

## From the Editors

Putting together each issue of this journal is an interesting kind of work in a number of ways. There is a great deal of satisfaction in seeing pieces go from original submission to published article. While our readings, comments, reviewer feedback and revising create a lot of work for writers, editors and reviewers, the result is the high quality articles, reviews and exchanges you are finding in each issue. While it is easy to get lost in the details of editing and also in the dialogue among writers, editors and reviewers, the articles themselves often convey more than their overt and explicit message.

In the current issue and all the issues we have published since we began editing the journal, one overriding theme is that CWPA is what business scholars call a “learning organization.” This phrase, made popular by Peter Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1990) describes organizations that are open to change. In addition, though, the phrase has come to describe organizations where continuous learning is a key feature. On-going learning is certainly a feature of CWPA as an organization. But it has struck me in editing the journal that we are not only good at on-going learning, but especially good at learning from one another and from our shared experience and developing expertise.

Naturally, the WPA listserv is an especially good example of this focus on change and continuous, shared learning. The list is one of the first things I learned about at WPA “bootcamp” (that is the summer workshop) from Marty Townsend and Doug Hesse, my workshop leaders. While I only occasionally post comments or questions to the list, I have benefited constantly from the information, ideas, insights and experiences shared there. Marty’s introduction of the listserv at the workshop came to mind as I read her piece (with Marty Patton and Jo Ann Vogt) in this issue on the history and development of the WAC program at Missouri. Continuous learning, openness to change and shared expertise are hallmarks of who we are. We hope that this issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* continues to support these features of the organization.

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

We are sorry to wave a good-bye to Jim Nugent whose time is consumed with his own research and writing projects; we have very much appreciated his careful copy editing and technical support. We hope an occasional question from the managing editor, two doors down the hall, won't be too much of an imposition. We are happy to welcome Carrie Leverenz to the editorial board. She has already reviewed two articles and we look forward to her assistance with new articles. We also welcome Betsy Allan of Oakland University, who will join us as an assistant editor. And we are grateful for ad hoc reviews by Darsie Bowden, Helen Foster, Joe Janangelo, and Carrie Leverenz.

## ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In "Pausing in the Whirlwind," Barbara J. Blakely and Susan B. Pagnac discuss their development of a campus place-based first-year curriculum that asks students to research and write about their campus mission, history, art, and architecture. This place-based approach to the first-year communication course helps students to locate themselves and their goals within the university community and aids their transition to college.

Matthew Heard reconceptualizes sensibility as the faculty of focused, attuned, "feeling out" of local contingencies and complexities that WPAs have already learned to adopt in order to negotiate the identity of writing in our different environments. Cultivating our sensibility to an ethos of writing would mean using our positions of vulnerability to reflect back the ways that writing shapes the values and practices that become naturalized in our local situations.

Emily Isaacs and Catherine Keohane in "Writing Placement that Supports Teaching and Learning" explore the development of a different kind of placement system at Montclair State University. Their system offers an important alternative to a number of other options for placement that readers may find quite useful.

Don Kraemer sees the proper content of first-year composition (FYC) or writing as the study of, and practice in, symbolic action for civic purposes (i.e., social justice). The cases we make for a particular curricular design should keep in dialogic contact both the obligations we have (a) to treat other people with dignity and (b) to choose for ourselves how to live well—a way of making a case that ought to be the chief aim of FYC.

Ann M. Penrose explores three factors that have historically defined professions: (1) a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise; (2) a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and (3)

an internal social structure based on shared goals and values. She offers an instructive model of the composition professional as a basis for articulating our professional values as we continue to advocate for improving the material conditions of employment.

In “Uncommon Conversations,” Marty Townsend, Marty Patton and Jo Ann Vogt review the history of their exemplary Writing Across the Curriculum program at the University of Missouri. The many features of this highly successful program and the many lessons they have learned and shared from it are a perfect example of the ways in which we all continue to learn from one another.

In “On the Crossroads and at the Heart,” Shirley Rose interviews Chuck Paine, host of the 2012 CWPA national conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Through their conversation, Shirley and Chuck explore the different ways that the history, “location” and “place” that is Albuquerque impacts UNM writing programs and other aspects of the university and surrounding community. Readers will gain insights about the host, city, institution, and surrounding community in preparation for attending the summer conference.

#### WPAs RESPOND TO “A SYMPOSIUM ON MENTORING THE WORK OF WPAs”

In response to our Fall Symposium on mentoring the work of WPAs—written by Joyce Olewski Inman, Kathryn Johnson Gindlesparger, Darci L. Thoune, Collie Fulford, and Tim McCormack—we received two provocative pieces from Melissa Ianetta and Rita Malenczyk. Ianetta’s response interrogates the commonplaces that are woven throughout each of the Fall Symposium essays, and suggests that the field may have “much to gain from thinking through more carefully the role of our utopic ideals in program building and the commonplaces that we use to express” those often unattainable ideals. While Ianetta focuses on the commonplaces, Malenczyk responds to three themes that she sees echoing throughout these five essays, which she identifies as the “three ‘I’s”: identity, instinct, and imperfection. In a response that eloquently traces the influence of each of these “I’s” on our work as writing program administrators, Malenczyk concludes with a plea for common sense and hope, advising new WPAs that they should keep “working, watching, listening...Talk to each other. Get over the imperfections. Keep self-flagellation to a minimum . . . and do the best you can.” We hope that this conversation about mentoring will continue in both formal and informal forums, and that we will continue to talk to each other about our hopes, our fears, and our expectations for WPA work.

## WPAs IN DIALOGUE

Randall McClure and Dayna Goldstein offer a thoughtful and provocative response to Barbara Cambridge's piece in Fall issue, which was the text of her talk at the summer conference in Baton Rouge.

## REVIEW

In "Enhancing Learning and Thinking in Higher Education," Sherry Rankins-Roberston, Tiffany Bouelle, and Duane Roen review several books that address the teaching, learning, and assessment of critical thinking skills in higher education. Finding flaws with some of the more popular arguments which suggest the failure of colleges and universities to teach critical thinking, they argue that discussions of student learning need to be steeped more thoroughly in disciplinary theory and practice.

