Strengthening Graduate Student Preparation for WPA Work

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Abstract

A new generation of rhetoric and composition specialists is making WPA work an area of specialization and actively seeking WPA positions upon graduation. Recognizing this emergent narrative, we describe the research we conducted as co-founding members of the Writing Program Administrators Graduate Student Organization (WPA-GO) and call for a more robust system of WPA preparation for these graduate students. We report key findings learned from 227 graduate students from more than fifty U.S. institutions about the kinds of WPA education and training available to them. We conclude by offering recommendations for how the field of rhetoric and composition can work to improve graduate student administrative professionalization and how WPA-GO and the Council of Writing Program Administrators might extend and build upon these opportunities.

Introduction

In April of 2013, a question posted on the WPA-L listserv under the subject heading "rhet/comp programs and admin work" elicited a flurry of responses, totaling seventy replies over the course of five days on two different threads. The question posed was this: "Does anyone know of doctoral programs in Rhetoric and Composition…that do not include WPA study of some sort?" (Macauley, Jr.). A small number of respondents replied to the question directly, with eight people indicating that their institution did offer a seminar course in writing program administration or special topics courses that were WPA-related while six people reported they did not have access to formal WPA coursework, although they did have opportunities to do WPA work as graduate student administrators in first-year composition,

writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC), and technical writing programs as well as writing centers.

However, it was the ensuing conversation about the value of offering a WPA course as part of a graduate program that received the most commentary. A majority of respondents, including those who had completed formal coursework in writing program administration and those who had not, argued for the importance of formal coursework in WPA preparation, not only for those who intended to be administrators of first-year composition but also for those who intended to direct writing centers, professional writing programs, etc. or to teach in or work with such programs. Additional replies included suggestions for the topics a WPA course should cover. Like many of our colleagues on the WPA-L, we, too, believe that a graduate course in WPA work is invaluable to those in the field of rhetoric and composition. But we also recognize three complicating factors. First, in light of varying institutional issues, some programs simply will not develop WPA coursework. Second, within those institutions that do, programs and students may find it a challenge to reprioritize curriculum decisions for an additional subfield. Third, we believe that the development of courses, while important, is not sufficient for preparing graduate students for the work of writing program administration. Perhaps, then, as a timely response to the above listserv discussion, our primary purpose in this article is to call for a more robust system of education and/or training[1] for graduate students (and, less directly, junior faculty members) interested in writing program administration.

In part, our call comes from a recognition of the realities of the job market and the number of junior WPA (jWPA) positions being advertised: a cursory glance shows at least twenty listings for jWPA positions in the Modern Language Association's 2012 Job Information List (JIL). This article, however, is less focused on these market realities and emphasizes more a shift in the exigencies of preparing graduate students for writing program administration. As we discuss below, many of the beliefs about the importance of WPA coursework are based on the assumption that every rhetoric and composition scholar will have to take a turn as WPA. But, this assumption bears reconsideration for at least two reasons: First, greater numbers of rhetoric and composition graduates are being produced every year, thereby reducing the "everyone has to do it" nature of the job. Second, more graduate students report being intellectually and professionally committed to WPA work as an integral part of their career. Later in this essay, we discuss shifts in the circumstances that draw people to WPA work.

We begin, however, by drawing on our own experiences as graduate student writing program administrators (gWPAs), on our efforts in devel-

oping Writing Program Administrators Graduate Student Organization (WPA-GO, a national gWPA professionalization organization), and on results of research we conducted about gWPA professionalization opportunities around the country to make the case that many gWPA professionalization programs often do not reflect graduate students' developing interest in WPA work. In presenting this research, we then make the further case that the field of rhetoric and composition, generally, and WPA-GO and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) specifically, have an opportunity to rethink gWPA professionalization in light of the changing nature of WPA work as a way of meeting the needs of graduate students who are actively pursuing careers with an administrative component.

WPA-GO: An Origin Story

Our individual experiences as gWPAs[2] in graduate school helped convince us of the importance of the kinds of gWPA professionalization that we are advocating in this essay. As a result of earning PhDs at universities with relatively extensive WPA professionalization opportunities, including coursework, workshops, mentoring programs, and assistantships/ internships, we developed intellectual and professional interests in writing program administration. Through our work as gWPAs, we recognized that graduate students in other institutions shared our administrative interests. However, we also realized that beyond individual institutions, there was a marked lack of resources to foster graduate students' engagement in writing program administration. Cristyn and Megan, in particular, felt the lack of graduate student engagement when during two CWPA Conferences, in 2008 and 2009, they presented on their project, "Praxis and Allies: The WPA Board Game,"[3] which was directed at graduate students, to small audiences consisting mostly of faculty or alumni from their own institution. The only graduate student who attended their panel at the 2009 conference was that year's winner of the CWPA Award for Graduate Writing in WPA Studies. This experience demonstrated to them that, while there were pockets of graduate students from one or two schools who attended the conference and presented together (usually limited to those with established graduate student WPA preparation programs), it could not really be said that there was a graduate student community. Ryan came to a similar conclusion in his experiences as an Assistant Director at Arizona State University. The lack of community at the conference was indicative of the graduate community for gWPAs more broadly: it simply did not exist in any real way as a result of a lack of professionalization programs and resources dedicated

to facilitating graduate students' engagement, beyond a few individual institutions.

We were not the only people to recognize this lack of graduate student engagement. Following the 2009 CWPA Conference in Minneapolis, members of the CWPA Executive Board discussed how to better accommodate graduate students' intellectual contributions to writing program administration and enable graduate students to take advantage of opportunities for mentoring, which were becoming (and have continued to be) a central commitment of CWPA (see Walcher, Janangelo, and Roen). In an effort to consider the needs of graduate students more specifically, Eli Goldblatt, local host of the 2010 CWPA Conference in Philadelphia, contacted faculty at various institutions across the country to solicit names of graduate students involved in writing program administration who might form an ad hoc committee to do the following: (a) formulate a list of issues that matter to graduate students interested in writing program administration, (b) encourage more graduate student participation in the 2010 CWPA Conference, and (c) organize a graduate student gathering during the conference. Seven graduate students, including the three co-authors of this article, responded to Goldblatt's recruiting campaign.[4] In order to address both the short term goals relating to the upcoming conference and longer term goals related to making the CWPA Conference a dependably graduate-student-friendly venue, the ad hoc committee developed a proposal for a graduate student organization, WPA-GO, and the WPA graduate committee (WPA-GC) that would steer and maintain the growth of WPA-GO. WPA-GO was conceived as a group any graduate student could join to find a social, intellectual, and professional community of students with common interests in writing program administration. At the 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication in Louisville, the CWPA Executive Board, under the leadership of then President Linda Adler-Kassner, voted unanimously to formally recognize WPA-GO and the WPA-GC.

The WPA-GO Survey

Our efforts to establish WPA-GO and the WPA-GC were educational in a variety of ways, but two of the enduring lessons that we learned were (1) our interest in writing program administration was shared even more widely than we imagined as evidenced by WPA-GO's quickly growing membership, and (2) WPA-GO and the WPA-GC are important but insufficient resources for meeting the professionalization needs of gWPAs. These lessons were reinforced for us as a result of research we conducted as part of our WPA-GO and WPA-GC responsibilities. In the spring of 2011, in sup-

port of WPA-GO's mission[5] to help prepare graduate students for work in writing program administration, we surveyed students enrolled in English or writing-related departments or programs around the U.S. about their interests in WPA work, the kinds of preparation they are currently receiving, and what additional offerings WPA-GO might provide with the support of faculty WPAs. (For the complete survey, please go to http://wpacouncil.org/archives/37n2/elder_survey.pdf.) Also, because we were aware of the important work Joe Janangelo, Duane Roen, and Sheldon Walcher were doing with the CWPA Mentoring Project,[6] we wanted to know how the interests of survey participants and WPA-GO's suggested offerings might map onto the initiatives identified by the CWPA Mentoring Project Committee.

A link to the survey, titled "WPA-GO Graduate Student Survey," along with notice of Institutional Research Board approval, was sent directly via email, in the spring of 2011, to 2,000 individuals at institutions listed on the Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition website as well as those subscribed to the WPA-GO email list, the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) Graduate Student Listserv, and the listserv for the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialties. Two hundred and twenty-seven graduate students enrolled in English or writing-related departments or programs from over fifty universities across the U.S. completed the survey (giving us a response rate of 8.8%).

Summary of Results and Key Findings

The online survey we distributed consisted of both open and closed questions designed to measure participants' interest in WPA work, the kinds of formal preparation participants receive both in and outside their institution to do WPA work, and the kinds of additional WPA preparation they might find valuable. Demographic information, including student enrollment status, degree program, and degree specialization, was also collected. (Please see Figures 1-3 in Appendix A.) What the responses demonstrated in large measure is that those graduate students who took the survey wanted to know more about writing program administration, and many of those same graduate students did not have access to professionalization resources. The following is a summary of some of the key results from the survey regarding gWPA professionalization.

One key finding from the survey was the confirmation that graduate student respondents were interested in writing program administration. To the first question of the eighteen-item survey–"Are you interested in Writing Program Administration (WPA)?"–76% of participants answered

"yes" while 14.2% answered they were not sure. (The 9.8% who answered "no" were automatically sent to the Thank You page and were not included in the rest of the survey or in our response rate.) As with all surveys, our results are limited by response bias: specifically, those interested in WPA work are almost certainly over-represented among participants who chose to respond to a survey titled "WPA-GO Graduate Student Survey." However, we were surprised by the number of respondents who expressed their interest in writing program administration and who were not specializing in rhetoric and composition fields (see Figure 3 in Appendix A). Despite the bias, the response to the first question supports the anecdotal evidence that we perceived in our interactions with enthusiastic graduate students already involved in WPA-GO—evidence that there is positive interest in administrative work among graduate students. The data thus reinforce our belief that there is a sizable audience of graduate students whose interest in WPA work can and should be fostered by WPA-GO, CWPA, and the field.

Other important findings suggest that graduate students' access to professionalization opportunities is mixed: a majority of respondents (81.5%) reported having practical (on-the-job) WPA professionalization opportunities at their institutions, ranging from serving as the assistant director of first-year composition to serving as assistant director of the writing center to serving as the coordinator of a WAC, business writing, or English as a second language program. (Please see Figure 4 of Appendix A for a complete list of the kinds of gWPA work respondents reported were available to them.) While practical opportunities for WPA work are rather plentiful, 46.6% of respondents reported they do not have opportunities for coursework in writing program administration. The apparent availability of WPA positions for graduate students is heartening; however, the absence of coursework indicates a lack of opportunities for graduate students to be exposed to influential scholarship in the field—scholarship that can help them envision writing program administration as intellectual, research-driven work.

Additionally, many of the graduate students (35.1%) who took the survey reported being unaware as to whether or not their institutions offer other kinds of support besides official WPA work positions and formal WPA coursework. Such a lack of knowledge could indicate that no such offerings exist or that institutional and departmental means of support for graduate students interested in WPA work are not well publicized. In either case, students without either access to or awareness of WPA professionalization opportunities at their institutions could benefit from additional avenues of professionalization, including those provided by WPA-GO and CWPA.

Respondents also reported high interest in mentoring opportunities, which is among Debra Frank Dew's recommendations for disciplinary progress on jWPA appointments, including gWPAs. A majority of respondents (80.4%) rated WPA mentoring opportunities as "very useful" (38.8%) or "useful" (41.6%). While the annual CWPA Conference could be one such avenue for continued mentoring, 83.4% of graduate student respondents have never attended the CWPA Conference. The reported reasons for not attending include not knowing about the CWPA Conference (34.6%) or holding misperceptions about it—including believing that the CWPA Conference is not open to anyone who doesn't currently hold a WPA position (19.0%) or that the Conference is not open to graduate students (16.6%). In addition to a lack of knowledge about the national CWPA Conference, another clear impediment to graduate student attendance is cost (which of course presents a challenge to graduate students wanting to attend any academic conference and is not limited to attending the CWPA Conference itself). A number of graduate students (12.8%) indicated that the cost of the conference and their own limited funding for travel and registration fees are prohibitive, particularly in light of the fact that the CWPA Conference occurs in the summer, when, according to some survey respondents, graduate students are less likely to receive funding or by which time they have already used up their funding.

Anticipating that respondents' inability to attend the national conference would be an issue, we also asked participants about their interest in and attendance at regional workshops related to WPA work. Participants' responses showed that attendance at such workshops is even lower than attendance at the national CWPA Conference, but 72.5% of respondents indicated they would be interested in attending regional workshops if they were available. Seven respondents answered that they have, in fact, attended regional workshops, including the Carolinas Writing Program Administrators "Meeting in the Middle" Conference. Other locations identified for regional workshops included "Michigan State" and "Spokane, Washington." A high percentage (79.6%) of respondents answered that a reason for not attending regional workshops was that they had never heard of any regional WPA workshops at or near their institutions. From this we might infer that such opportunities are not very plentiful or well publicized in most areas.

Yet the survey results indicate that WPA workshops, whether at the national conference or in regional meetings, were viewed by our respondents as potentially quite valuable. A majority of respondents (66.4%) answered that they would be interested in attending national WPA professional development workshops specifically related to graduate students

and their needs, and, as noted above, 72.5% answered that they would be interested in attending regional WPA professional development workshops specifically for graduate students. The WPA-GO survey suggested fourteen possible WPA workshop topics related to the needs of graduate students. (For the complete list of suggested workshop topics included in the survey and respondents' ratings of the usefulness of these topics, please see Figure 5 in Appendix A.) Most respondents answered that they perceived all proposed workshop topics listed in the survey as very useful or useful. Participants rated job market preparation as particularly valuable to them. This result indicates that graduate students interested in WPA work are concerned about how best to position and prepare themselves for job searches—a concern that WPA-GO has already begun to address. Other topics suggested in the survey that were ranked as highly useful by many respondents included curriculum design, program assessment, student writing assessment, WPA budgeting practices, finding program funding, building relationships across the institution, and communicating WPA work as a scholarly endeavor.

In addition to the suggested workshop topics included in the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to write in their own workshop topic suggestions. Eighteen respondents offered additional suggestions. Several respondents added workshop topics related to student diversity and working with multilingual students in writing programs. One respondent suggested the topic WPA work and social change, while another recommended addressing advances in technology and their effects on WPA work. Yet another respondent suggested a workshop on negotiating being a graduate student while also working as a WPA at a two-year college, a situation that this respondent noted as common. An enthusiastic participant wrote, in an editorial response to the fourteen suggested workshop topics included in the survey, "Wow—these topics look amazing! I checked what I thought would be useful to me now, as a grad student who hasn't yet done WPA work." The response to our suggested workshop topics as well as the insightful suggestions generated by respondents demonstrate excitement about WPA-related workshop offerings for graduate students, prompting what we see as a needed response from WPA-GO, CWPA, and the field to offer such opportunities to graduate students.

Finally, in addition to workshops, responses indicated a strong interest in other potential WPA-GO offerings, including travel scholarships to both national and regional conferences, publishing opportunities, and social networking opportunities that would enable graduate students to meet fellow students and faculty members who share their interest in WPA work. Respondents also expressed enthusiasm about opportunities for col-

laboration with other graduate students or faculty WPAs on research, scholarly writing, curriculum design, problem solving, and conference presentations. Several participants additionally indicated a desire for increased communication and awareness about CWPA and/or WPA-GO events and activities. For example, one respondent suggested, "Greater visibility in communicating to graduate students nationally, perhaps?" while another wrote, "More visibility of WPA programs and opportunities," and another requested "more publicity on the organization." One lamented, "[I] haven't had means to keep in touch. As a result, especially since my institution doesn't offer any WPA professionalization, I feel very out of the loop." Others suggested specific means by which such greater communication and heightened awareness could occur: one wrote, "maybe a listserv just for GTAs," while another offered, "I'd love to see newsletter or social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) about upcoming events, or even news regarding the accomplishments of graduate students as WPA assistants, for example." Interestingly, one respondent stated that the very act of taking the survey brought greater awareness of current CWPA offerings: "There are none [additional programs and offerings] that I can think of at the moment, but I'm glad I took this survey and became aware of the conference!" In sum, the survey question regarding potential offerings and programs provided a wealth of information about what our respondents would like to see available for graduate students in the future. (For the complete list of WPA-GO potential offerings and respondents' ratings of these offerings, see Figure 6 in Appendix A.)

WPA Work: A Changing Narrative

The responses to our survey indicate an important shift in the circumstances that draw people to writing program administration, both as a graduate focus and as a career path. The persistent statements of graduate student interest in writing program administration substantiate our belief that the narrative about WPA work is changing insofar as it was previously often characterized as work foisted upon reluctant rhetoric and composition scholars. Our respondents' attitudes offer a stark contrast to the "usual condescending attitudes toward administration" of the beginning faculty members Edward M. White describes in "Teaching a Graduate Course in Writing Program Administration" (101) and align more with Theresa Enos's description in "Reflective Professional Development" of graduate students "choosing writing program administration…rather than having it ordained by the job position itself" (64). In this section, we explore more fully some of the assumptions that have accompanied the expectation that everyone

will have to take on WPA work at some point in their career. We contend that this expectation is changing as more rhetoric and composition specialists are produced and as more people actively seek career paths that include administrative responsibilities early in their careers. In the remainder of this essay, then, we argue that WPA preparation should reflect the changing realities as WPA work becomes more specialized and more self-selective.

The assumption that most rhetoric and composition scholars will have WPA responsibilities or will likely take a turn is lessening as growing numbers of PhDs in rhetoric and composition are minted. According to the "2007 Survey of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition" in *Rhetoric Review*, sixty-seven rhetoric and composition PhD programs enrolled more than 1100 students in 2007 (Brown et al. 335). Writing program administration positions, although hardly disappearing, still constituted less than a quarter of positions accepted by candidates in the field (338). As the field grows,[7] rhetoric and composition scholars and teachers have more options than they once did that do not necessarily include administration, including positions as teachers and researchers at two-year schools, at PhD-granting institutions, and in programs with numerous rhetoric and composition faculty members.

This assumption is further diminishing as WPA positions become increasingly specialized in concert with the growing number of PhDs and as writing program administration has become an area in which formal certification is considered an asset (Enos 64; Ianetta et al.). As Jillian Skeffington, Shane Borrowman, and Theresa Enos acknowledge, in recent years "there certainly seem to be more professionals doing WPA work who have specifically prepared for this work" (19). Jonikka Charlton reinforces this view, arguing that, "While it is still true that many administrators […] just somehow found themselves in their positions, it is also true […] that more of us are actively choosing administrative work and deliberately preparing for and embracing its intellectual demands" (n. pag.). As more students graduate from rhetoric and composition programs, and as a percentage of these graduates seek jobs specific to WPA work, writing program administration will gradually pass from people who (willingly or reluctantly) "find themselves" in WPA positions to people who actively prepare for and pursue these positions with purposeful intent, whether in graduate school or after graduate school through other professionalization opportunities. In turn, it is likely that more institutions will seek to hire these scholars who have specialized in WPA work. Currently, however, according to our survey respondents, there are not enough opportunities among graduate programs across the U.S. to meet the demand for graduate students who wish to prepare to do this work.

Given the changing nature of expectations about who will serve as a WPA, the assumption that graduate students and, in effect, junior faculty, need to be girded against the perils of writing program administration also bears some reconsideration. In recent years, there has been much examination within the WPA literature of the possible deleterious effects of WPA professionalization on graduate students (e.g., Charlton; Edgington and Taylor; Fontaine; Fremo; Helmbrecht and Kendall; Latterell; Mountford; Rose and Weiser; see Edgington and Gallaher for an extensive bibliography of resources relating to Graduate Student Administration issues). Narratives stressing the perils of writing program administration warn graduate students and junior faculty from taking up this work pre-tenure, some even declaring it "unethical" for junior faculty to hold these positions (Horning 40). The prohibition against junior writing program administration became a much recognized principle in the CWPA "Portland Resolution," which states that WPAs should be a "tenured faculty member or a full-time administrator" with security of employment. This declaration cannot be disregarded, arising as it did out of historical and material exigencies. Nevertheless, while thoughtfully offered and certainly well meaning, it is also generally protective, defensive, and pre-emptive. Moreover, it assumes that all WPA positions and contexts are perilously the same and that graduate students or junior faculty cannot be effectively prepared to do this work.

Richard C. Gebhardt offers another perspective in "The Importance of Untenured Writing Administrators to Composition and to English Studies." He writes, "[I]n a field in which administration is a subspecialty and a career track, there seems something unreasonable about building a seven-year buffer zone between the background and enthusiasm developed in graduate school and the chance to put them into practice […] in meaningful writing program administration" (17). In their book *GenAdmin: Theorizing WPA Identities in the Twenty-First Century*, Colin Charlton et al. argue that the new generation of WPAs is no longer bound by the idea of a "chronological placement" or "cultural positioning" that dictates one must first be tenured in order to do WPA work (4). Rather, the authors recognize the know-how and rhetorical ability that pre-tenure WPAs bring to their positions. This agency, combined with the intellectual, scholarly quality of the work in which WPAs engage, makes such work largely equivalent pre- or post-tenure:

> Our understanding of WPA work involves a conflation of abilities to theorize, experiment, network, act, assess, and build a community of teachers and students [. . .] When our conception of WPA work–and the people working in those positions–is defined by the power afforded by tenure alone, we cut ourselves off from a more genera-

> tive conversation that attends to the ways in which the WPA can not only create power or influence without tenure, but also improve the conditions in which s/he works. This [emphasis on tenure] in turn discredits the value and importance of discursive, rhetorical acts that all WPAs engage in because of their training as rhetoricians and their disposition to work toward meaningful, pragmatic programmatic change that supports student writers. (213)

As noted in the WPA literature (Dew; Hult et al.; see also Lucas; McLeod 116-118) and on the JIL, pre-tenure WPA positions have become a fixture in higher education. Therefore, rather than simply argue against recent graduates taking on WPA positions, we must adequately prepare and support junior faculty in these positions. In other words, we are not advocating abandoning WPA professionalization programs that are designed to protect students from WPA perils. Rather, we are advocating the purposeful development of professionalization programs that exceed the goal of protecting students who are genuinely committed to writing program administration as an intellectual and professional career path.

Dew speaks to the preparation issue in "Ethical Options for Disciplinary Progress on the Issue of jWPA Appointments." Here, Dew argues that if the field agrees jWPA appointments "are necessary, useful and thus legitimate, we should proceed with heightened attention to the educational needs of this peculiar subclass of rhetoric and composition professionals by inviting jWPAs (gWPAs, NTTF [non-tenure-track faculty] serving as WPAs and jWPAs) to speak to the training issue" (287). We concur. The recommendations below, then, constitute our response to Dew's invitation as we "speak to the training issue" by describing some of the ways in which the field more generally might improve these efforts, as well as how WPA-GO and CWPA, more specifically, might continue to build on their efforts to meet graduate students' professionalization needs.

Recommendations for the Field

It is clear from our survey data that graduate students at a number of institutions have opportunities to gain experiential knowledge in WPA work through positions in first-year composition and WAC/WID programs or in the writing center, for example. It is also clear that these practical experiences are often detached, whether intentionally or not, from complementary professionalization opportunities. We believe that practical experiences are invaluable for students who expect to or want to administer writing programs, but we also believe they should be grounded in the theory and research of the field to make that experience more meaningful and effective.

Therefore, in line with many of the views expressed in the WPA-L conversation that began this essay, we hope to see more institutions begin to offer seminars on WPA theory, research, and practice.

Additionally, we would like to see the field begin to develop more comprehensive WPA specialized PhD tracks for students who want to pursue their intellectual and professional interest in writing program administration. Ideally a more developed WPA specialization would include instruction in writing-program-related concerns such as curriculum design, program assessment, student writing assessment, and placement. These topics should be examined through the diversity of lenses offered by various institution types (e.g., two-year and four-year colleges and universities; small, private liberal arts colleges; tribal colleges; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Hispanic Serving Institutions; etc.) and take into account the various needs of different types of learners (e.g., multilingual writers, minority students, first-generation students, adult students, basic writers, etc.). Instruction in WPA work needs to reflect the diversity of the types of institutions where WPAs engage in such work as well as the diversity of the students (and faculty) with whom WPAs work. Graduate students should also learn how to communicate this work as scholarly work, as addressed, for example, by the CWPA statement on "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Program Administration."

A WPA specialization should also include coursework on additional aspects such as hiring and supervising personnel, conducting teaching observations for professional development versus evaluation purposes, building relationships with faculty and administrators across one's own institution and other institutions, balancing one's time, and managing stress. Furthermore, as part of this specialization, graduate students should also be encouraged to take courses outside of their own department to help prepare them in other ways for WPA work (e.g., leadership courses or courses in conflict management). These courses could help prepare graduate students to meet the institutionally constituted political challenges of administration as identified, for example, by Roxanne Mountford in "From Labor to Middle Management: Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration," rather than simply encouraging jWPAs to avoid these challenges, which will most likely persist after tenure. Additional course offerings related to the managerial aspects of WPA work might include budgeting and accounting while, ideally, allowing students to examine these topics through the lens of a WPA (e.g., WPA Budgeting Practices). We might turn to such curricular models as the Language Program Administration specialization offered by the Monterey Institute of International Studies, which requires coursework in language program administration,

language teacher education, and teacher supervision as well as accounting, financing, and marketing.[8]

Another possibility for buttressing graduate students' practical WPA experience would be for institutions to combine resources and offer, for example, an online WPA certificate program—one that would, again ideally, include the above course offerings and be endorsed or "certified" by the CWPA. (This certification may be akin to the CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence.) In addition to providing graduate students with the possibility of engaging in coursework perhaps not offered at their own institutions, participants would also have the opportunity to network with other graduate students and faculty at colleges and universities across the country. Some of this work might also be done with the aid of locally established CWPA affiliates and could be further supported by the summer institutes offered at the annual CWPA Conference. This multi-pronged approach to WPA professionalization may address the challenge individual institutions can face when expanding curricular offerings as well as the challenge graduate students may face when attempting to fit more courses into their graduate plan of study. (Additionally, the offering of a WPA certificate could help to address the needs of those WPAs who discover their interest in this work after graduation.) Whether WPA specialization programs are offered online or face-to-face, the careful preparation of gWPAs interested in careers in writing program administration will go a long way to helping these individuals successfully meet the perils and improve on the promises of WPA work.

Recommendations for WPA-GO and CWPA

Much as we support WPA specializations, we recognize that such curricular development represents a number of complicated professional, institutional, and material challenges. And whether they come to fruition or not, it is incumbent upon extra-institutional organizations to work to address the concerns and needs of graduate students, including those concerns indicated by the results of our survey. (In fact, several initiatives, originating from informal conversations with fellow graduate students, were already under way before the survey was completed. The anecdotal evidence from these conversations was later corroborated by the survey results.) WPA-GO and CWPA are making such efforts, but there is still a lot to be done. In the absence of WPA specialization programs at universities around the U.S., the following is a series of recommendations for WPA-GO and CWPA that could help meet the needs of graduate students who have limited access, for whatever reason, to WPA professionalization at their own institutions.

First, as indicated in the results of the survey, a number of respondents either did not know about CWPA or concluded that it was not an organization where graduate student participation was encouraged. It is likely that, previously, graduate students were not such a welcome sight as many of our past narratives about WPA work and perhaps their authors actively discouraged graduate students from participating in this work. However, with the changing narrative about who is interested and actively engaged in this work, a major initiative of WPA-GO is to encourage graduate student participation in CWPA and the national CWPA Conference. The establishment of WPA-GO as described above was the first formal step in this direction, and the organization as well as graduate students continue to find ongoing support from the CWPA Executive Board under the changing leadership of Linda Adler-Kassner, Duane Roen, and Rita Malenczyk.

A second goal, which may contribute to achieving the first goal identified above, is to increase graduate student membership in CWPA. Between July 2010 and 2011, the number of graduate student members of CWPA grew from 40 to 160. (Even as members continue to graduate, the number of graduate student members remains steady.) At the 2011 CWPA Executive Board meeting at the annual CWPA Conference, Secretary Keith Rhodes attributed this increase in graduate student membership to the publicity efforts of WPA-GO. By continually growing graduate student membership and strengthening communication with members through the WPA-GO webpage on the CWPA website, WPA-GO email list, WPA-GO Facebook page, newsletters, WPA-GO special interest group, and a newly established GWPA-L listserv,[9] we hope that more and more graduate students will learn that they have a place at the CWPA table. These outreach efforts, in conjunction with the WPA-GO hosted social networking opportunities at the annual CWPA Conference and Conference on College Composition and Communication, encourage interaction among graduate students interested in WPA work, as well as between graduate students and faculty WPAs. Such interaction is of particular importance to those graduate students who, like many of our survey respondents, are at institutions that do not currently offer peer-to-peer or expert-novice WPA mentorship opportunities.

Thirdly, as a majority of respondents are enthusiastic about the workshops WPA-GO has begun to organize and offer at the annual CWPA Conference, both WPA-GO and CWPA should continue to organize as well as expand on these offerings. Because professionalization and job market preparation are clearly concerns of our survey respondents, at the 2011 CWPA Conference WPA-GO and CWPA faculty liaisons Duane Roen and Joe Janangelo implemented a series of professional development work-

shops specifically for graduate students on topics that included creating a curriculum vitae, reading job advertisements, and writing a teaching philosophy. In addition to such workshops, at the 2013 CWPA Conference in Savannah, Georgia, Melissa Ianetta and Kelly Ritter led the first full-day institute dedicated to graduate students and gWPA issues. WPA-GO and CWPA should expand these offerings in order to meet the needs of graduate students at those institutions where opportunities for WPA professionalization are, thus far, limited. Institute topics would ideally reflect those outlined above under the recommendations for the field and would include issues specific to the discipline of writing program administration (e.g., curriculum design, assessment, placement, etc.) as well as the more managerial aspects of WPA work (e.g., accounting, budgeting, marketing, etc.). In addition, the current WPA-GC is examining opportunities for posting future conference workshops and institutes for gWPAs online in order to provide access to those individuals who may not be able to attend the conference. These summer workshops or institutes could be designed as part of the aforementioned WPA certificate program that the CWPA could then endorse or certify. At the same time, WPA-GO and CWPA can encourage members of the profession to begin working to effect changes in graduate student professionalization at their own institutions, while considering the varying demands of their home institutions and programs.

Finally, in addition to strengthening the preparation that graduate students receive, it may be time for WPA-GO and CWPA to create a Portland-type resolution in support of graduate students to protect them from possibly exploitive work conditions at their colleges and universities. (For important discussions of potential issues that can arise from graduate student administrative positions, see Desser and Payne; Ebest; Edgington and Taylor; Gebhardt; Helmbrecht and Kendall; Latterell; Mountford.) As the WPA-GO survey reveals, a number of survey participants hold WPA positions, and it is important to ensure that these students are receiving the departmental and institutional support they need to meet the demands of that job as well as complete the requirements for their degree program. At the same time, however, the Portland Resolution needs an amendment that better reflects the diversity of individuals (tenured, untenured, non-tenured faculty, and gWPAs) engaged in WPA work rather than simply discouraging these individuals from doing this work.

Conclusion

Much WPA literature supports the notion that writing program administration is challenging, intellectual work and that those who do such work

benefit greatly from thorough professional training, attentive mentoring, and collaborative support. We hope that this essay directs some needed attention to the importance of providing such training, mentoring, and support for graduate students who constitute the future of the field. Moreover, the results of our survey indicate that our members and potential members see a clear need for these services, especially when such opportunities are lacking at students' own institutions. One respondent indicated that the activities and programs suggested in the survey would have been quite beneficial had they been available earlier in this student's career: "Since this is my final year as a graduate student, I can merely say that had any of these services/offerings that you're naming here been available (or known) to me as a grad student I would have found them exceedingly helpful." Another respondent further illustrated this perceived need for professionalization preparation:

> I have worked as a Writing Center AD, Comp AD (business school), and RA/GA to the Dean of Grad School[;] taking this survey made me think that I've been doing a lot of 'admin' work and so I don't know why it didn't occur to me that I should get some training, read a little, and get into the community of WPAs….Since I plan to be open to WPA work when I graduate, I should have though[t] about this earlier . . .

A third respondent expressed an outright sense of isolation, responding thus to the survey question requesting suggestions for additional WPA-GO offerings: "Anything that might help me feel a little less like I'm floundering around on my own." It is the earnest wish of WPA-GO to ameliorate graduate students' isolation and grow opportunities for collaboration—the same needs that are expressed in the quote above, and the very same isolation that Cristyn and Megan felt at their first CWPA Conference in 2008 before finally meeting and collaborating with their co-author, Ryan, and the rest of the WPA-Graduate Committee. The survey results and recommendations above give us concrete ideas about how the field, more generally, and WPA-GO, with the ongoing support of the CWPA, specifically, can continue moving forward in helping to prepare the next generation of WPAs for successful and productive careers in writing program administration.

Notes

1. We collapse education and training under the broader heading of professionalization in the remainder of this article.

2. Cristyn was the Online Writing Lab (OWL) Mail Coordinator and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Coordinator for the Purdue Writing Lab.

Megan held the position of Liaison for the Purdue Writing Lab and the first-year writing program, Introductory Composition at Purdue, as well as the position of WAC Coordinator for the Purdue Writing Lab. Ryan was the Assistant Director of Writing Programs at Arizona State University.

3. "Praxis and Allies: The WPA Board Game," co-authored by Harris Bras, Dana Lynn Driscoll, Cristyn L. Elder, Megan Schoen, Tom Sura, and Jaclyn M. Wells, earned the CWPA Award for Graduate Writing in WPA Studies in 2008. It is archived and available for free download on the website of the Council of Writing Program Administrators at the following link: http://wpacouncil.org/praxis-allies-wpa-game.

4. The seven charter members of the ad hoc committee were Meaghan Brewer, Tim

Dougherty, Cristyn L. Elder, Steven Lessner, Megan Schoen, Ryan Skinnell, and Ryan Witt.

5. WPA-GO's complete mission statement is as follows:

> WPA-GO seeks to strengthen connections between graduate students and professional WPAs through educational development and networking opportunities. In support of graduate student WPA preparation, WPA-GO works with faculty WPAs to provide the following: mentoring activities, workshops, scholarships and awards, and social events.

6. More information on the CWPA Mentoring Project can be found here: http://wpacouncil.org/mentoring-project

7. There is evidence that growth in the field has slowed a bit in recent years. For instance, in the "2007 Survey of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition," the authors write, "Students matriculating in rhetoric and composition PhD programs show a slight decline [in 2007] at 1,181 (1,276 matriculated in 1999; 1,173 in 1994)" (335). Nevertheless, the field regularly enrolls more than 1,100 students in PhD programs and regularly graduates more than 200 students, which contribute to the overall numbers of specialists in the field. Therefore, while enrollment may have slowed to some degree in recent years, the field continues to grow at a significant pace as people graduate.

8. For a description of the Language Program Administration specialization offered by the Monterey Institute of International Studies, please see: http://www.miis.edu/academics/programs/langteachingspecializations/lpa

9. Information about WPA-GO, including how to join the WPA-GO email list, WPA-GO Facebook page, and newly created graduate student listserv (GWPA-L), can be found at the following link: http://wpacouncil.org/wpa-go.

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Appendix A

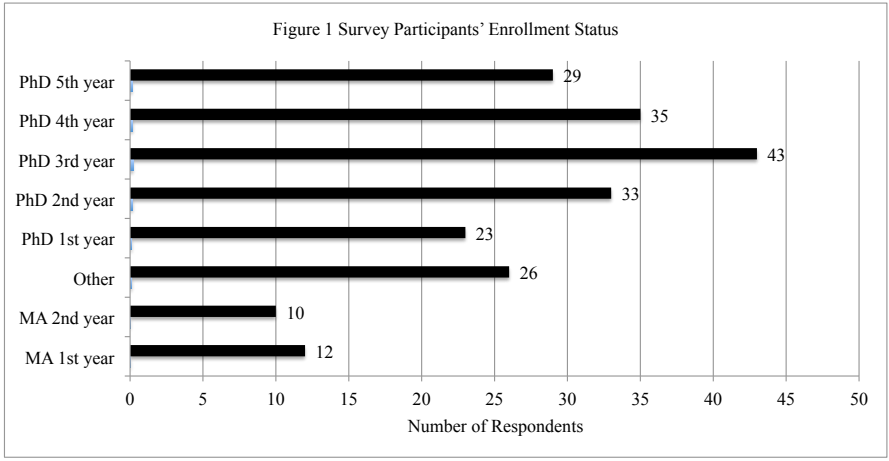
Figure 1 Survey Participants' Enrollment Status
PhD 5th year
PhD 4th year
PhD 3rd year
PhD 2nd year
PhD 1st year
Other
MA 2nd year
MA 1st year
29
35
43
33
23
26
10
12
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5
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15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
Number of Respondents

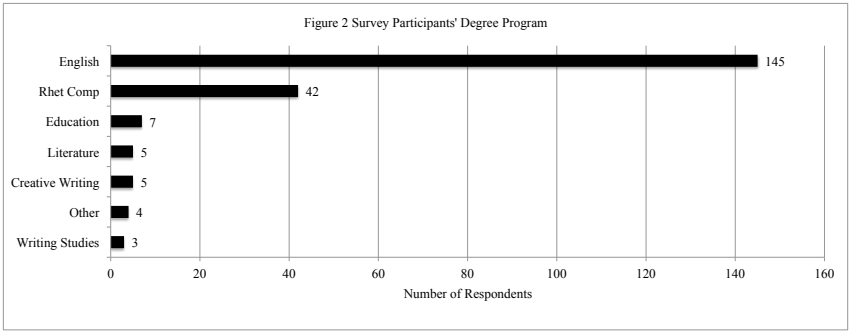
Figure 2 Survey Participants' Degree Program
English
Rhet Comp
Education
Literature
Creative Writing
Other
Writing Studies
145
42
7
5
5
4
3
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
Number of Respondents

Figure 3 Survey Participants' Degree Specializations

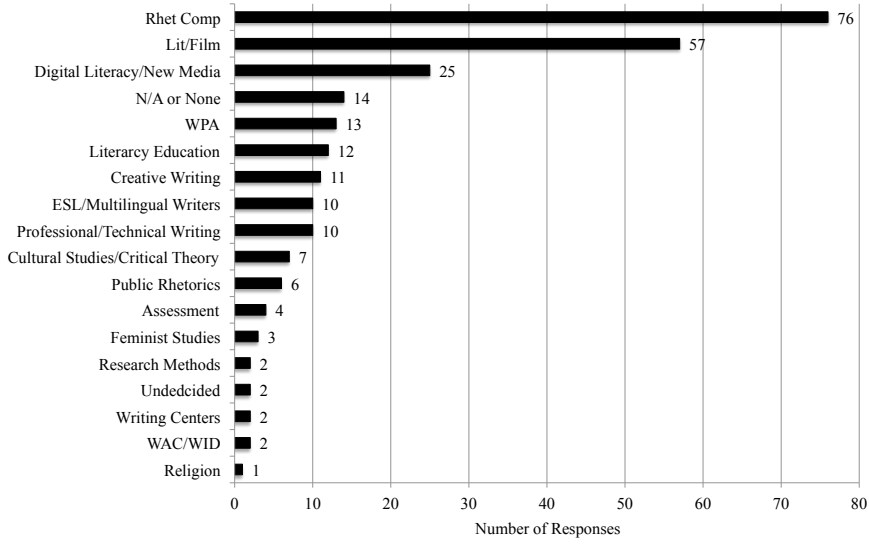

Figure 4 Kinds of gWPA Work Available to Survey Participants

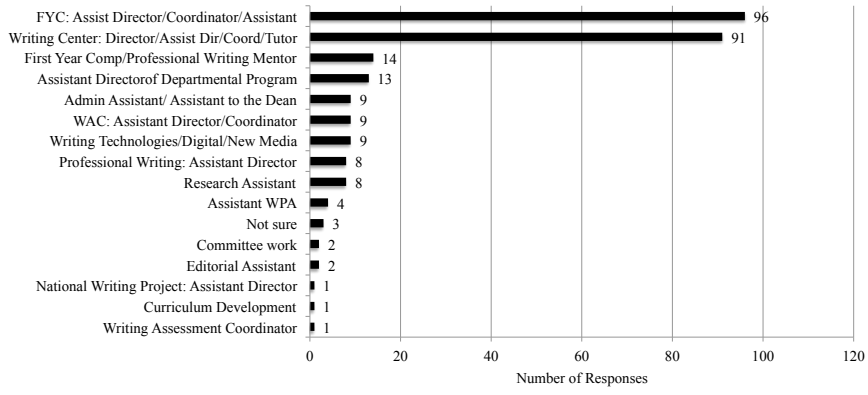

Figure 5: Usefulness of Potential WPA-GO Workshop Topics

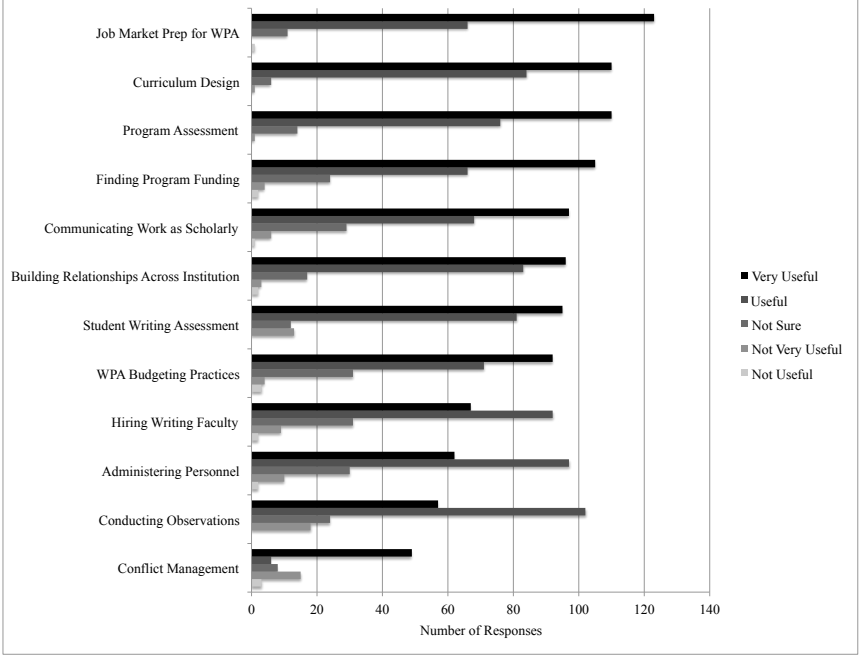

Figure 6 Usefulness of WPA-GO Offerings