org/archives/v24/24.5.pdf>
- Connors, R. J. (1997). *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Cooper, M. M. (2016). *The Ecology of Writing*. 48(4), 364–375.
- Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges. (March, 2019). *COPLAC Membership Criteria*.
Retrieved April 15, 2020. http://coplac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/COPLAC_Membership_Criteria_APPROVED_2.pdf
- Crowley, S. (1998). *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Delucchi, M. (1997). “Liberal arts” colleges and the myth of uniqueness. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(4), 414–426. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2960010>
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education*.
- Donahue, P., & Falbo, B. (2007). (The Teaching of) Reading and Writing at Lafayette College. In P. Donahue & G. F. Moon (Eds.), *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition* (pp. 38–57). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Dutt-Ballerstadt, R. (2018). When Free Speech Disrupts Diversity Initiatives: What We

- Value and What We Do Not. *Faculty Publications*. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/englfac_pubs/49
- Ede, L. (2004). *Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Elizabeth City State University. (n.d.). *About ECSU*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <http://www.ecsu.edu/about/index.html>
- Eodice, M., Geller, A. E., & Lerner, N. (2016). *The Meaningful Writing Project: Learning, Teaching, and Writing in Higher Education*. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Epp, R., & Spellman, B. (2014). Introduction: Roads Taken. In R. Epp & B. Spellman (Eds.), *Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good* (pp. 1–20). Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 9–20). <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.148.27lee>
- Falbo, B. (2004). When Teaching Is a Private Affair. *Composition Studies*, 32(2), 93–108. Retrieved from <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Folsom, E. (2001). Degrees of Success, Degrees of Failure: The Changing Dynamics of the English PhD and Small-College Careers. *Profession*, 121–129. Retrieved from

<https://about.jstor.org/terms>

Fort Lewis College. (2016). *Liberal Arts Core*. Retrieved April 20, 2020.

<https://catalog.fortlewis.edu/content.php?catoid=46&navoid=3103>

Fort Lewis College. (n.d.). *Mission & Core Values*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.

<https://www.fortlewis.edu/about-flc/leadership/mission-core-values>

Fox, T. (1999). *Defending Access: A Critique of Standards in Higher Education*.

Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.

Fulford, C. J. (2009). *Writing across the curriculum program development as ideological and rhetorical practice* (University of Massachusetts Amherst). Retrieved from

http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1096&context=open_access_dissertations

Georgia College and State University. (n.d.). *About Georgia College*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://www.gcsu.edu/about>

Giroux, H. A. (1993). Consuming Social Change: The “United Colors of Benetton.”

Cultural Critique, Winter 199(26), 5–32.

Gladstein, J., Lebduska, L., & Regaignon, D. R. (2009). Consortia as Sites of Inquiry:

Steps Toward a National Portrait of Writing Program Administration. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 32(3), 13–36. Retrieved from

<http://wpacouncil.org.echo.louisville.edu/archives/32n3/32n3gladstein.pdf>

Gladstein, J. M., & Regaignon, D. R. (2012). *Writing Program Administration at Small Liberal Arts Colleges*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Gold, D. (2008). *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in*

- American Colleges, 1873-1947*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Gold, D., & Hobbs, C. (2014). *Educating the New Southern Woman: Speech, Writing, and Race in Public Women's Colleges, 1884-1945*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Hanstedt, P. (2003). Service and the Life of the Small-School Academic. *Profession*, 76–84. Retrieved from <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Hanstedt, P., & Amorose, T. (2004). The Idea of the Small School: Beginning a Discussion about Composition at Small Colleges and Universities. *Composition Studies*, 32(2), 13–29. Retrieved from <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Haswell, R. (2012). Quantitative Methods in Composition Studies: An Introduction to Their Functionality. In L. Nickoson & M. P. Sheridan (Eds.), *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies* (pp. 185–196). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Hayes, W. (2015). *The Fate of Liberal Arts in Today's Schools and Colleges*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Haynes, J. K. (2002). Linking departmental and institutional mission. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2002(119), 65–68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.72>
- Hebb, J. (2005). Reenvisioning WPAs in Small Colleges as “Writing People Advocates.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 29(2), 97–110. Retrieved from <http://wpacouncil.org.echo.louisville.edu/archives/29n1-2/29n1-2-Hebb.pdf>
- Henderson State University. (n.d.). *Vision and Mission*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.

<https://www.hsu.edu/pages/about/strategic-plan/vision-and-mission/>

Holcomb, Z. C. (1998). *Fundamentals of Descriptive Statistics*. Los Angeles: Pyczak Publishing.

Horner, B. (1999). The “Birth” of “Basic Writing.” In B. Horner & M.-Z. Lu (Eds.), *Representing the “Other”: Basic Writers and the Teaching of Basic Writing* (pp. 3–29). Urbana, Illinois: NCTE.

Huckin, T., Andrus, J., & Clary-Lemon, J. (2012). Critical Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric and Composition. *College Composition and Communication*, 64(1), 107–129. Retrieved from <https://about.jstor.org/terms>

Hutner, G., & Mohamed, F. G. (Eds.). (2016). *A New Deal for the Humanities: Liberal Arts and the Future of Public Higher Education*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Isaacs, E. J. (2018). *Writing at the State U*. Utah State University Press.

Jackson, K. K. (2018). A State of Permanent Transition: Strategies for WPA Survival in the Ever-Present Marginal Space of HBCUs. In *WPAs in Transition* (pp. 25–36). Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press.

Janangelo, J. (2016). Introduction: Of Provocations and Possibilities. In J. Janangelo (Ed.), *A Critical Look at Institutional Mission* (pp. xi–xviii). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Jewell, J. O. (2002). To set an example: The tradition of diversity at historically black colleges and universities. *Urban Education*, 37(1), 7–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085902371002>

Johanek, C. (2000). Composing Research : A Contextualist Paradigm for Rhetoric and Composition. In *Composing Research*. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress_pubs%0Ahttp://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46nrtw.10

Jones, L. F. (2004). Exploring Paradoxes of Power in Small College Writing Administration. *Composition Studies*, 32(2), 75–91. Retrieved from <https://www-jstor-org.echo.louisville.edu/stable/pdf/43501589.pdf>

Keene State College. (n.d.). *Mission & Values*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://www.keene.edu/administration/mission/>

Kentucky State University. (n.d.). *Mission, Vision, and Core Values*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://kysu.edu/about-ksu/mission-vision-core-values/>

Kinneavy, J. E. (1969). The Basic Aims of Discourse. *College Composition and Communication*, 20(5), 297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/355033>

Klausman, J. (2008). Mapping the Terrain: The Two-Year College Writing Program Administrator. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 35(3), 238–251.

Malencyk, R., & Rosenberg, L. (2016). When Fantasy Themes Collide: Implementing a Public Liberal Arts Mission in Changing Times. In J. Janangelo (Ed.), *A Critical Look at Institutional Mission* (pp. 151–168). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Marx, A. (2004). *Amherst College Commencement Address*. Amherst College.

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. (2013). *MCLA Mission and Values Statement*.

- Retrieved April 18, 2020. http://www.mcla.edu/About_MCLA/mission/index
- Masters, T. M. (2004). *Practicing Writing: The Postwar Discourse of Freshman English*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Midwestern State University. (n.d.). *Mission Statement*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://msutexas.edu/welcome/president/mission-statement.php>
- Midwestern State University. (n.d.). *Writing Proficiency Exam Requirement*. Retrieved April 20, 2020. <https://msutexas.edu/academics/wpr/>
- Miller, S. (1991). *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Mirza, H. S. (2006). Transcendence over Diversity: black women in the academy. *Policy Futures in Education*, 4(2), 101–113. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2006.4.2.101>
- Mitchell, M., Leachman, M., & Saenz, M. (2019). *State higher education funding cuts have pushed costs to students, worsened inequality*. 1–22. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/state-higher-education-funding-cuts-have-pushed-costs-to-students>
- Morphew, C. C., & Hartley, M. (2006). Mission statements: A thematic analysis of rhetoric across institutional type. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(3), 456–471. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2006.0025>
- New College of Florida. (n.d.). *Mission Statement*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://www.ncf.edu/about/mission/>
- Newkirk, P. (2019). Why Diversity Initiatives Fail. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-diversity-initiatives-fail/>

- Northern Vermont University. (n.d.). *Community Values*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.northernvermont.edu/about/mission-and-history/community-values>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1997). *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Oakley, F. (1992). *Community of Learning: The American College and the Liberal Arts Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ostergaard, L., & Wood, H. R. (Eds.). (2015). *In the Archives of Composition: Writing and Rhetoric in High Schools and Normal Schools*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Paino, T. D. (2014). The reflective practitioner: The role of a public liberal-arts university in saving liberal education. *On the Horizon*, 22(1), 72–74.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-10-2013-0040>
- Perryman-Clark, S. M., & Craig, C. L. (Eds.). (2019). *Black Perspectives in Writing Program Administration: From the Margins to the Center*. Conference on College Composition and Communication.
- Pfnister, A. O. (1984). The Role of the Liberal Arts College: A Historical Overview of the Debates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 55(2), 145.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1981183>
- Porter, J. E., Sullivan, P., Blythe, S., Grabill, J. T., & Miles, L. (2000). Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change. *College Composition and Communication*, 51(4), 610–642. <https://doi.org/10.2307/358914>

- Principe, A., & Graziano-King, J. (2008). When Timing Isn't Everything: Resisting the Use of Timed Tests to Assess Writing Ability. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 35(3), 297–311.
- Reither, J. A. (1985). Writing and Knowing: Toward Redefining the Writing Process. *College English* 1, 47, 620–628.
- Ritter, K. (2012). *To Know Her Own History: Writing at the Woman's College, 1943-1963*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Russell, D. R. (2002). *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History* (Second). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Third). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., ... Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality and Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Schoen, M. (2019). Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It: A Survey on Writing Programs and Institutional Mission. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 42(2), 37–57.
- Scott, T. (2016). Animated by the Entrepreneurial Spirit: Austerity, Dispossession, and Composition's Last Living Act. In N. Welch & T. Scott (Eds.), *Composition in the Age of Austerity* (pp. 205–219). Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

- Scott, T., & Welch, N. (2016). Introduction: Composition in the Age of Austerity. In N. Welch & T. Scott (Eds.), *Composition in the Age of Austerity* (pp. 3–17). Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.
- Seery, J. A. (2002). *America Goes to College: Political Theory for the Liberal Arts*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Shepherd University. (n.d.). *Core Values*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.shepherd.edu/about-shepherd/shepherd-core-values>
- Shuman, S. (2017). *COPLAC - The Evolution of A Vision, 1987-2014* (pp. 1–19). pp. 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Sipress, J. M. (2014). A Place Where Ideas Matter. In R. Epp & B. Spellman (Eds.), *Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good* (pp. 21–35). Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press.
- Sonoma State University. (n.d.). *Diversity*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.sonoma.edu/about/diversity>
- Spohrer, E. (2006). What Margins? The Writing Center at the Small, Liberal Arts College. *Writing Lab Newsletter*, 31(4), 7–11. Retrieved from www.writinglabnewsletter.org
- Swales, J. M., & Rogers, P. (1995). Discourse and the Projection of Corporate Culture: The Mission Statement. *Discourse & Society*, 6(2), 223–242. Retrieved from <https://journals-sagepub-com.echo.louisville.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0957926595006002005>
- Tardy, C. M. (2015). Discourses of Internationalization and Diversity in US Universities

- and Writing Programs. In D. S. Martins (Ed.), *Transnational Writing Program Administration* (pp. 243–263). Utah State University Press.
- Taylor, R. G. (2004). Preparing WPAs for the Small College Context. *Composition Studies*, 32(2), 53–73. Retrieved from <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Tienda, M. (2013). Diversity ≠ Inclusion: Promoting Integration in Higher Education. *Educational Researcher*, 42(9), 467–475.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X13516164>
- Trachsel, M. (1992). *Institutionalizing Literacy: The Historical Role of College Entrance Examinations in English*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Trawick-Smith, J. (2014). How Everything Influences Everything Else. In R. Epp & B. Spellman (Eds.), *Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good* (pp. 61–79). Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press.
- Truman State University. (n.d.). *Mission & Vision*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.truman.edu/about/mission-vision/>
- Truman State University. (n.d.). *Mission Statement*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.truman.edu/about/mission-vision/mission-statement/>
- Truman State University. (n.d.). *Vision Statement*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.truman.edu/about/mission-vision/vision-statement>
- University of Montevallo. (n.d.). *About UM*. Retrieved April 18, 2020.
<https://www.montevallo.edu/about-um/>
- University of North Carolina Asheville. (n.d.). *Diversity and Inclusion*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://www.unca.edu/about/mission-values/diversity-and-inclusion/>

- University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. (n.d.). *Mission and Objectives*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://usao.edu/about/mission-objectives.html>
- University of Virginia at Wise. (n.d.). *Mission & Goals*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://www.uvawise.edu/uva-wise/administration-services/chancellor/strategic-planning/mission-goals/>
- University of Wisconsin-Parkside. (n.d.). *Mission & Vision*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. https://www.uwp.edu/explore/aboutuwp/mission_vision.cfm
- University of Wisconsin-Superior. (n.d.). *UW-Superior's Commitment to Our Liberal Arts Mission and Tradition*. Retrieved April 18, 2020. <https://www.uwsuper.edu/about/liberal-arts.cfm>
- Urgo, J. (2014). Afterword: The Road Taken and the Difference it Makes. In R. Epp & B. Spellman (Eds.), *Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good* (pp. 221–226). Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical Discourse Analysis. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Second, pp. 812–829). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983953.n41>
- Vander Lei, E., & Pugh, M. (2016). What is Institutional Mission? In R. Malencyk (Ed.), *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators* (pp. 142–154). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.
- Volk, S., & Benedix, B. (2020). *The Post-Pandemic Liberal Arts College: A Manifesto for Reinvention*. Cleveland, Ohio: Belt Publishing.
- Wan, A. J. (2014). *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Training in Anxious Times*.

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Watts Smith, C., & Mayorga-Gallo, S. (2017). The New Principle-policy Gap: How Diversity Ideology Subverts Diversity Initiatives. *Sociological Perspectives*, 60(5), 889–911. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121417719693>

Weigle, S. C., & Friginal, E. (2015). Linguistic dimensions of impromptu test essays compared with successful student disciplinary writing: Effects of language background, topic, and L2 proficiency. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 18, 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2015.03.006>

Welch, N., & Scott, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Composition in the Age of Austerity*. Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press.

White, M. H., & Crandall, C. S. (2017). Freedom of racist speech: Ego and expressive threats. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(3), 413–429. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000095>

Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zakaria, F. (2015). *In Defense of a Liberal Education*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE OF INSTITUTIONS

Full COPLAC Members:

Fort Lewis College (W, 3320)*+
Georgia College & State University (SE, 6989)
Henderson State University (SE, 3557)
Keene State College (NE, 3569)*+
Mansfield University (NE, 1637)+
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (NE, 1452)*+
Midwestern State University (SW, 6102)*+
New College of Florida (SE, 837)*+
Northern Vermont University – Johnson (NE, 1145)
Ramapo College of New Jersey (NE, 6174)+
Shepherd University (NE, 3648)+
Sonoma State University (W, 9201)*+
St. Mary's College of Maryland (NE, 1602)+
SUNY Geneseo (NE, 5541)+
Truman State University (MW, 5853)+
University of Illinois at Springfield (MW, 4575)*
University of Maine at Farmington (NE, 2040)
University of Mary Washington (SE, 4727)+
University of Minnesota Morris (MW, 1554)
University of Montevallo (SE, 2616)*
University of North Carolina Asheville (SE, 3762)*+
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (SW, 904)*
University of South Carolina Aiken (SE, 3669)*+
The University of Virginia's College at Wise (SE, 2065)+
University of Wisconsin – Superior (MW, 2601)*+

Provisional COPLAC Members:

Louisiana State University of Alexandria (SE, 3247)
Kentucky State University¹⁸ (SE, 1781)

Non-COPLAC Members:

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania (NE, 469)
Elizabeth City State University (SE, 1678)
Purchase College, SUNY (NE, 4264)+

¹⁸ Not included in survey but included in document analysis sample

Southern Oregon University¹⁹ (W, 6114)+
University of South Carolina Beaufort (SE, 2112)+
University of Wisconsin – Parkside (MW, 4325)+

¹⁹ Former member of COPLAC

APPENDIX B: COPY OF SURVEY

Identifying Information

1. What is your home institution?
2. What is your name and position title?
3. How long have you been at this institution?
4. How long have you been in your current position as a writing program administrator (WPA)?
5. What is your preferred email address?

Your Position

6. To whom is your writing program accountable? Under what department(s)/which individual's purview(s)?

7. How would you classify your position?

- WPA position is classified as a tenure-line faculty
- WPA position is classified as non-tenure-line faculty (full-time)
- WPA position is classified as non-tenure-line faculty (part-time)
- WPA position is classified as both faculty and staff (full-time)
- WPA position is classified as both faculty and staff (part-time)
- WPA position is classified as staff only (full-time)
- WPA position is classified as staff only (part-time)

8. If your position is on a tenure line, where does the tenure reside?

- English Department
- Rhet/Comp or Writing Department
- Humanities Department
- It isn't on a tenure line
- Other Department (please specify)

9. As WPA which of the following are your job responsibilities? (check all that apply)

- Teach academic writing courses
- Assess all or some aspects of the writing program
- Assess the development of student writing on campus
- Train instructors
- Conduct faculty development
- Supervise professional staff (Asst. Director, Admin. Asst.)
- Supervise tutors (professional and/or peers)

- Observe instructors
- Hire professional staff
- Hire tutors
- Schedule writing courses
- Schedule writing center
- Place students into writing courses
- Oversee curriculum development
- Train professional staff
- Train peer tutors
- Advertise program
- Oversee program budget
- Tutor students
- Plan events
- Serve as an academic advisor
- Offer student workshops
- Other (please specify)

| |
|-------------------------|
| Program Staffing |
|-------------------------|

10. Is there an additional faculty or staff member who administers a portion of the writing program or a different writing program on campus?

- Yes
- No

11. What is the position title for this position?

12. How would you classify this position?

- Tenure-line faculty
- Non-tenure-line faculty (full-time)
- Non-tenure-line faculty (part-time)
- Both faculty and staff (full-time)
- Both faculty and staff (part-time)
- Staff only (full-time)
- Staff only (part-time)

13. What type of administrative support does your program have? (Check all that apply)

- Full-time administrative assistant
- Part-time administrative assistant
- Intern
- Student Workers
- No Administrative Support

14. Does your writing program have a faculty advisory committee?

- Yes
- No

15. If yes to the above, what are the responsibilities of the faculty advisory committee?

Composition of your Writing Program

16. Does your institution have a writing requirement?

Yes

No

17. What does that requirement consist of? (Check all that apply. If it varies across campus units, please briefly identify that under "Other")

First-Year Writing Seminars taught by faculty across the curriculum

First-Year Composition predominantly taught by English and/or Writing faculty

Writing intensive courses that are located throughout the curriculum

Writing in the major

Portfolio

Senior thesis or capstone experience

Other (please specify)

18. Do you accept transfer credit for the writing requirement?

Yes

No

Sometimes (please explain)

19. By which of the following means are students able to place out of any of the writing requirements?

- Specified Advanced Placement (AP) score
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Specified ACT score
- Specified SAT Writing score
- Specified SAT Critical Reading (formerly SAT verbal) score
- Specified CLEP score
- Portfolio of previously written work
- In-house examination
- Students are not able to place out of any writing requirements
- Other (please explain)

20. Have any of the following changes to the writing program taken place since you joined the institution? (Check all that apply)

- First-Year Composition was converted to a First-Year Writing Seminar
- Writing courses were added in addition to the first-year requirement
- The writing requirement was dropped
- A full-time WPA position was created
- An existing WPA position was converted to a tenure-line
- An existing position was converted to a non-tenure line
- An existing position was converted to a faculty position
- An existing position was converted to a staff position
- An existing position was converted to full-time
- An existing WPA position was converted to part-time
- A writing major or minor was added
- A writing center was added

- A Writing Fellows program was added
- Additional full-time positions were created
- Peer tutors were replaced with professional tutors
- Professional tutors were replaced with peer tutors
- Other (please specify)

21. Have there been any other significant changes to your writing program during your time at the institution?

- No
- Yes (please specify)

22. If you're willing and able, please explain the process or rationale behind any of these changes:

| |
|---------------------------|
| First-Year Writing |
|---------------------------|

23. How many semesters of first-year writing are required?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- Other (please specify)

24. Do you have an outcomes or equivalent statement for your first-year writing courses?

Yes

No

25. If yes to the above, would your outcomes statement best be described as:

The WPA Outcomes Statement (adopted or adapted)

A program- or department-developed statement

A university-developed statement

A state-developed statement

Outcomes statements are really developed individually, by instructors

26. Please explain your answer to the above question:

27. Does your institution require an exit exam for your-first year writing course or courses?

Yes

No

28. How many sections of FYW are typically offered per semester?

29. Who teaches first-year writing at your institution? (check all that apply)

Full-time tenured or tenure track faculty

Permanent full-time, non-tenure track faculty

- Limited term full-time, non tenure track faculty
- Part-time adjunct faculty
- Graduate student instructors
- Other (please specify)

30. Approximately how many instructors of each type identified above do you staff?

31. In the FYW course, how much individual control do instructors have over the syllabus?
Choose the answer that best applies.

- Instructors use a department- or program-provided syllabus
- Instructors are provided with guidelines for their syllabi but are given some latitude
- Instructors' syllabi are subject to department or program approval
- Instructors develop their own syllabi

32. Please explain your answer to the above question:

33. Does your institution provide a special or unique course or option for honors students to complete the FYW requirement?

- No, there is no honors program
- No, honors students take the same FYW requirement
- Yes. It is called:

Basic Writing

34. Does your institution offer a basic (or remedial) course in composition?

- Yes
- No (skip to the next section)

35. What best describes the course?

- Non-credit-bearing prerequisite for writing requirements
- Credit-bearing prerequisite for writing requirements
- Non-credit-bearing co-requisite course taken alongside a required writing course
- Credit-bearing co-requisite course taken alongside a required writing course

36. If your institution does offer a basic writing course, how does your institution determine students' course placement? (Check all that apply)

- SAT
- ACT
- COMPASS
- ACCUPLACER
- Directed self-placement
- State-wide assessment: primarily based on student essay
- State-wide assessment: primarily based on objective examination (multiple choice, etc.)
- In-house examination: primarily based on student essay
- In-house examination: primarily based on objective examination (multiple choice, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

37. Does your university require an exit exam for your basic composition course(s)?

No

Yes (please explain)

| |
|------------------------------|
| Other Writing Courses |
|------------------------------|

38. How many writing intensive courses are required beyond the first-year writing requirement?
If it varies across units, please explain that.

39. Are there outcomes statements or other explicit writing goals for these courses?

Yes

No

40. If yes to the above, what are they?

41. Do writing intensive courses need to be completed by a certain time?

No

Yes (please explain)

42. Does your program or institution provide an incentive for faculty to teach writing intensive courses?

No

Yes (please explain)

43. Is there an institution-wide requirement for writing courses or experiences within students' major courses of study? How many?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Other (please specify)

Faculty Development

44. Are instructors who teach FYW at your university specifically trained in teaching writing?

Yes

No

45. What do you do for faculty development for instructors in the writing program? (Check all that apply)

Facilitate a required workshop or seminar

Conduct an optional semester-long seminar

Conduct optional workshops

- Conduct one-on-one consultations
- Meet with departments
- Host monthly lunches on a given topic
- Meet informally with faculty
- Other (please specify)

46. What do you do for faculty development around writing for other instructors across campus?
(Check all that apply)

- Facilitate a required workshop or seminar
- Conduct an optional semester-long seminar
- Conduct optional workshops
- Conduct one-on-one consultations
- Meet with departments
- Host monthly lunches on a given topic
- Meet informally with faculty
- Other (please specify)

| |
|--------------------------------|
| Overall Role of Writing |
|--------------------------------|

47. What initiatives do you wish to put into place in your program over the next 5-10 years?

48. Is there anything else you would like me to know about the culture of writing at your institution?

49. My next step is to interview a subset of my survey respondents about their writing program.
Are you interested in being interviewed?

Yes

No

CURRICULUM VITA

N. Claire Jackson

Education

Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition, University of Louisville, May 2021

M.A. in English, University of Maine, May 2014

B.A. in English and Secondary Education, University of New England, December 2011

Dissertation

Title: Writing Program Administration at Public Liberal Arts Colleges

Committee: Dr. Andrea Olinger (Chair), Dr. Bruce Horner, Dr. Susan Ryan, Dr. Rita Malenczyk

Research

Publications (Single Author)

“There is No Question about This and There Never Has Been for Eight Years’: The Public Reception of Christine Jorgensen. *Peitho: Journal of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020.

“Responding to Male Students’ Gender Bias in the Composition Classroom.” *Looking Forward: A Dialogue on College Men and Masculinities*, edited by Z. Foste, ACPA Standing Committee on Men and Masculinities, 2013, pp. 10-17.

Publications (Co-authored)

“Preparing Graduate Students and Contingent Faculty for Online Writing Instruction: A Responsive and Strategic Approach to Designing Professional Development Opportunities.” *PARS in Practice: More Resources and Strategies for Online Writing Instruction*, edited by Jessie Borgman and Casey McArdle, The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado, 2021, pp. 225-242. (Co-authored with Andrea R. Olinger).

“Translingual Approaches to Writing and Its Instruction, WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, No. 28.” *WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies*. <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/comppile/wpa/TranslingualApproaches.pdf>. (Co-authored with Bruce Horner, Emily Yuko Cousins, Jaclyn Hilberg, Rachel Rodriguez, and Alex Way).

Conference Presentations

“Writing Program Administration at Public Liberal Arts Colleges,” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Spokane, WA, April 7-10, 2021.

“Organizing without a Union: Negotiating Managerial Discourses,” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Milwaukee, WI, March 28, 2020. (Conference cancelled).

“Rhetorics of Self-Definition for Trans Women in the 1950s,” Feminisms and Rhetorics 2019, Harrisonburg, VA, November 15, 2019.

“Performing Institutional Critique in FYC: Students’ Examination of Programmatic Language Ideologies,” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Pittsburgh, PA, March 14, 2019.

“Making Writing Studies Matter in the Age of Dual Enrollment,” 12th Biennial Thomas R. Watson Conference, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, October 26, 2018.

“Developing Richer Conceptualizations of Writing through Threshold Concepts,” 7th Biennial Threshold Concepts Conference, Miami University, Oxford, OH, June 15, 2018.

“Dual Credit FYC and Its Effects on Writing Transfer,” Research Network Forum, Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, MO, March 14, 2018.

“Teaching for Transfer through Reflective Writing,” 2017 MCELA Conference, Point Lookout Conference Center, Northport, ME, March 24, 2017.

“Considering College-Level Writing in High School within the Context of K-16 Education,” 2016 MCELA Conference, Point Lookout Conference Center, Northport, ME, March 25, 2016.

“College Writing in the High School Classroom,” 2015 MCELA Conference, Point Lookout Conference Center, Northport, ME, March 27, 2015.

“‘The Highly Important Matter of Clothes:’ Aesthetics and Agency in Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand*,” 2013 Conference on the Harlem Renaissance, Paine College, Augusta, GA, November 7, 2013.

“The Girl Who Didn’t Go to Paris: The (Re)Construction of Lauren Conrad’s Identity in MTV’s *The Hills*,” 43rd Annual Popular Culture Association Conference, Washington, DC, March 29, 2013.

Local and Campus Workshops

“Using Rubrics Well,” New Composition TA Orientation, University of Louisville, Aug. 15, 2019.

"Labor-Based Grading Contracts," Pedagogy Fellows Workshop, University of Louisville, Nov. 7, 2018.

"Assessing Writing: The Question(s) of Rubrics," New Composition TA Orientation, University of Louisville, Aug. 16, 2018.

"Writing about Writing Pedagogy Workshop," University of Louisville, Nov. 1, 2017.

"Working Smarter, Not Harder: A Closer Look at Formative Assessment" University of Maine at Presque Isle, Oct. 19, 2016; Jan 24, 2017; and Mar. 2, 2017 (three-part workshop).

"Teaching Bridge Year English," United Technologies Center, Bangor, Maine, Spring 2014.

Teaching

Courses Taught (University of Louisville)

English 101: Introduction to College Writing (2 sections)

English 101-DE (online): Introduction to College Writing (3 sections)

English 102: Intermediate College Writing (2 sections)

English 306: Business Writing (2 sections)

English 375-DE (online): LGBTQ Literature in the US (1 section; cross-listed with Women's and Gender Studies)

Teaching Writing Online (1 section; online certificate course for GTAs and Part-Time Faculty)

Courses Taught (University of Maine)

English 100: College Composition Stretch (1 section, dual credit)

English 101: College Composition (11 sections)

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies 201: Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Culture (1 sections)

Courses Taught (University of Maine at Augusta)

English 101: College Writing (2 sections, dual credit)

English 102W: Introduction to Literature (1 section, dual credit)

Courses Taught (University of Maine at Fort Kent)

English 100: English Composition I (3 sections, dual credit)

English 101: English Composition II (2 sections, dual credit)

High School Teaching Experience

English Teacher, Hermon High School, Hermon, ME, 2015-2017

High School English Teacher, Katahdin Middle/High School, Stacyville, ME 2014-2015

Administrative Experience

Assistant Director of Composition, Composition Program, University of Louisville, 2018-2020

- Facilitated weekly mentoring groups for new teaching assistants
- Planned orientation for new teaching assistants
- Evaluated portfolios for transfer credit
- Facilitated pedagogy workshops
- Scheduled over 100 sections of FYC and upper-level writing courses
- Participated in hiring of contingent faculty
- Collaborated on program-wide orientation for composition instructors and the Celebration of Student Writing
- Designed and facilitated online writing pedagogy training for teaching assistants and contingent faculty

Service

Service to the Field

Chair, WPA-GO Outreach Sub-Committee, 2020-2021

Member, WPA-GO Graduate Committee, 2019-2021

Member-at-Large, Writing About Writing Standing Committee, 2018-2021

Peer Reviewer, *PARS in Practice Edited Collection*, WAC Clearinghouse, 2020

Co-Chair, WPA-GO Grants Committee, 2019-2020

Chair, WPA-GO CCCC Local Committee, 2019-2020

Member, Conference Committee, Writing Across the Lifespan Collaboration, 2017-2018

Member, Alan C. Purves Award Committee, Research in the Teaching of English, 2017

Teacher Leader, ELA Formative Assessment Network, Maine Department of Education, 2016-2017

Executive Board Member, Maine Council for English Language Arts, 2015-2017

Member, Dual Enrollment Position Statement Committee, Maine Council for English Language Arts, 2016

Member, Dine and Discuss Committee, Maine Council for English Language Arts, 2015-2016

Participant, SAT Multi-State Standard Setting, College Board and Maine Department of Education, 2016

Intern, *Across the Disciplines: A Journal of Language, Learning, and Academic Writing*, 2011

Service to the University

Participant, Cardinal Core Assessment Committee: Behavioral Sciences and Historical Perspectives, University of Louisville, 2020

Member, Travel/Research Grant Committee, Graduate Network of Arts and Sciences, University of Louisville, Spring 2018 and Spring 2020

English Department Representative, Graduate Network of Arts and Sciences, University of Louisville, 2018-2020

Service to the Department

Graduate Student Representative, Assistant Professor of Professional/Technical Writing Job Search Committee, Department of English, University of Louisville, 2019-2020

Ph.D. Peer Mentor, Department of English, University of Louisville, 2018-2020

Participant, ENG 101 Portfolio Assessment, English Department, University of Maine, 2012-2017

Participant, FYW Program Assessment, University of Maine at Augusta, 2016

Awards

Guy Stevenson Award for Excellence in Graduate Studies, Graduate School, University of Louisville, 2021

2017-2018 Pedagogy Fellow, Composition Program, Department of English, University of Louisville

Professional Memberships

Association for Writing Across the Curriculum

Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition

Conference on College Composition and Communication

Global Society of Online Literacy Educators

National Council of Teachers of English