“IT DEPENDS ON WHO YOU TALK TO”: MAPPING WRITING CENTER-WRITING PROGRAM RELATIONSHIPS AT SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

by

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To Mom and Dad,

and in memory of Don Towle, Jerri Sue Scott, and Scott Drotar

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Writing centers and writing programs, as well as the role of their administrators, are shaped by historical and disciplinary factors that have been closely examined by scholars over the last half century. However, the role of institutionality in writing center and writing program administration (WPA) studies has been ignored in much of the scholarship about these two sub-disciplines. This dissertation examines the role of institutionality by developing a new method, relationship-mapping, as a way of understanding how the complex nature of institutional contexts impacts the work of writing centers and writing programs. Through a study of 13 small liberal arts colleges, it is determined that the factors of this specific institution type shape and transform the ways in which centers and programs develop relationships and collaborations to teach and support writing. Relationship-mapping shows promise, though, beyond small colleges and could be used at a multitude of institution types as a way to responsibly critique institutions and how they support students, as well as a way to study institutional cultures of writing.

CHAPTER 1: MAPPING THE HISTORY, DISCIPLINARITY, AND INSTITUTIONALITY OF WRITING ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

As an extremely shy eighteen year old, I had no idea what to expect when I started my first day of orientation at my small liberal arts college. I was one of about a hundred students who were on campus a week early because I had been flagged as needing additional assistance. Being a first-generation student from a low-income family meant I had no idea what to expect from college. During that additional orientation week, faculty and staff taught us how to ask for help and how to manage our time and set goals. It did not help much, if I'm being honest. The thing no one told me about going to a prestigious and wealthy small college is that it attracts a very particular type of student: the type that doesn't want to admit they're struggling.

Whatever success I managed at my small college was because of the one thing I did know I was better at than most people around me: writing. I majored in creative writing, but it was my humanities and social science classes that my writing oddly flourished. A religious studies professor told my parents at graduation that I wrote "the most beautiful papers" she had ever seen from an undergraduate. Another professor told me that I had a distinctive style of writing he had never seen before. And yet, despite all this praise, I knew at a fundamental level that I did not know how to write in an academic style. My decent (but not particularly impressive) SAT scores got me out of taking the first-year composition course taught by English faculty, and the writing-intensive requirement was easily fulfilled by an introductory literary survey class in which I wrote a lot about feminist Marxism but didn't learn what a literature review was or the reasoning behind MLA citation. I was simply writing stories, but with ideas and references instead of characters or settings. When I told one professor that I wrote papers so they would have rising action and a climax, he had a look on his face as though he was reconsidering every A he had ever given me.

Working in the writing center during my undergraduate years was a constant internal struggle of not revealing just how little I knew about introductions and conclusions. I was a profoundly average tutor. What good I did was in relationship-building with international student clients who really just needed a coach more than they needed an instructor. I liked my job in the

writing center, but it was just that: a job. I reserved more passion for the work I did over at the library, where I was surrounded by books and down-to-earth staff members.

Here is what I did not know then that I know now: My lack of education in writing academically was not some personal fluke, but rather a result of institutional issues that were invisible to me. It turns out the reason I did not have to take first-year composition was that there simply were not enough faculty available to teach the number of sections needed, and so the English department created a SAT/ACT score boundary that I fell above. One of the reasons I never particularly felt passionate about my writing center work was because we lacked the kind of professional development opportunities and community-building I would receive at other centers later. The tutoring staff met a couple times a semester, were told we were doing good work, and otherwise sort of sent on our way. The writing curriculum at that institution has now changed (mostly for the better), but it had a direct impact on my development as not only a college student, but eventually a future scholar, as well.

A couple years after graduating, I started an MFA program at a completely different institution type, a mid-size and extremely privileged private research university. There, I struggled in my first PhD-level literature course to write in an academic style, but was once again able to get a job in the writing center. And that is where I both fell in love with writing center studies but also where I developed an understanding of how institutional contexts affect the way students are taught and supported in their writing. Here, the writing center was part of a writing program separate from the English department, and tutors were given more extensive professional development training. Additionally, tutors were expected to not only engage with writing center scholarship but also to produce it. In this context, I learned to write about research in ways that moved beyond the type of deep-reading analysis I was familiar with from my literature and workshop courses.

After realizing my passion for writing center studies as a possible career path, I decided to switch disciplines and start a PhD in rhetoric and composition. And this took me to yet another specific institutional context: the large, public research university with a STEM focus. With this change came another form of writing instruction and support: a first-year writing program and a writing center located within the English department, and yet separate from each other in many ways. As I began to study the unique institutional issues that affected the unstable relationship between the writing program and writing center for a qualitative methods class, I began also

comparing that relationship with the ones at my previous institutions. Then I compared other institutions, too. And soon, I realized how little-understood institutional contexts were as a theme in writing program administration (WPA) and writing center studies. I thought about my beloved alma mater, about how writing structures there influenced my progress as a writer in both positive and negative ways, and I thought about how I never saw small colleges represented in the readings I was doing in my PhD coursework. What do writing programs and writing centers at small liberal arts colleges (SLACs) look like, and how do they operate together or apart to support student writers and develop the writing pedagogy of faculty members? These questions began to trouble me, especially as I considered the type of job I wanted to start after my PhD. I knew I needed to go back to a smaller college, that I needed to be a writing center director at the kind of institution that supports mentoring relationships with undergraduates. And if I wanted to do well in that kind of job, then I needed to understand what I was getting myself into.

And thus, this project about writing program and writing center relationships at small liberal arts colleges began to develop.

Over the last four years of my graduate study, I have learned a lot about the history of writing programs and writing centers, as well as the disciplinary concerns and labor issues of both these sub-disciplines. What I did not learn much about was institutionality or institutional positioning. Previous research on writing center and program administration, and the paltry amount of research about the relationships between those writing instruction and support units in particular, do not engage with institutional factors that might influence administrative structures and positions, factors such as faculty and administrative relationships within an institution, institutional definitions and values, and the material support given to specific programs and initiatives. Without these contextual maps, we are left only with a malformed picture of what is happening and why. Additionally, by leaving out institutional contexts, writing center and writing program administration studies potentially erases voices from those whose institutional contexts do not look like the dominant norm.

WPA and writing center work discounts or ignores discussions about institutional context because these discussions complicate or even dismantle ready-made narratives about administrative work. In her book *Peripheral Visions*, Grutsch McKinney (2013) argues that writing centers participate in a grand narrative that both helps and hinders arguments for writing

center studies as its own subfield. This narrative, which Grutsch McKinney lays out as "writing centers are comfortable, iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-on-one tutoring on their writing" (p. 3) has defined writing center work both internally within the sub-field and externally among writing studies and institutions. By consistently and persistently repeating and reinscribing this narrative, writing center administrators and scholars have trapped themselves in a problematic relationship with their work because "the ways we talk about writing centers affect what we see and don't see in writing centers, what work we value and don't value" (Grutsch McKinney, 2013, p. 18). Grutsch McKinney makes a highly compelling case for why writing center scholars need to be able to see through and beyond the typical narratives of writing center work in order to actually move the field forward.

One of the biggest problems in the constructed narratives of writing instruction and support in universities is the simple fact that the *narrator* is in the privileged position of including and ignoring what they want. And for far too long, the narrator has been writing program administration scholarship that is firmly planted in one type of institutional context: the research university. As Jeanne Gunner (1999) discusses in her history of WPA scholarship, the large or prestigious research university has almost completely controlled the perception of what writing programs look like and how they are understood by their stakeholders. The majority of scholarship in WPA studies is from administrators and scholars at research-one (R1)[1] universities. This is likely for a couple major reasons. First, WPAs at research institutions are more likely to be working with graduate students and managing first-year composition programs where data and research assistance is easily on hand. Second, these administrators and scholars are more likely to be tenure-track[2] and have the ability to do research and publish, as well as participate in professional activities like conferences and networking. With large institutions dominating our understanding of what writing programs and centers look like, we are unable to see across different models and recognize that there are differences that need further exploration, forming gaps in our collective knowledge.

I subscribe to Grutsch McKinney's (2013) critique because of the work this dissertation project required and what I learned through my interviews. Hearing stories from tenure-track,

[1] According to the Carnegie classification definitions (2017), research-one, or R1, institutions are doctoral universities classified as having the "highest research activity." Purdue University, for example, is an R1.
[2] See data presented later in this chapter.

non-tenure-track, faculty, and staff administrators, as well as mapping program structures and institutional relationships to writing, I began to see all the ways in which the grand narrative of writing centers and writing programs has failed writing studies over and over again, and vice versa. Writing program, and even more so writing center, scholars have long had to argue for the value of their work in the larger field. However, these sub-fields constantly disadvantage themselves by publicly presenting too-neat narratives in places like listservs, publications, and even in day-to-day conversations with graduate students and faculty and staff colleagues. By studying under-examined and misunderstood institutions like small liberal arts colleges and by reconsidering our traditional narratives of labor and positionality, we might begin to shift the narrative to one that is more inclusive, yes, but also more complex and more rhetorically savvy, a narrative that can evolve and transform as needed. An elastic and more equitable narrative: that is what I seek in this work.

My approach to opening up the narrative is to map the relationships of writing programs and writing centers at small liberal arts colleges. Mapping relationships not only allows for a fuller understanding of writing instruction and support infrastructures in this one institution type, it also methodically examines issues of historical context, labor, and scholarship production that have long complicated -- and often made difficult -- the ways in which writing center studies has or has not seen itself as part of WPA work, as well as the ways in which WPA studies has routinely marginalized writing center work. Additionally, this work opens up how we talk about our work to include institutionality – not as a limiting factor but as one that expands our ability to define and understand writing instruction and support across institution types, and to make actions for change. In this literature review, I provide these historical and disciplinary contexts in order to both enrich the understanding of WPA and writing center work in higher education, then bring in institutionality as the "third rail" of WPA and writing center studies work, a necessary complication in how writing administration scholars have defined their roles within the larger field of writing studies. Finally, at the end of this chapter, I discuss my focus on the specific institution type of small liberal arts colleges and present the research questions that guide this project.

The History of Writing Programs and Writing Centers

WPA and writing center studies, while both emerging from a particular moment of time in the history of higher education, are not historically tied together through some formal congruence. While they both are under the umbrella of writing studies now, they originally developed out of unique institutional contexts separate from both each other and from traditional rhetorical education. The two sub-fields have, over time, been conflated and made synonymous in order to make the narrative of their emergences in the late-19th/early-20th century neater and more coherent. However, I argue here, writing centers and writing programs have, from their very origins in the United States, emerged relatively independently of each other and out of different institutional needs. Additionally, I argue that writing centers and writing programs may share what look like similarities to casual viewers, but that they are deeply invested in different goals and ideas. They have common concerns and stakeholders, yes, and I will explore the ways in which those commonalities reveal both the advantages and problems inherent in WPA and writing center studies in the next section. But I also want to delineate the ways in which their history, scholarship, and material concerns have diverged and led to increased isolation from one another. Essentially, I argue that these two sub-disciplines' complicated beginnings over time have alienated them from each other, necessitating an understanding of the types of relationship-building and collaboration (or lack thereof)[3] I examine in my study.

The key difference between writing centers and writing programs as entities for writing instruction is their separate birthplaces. Writing programs emerged out of concerns at universities about student preparedness, while writing centers actually began as a form of laboratory teaching at secondary schools. Writing centers began becoming more popular in universities in the 1930s as a result of massive enrollments and a changing student population demographic, but they also continued to be a kind of "lesser-than" unit of English instruction, with universities wanting to better prepare student writers while also being embarrassed that they

[3] I want to clarify my usage of "relationship" and "collaboration" as two distinct subjects. Relationships are more intangible, built upon a complex matrix of labor, material and institutional support, respect, or knowledge - or the lack of all of these. Relationships refer to the ways in which program and center directors understand each other and the work they do or do not accomplish together. Collaboration, meanwhile, refers to more tangible aspects of relationship-building, referring to the material production or consequences of how relationships function. Collaborations may be affected by relationships, and, in turn, relationships are deeply affected by the pursuit, success, or failure of collaborations between programs and administrators. My analysis chapters will more strongly define and examine these two functions.

had students who were under-prepared in the first place (Lerner, 2005). So while writing centers and writing programs were connected through an affiliation within English departments, an increase in university enrollments, and concerns about student preparedness, their actual histories, especially their material histories, and the ways those histories have been captured and reported, are very different.

Writing programs are tied directly to the developing need for English writing instruction in universities after the Civil War and reached a tipping point in the 1890s when scholar-teachers of composition such as Barrett Wendell and Fred Newton Scott helped bring questions of process and pedagogy to the forefront of conversations about writing instruction (McLeod, 2007). During the 1920s and 30s, as enrollments began increasing, particularly at public institutions, more and more writing courses had to be added to the curriculum to meet needs (Lerner, 2005), particularly because so many of these students were from demographics that, to this point, had been largely underrepresented in higher education: immigrants, the middle and lower classes, and students from rural areas. Then, with the GI Bill after World War II, enrollments changed wildly once again in the late 1940s, forcing writing programs to rethink their curriculum (Corbett, 1993). However, despite all these changes, what we might consider "writing program administration" was still not considered a typical part of the higher education milieu.

Writing program administration as we currently think of it did not fully emerge until the 1970s. Certainly, there were faculty or staff members who managed or developed the curriculum for writing programs at universities; this was largely the exigence for the first meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949. However, these often-unrecognized administrators of writing programs remained largely invisible as researchers or scholars. McLeod (2007) notes that, until the 1970s, there was only one study directly related to WPA scholarship published in mainstream composition journals, a survey piece by Emerson Shuck. Most scholarship in the sub-field took the form of program descriptions, pedagogical discussions, and the tricky "advice narrative." Things improved with the advent of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), which was founded in the 1970s and held its first conference in 1986. At that point, writing program administration began to take the form of what we now know it to be. While issues such as labor and institutional position, professionalization, and tenure certainly circled the field then, those issues have become better articulated and more deeply examined in the last two decades.

One major issue in the history of writing programs and writing program administration is its accuracy. Early histories are tied to institutional memory, which is why Harvard and Midwestern state institutions, such as University of Michigan, are over-represented in histories of writing program administration: they recorded their work. Scholars such as Barbara L'Eplattenier and Neal Lerner have worked to recover histories of early models of writing program administration, but this type of historical work is still underdeveloped. The truth is that most English departments were simply not keeping track of their advancements in concrete ways. "Indeed, the emergence of writing programs, an emergence that frames the very conditions of the possibility of the contemporary study of composition is a looming hole in the field's history," argues Strickland (2011). Non-research institutions in particular suffer from the gaps of writing program history. L'Eplattenier (1999) and McLeod (2007) both discuss the role of private women's colleges in the late 19th-century writing instruction (Gertrude Buck, a famous student of Fred Newton Scott and a pioneer of writing and rhetoric pedagogy in higher education, cut her teeth originally at Vassar), but beyond these schools, little is known about how writing program administration emerged specifically at a wide swath of institutions - not only small private colleges, but also two-year colleges, regional comprehensives, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). WPA scholarship, particularly the work of Shirley Rose, has argued for the need for increased archival and historical research in WPA studies. As L'Eplattenier (1999) reminds us, understanding the history of writing programs is incredibly important to the way WPAs understand and articulate their work, especially as historical evidence can be used to persuade stakeholders of the need for change or maintenance of specific program aspects. Had calls for this type of archival work been made and heeded decades earlier, we would have a more complex and complete view of writing program histories.

Surprisingly (and perhaps ironically), the history of writing centers is actually relatively more complete than that of writing programs simply due to the much-denigrated "lore" aspect of writing center scholarship. We know about early writing centers because of the very lore-based scholarship that writing center administrators are often now criticized for using. Early administrators simply spent a lot of time talking about themselves. They published laboratory classroom and clinic descriptions in early issues of the *English Journal* and presented at what were essentially early versions of NCTE-type organization conferences. One reason for this stronger record may be the way in which early writing centers were tied to secondary schools

before they infiltrated universities. Secondary school teachers had more opportunities to share successes and failures because they had access to more professional organizations, meetings, and publications than university writing instructors of the time. These advantages have allowed writing center historians, such as Neal Lerner and Elizabeth Boquet, to provide a surprisingly cohesive scope of the history of writing centers and early administrators. Lerner's work is particularly helpful. His massive CompPile bibliography "Chronology of Public Descriptions of Writing Laboratories/Clinics, 1894-1977" (Lerner, 2010) traces early forms of one-on-one teaching models in English from the late 19th century all the way through to writing center boom of the 1970s, with many citations of articles and program descriptions about secondary schools and eventually universities. Additionally, his book, *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory* (Lerner 2009), examines specific programs such as the Dartmouth Writing Clinic and the writing laboratory at the University of Minnesota's General College. While Lerner focuses on a relatively small number of schools, his range is wide in both institution type (MIT and Mount Holyoke, for example, are also included in his discussion) and geographic area. Lerner (2009) pushes against the idea of early writing centers as only remediation centers, especially since they so often were necessary evils developed by writing programs as a way to handle having too many students with too many disparate needs. However, it is hard to separate the development of writing centers from the need for increased writing instruction for underprepared students.

Writing centers are first documented around the turn of the century, a result of English instructors, mostly at the secondary level, taking up laboratory methods of teaching popularized by Helen Parkhurst's Dalton plan and the work of John Dewey. These early versions of writing centers were chronicled in *English Studies* through brief descriptions of classrooms built around the idea of one-on-one tutorials between instructors and students. Early writing laboratory classrooms were still very much in the realm of the banking model of education, where students were given more attention but still learning at the feet of "experts," a very different model from the type of peer-to-peer tutoring that is now associated with contemporary writing centers.

Eventually, higher education began taking up this writing laboratory model with mixed results, most famously in the form of Dartmouth's Writing Clinic, which was established toward the tail-end of the first writing center "boom" of the 1930s, when many schools began to establish writing laboratories on their campuses (Lerner, 2009). Established in 1939 by one of the senior undergraduates, Peter Cardoza, the clinic was supposed to serve the purpose of fixing

what university faculty saw as problem writers, students who were not up to snuff according to the specific brand of eliteness Dartmouth was trying to build (Lerner, 2007). Eventually, the idea of housing a writing clinic became unappealing to Dartmouth's faculty and administrators, who saw it as too symbolic of a "problem" of underprepared undergraduate students, a problem they did not want to be made public in fears it would hurt the university's prestigious reputation. The clinic closed pretty quickly, and its failure can be blamed on a host of factors from institutional snobbery, lack of resources, and cult of personality, as the clinic particularly suffered once Cardoza left his position as its leader.

A more robust and long-lasting early writing laboratory was the University of Iowa's writing center, established by Carrie Stanley in 1934, and still in existence today as the university's primary writing support center. Like most early writing centers, the Iowa laboratory's history is tied to that of remediation and open access, as state universities began to see an influx of immigrants or otherwise unprepared undergraduate students. Unlike Dartmouth, Iowa's laboratory was able to maintain its success even after Stanley left, and its stability certainly came from the resources and support given to it by the actual institution ("History of the Writing Center," 2017). Unlike Dartmouth, which saw its clinic as a representation of poor student quality, Iowa recognized its position as a land grant institution with a student body from a wide variety of backgrounds and educational experience, and the writing laboratory was considered a necessary aspect of English education. In her history of open-admissions writing centers, Boquet (1999) argues that during the post-World War II enrollment boom, "writing labs began to be characterized in the literature as places where average students can get help with content and organizational problems, a step forward from the primarily remediation-oriented labs" (p. 470). Writing centers began to take on a new image of necessity, signaling a shift in how public institutions in particular would begin marketing themselves as a place for the middle class. In this way, writing center clout is largely determined by institutional type and messaging, which, as Salem (2014) asserts, is still a relevant factor today. According to Salem's nation-wide data gathering, 87% of public universities have a writing center, a much higher rate than that of for-profit or private universities.

While early writing centers are tied to remediation, the messaging around that remediation has changed over time. Increasingly, writing centers are considered a necessity for universities that want to sell themselves as proponents of equality and opportunity within higher

education. Salem (2014) claims that writing centers "serve institutions in their efforts to compete in a stratified university system. Writing centers allow universities to signal the kind of literacy they sponsor, and they give universities a concrete venue for operationalizing institutional goals and agendas" (p. 37). This is especially true at public research universities and private, residential liberal arts colleges, such as the ones discussed in this dissertation. Residential liberal arts institutions, says Salem, are able to easily fold writing centers into their institutional narrative of providing a civic, whole-person form of education and not just a job-based education. My own experience of small liberal arts colleges supports Salem's claim, and I believe that what failed at Dartmouth in the 1940s is what makes writing centers successful now in the twenty-first century. This narrative shows a general trend in higher education overall, as the open access movement of the 1970s and increased attention to issues of diversity and preparedness have filtered down from public land grant universities to other types of institutions. The liberal arts educational model that developed over the 20th century has made it possible for writing centers to develop and exist within small institutions that pride themselves on both elitism and equality, however dubious and problematic some of those dual claims may be. Despite the limited prestige that comes with having a writing center, though, the labor around writing center work still often gets lumped in with remediation, which has had damaging consequences for administrators and scholars. More importantly, the oft-repeated historical narrative of "writing centers = remediation" has had a major impact on how the discipline of writing centers has developed over time, as well as how writing program administration has both claimed and distanced itself from writing centers.

Disciplinarity and its Discontents in Writing Center and WPA Studies

One of the main reasons it is important to study the relationships between writing programs and writing centers is the problem of discipline. The disciplinary knowledge of writing program and writing center administrators is often lumped together into a general idea of what a WPA is and does. Even in my graduate studies at Purdue, I am technically specializing in Writing Program Administration as my secondary area. However, I actually do not consider myself a WPA scholar. Instead, I identify primarily as a writing center scholar who just happens to have taken some WPA classes. And yet, there is not a writing center secondary in the program; instead, I had to "invent" a writing center theory and practice secondary with the

blessing of the director of the graduate program. This personal experience is reflective of a larger conceptualization within the discipline of writing studies that writing center administration (WCA) = writing *program* administration (WPA)[4]. However, there are very real disciplinary differences between writing center studies and writing program administration, differences that have shaped the labor, scholarly pursuits, and reputations of both sub-disciplines, leading to current contemporary issues within WPA and WCA work.

These differences speak to larger questions and definitions of discipline and what makes a discipline. In her influential article, "Composition Studies: Dappled Discipline," Lauer (1984) defines discipline as:

> [having] a special set of phenomena to study, a characteristic mode or modes of inquiry, its own history of development, its theoretical ancestors and assumptions, its evolving body of knowledge, and its own epistemic courts by which knowledge gains that status. Its surface features include a particular departmental home, a characteristic ritual of academic preparation, and its own scholarly organizations and journals. Finally, permeating these features is a discipline's tone, the result of its evolution and the ways its scholars interact with one another and outsiders. We recognize a discipline not by each of these features taken singly but rather by their presence as a cluster. (p. 20)

Lauer's (1984) defense of composition studies as its own unique discipline is largely accepted by writing scholars, as well as the wider field of English studies. I would argue that Lauer's definition of a discipline may actually problematize the ways in which parts of writing studies, such as technical writing/communication, digital rhetoric, and WPA and writing center studies, could themselves be labeled as disciplines because they carry all of Lauer's features in clusters[5]. Unfortunately, I believe that for me to claim writing center and WPA studies as their own

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[4] Writing program administration and singular writing program administrators are both referred to as "WPA" in the scholarship of writing studies at large. Therefore, I will use WPA to mean both here. Context will readily reveal which usage I am using, but in cases where it may be confusing, I have taken care to be explicit or to use the full terms. Strangely, neither writing center scholarship or the broader field routinely uses an acronym placeholder to mean "writing center administration" or "writing center administrator." WCD (writing center director), WCP (writing center professional), and WCA (writing center administrator) have all been offered as placeholders by various writing center scholars, though I have never seen a particular preference given by the International Writing Center Association (IWCA) or the *Writing Center Journal.* I have decided to use "writing center administrator" and "WCA" as my preferred terms because they most closely parallel those of writing program administrator/WPA.

[5] I am particularly interested in how writing centers do not fit Lauer's assertion that a discipline shares a departmental home. Writing centers are located in and administered by all kinds of departmental homes. In my study, participants come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, and the writing centers at their institutions are almost never located in English. In fact, some study participants even admit that their English departments want very little, if anything at all, to do with the writing center or its administrative duties.

disciplines is beyond the scope of both this dissertation and my interests. Instead, I will be using this literature review to demonstrate why writing center and WPA studies are each unique sub-disciplines within writing studies, based partly on Lauer's definition of shared commonalities. I use sub-discipline or sub-field to describe WPA and writing center studies because those terms are relatively common in academia and also clarify the unique position both sub-disciplines find themselves in in comparison to the larger umbrella of writing studies. However, as I hope to demonstrate in the rest of this chapter, I am firmly discussing them as *separate* sub-disciplines, even if they do share some commonalities. I would argue that the injustice of lumping together these two sub-disciplines has had the unfortunate consequence of actually alienating writing center and writing programs from not only each other, but from writing studies as a whole. The conceptualization of writing center and writing program scholarship, and the rooting of those conceptualizations in their histories and labor issues, has led to a central misunderstanding of both commonalities and differences between the two sub-disciplines.

Disciplinary Relationships and Administrative Work

As Geller and Denny (2013) point out in their study on the working conditions of writing center administrators, and as backed up by the results from Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, and Jackson's (2016) book on new writing center administrators, the everyday labor of a writing center director depends very little on official titles and positions. Directors keep their centers up and running, train new tutors, track traffic, and serve as the face of their centers, no matter if they are faculty or staff, part-time or full-time, or tenure-track or not. What marks the difference, then, is institutional support for research. Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, and Jackson point out that emotional and everyday labor are inherent in all writing center administrator roles; it is, as they call it, "disciplinary labor" that changes based on institutional status and support. Disciplinary labor, such as attending or presenting at conferences, pursuing an active research agenda, and mentoring others in their own research, is the fundamental line between administrative labor and scholarship in writing centers.

However, both Geller and Denny (2013) and Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, and Jackson's (2016) studies find that actual happiness or contentment with the job has little to do with research; many directors love their jobs despite not having an active scholarship component. Geller and Denny (2013) discovered that a primary aspect of job satisfaction and research

participation was related to disciplinarity. Directors from non-composition areas of English may resent how their duties take them away from their literature studies or creative writing. Writing center directors trained in writing center research may resent how their everyday labor leaves them less time for the disciplinary labor they enjoyed as graduate students. Disciplinarity is what also leads to the feelings of marginalization that writing center directors seem to feel across the board -- not the differences between sub-fields within English, but rather the treatment of writing centers as a sub-field within writing studies.

Writing center administrators often feel as though they are not only an afterthought within English studies but even within writing studies and WPA studies, which so often claims writing center studies under its umbrella. As Geller and Denny (2013) note:

> on the rare occasion WPA conversations turn to the place of [WCAs], compositionists often enact the very marginalizations they themselves often face in relation to wider literary-tilted English studies. [WCAs] are positioned as a substrata of writing program administration, even further removed from the academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry of English studies. (p. 98)

In this way, writing centers become the red-headed step-child of a sub-field (WPA studies) that already often positions itself as the red-headed step-child of English studies. Ianetta, Bergmann, Fitzgerald, Haviland, Lebduska, and Wislocki (2006) echo this disjoint in their discussion of the question of whether or not writing center directors are WPAs. The authors take a mixed view of their central question and debate the merits and drawbacks of considering themselves, as writing center administrators, part of the WPA sub-field. They develop a taxonomy of administrative types: the Universal Professional, who "sees scholarly identity [as] the path to agency in the academy" (p. 14) and is more likely to see WPA and WCA work as belonging within writing studies; the Local Professional, who believes "individual context rather than disciplinary standards of Composition studies provides the best route to WPA preparation and success" (p. 15) and is more interested in local concerns than larger questions of disciplinarity and scholarship; and the Administrative Iconoclast, who "assumes the primary value of all writing instruction is its attention to the individual -- individual students, individual campuses, and individual writing centers" (p. 16). Administrative Iconoclasts are the least likely to play nice with other administrative structures in place at their institutions, though they are also likely to be the most focused on getting the job done. Ianetta, et al. (2006) explain how these three different

administrative types function within a variety of universities, including large public research universities and small liberal arts colleges. What administrative type a WCA or WPA positions themselves as directly impacts their relationship with other administrators at the institution, which could be one of the primary problems faced by administrators who struggle to collaborate in mutually beneficial ways with their counterparts from other programs.

Whereas WPA studies relies on the Universal Professional model to perpetuate the sub-field, claiming this administrative type could lead to the kind of disciplinary snobbery found by Geller & Denny (2013), leading to an erosion in relationships between programs and administrators. In Balester and McDonald's 2001 study of relations between WPAs and WCAs, results revealed that the attitudes described by Geller and Denny and Ianetta, et al. (2006) directly impact how administrators across programs work (or don't work) together. In problematic relationships between WCAs and WPAs, disciplinarity was the primary factor of cause, particularly when WPAs saw WCAs as not being "experts" in the field of writing studies as they themselves were. The situation of expertise was not only one-way, though. WCAs who encountered WPAs who saw writing centers as only spaces of remediation or who misunderstood the mission of the writing center found it hard to develop relationships with those WPAs. Successful relationships, however, were more likely when centers and programs were located in the same department or academic unit, and were largely dependent on strong communication between the WCA and WPA. Despite some examples of good relationships between writing centers and writing programs, Balester and McDonald (2001) mostly found that the disciplinarity factor hindered collaboration, with some WPAs and WCAs "[seeming] to define their territories in ways that discouraged them from becoming involved in the policies and practices in each other's domains" (p. 77). The authors also found that, overall, WPAs held a "more privileged place in institutional structures and that the professionalization of [WCAs] is lagging" (p. 77).

Research and Scholarship in Writing Center and WPA Studies

Perhaps the biggest gap in writing studies' conceptualization of WPA and writing center studies is the view towards what types of research matter. Recently, writing center publications have pushed for an increase in empirical research. Driscoll and Wynn Perdue (2012) have argued that increasing RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-driven) research should be a primary

concern of writing center scholars. Certainly, this type of rigorous research should be used to inform our practices and to help those in all of composition studies understand the work of writing centers. Increased opportunities for RAD research to be completed and published within writing center studies is incredibly important for helping the sub-field legitimize itself. However, as Nordlof (2014) points out, a field built entirely on research without theoretical underpinnings is doomed for failure, especially when it comes to earning the respect and value of other fields it is tied to, especially rhetoric. Technical communication, which has successfully built itself up as a popular sub-field within writing and rhetoric studies, regularly utilizes theory in its scholarship. Writing center studies has not quite done the same, and while writing center studies need not base itself on technical communication, it does need to balance theory and practice in order to continue spawning new avenues for future inquiry.

WPA studies has managed a slightly stronger theory and empirical marriage, although that is partly because of the more robust nature of WPA work in general in terms of labor divisions and faculty status. Books such as Rose and Weiser's (2002) *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher* and *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist*, as well as rich scholarship published in the *WPA* journal have helped the field to position itself as a part of composition studies in a way that writing center scholars have not yet been able to manage. Theory and empirical research are both held as legitimate avenues for scholarship, a balance writing center studies has yet to fully articulate. Theory is seen as integral to how WPAs work, with Rose and Weiser (2002) claiming that a WPA should be a "reflective agent seeking explanations of phenomena and situations in order to understand them better and to act on that understanding in a particular context for a particular purpose" (p. 183). Writing center administrators certainly see themselves similarly, and yet are hindered by perceptions that their work is storytelling without a strong basis for extrapolation and generalization.

Writing center studies, perhaps more than any other sub-field within writing studies, is haunted by negative perceptions of "lore," the stories told by writing center administrators that was long held up as the only form of scholarship in the sub-field. However, the accusation of "lore" has become the dominant narrative of writing center scholarship in incredibly harmful ways that has not so much stunted it as a sub-discipline so much as it has damaged the view of writing center scholarship by the broader writing community. While early writing center work was, in fact, centered on narratives and program description, it has changed significantly since

then. Additionally, most early writing program administration work could be labeled lore, with program descriptions and histories making up the scholarship popular in the first and middle parts of the 20th century. Program descriptions are still regularly published in writing program administration journals, and most empirical work tends to be institution-specific as well. So why has writing center studies been labeled as lore-heavy and problematic despite significant strides towards more rigorous work in the last couple decades?

The Relationship between Labor, Status, and Scholarship

Rose and Weiser (2002) provide an answer of sorts in their description of writing program administration scholarship and why the theory/practice divide remains problematic in English and writing studies:

> The traditional privileging of theorizing, of the pursuit/knowledge/truth for its own sake rather than for any particular practical application or solution to a problem, is not without implications about class. Theory is equated to thinking; practice to doing….Thinking requires a significant amount of otherwise unconstrained time -- in other words, leisure -- while doing can be associated with work or labor. Leisure is traditionally available to the upper classes, who are freed from the obligations of labor by the working class. (p. 187)

This theory/practice divide as tied up with notions of class accurately describes the problem inherent in writing center scholarship, where writing center administration is seen as the labor of management, whereas the research and writing of a tenured professor of rhetorical theory or literature can be considered leisurely intellectual work. Wynn Perdue and Driscoll (2017) argue that this is one of the fundamental issues affecting writing center research. Writing center administrators that hold staff positions are often not given resources for research because they fill a kind of labor-based role that is supposed to free up the time of "real" researchers, i.e. faculty. The idea of writing center administrator as practitioner shouldn't be shameful in a field built partly on the tenet of pedagogical research, and yet, when put in the type of management context of writing center administration, it is seen as "lesser." Lore then gets positioned as the province of the lower classes, telling stories rather than thinking their way through theory. Rose and Weiser argue that writing program administration could bridge the gap through a specialized form of theory. Writing center scholarship can and should imagine itself similarly, and has. And

yet its success still falls behind that of WPA studies in terms of positioning the importance of research.

The negative aspect of lore, of course, is also deeply affected by gender. In classic gender constructions of men as researchers and women as storytellers, it is no surprise that a sub-field largely dominated by women has struggled to be seen as legitimate. Writing program and writing center work has long been construed and challenged as "women's work," (Holbrook, 1991; Miller, 1991; Ratcliffe & Rickly, 2010). And of course, work that is seen as the province of women often becomes de-legitimized, especially in academia, where men so often have higher-level administrative positions or where male instructors are given more leniency in student and colleague evaluations than women. WPAs and writing center administrators have had to fight the ways in which their work has been devalued simply because it is seen as a form of management inherent to women's skills. And with lore seen, too, as the province of women, it is held up as lesser scholarship by those who would like to see writing program and center administration as a lesser sub-field over all. However, writing center work is put in a particularly vulnerable position because it doubles down on the classed perceptions of labor discussed above. [6]

As intersectional feminism tells us, of course, it is not simply external gender views that affect how WPA and writing center scholarship circle each other. Internal structures allow for inequity or conflict between the two sub-fields, as well. Gunner (1997), in her criticism of the Portland Resolution, points out that the intellectual service statements of CWPA actually re-iterate "traditional hierarchies" rather than subverting them. Additionally, Gunner argues that a document like the Portland Resolution subjugates composition instructors and undergraduate students, positioning the WPA as the manager and instructors and students simply as employees that need to be managed. Bartlett (2003) takes this one step further when discussing both the Portland Resolution and the CWPA's "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration." Bartlett claims that these statements not only exploit adjunct and graduate student labor, but that they actually "work against feminist goals" (p. 274) by equating WPA work with the traditional intellectual leisure that Rose and Weiser discuss. Bartlett argues that

[6] I would also argue that an additional reason writing center work may be devalued is because many writing center administrators directly manage and educate undergraduates as peer tutors, compared to WPA faculty who might manage and educate graduate staff and non-tenure- or tenure-track faculty. In a world that often positions undergraduates as still being children, a woman writing center administrator in a peer-tutoring-based center may be positioned as a "mothering" figure, even more so than WPAs.

WPAs who have taken up the feminist agenda while ignoring the unequal treatment of labor within a traditional writing program are simply reproducing the masculinist structures of academia. CWPA's statements about intellectual labor "map composition programs as a bifurcated labor system where knowledge is generated by disciplinary experts and implemented by subordinated labor" (p. 266). While Bartlett focuses her argument on WPAs and composition instructors, writing center administrators may fit into the category of "subordinated labor," as well. At many institutions in which writing center administrators hold staff positions, or even in institutions where they are part of an English department or a writing program, writing centers are still seen as part of a larger composition structure in which WCAs can easily become cogs in the larger program machine. This positioning of writing center labor trickles down to the perception of writing center scholarship, too -- not produced by disciplinary experts, but rather the musings of those who carry out the work of service to a larger cause. It is no surprise, then, that writing center scholarship has struggled to be seen externally for the non-lore work being done there.

Writing center studies faces an additional burden that WPA studies has faced in the past as well: being put on the defensive. As Boquet (1999) notes:

> the relationship between writing centers and composition studies, as that relationship has been represented in the pages of *CCC [College Composition and Communication]* and *College English*, becomes increasingly ambivalent, with most writing center scholars called on to articulate...the relevance of writing center to the field as a whole, as though it were not an area as self-evident as, say, basic writing or computer technology. (p. 476)

So often, writing center scholars who want to publish or present outside of their immediate publications and conferences are forced into a position of fighting for their own relevance. Any casual perusal of a journal like *CCC*, *College English*, or *Composition Studies* reveals not only a dearth of writing center articles, but also an over-representation of what I like to call the "hey, writing centers matter, too" piece. While the *Writing Center Journal* is publishing articles that push the boundaries of empirical research (Salem's work is a particularly good example of this) and developing a stronger argument for more attention to theory (see Denny's "Queering the Writing Center"), so much of the writing center work that gets published in more mainstream writing journals is about the historical significance of writing centers or arguments for centers as

de facto WAC programs.[7] While this work is important (Lerner and Boquet's historical work published over the last two decades in *CCC* are prime examples of why archival research matters in WPA and writing center studies), it also presents a very narrow view of what writing center scholarship is and can be to the broader field. By being constantly placed into the role of defending their own existence, writing center scholars are hindered in the type of creativity and imagination that scholars in other sub-fields of writing studies have been allowed to pursue and privileged to publish. And this has been internalized by the sub-field itself, with writing center research limiting itself because of external pressures to look outward, rather than asking other areas of the broader field to look inward at writing centers. As Boquet (1999) points out, writing center work has not fully embraced its own promise, which is "the excessive institutional possibilities that the writing center represents" (p. 478). To embrace those possibilities means that writing center work itself needs to open up, rather than close in on its own immediate concerns. Writing center scholars need to get beyond the "rhetorical habits" (Grutsch McKinney, 2013, p. 46) that limit the imagination of what writing center research can offer the field of writing studies. Unfortunately, the labor issues inherent in writing center administration and WPA work at large makes this embracing nearly impossible under current conditions.

One possible way to open up scholarship and disciplinary conversations is to consider collaborative work between more and less privileged colleagues. However, that is not always so simple or easy. Ianetta, et al. (2006) push back on the narrative that collaboration is necessary for administrative success. Several of the authors point out that they are both the WPA and WCA at their institutions, which complicates the idea of relationship-building between programs and puts more stress on relationship-building outside of the center or program office walls. Other authors argue that getting caught up in relationship-building can come at the expense of the writing center itself. In that Ianetta, et al. piece, Mary Wisloski says WCAs should be careful not to get too close to writing programs because of both "the fluidity of institutional configurations and the divergent goals of writing centers and curriculum-based writing programs" (p. 18). Writing centers are part of ever-changing institutional contexts, and as such, need to be careful to avoid marrying themselves to programs that must deal with their own issues, goals, and changes. This

[7] Itself an issue that will be discussed later in this dissertation. The problem with the over-representation of these type of articles in mainstream writing studies journals is that they continue to place the role of writing center administrators into "service" functions rather than positions of researchers or scholarship-producers.

separation between programs and centers is particularly important in centers and programs that are not part of the same department or academic unit.

Institutional position, and the various contexts in which programs exist, remains a key problem in how we understand relationship-building between programs or centers. One unresolved issue lingering after Balester and McDonald's (2001) study is that of institutionality. While Balester and McDonald do mention which type of institutions took part in the study, they did not break down their results by institution type. As suggested by Ianetta, et al. (2006) and Gladstein and Regaignon (2012), institutional context plays a major role in how WCAs and WPAs interact. Additionally, while Balester and McDonald reveal the importance of program and center locations, they do not provide results that allow the reader to understand how these program and center administrative structures affect relationship-building. One of the goals of this dissertation is to better understand the importance of contexts of institution type and administrative structures in relationships and collaborations among units of writing instruction on a campus. There is a need to get beyond the large research institution as the only model we have for scholarship or understanding labor concerns (Gunner, 1999). It is for this reason that this particular study will focus on small liberal arts college, which have a very unique institutional context and a wide variety of administrative structures in place for writing instruction on their campuses.

The Third Rail: Institutionality

There is a lack of representation across institution types in writing center and writing program administration scholarship. Large research universities still over-represent the two sub-fields in major publications. Gunner (1999) blames this on WPA studies' early scholarship, which was highly contextual and institutionally-focused. Because research institutions were the ones most visibly affected by the need for increased writing curriculum, early WPA research was overwhelmingly done by administrators at these privileged institutions. And unfortunately, over time, that trend continued and made WPA research and publishing more elusive for other kinds of institutions and programs. As Gunner so succinctly puts it:

> This foundational model of the WPA as a single position/voice located in a particular program which lays claim to a universal representativeness creates the means of a dominant discourse. Those who speak come to speak for others; the identity they present comes to be the identity assigned to others. (p. 34)

Like WPA studies, writing center studies has too often relied on a handful of several strong voices from specific contexts to define the entire sub-field. Browsing through writing center and WPA journals, one is still most likely to see scholarship from research institutions. Part of this goes right back to the labor divide. Smaller schools are less likely to have administrators with the type of tenure-track faculty positions that allow for research time and resources. Additionally, many administrators at smaller or less prominent institutions may lack the education to do empirical research (Wynn Perdue & Driscoll, 2017). Despite calls for improvement from both WPA and writing center studies, change continues to be slow, especially for writing center administrators.

These discussions of institutionality have largely been left out of dominant narratives about how history and discipline have impacted writing center and program structures, administrative labor, and pedagogy. In order to better address writing administration, we need to think about the institutions themselves. How programs and centers form and are administered, and the daily operations and work done in those spaces, are affected by the context and conditions that create them. Often research in the larger field of writing studies assumes a sort of "sameness" of programmatic structures, that what works in one place could be adjusted only slightly for other programs and institutions. Program profiles or site-specific publications are meant to serve as models or inspirations for other administrators to pick up and make their own. However, the adjustment is harder in some places than others. For example, what do institutions without explicit writing programs do with assessment models based entirely in having a composition teaching staff that can rate and review? How do writing centers in which administrators and tutors work completely different schedules incorporate the professional development models used by institutions with large staffs and multiple administrators? The issue is that too often the "institution," named or not, takes on a static form that simply does not exist in the wilds of actual academia.

Small liberal arts colleges are an institution type that has been particularly underserved by this static idea of institutions and programmatic structures. As I began to study writing instruction and support at small liberal arts colleges, the very first thing that struck me was how apologetic some participants were about the unique, and often hard to describe, context of their institutions. And for good reason, too. No two institutions in this study matched perfectly across all the major themes for analysis. Some had writing programs, some did not, sure. But it went

deeper than that. Some schools utilize alternative academic schedules. Some schools serve incredibly wealthy populations. A few institutions have low faculty morale. A few administrators felt as though it was hard to break into conversations about curriculum because of faculty control. There is no universal "small liberal arts college," and to assume that the kind of work regularly published in a place like the *WPA Journal* can easily be picked up and moved from one institution type to another is problematic. Therefore, if we want to have conversations about labor or pedagogy or assessment, we have to include institutionality, along with history and disciplinarity, as one of the pillars of context for understanding larger shifts in writing center and program work.

There is always the worry that we could be "too contextual," of course. Certainly, some degree of universality has to be assumed in order for writing program and writing center studies, perhaps more than any other subfield within writing studies, to be useful and enriching. But in larger conversations about what the discipline is and what it should be, context *is* important – not as a way of excluding who can and cannot talk about specific topics, but as a way of opening up the field. Large and small schools would benefit from seeing a wide variety of models, not just models that fit their own experiences. Additionally, opening up narratives for institution-based research also opens up the role of narrator. By increasing the types of institutions that get to be studied and published about, more voices get a chance to emerge. And increased exposure to different voices can only improve the field of writing studies. For this reason alone, it is worth having serious discussions about institutionality in the work of writing programs and writing centers.

One way to get at questions of institutionality in WPA and writing center labor and scholarship is to map the ways in which power, material resources, and value operate together to influence how writing programs and centers function at individual institutions or institution types. Institutional critique, as it was framed by Porter, Sullivan, Blythe, Grabill, and Miles (2000), is one methodology we can use to better understand why institutionality matters and how we can better approach it in our disciplinary conversation. Porter, et. al. (2000) define institutional critique as "a method that insists that institutions, as unchangeable as they may seem (and, indeed, often are) do contain spaces for reflection, resistance, revision, and productive action. This method insists that sometimes individuals…can rewrite institutions through rhetorical action" (p. 613). The authors "see institutional critique as a way to supplement [writing

studies'] current efforts and to extend the field into broader interrogation of discourse in society" (p. 613). In institutional critique, the idea is to resist the static model of the university that so often dominates writing program and writing center scholarship. Instead, it offers a framework based in rhetoric as a way for understanding our institutions, and, more importantly, understanding how to change them for the better.

While Porter, et al. (2000) specifically discuss individual people in their definition of institutional critique, I am opening up the idea of the change agent to include specific units within an institution – in this case, programs and centers. Because writing units at small liberal arts colleges are often tied to individuals, expanding the definition of who can engage in institutional critique is particularly relevant for studying SLACs. Additionally, I want to expand on definitions of what institutions are. In this case, we can think about the actual institution, made up of both its physical components (buildings, people, books) and more psychical components (goals and missions, ideas, the imagination of what the institution is and can be), but we can also think about external institutions that also apply pressure to individual people and programs: the institutions of WPA and writing center studies (disiciplinary conversations and conventions, professional organizations and conferences, preferred publications, etc.), in particular. One could even expand as far as social and political institutions, including government and capitalism (and a whole, separate dissertation could certainly be written about how capitalism directly impacts small liberal arts colleges). I think it is incredibly important to open up institutional critique when talking about SLACs to include the institutions of discipline, as how positions are configured, discussed, and seen are directly impacted by disciplines and loop back around to change or effect disciplines, as well. Institutional critique is an ideal framework for studying small liberal arts colleges because of the way it looks at larger networks of power and value to understand why things are the way they are and how they can be changed.

Applying institutional critique to units within a specific institution type is a new way of understanding writing programs and writing centers. Small liberal arts colleges, as noted throughout this chapter, are a particularly interesting and vastly understudied area within composition studies. The structure of writing instruction and support at small liberal arts colleges is significantly different from that of other types of institutions due to their size, staffing, and student needs, as well as their philosophical underpinnings. And one of the most visible manifestations of these institutional differences is what administrative positions look like in

writing centers and programs (or, as this dissertation will explain, writing instruction units or initiatives, as only a few have a program in name or form). According to the National Census of Writing (2017)[8], SLACs are significantly less likely to have designated first-year writing directors running writing programs, with less than half of those directors holding tenure-track positions. And while most of the SLACs reporting to the census had writing center administrators, the vast majority (more than two-thirds) of those administrators did not have tenure-track positions. Larger public institutions, meanwhile, have a majority of tenure-track writing program administrators. Tenure-track faculty writing center administration positions at larger public universities was still relatively low overall, but higher than at SLACs. These inequities cause real material and scholarly problems for not only WPAs and WCAs separately, but for their relationships with each other, too. And even if, as I would argue, we separate "tenure" from "quality" in terms of administrative success, the imbalance says a lot about how institutions value (or don't value) writing programs and writing centers.

Writing administrators at small liberal arts colleges have been historically underrepresented in WPA and writing center literature, which has negative effects on both small institutions, who don't see themselves represented, and larger institutions, who lose out on learning about innovative or different administrative approaches. Amorose (2002) notes that WPAs at smaller schools hold unique positions within their institutions that have different issues of power, authority, and influence than those faced by WPAs at larger institutions. For that reason, Amorose argues, WPAs at small schools may find the WPA tradition of "advice" literature not only unhelpful but actively damaging. Because WPAs at small schools are highly visible, and because small schools have longer institutional memories with faculty and staff that remain there for long periods of time, assuming roles of power can actually backfire or put them in a precarious position. WPAs at smaller schools must do relationship-building and

[8] I am using statistical data from both the Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP) and the National Census of Writing (NCOW), and will occasionally compare statistics from each survey. The problem, of course, is that the questions, interests, and methods of each survey/project are quite different, with NCOW concentrating more on the broader picture of what writing instruction looks like in the United States (NCOW collates information about first-year writing programs, writing centers, and WAC programs), and WCRP focusing on more detailed issues related to writing center administration, usage, and labor. I will endeavor to distinguish between where my statistics come from anytime I use them here in this dissertation. Additionally, I want to make it clear that I will give preference to the data of WCRP when possible, as the institutional distinctions *and* depth of the questions asked in the survey are more relevant to the material concerns of my work here. NCOW provides a great larger picture view, but it does not help me understand disparities in pay or experience of administrators.

collaboration differently because of their unique contexts and concerns. Research about small colleges can change the conversation around power and authority at campuses, but because the research on small institutions is so limited, there has not been much reach outside of niche areas. The conversation has slowly changed with work by people like Amorose and Gladstein and with the inclusive efforts of survey projects like the Writing Centers Research Project and the National Census of Writing, but more could be done. Empirical work focusing on small liberal arts colleges in one particular way that this gap could be filled, which is one of the key areas of interest for the author of this dissertation.

This dissertation is heavily influenced by the work of Gladstein (the co-creator of the National Census of Writing), particularly her 2012 book with Regaignon, *Writing Program Administration at Small Liberal Arts Schools*, which remains one of the only pieces of broader writing program and writing center administration scholarship specifically about SLACs. Glastein and Regaignon (2012) conducted a large-scale grounded theory study of one hundred SLACs across the country, focusing on what writing looked like at these schools. The authors are particularly interested in administrative structures: Do these schools have writing programs and centers? Who runs them? How do they assess their programs and student writers? Results revealed that SLACs are not as uniform as they might be perceived, with a wide variety of writing instruction structures in place. Gladstein and Regaignon discuss these structures by focusing on *explicit* and *embedded* sites of writing and administration. Explicit sites of writing are things like first-year writing programs, WAC/WID programs, and writing centers, with explicit administrators being those whose title and position is directly tied to those sites. Embedded sites are things such as first-year seminars or other core curriculum courses with writing requirements attached. These embedded sites are less likely to have formal administrative positions attached. The authors establish six main models for writing administrative structures at SLACs: explicit WPA and explicit WCA; solo WPA/WCA; explicit WCA only; embedded WPA and explicit WCA; explicit WPA only; and no WPA/WCA. The last two are very rare, with only a couple schools holding those structures, but the rest are fairly common, particularly the first two configurations. Overall, Gladstein and Regaignon are fairly positive about writing administration at small liberal arts schools, even with a few caveats warning against the problem of the "boss" compositionist or the problem of under-resourced programs and centers. They discuss the problems of labor in their study, but they do not reveal

the complicated web that is spun when institutions do not show value for writing through granting of tenure-track positions, nor do they show particular concern for how labor practices at SLACs lead to less scholarship emerging from writing center and writing program administrators at those institutions.

While Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) work does an excellent job mapping writing at SLACs, and while it has very strong points to make about WPA and WCA positions, it loses focus on the more material complications of WPA and WCA work at small liberal arts colleges. Writing center administration issues particularly get the short shrift (only one chapter) in their analysis. They claim that "while small college writing centers are structurally similar to those at large universities, institutional size results in a less marginalized place in the educational culture of the school" (p. 160). And yet, by the authors own data and backed up by the National Census (which was established by Gladstein), writing center administration at SLACs is *more materially* marginalized. Lack of tenure-track faculty positions and therefore lower pay structures results in WCAs who oversee centers without getting the kind of institutionalized credit a faculty member might get. This lack of value results in less research, less attention to professionalization efforts, and less ability to engage with writing center scholarship and pedagogy, all of which profoundly affect the wider sub-field of writing center administration, which in turn affects writing studies. In order for writing centers to be less marginalized, then the people who run writing centers must also be less marginalized by their institutions and their larger field.

Writing programs and writing centers, and WPAs and WCAs, have to reckon with issues of institutionality, value, and labor and material resources. However, despite Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) findings that writing centers are very common and highly visible at their institutions, national statistics tell us that commonality and visibility matter very little when actual material or institutional value of those writing center spaces continues to be so low. And because writing centers are more prevalent across SLACs than writing programs, it is important to pay attention to the direct institutional structures that perpetuate any inequality – both within individual institutions, yes, but also across the larger subdisciplines. Institutionality is the necessary third rail, the one that we cannot always touch but which makes the train go. It must be a part of any conversation about administrative work in writing studies.

Because institutional critique is a methodology interested in networking and spatial relationships (Porter, et al., 2000), applying it to something as complicated as relationship-

building between writing units at multiple institutions makes it a perfect framework for thinking about the importance of institutional contexts. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, once I began to look at the relationships between the writing program and writing center at my own graduate institution, I realized how examining relationships could provide insights into all three of the areas that have defined the larger subfields of WPA and writing center studies: history, disciplinarity, and institutionality. Additionally, relationships tell us a lot about the time, material, and labor investments that signal institutional value, making them a rich and incredibly under-studied area of examination.

With questions of institution, history, and discipline as my primary focus and institutional critique as a framework, I have developed three research questions for this dissertation to answer through a grounded theory empirical study that centers on small liberal arts colleges:

1. What are the relationships between institutions' first-year writing (FYW) programs and writing centers?
2. How do the stakeholders in first-year writing programs and writing centers define and understand these relationships?
3. What programmatic and institutional factors determine and influence the relationship between first-year writing programs and writing centers?

My goal with this research is not only to better understand these program relationships but also to advocate for their inclusion in WPA and writing center scholarship. Understanding program structures, influences of power and institutional value, and labor issues has the ability to change what we imagine when we think about what a writing program or center is or should be. Additionally, by focusing on an institution type that has been largely ignored by writing studies, there is a potential to change the narrative of what institutions do and do not get to be included in our collective knowledge-making and disciplinary imaginations. After all, institutional critique is not just a methodology for study; it is also a methodology for "expos[ing] and interrogat[ing] possibilities for institutional change through the practice of rhetoric" (Porter, et al., 2001, p. 631). That is what the ultimate aim of this dissertation is: to change institutionalized narratives by cracking open possibilities.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Mapping relationships through institutional critique means a rigorous and people-based approach is needed. Writing studies is a field concerned with the experiences of human beings, and a humane form of research is needed to study those experiences and all the attendant emotions, struggles, and lived moments those experiences might entail. This means research should be ethical, help the participants it studies, and have genuine value for the field. Sullivan and Porter (1997) say that this means we need to have guiding principles to direct our research, "a 'good' that we should be striving toward. It is this good, this political and ethical end, that we are trying to surface and critique when we talk about the importance of critical research practices" (p. 8). As my first chapter explains, the goal of this study is "complicating received narratives" (Grutsch McKinney, 2016, p. xix), creating space for alternative stories or experiences within writing administration. Additionally, extending narratives in the field might also mean the "political and ethical end" of increased material resources for writing support and administrators across institution types, including institutions with very few tenure-track writing specialists.

With these goals of increased visibility and fairer labor practices, informed by institutional critique's focus on spatial relationships and power dynamics, I decided to take a qualitative approach to my study because power and space are systems of human influence and experience. Because my research questions are about perceptions and definitions people have towards their institutions and relationships between those people and institutions, qualitative work is the best way to answer my research questions because it gives participants a voice through the data, rather than letting data dictate the voice, as quantitative work often does. Qualitative work is a methodology based in human voices and human experience, and so it has the potential to change narratives within a discipline. In the case of this research, qualitative work has the ability to explore institutions beyond their public images, and gets in deeper to see how people and units operate within those institutions. Therefore, qualitative research is the only methodology I considered when designing this study.

In designing this study, I wanted to use proven methods from the field of writing studies but to study a topic that had never used these particular methods before. Balester and McDonald (2001) used a survey-based approach for their research on WPA-WCA relationships, and Ianetta

et al. (2006) and Waldo (1990) used autoethnography. Some researchers have used institutional ethnography as a way of better understanding how programs and administrators operate within their institution (LaFrance & Nicholas, 2012; Miley, 2017), but this type of ethnographical work is not appropriate for cross-institutional research. Gladstein and Regaignon (2012), whose study of writing program administration at SLACs most closely resembles this study, used a mixed methods approach in which they surveyed 109 institutions and then conducted interviews and focus groups with a portion of the administrators who answered the survey. All of this work, rich and varied, helped guide the principles I wanted to use for my own study design, although I found that utilizing any of their particular methodologies/methods was not fully fitting for this project. I knew a survey was not going to help me understand relationships, and I also knew an ethnographic approach was not going to be particularly feasible for researching more than just a few institutions at once, at least not with the relatively small dissertation-completion window I faced. Case studies, which are very popular in WPA and writing center research, was one possible option for my research goals. However, again, a case study methodology would have limited my scope and forced me to choose just a handful of interesting institutions which may or may not represent the range of structures available. In the end, I decided the only methodology that would work for both my intended scope and desire to base my data in interviews was grounded theory.

After describing the history and implementation of grounded theory, I use this chapter to describe, in detail, my data collection and analysis methods, as well as the validity and generalizability of the research ensured by those methods. I then introduce my participants and the institutions they represent.

Grounded Theory

While institutional critique has informed every step of the conception and design of this dissertation study, I developed my data collection and analysis methods using grounded theory. Institutional critique and grounded theory complement each other in productive ways. Like institutional critique, grounded theory is a methodology intended to map complex relationships between individuals, social units, and specific phenomena. The goal of grounded theory is to understand how and why things happen, based not on preconceived notions, but rather through the interactions and perceptions of specific stakeholders. In the case of this study, grounded

theory allowed for enriched examination of a topic that has been mostly neglected by previous researchers. By connecting institutional critique's goal of understanding structures of power and the material consequences of those structures to grounded theory's stringent methods of analysis through multiple stages of coding, I have been able to develop richer, more layered results and discussion.

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s and has been used primarily in the social sciences to examine specific, complex phenomena. In their 1967 foundational work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* Glaser and Strauss describe grounded theory as "derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples" (p. 5). Essentially, grounded theory is a way of answering research questions using not preconceived theories from the literature but by discovering specific theories out of the data itself. However, in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) formulation, it is not simply about finding theory in the data but also about making sure that results are actually relevant and applicable to the questions posed or problems attempting to be solved, "a way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses" (p. 3). The way to arrive at these theories is through multiple rounds of coding and memoing that would require a researcher to be a kind of blank slate finding what emerges *in vivo*. The rigor of grounded theory means it can be time-consuming but also incredibly valuable for providing insights and ideas that may not come simply out of something like a case study or phenomenological methods that rely on previous theories from within a discipline. Grounded theory is particularly useful for subject matter that is either under-studied or over-studied because it allows for new, useful concepts to emerge.

Grounded theory has several major benefits, particularly as it relates to this study. First, grounded theory asks the researcher to get very close to their data, with intimacy making for detailed work. This closeness gives richness to the actual experience of data collection, making it an ideal methodology for those who are relatively new to qualitative work. Second, grounded theory allows for both data collection, the gathering of data from already-existing sources, and data generation, a creation of data through collaborative processes like interviews (Ralph, Birks, & Chapman, 2014). Finally, grounded theory is a methodology about relationships. Relationships between codes and categories allow for theory to take hold during the last round of coding (Urquhart, 2013). Mapping relationships is what distinguishes grounded theory from simple *in vivo* coding schemes by resulting in "a chain of evidence" (Urquhart, 2013, p. 159), a

network of possibilities. Relationship-finding and -building, the importance of which is reflected in both my subject matter and methodology here, cannot happen without the closeness to data and dual forms of data collection above, which makes it the single most important signal of grounded theory's value in answering hard questions and solving difficult problems.

The rigorous and reflective coding process required by grounded theory analysis has changed over time, with different authors, including Glaser and Strauss, both together and separately, developing different coding schemes. Glaser (1978) divided the process into three steps: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. Since then, the original founders of grounded theory have refined and renamed the process. Eventually, after Glaser and Strauss fell out after disagreements about methods, Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommended getting rid of coding stages completely and instead recommended context, process, and theoretical integration. Glaser, however, stuck to his original three-step coding process and many researchers and authors have kept to that scheme due to its clarity, as each of those coding steps have clear boundaries and each one demands thematic saturation (Urquhart, 2013). I will be keeping to Glaser's original categories of open, selective, and theoretical because I think they make the most sense for a cross-institutional study of this scale.

Open, selective, and theoretical coding describe their own processes within their very terminology. Open coding is the process of coding everything -- line by line of data, a researcher should just be looking for what is said (or, in some cases, how it is said). At this point, a researcher should not be carefully picking out what they think is the most relevant data or themes. All data is considered potentially relevant. Categories begin to develop during selective coding, when all the open codes are looked at for repeated or common themes and then categorized accordingly. Selective coding helps make the data more manageable and prepares it for the relationship-building of the theoretical coding stage. Selective coding is only finished once thematic saturation is attained, with every possible category accounted for for all open codes. The last step of analysis, theoretical coding, involves finding relationships between the categories developed during selective coding. Theoretical coding is also the stage where we can see the clearest overlap between institutional critique and grounded theory methodologies because of the "mapping" that happens in theoretical coding. Urquhart (2013) recommends making physical diagrams in order to develop these networks of relation that emerge from the data during theoretical coding, as well as using relational language like "___ is used for ___."

The mapping aspect of theoretical coding seems useful for a project like this study because institutional power dynamics, which also need to be mapped according to institutional critique, intersect with the data in interesting ways. Following the three-level coding scheme laid out by Glaser and others gave a vibrant interpretation of the data, and, as a result, in-depth findings. I describe my coding process below in the Methods section and give examples of each level of coding.

During all three levels of coding, grounded theory methodologists recommend rigorous memo writing. This memo writing aspect of grounded theory is one of the things that most attracted me to this methodology, as I am someone who learns and develops ideas through short but in-depth bursts of writing. Memoing is defined by Birks and Mills (2011) as "records of thoughts, feelings, insights, and ideas in relation to the research project" (p. 40). While the coding process is rigidly defined in order to be as analytically thorough and true to the data as possible, memoing is where the theories emerge in more depth. During open and selective coding, the researcher can write up their reactions to the codes that develop and begin to think through the process of categorizing data. Theoretical coding relies heavily on the idea-building of memoing to put meaning to the results. Memoing is also where researchers are able to begin applying previous literature and theories to their own results and theories (Urquhart, 2013). I used memoing at every step of my data analysis in order to think through the findings and also bring institutional critique into the fold. By connecting findings and ideas to institutional power structures and maps of institutional labor and value, I was able to largely develop the analysis chapters of this dissertation.

Methods

Recruitment

After receiving IRB approval for my study in August 2017, I began recruiting participants by emailing 10-15 potential participants per email drop, with three email drops completed between September 2017 and February 2018. I used the SLAC-WPA membership list, as well as my own knowledge of Midwestern SLACs, to find possible institutions to include in my recruitment, and then found administrative participants through institution websites.

Information about my participants and some of the difficulties I encountered are located later in this chapter.

Interviews and Pre-Interview Questionnaires

Each participant was asked to do one in-depth interview, as well as complete a pre-interview questionnaire. The pre-interview questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics and asked basic questions about the participant's position and program/center. The questionnaire also contained the consent form for digitally-acquired data. A copy of the questionnaire instrument can be found in Appendix A.

Interviews were primarily completed online (via Skype or Google Hangout) or by phone, although several were able to be done in person at conferences or at institutions located within a two-hour drive. Interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes, and questions focused on contextual information about the institution and program, as well as writing support and instruction efforts from the perspective of the program or center administrator. Administrators were also encouraged during the interview to be honest about how they saw their roles on campus and how they saw their institutional positions within a larger system of power at the university. Interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Half of the interviews were transcribed by myself, but the other half were transcribed by the professional transcription service, Verbal Ink, after I received a research grant that allowed for me to pay for assistance with my data collection. After receiving the Verbal Ink transcripts, I did go through and correct any noticeable errors. Because this study is not reliant on perfect wording, I did not take great pains to make sure I transcribed every utterance, including filler words (such as "like" or "um") or any overlap in dialogue. Instead, I was more focused on making sure I transcribed the basic information I was being given.

Documentation

All participants were invited to share documents related to their centers, such as annual reports or program goals or missions, but only a few participants actually shared these types of documents. Most documentation, then, came directly from institution, program, and center websites. This public-facing information was very helpful and useful during interview preparation and data analysis. Preparing for interviews by reading and analyzing public-facing

documentation allowed me to ask more nuanced follow-up questions and helped me connect more personally with participants. Additionally, documentation helped provide a great deal of the contextual information that helped me to categorize types of program-center relationships. Documentation also provided textual evidence for what issues of importance applied to each institution or program.

Data Analysis

Post-interview Memoing

The first stage of analysis was extensive post-interview memoing. After each interview, I would hand-write my immediate reactions or interesting moments from the exchange. Then, after transcribing or reading/re-reading a transcription, I wrote what I called a "program profile" for each institution in which I tried to, as objectively as possible, describe the writing instruction and support infrastructures and positions. These profiles were about 1000-2000 words each, and they helped me organize initial data into pre-existing categories based on the literature, including Ianetta et. al's (2006) administrator taxonomies, Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) explicit/embedded dichotomy, and Caswell, McKinney Grutsch, and Jackson's (2016) administrative labor categories. These profiles also worked to help me find missing information that might be helpful, which led to the development of follow-up questions to send to participants. While profiles were helpful for thinking through interviews and collecting my reflections and initial interpretations after interviews, they were less useful during the coding stages of analysis because I was following stricter grounded theory methods to allow for emergence rather than preconceived perceptions.

Open Coding

After this first round of memoing, I began open coding. I hand-coded each interview line-by-line and then entered all the codes into a spreadsheet for each institution and participant. For the open-coding part of my analysis, everything a participant or document said was available to be coded. I did not look for specific types of codes or organize codes in my initial spreadsheets. Rather, I simply recorded what the data was reflecting, as prescribed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Urquhart (2013).

An example of my open coding is below, with codes in brackets for the text they describe:

> *Interviewee: So what's it like? You're constantly going to be moving, you're constantly going to be running.* [busyness of WC admin] *You better have a set of course releases, you better have a dedicated line.* [importance of dedicated faculty line] *You better have a dean that believes in you.* [importance of supportive administration]

During open coding, I also pulled specific quotes that were interestingly-worded and which went together with a specific code. These pulled quotes were put into a separate document and tagged with what they were about so that I might be able to better link them to phenomena later in the analysis process.

Selective Coding

After open coding ended, codes were categorized based on common themes across institutions. For example, using the example above, "busyness of WC admin" was themed in a larger category of *feelings about position*; "importance of dedicated faculty line" was themed as *status/position*; and "importance of supportive administration" was themed as *institutional support*.

What worked best for me during selective coding was to provide an identifying color to each to institution's set of open codes, then begin arranging codes by hand based on theme areas based on commonalities. I did this by physically spreading codes printed and color-coded on slips of paper out on my office floor and then putting together the common codes into theme piles. This helped me to visually see all of the themed categories while still maintaining the identities of each institution for analysis and to help with the theoretical coding part, where I would need institutional and positional contexts in order to develop nuanced ideas. While I would be able to get similar results quicker and with less physicality by using a coding program like NVivo, I think it was important for me to do this by hand, as it was my first time coding results from such a large project. Now that I have created the conditions of the selective coding, I can better understand the algorithms and decision-tree patterns a program like NVivo will offer me in the future.

Once I physically sorted codes into categories over the course of several days, I deposited all my data in a spreadsheet in which institutions and participants made up the columns, and

themed categories made up the rows. In order to make this extensive tabling easier to read and digest, as well as to make the relationship-examining of theoretical coding easier later, I actually created four sheets within my selective coding Excel file. Multiple themes were added to each of the four sheet categories: institution, writing, relationships, and labor.

The selective part of the coding process also required extensive memoing. Unlike open coding, which was more exploratory, selective coding allowed for interpretation to begin flourishing. I used memoing to begin exploring possible relationships between institutions and ideas. As someone who discovers most of her insights through writing, memoing provided the most illuminating and interesting parts of the analysis process. It also helped me continue to narrow down or expand categories as needed. Memoing made theoretical coding significantly easier than it possibly could have been otherwise.

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding is the part of grounded theory that makes it stand apart from other qualitative research methodologies. By looking across selective codes for relationships between data, theory emerges. Memoing is also most important during this stage of the process as that is where a lot of the relationship building can be fully explored and detailed. Additionally, memoing during the theoretical coding stage allows for themes to "talk to" previous literature and existing theories.

Many grounded theory experts recommend using visual guides for theoretical coding. Much in the way institutional critique uses spatial understanding to look at power structures within institutions, visually mapping relationships between data helps a researcher "see" the networks of influence in, on, and across data. Alas, I found the visual mapping to be only relatively useful, as I am someone who thinks more textually. Doing lots of free-writing in my memo journals is what allowed me to truly see and understand where relationships existed within my data. Those relationships became the theory. And because this study was about relationships, the poetry of using relationships as the foundations for the emerged theory absolutely appealed to me.

Validity and Generalizability

Efforts were taken to make sure data was both valid and generalizable in order make the results and discussion both relevant and trustworthy. Validity was achieved by triangulating data collection by utilizing both data collection of existing materials, such as websites and other public-facing documents, and data generation via interviews and the pre-interview questionnaires. During the analysis phase, I repeated my selective coding process twice to double-check categorization, first by organizing open codes by hand physically, then by entering codes into tables one-by-one. Additionally, I used data from both the Writing Centers Research Project and the National Census of Writing to compare my results to larger national trends at small liberal arts colleges.

The most powerful form of validation came from my collaboration with my participants. Following recommendations for collaborative methods of research between researchers and participants (Sullivan & Porter, 1997; Grutsch McKinney, 2016), I involved my participants in my analysis stage by writing individual participant check-in forms for each participant and then receiving feedback from them. Each participant check-in form contained a section where I described my general findings across institutions, followed by sections describing my findings for the individual institution and participant. Participants were encouraged to clarify points or provide feedback for both the general and individual sections, and they did so by emailing me back with their suggestions for improvement or their confirmations of findings. This feedback was actually one of my favorite parts of this entire research process because it involved sharing and learning with and through my participants. Because every participant had a genuine stake in the topic of this project, they have all been incredibly helpful at improving the validity of the study by actively participating in the analysis process. Many participants have requested to see the dissertation when it is finished, and so I expect to receive even more feedback and continue the collaborative process in the future.

While the research I present here is certainly valid, that does not mean it is organically generalizable across small liberal arts colleges. In order to increase the generalizability, I paid careful attention during the recruitment process to reach out to schools that represent a wide variety of SLAC types, both in terms of region and student populations. I successfully recruited at least one institution from every major regional area of the continental United States, except for the Pacific Northwest. I also recruited schools with different types of student populations,

including some elites serving primarily white, wealthy students, as well as some SLACs that served smaller populations. Endowments for the schools in the study ranged from quite low, around 80 million dollars, to very, very high at over 2 billion dollars. While these parts of the recruitment process were intentional, the study also benefited from the more random, successful recruitment of institutions with a wide variety of writing program and center structures to more accurately reflect all small liberal arts colleges.

While my sample size is quite small, with only 13 institutions representing small liberal arts colleges across the United States, the variety of institution structures represented is actually quite diverse. Additionally, as noted above, I compared my data with statistics from the Writing Centers Research Project and the National Census of Writing, which helped me understand how much I could generalize using the institutions in this study. Having these two amazing resources at my disposal helped this research tremendously.

There is, of course, always a danger in qualitative research of the few speaking too loudly for the many. There is no universal SLAC, and that in itself is part of the larger argument of this dissertation. Because the institutional models represented in writing center and writing program research are so static and so similar, we need to expand what we think of when we think of "the institution." This project proves *the* institution does not exist when it comes to higher education. A myriad of institutional, programmatic, and external factors affects how a small college operates and how it develops and sustains efforts at writing instruction and support. And so while it is possible these 13 institutions in this study are not representative of the whole of small colleges, they do represent the ways in which institutionality matters deeply to how we research and interpret academic writing structures in our field.

Participants

There were 17 participants in this study representing 13 institutions. These participants came from a wide range of SLACs, including elites and mid-tiers from all major regions of the continental United States except the Pacific Northwest. Most of the participants were writing center administrators, as other faculty or staff who administered other writing units (first-year writing, first-year seminars, or WAC administrators) overwhelmingly did not respond to my recruitment emails or requests, even at institutions in which writing center administrators had already agreed to participate in the study. For this reason, many of the institutions discussed in

this study only had one participant, which was unfortunate. However, I believe that this problem actually illuminates a larger issue regarding the lack of trained writing experts within positions of power in writing units outside of the writing center at small colleges. I explore this issue in more depth in my analysis chapters. Originally, I had hoped to have up to 30 participants representing 15 institutions from a much wider range of circumstances. I encountered several difficulties, though, that made these numbers impossible. I had a difficult time recruiting participants from institutions that are not well-known, have large endowments, or without administrators who are active in WPA or writing center studies. I was unable to successfully recruit participants from HBCUs or other minority-serving SLACs, nor was I able to find willing participants from any public SLACs. Also, unfortunately, some people who originally agreed to participate stopped communicating as data collection progressed. Overall, though, I am happy with the participants I had, and believe I received more than enough data to answer my research questions and to provide nuance to my results.

Table 1 lists the anonymized institutions and participant codes that I will refer to throughout the dissertation, as well as the institutional role each participant occupied. As one can see, only one institution did not have a writing center representative, as they were one of the participants who stopped communicating via email over time. Additionally, one institution only had an interim writing center administrator, a former undergraduate peer tutor in that same center who did not have as much knowledge about the center or institution as an experienced administrator might. In my analysis chapters, I will present data that adds to this summary of participants and reveals the complications that undergird these positions.

Table 1: Study Participants

Institution	Participant	Institutional Role
1	1	Writing center administrator
2	2	Writing center administrator
3	3	Writing center administrator
4	4	Writing program/center administrator
5	5A	First-year seminar administrator
	5B	Writing program administrator
6	6A	Writing program administrator
	6B	Writing center administrator
7	7A	Writing program administrator
	7B	Writing center administrator
8	8A	Writing center administrator
	8B	Writing faculty member
9	9	Writing center administrator
10	10	Interim writing center administrator
11	11	Writing center administrator
12	12	Writing program/center administrator
13	13	Writing center administrator

Participants were primarily white women, although four men did participate. I did not recruit with a particular demographic in mind, which I realize is problematic and would like to adjust for future research. However, I also was fairly limited as writing studies is still an overwhelmingly white field, and women are over-represented in writing administration (particularly writing center administration) compared to the larger field (Gere, 2009; Valles, Babcock, & Jackson, 2017). In the future, I would include demographic questions related to race/ethnicity, gender identity, and generational status (first-generation versus continuing-generation academics) in my pre-interview questionnaires. In this, I echo Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, and Jackson (2016), who note the need to think more about diversity and representation in future work about labor in writing center studies and critique their own research for not complicating demographical narratives.

When I continue this research after my graduate study ends, I hope to recruit more participants from a wider range of SLAC institutions, with a focus on diversity in terms of both institutional demographics and in program structures. I also hope to make my methods even more collaborative, with increased communication between my participants and me through every part of the process, rather than towards the end of data collection and during analysis as it was in this study.

This study produced a wealth of knowledge, as evidenced by the rest of this dissertation. In chapter three, I report my findings on the writing instruction and support offered by the thirteen institutions in this study. By comparing my findings to national data about writing curriculum and writing centers, and by examining the unique context of small liberal arts colleges, I was able to extrapolate my data to show larger trends across SLACs on the national level. In chapter four, I discuss the unique issues of labor, status, and disciplinary positions of those who work in writing centers and programs to make the argument that the positionality of writing administrators directly impacts the work of writing instruction and support units, as well as how those units collaborate and build or sustain relationships. Chapter five expands on the previous two chapters by examining the "bigger picture" of SLACS, defining the roles of stakeholders, including faculty, students, and cultural values, in writing programs and centers. And finally, in chapter six, I bring together all of these various threads to present a wholly new typology of programmatic relationships.

CHAPTER 3: "IT'S ALL OVER THE PLACE": WRITING INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT AT SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

The culture of writing at small liberal arts colleges (SLACs) gets touted regularly in their promotional materials, by alumni and faculty, and by their career centers or other professional offices. However, as established earlier in this dissertation, there is a limited amount of research on what those cultures actually look like. We know small schools look different from larger research institutions, and we know the liberal arts education relies on writing as part of a larger idea of producing critical thinkers and informed citizens. Scholars like Gladstein and Regaignon, Thomas Amorose, and Carol Rutz have discussed the unique contexts of SLACs in relation to larger research universities. But the importance of institutionality to discussions of writing cultures make it nearly impossible to give a descriptive pronouncement of what the "SLAC writing culture" is. Instead, we are left with a lot of anecdotal evidence (oh, that dreaded lore) and some concrete numbers through national surveys as the closest thing to a universal truth. I want to complicate what we know by exploring the range of experiences at SLACs – not only what they have in common, but what they also very much do *not* have in common.

Writing instruction and support at small liberal arts colleges is simply *different* from other institution types. Nowhere perhaps is the distinction more visible than in the requirements for first-year writing. According to the National Census of Writing (2017), 96% of respondents from all institution types have some kind of first-year writing requirement, and that number is relatively consistent within institution types, as well. However, the *type* of requirement shows a significant difference between SLACs and other institutions. Large and medium-sized colleges, with populations of 5,000+ students, overwhelmingly described their first-year writing requirement as a first-year composition course (or sequence of courses). The same is true of schools defined as public. However, this number shrinks to just a third of its size when looking at small liberal arts colleges. Instead, the descriptors of First-Year Writing Seminar and First-Year Seminar vastly outnumber the first-year writing/composition descriptor.[9] There are other

[9] NCOW is unclear what they mean by First-Year Writing Seminar (FYWS) versus First-Year Seminar (FYS). I think this could be a confusion that is also present among those who participated in the study. Most of my participants referred to their first-year requirement as FYS, but with a heavy writing component. It seems to me like these two categories could be problematic, especially for WPAs or WCDs participating in the survey who do not have a strong familiarity with Gladstein's definitions.

differences, too, of course, including the WAC/WID requirements that many SLACs offer, which are called a variety of things (W classes, writing in the major courses, or writing-intensive courses), as well as the leadership behind these programs, which I discussed in my first chapter.

Writing centers, however, do not widely differ between institution types. They exist at the vast majority of colleges, and they certainly exist in the vast majority of SLACs. The status of writing center administrators looks different at SLACS (again, as discussed in the first chapter), which will be discussed some more in Chapter Four. What is more interesting here, in terms of the findings of this study, is the ways in which writing centers at SLACs differ from *each other* in terms of the tutoring culture: who tutors, the communities those tutors do or do not form, and the ways in which tutors are offered educational and professional opportunities. These differences will be discussed later in this chapter.

In this chapter, I will report the results of my study as they relate to the writing instruction and support structures of these institutions. While later in this dissertation I analyze issues of labor and map the institutional structures that deeply affect these programs and administrators, here the focus is on findings related to the programs and centers themselves. I have collapsed findings and discussions together in this chapter because such a form illuminates why it is so hard to "find" trends across the board at these institutions, and because the whole point of this project is to complicate what we think we know based on a surface-level glance at small colleges. While this chapter looks at writing instruction and support in discrete ways, the culmination is a broad view of just how complicated writing is at SLACs and how hard it is to pin down what writing program/center relationships should be at these institutions. By explaining the lay of the land, then connecting it to expressions of complexity from the participants, I expand on the limited ideas of what we think writing is at SLACs, adding a twist to the simple adage that SLACs produce good writers.

Explicit and Embedded Writing Instruction and Support at SLACs

Because of the reliance on the first-year seminar model, first-year writing programs at SLACs do not look like programs at larger institutions. Some SLACs do not have a writing program at all, and the ones who do often have a program that shelters multiple levels of writing instruction and support but which rarely oversees the direction of a first-year composition type of course. Writing centers and writing center administrators (WCAs) are fairly ubiquitous among

SLACs, but they are not always self-contained and often end up being the only home for all writing on campus. In order to explain what programs and administrative positions at small liberal arts colleges look like, Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) developed what they call "configurations of leadership," based on their assertion that SLACs have sites of writing that are explicit, embedded, or both. Explicit writing, they explain, are the sites that are "clearly named in college catalogs, websites, job titles, and other institutional documents," while embedded writing sites "are housed inside other institutional entities" (p. 38). This includes first-year seminars where writing is a component of the course but not the stated "writing requirement" for the institution. Gladstein and Regaignon's usage of explicit versus embedded is incredibly helpful because of the ways in which SLAC writing instruction and support structures are often deeply nestled into other structures. Additionally, including embedded sites of writing in the analysis of an institution's writing culture creates a bigger, better picture of what writing really looks like there.

In order to better illustrate the types of writing program and center structures at the institutions in this study, I have classified them based on the "configurations of leadership" model that comes out of Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) explicit and embedded sites taxonomy. They created six administrative groupings in which to place writing administration structures. In Table 2, I define the six leadership configurations and place the participating institutions of this study into the appropriate descriptor. Despite the usefulness of Gladstein and Regaignon's leadership configurations, I do not think they tell the whole story of writing, which I will soon discuss in more detail below.

Table 2: Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) configurations of leadership

Configuration of Leadership	Definition/Features	Participating Institutions
Explicit WPA[10] + Explicit WCA[11]	• WPA oversees some form of a writing program or writing initiatives • WCA oversees the writing center • two positions are separate but often collaborate	Institution 5 Institution 6 Institution 7 Institution 9

[10] WPA = writing program administrator.

[11] Gladstein and Regaignon use writing center director, or WCD, as their preferred term. Because I use writing center administrator (WCA) as the common terminology for this dissertation, I am using my own terminology here. The rest of the configuration titles are Gladstein and Regaignon's own.

Table 2 continued

	• demonstrates commitment of university to writing instruction and support • potential danger of WP and WC operating parallel to each other	Institution 12
Solo WPA/WCA	• only one person is responsible for writing initiatives and programming • WPA/WCA often collaborates with others across campus to pursue goals	Institution 2 Institution 4
Explicit WCA only	• only one person on campus responsible for writing, located primarily in the writing center • as a result, institution takes WAC-based approach to writing • writing instruction and support responsibilities are diffused across the campus • potential danger of placing burden of writing instruction on students	Institution 3 Institution 8 Institution 11 Institution 13
Embedded WPA + Explicit WCA	• explicit writing center administrator oversees writing center and possibly some other parts of writing on campus • no person is labelled as a WPA but someone does take on some aspect of writing leadership in the institution • can be difficult to find who the embedded WPA is	Institution 1
Explicit WPA only	• single person responsible for writing programming • no single person responsible for writing center • very rare	N/A
No WPA or WCD	• institution may have writing requirements but no administrators for the WP or WC • likely no writing program on campus and possibly no writing center • very rare	N/A

Categorizing the configurations of the study's participant institutions was difficult due to how many institutions only had one participant. Additionally, one of the participants, the interim WCA at Institution 10, was unable to provide enough information to discern the role of the writing program administrative duties at that institution. For that reason, Institution 10 has been

left off of this table. Additionally, some institutions were difficult to categorize due to the fuzziness of boundaries between some of these categories. Institution 1, for example, does not have a writing program or anyone with a WPA title. The explicit WCA runs the writing center but also works across campus and collaborates with faculty and other administrators to promote writing support. However, there is also a tenure-track faculty member who serves as a WAC coordinator, although that person's position is looked at with a fair amount of confusion on the campus. Because Institution 1 does not have a formal writing program and no real WAC efforts outside of faculty development (which is undertaken by both the WCA and WAC coordinator), it would not make sense to categorize that person as a WPA, as they have a very minor role in writing instruction and support within the institution. For that reason, I defined Institution 1 under the category "Embedded WPA + Explicit WCA."

The features of each leadership configuration, as defined by Gladstein and Regaignon (2012), is helpful for thinking through the ways these institutions publicly support sites of writing. Having an explicit WPA and explicit WCA is an important sign that the institution has a culture of writing that it supports in real, material ways. However, that does not mean that an explicit WPA is always as well-established in writing studies as the WCA. Institutions 6 and 7 have WPAs with PhDs in writing studies and experience in writing administration, and Institution 12 has a WPA with a PhD in literature but a background in writing pedagogy, as well. Institution 9 has a WPA from the literature side of English, but who has served as the WPA for many years. Institution 5, however, has a WPA who does not have any kind of background in writing studies or English and instead belongs to another humanities/social sciences field. Participant 5B is a tenured professor who is nearing the end of a planned three-year rotation of writing program directors for the institution. Despite their lack of training in writing, they have worked at the institution for many years, have cross-campus connections that benefit their faculty development work, and are dedicated to their position. These complications show that all WPAs are not necessarily created equal, even if they all fit into the same leadership categories. Some have more institutional experience, while others have graduate degrees in writing studies and a focus in program administration. Additionally, these leadership configurations tell us nothing about positionality or rank, which says just as much about the institution's dedication to its writing culture as programmatic titles or responsibilities do. Of the five institutions with both explicit WPAs and WCAs, none of them have tenure-track faculty serving in both positions.

Chapter Four will go into more detail about how positionality, rank/status, and labor effect cultures of writing at SLACs.

While Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) leadership configurations are incredibly helpful for thinking about the structures of writing administration at SLACs, they can only tell us so much information. I have used this taxonomy as a way of showing how administrator participants in this study operate within their institutions, but it does not tell the full story of what writing programs and centers, and the relationships between these units, look like at SLACs. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss the writing center and program structures at play at these institutions, as well as provide information and analysis on faculty development and writing fellows (WF) programs. My goal is to go beyond Gladstein and Regaignon's assertions about leadership configurations to provide a more nuanced analysis of what writing program and center structures tell us about cultures of writing at SLACs.

Writing Curriculum and Programs

The term "writing programs" in reference to the most common writing instruction structures at small liberal arts colleges is somewhat of a misnomer. Typically, in WPA scholarship, programs refer to first-year writing requirements, or occasionally multi-tiered writing expectations, for undergraduates. However, it is relatively uncommon to find a first-year writing (FYW) course at SLACs. Instead, two-thirds of SLACs (Gladstein & Regaignon, 2012; NCOW, 2017) offer first-year seminars that include some kind of explicit or embedded writing requirement. A first-year seminar (FYS) is a one or two-semester course focused on introducing students to the academic discourse and culture of a small liberal arts institution. These courses are usually themed or tied to disciplinary topics, and they are taught by faculty across the entire campus. (My own FYS class at my undergraduate institution was titled "Misfits," and focused on literature featuring outsider characters. It is where I developed a soft spot for Salinger's Seymour Glass and a hatred for Kerouac.) Most of the time, each seminar will be very different from another, with its own syllabus and readings. Occasionally, though, such as at Institution 9, all first-year students will take an FYS course that is themed across all of the seminars. Institution 9 utilizes a two-semester world history/civics course that is taught by humanities faculty. FYS courses are deeply tied to the small liberal arts college tradition of small classes, intense faculty-student bonds, and mentorship within the disciplines. Additionally, many FYS classes are tied to

orientation and community-building activities, where students in a seminar course will be expected to interact socially outside of class time.

In this study, all but three institutions used some form of a FYS course as their primary first-year writing requirement. Institutions 2, 7, and 10 all offer an explicit FYW class. However, those courses do not follow traditional first-year writing models, either. At Institutions 2 and 10, English faculty teach the course but are allowed to theme the course however they see fit. So while they have explicit first-year writing titles, they also do not follow traditional syllabi that might be common at larger institutions that rely on graduate or adjunct labor for first-year writing instruction. Several participants note that their institution used to offer a first-year composition course as their writing requirement, but that they eventually switched to the first-year seminar model in order to better streamline the curriculum.

Along with the FYS model, the other hallmark of SLAC writing curriculum is the writing-intensive course (often called a "W" course). Most of the institutions in this study require some kind of writing-intensive class by the end of the sophomore or junior year. The exact requirements for this vary. Institution 2, for example, requires six writing-intensive courses for all students, while Institutions 4 and 5 ask students to complete a single "W" requirement. A few institutions in this study do not require any writing courses beyond the first year, most notably Institutions 11 and 13, the two institutions in this study that also happen to only have professional tutors in their writing centers. The W course is positioned by many scholars and administrators as a form of WAC. It is not required that students take the course in their major (in fact, at some institutions, students must take their W course outside of their major department). Like the first-year seminar, W courses are taught by faculty across campus. However, unlike FYS, W courses are more rooted in disciplinary expectations and genres, and faculty are teaching more to their particular specialties and expertise. Instead of proving they are capable of basic academic discourse, students must demonstrate their ability to write within particular disciplinary conversations. Despite the prevalence of W courses across most SLACs, they are one of the harder writing instruction models to pin down due to being what Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) call "the murky middle" (a quoted term several participants also brought up during their interviews when discussing writing-intensive requirements). Faculty development for these courses varies wildly from place to place, and there are very few assessment protocols in place for understanding how well these courses are working as a transition between the first

year and the senior year, where students are expected to do higher-level writing grounded within their chosen discipline. Despite these irregularities, the W course actually could serve as a useful model for writing instruction and WAC across all institution types, as it requires students to move beyond the disciplinary-less constructs of the FYW or FYS course and actually engage with more disciplinary contexts and genres.

If the W course is common but uneven across SLACs, then writing capstones are even more so. Most institutions in this study have some kind of graduation requirement that happens in the senior year, but that requirement is often not overseen by the writing program or any writing administrators. In most cases, the capstone requirement, usually a senior seminar within the major or a thesis, is a product of individual departments. Even if the institution requires a senior capstone, departments tend to make the decision what that capstone will be and what the requirements will be for its majors. In this way, SLACs are not particularly different from other institution types, which often leave the heft of disciplinary writing to individual departments and which do no real concentrated assessment of senior student writing.

For some institutions, the final writing requirement for graduation is a portfolio. Like capstone writing courses and senior theses, the portfolio requirement looks different at each institution, even when taken from already-established models elsewhere. (Carleton College is a SLAC that is particularly famous for its use of writing portfolios for students as both a form of WAC and an assessment tool. There is a lot of information about Carleton's portfolio system published, and some SLACs have acknowledged that is where their own portfolio initiatives have come from.) Institution 9 uses a writing portfolio as its primary writing instruction form in the writing program. While students are expected to write in a year-long FYS, as well as in a second-year communications course taught by humanities faculty, the portfolio is the purview of the writing program, which assesses and passes portfolios as a graduation requirement for all students. Some institutions have found portfolios more successful than others. Institution 6 used to use a portfolio model for evaluation and assessment of students, but students were reluctant to turn in their writing and so fewer and fewer were submitting portfolios over the years. With both students and faculty increasingly disinterested in the portfolio system, Institution 6 dropped the portfolio requirement and now instead asks faculty to submit evaluations of their student writers. Portfolios, while useful, are time-consuming for those who must collect and assess them, and students are resistant and often uncooperative in submitting them. While some institutions still

use them to evaluate student writing and prove a commitment to writing to institutional stakeholders, portfolios are still relatively unpopular in comparison to other forms of writing requirements at SLACs.

These forms of writing requirements – FYS, Ws, capstones, and portfolios – only tell us a small part of the story when it comes to writing at SLACs. And yet, these requirements show a commitment to writing by these small institutions that are often more intensive or thorough than those required by larger institutions. The common three-tier system of FYS to W to capstone is imperfect and uneven across the individual institutions, but in the places where they exist, there is often a writing program, WPA, or other administrator who helps to evaluate and assess writing at their institution. Additionally, a WP or WPA (or WCA with WPA-like duties) has the ability to provide faculty development and establish relationships and collaborations across campus. The issue, of course, is that we can look at these institutions with WPs or WPAs as outsiders and say they show a commitment to writing on the part of the institution, but we cannot accurately assess their actual effectiveness because they are so tied to individual institutions' cultures and goals. Instead, it makes more sense to look at larger networks, and that includes having a better understanding of how writing programs or writing curriculum requirements map onto other institutional sites of writing, including assessment efforts, faculty development, and – perhaps most importantly – the writing center.

Table 3: Summary of participating institutions' writing requirements

Participant Institution	**Required FYS**	**Required FYW**	**Required W course (at least 1)**	**Required senior capstone/major course/thesis**	**Portfolio as graduation requirement**
1	X				
2		X	X		
3	X				
4	X		X	X	
5	X		X	X	
6	X				
7		X	X		
8	X				
9	X		X		X
10		X	X		
11	X				
12	X		X		
13	X				

Writing Centers

Every institution in this study has a writing center with a dedicated writing center administrator. This is perhaps not a surprise, as writing centers can be found at most institutions of higher education in the United States. The prestige associated with a private liberal arts education means these institutions will likely have a writing center, as writing centers are seen as "on brand" (Lerner, 2007) with the image these institutions try to create. Salem (2014) claims that "writing centers offer precisely the kind of high-quality, out-of-class learning experience that residential liberal arts colleges seek to provide for their students. Moreover, the hallmarks of writing center pedagogy align almost perfectly with the liberal arts education narrative" (p. 35). Participant 11 agrees with Salem's point:

> I think the idea of community is really big in liberal arts schools. You want to foster that sense of community. Writing centers do a great job of providing a community where I don't think there is one otherwise…. Everyone's writing academic papers, and you don't really have a place to discuss that kind of writing. So coming to the center and having that kind of conversation about it builds that sense of community.

Having a writing center with its own administrator is a way for SLACs to signal that they care about student learning and success, and that they consider writing ability to be part of their definition of that success. However, this does not mean all SLAC writing centers are necessarily equal. Despite all thirteen institutions in this study having a writing center, the centers themselves are quite different. From the number of tutors to the type of tutors, from tutor education to community and culture, SLAC writing centers vary due to their particular institutional contexts. Below, I discuss some of the common and uncommon marks of the SLAC writing centers in this study.

One of the biggest differences between SLAC writing centers is the types of tutors. Eleven institutions utilized peer tutors, with two of those also noting they had at least one professional tutor on staff for dealing with specific documents such as Fulbright applications or other funding materials. Two of the institutions – Institution 11 and Institution 13 -- actually staffed their center with only professional tutors. This staff breakdown fits with the national statistics provided by the Writing Centers Research Project (2017), which show that in 2014, 84% of all institution types in the survey were staffed primarily by undergraduate tutors and over 96% specifically at SLACs. Peer tutors are significantly less expensive than professional tutors, and as studies like the Peer Tutor Alumni Research Project have proven, peer tutoring benefits

undergraduates in their educational and professional lives (Hughes, Gillespie, & Kail, 2010). That double benefit of cost and personal/professional development makes peer tutoring fit into the mission of SLACs, just as Salem (2014) describes above, providing undergraduate peer tutors with a "high-quality, out-of-class learning experience" (p. 35). It should also be noted that the two institutions in this study that hired only professional tutors are two of the most prestigious SLACs in the country and with two of the highest endowments of all institutions in the study. Having professional tutors at these institutions benefits the branding of these institutions because there is pressure for students to succeed not only in their courses but beyond. Having access to professional tutors for help with texts like graduate school and job applications, funding applications, and other professional development and support documents gives high-achieving students the types of advantages that having tutors with master's degrees and tangible professional experience can provide. Writing centers that hire one or more professional tutors in addition to peer tutors address similar institutional concerns. The issue of writing center staffing at SLACs is not that one type of tutoring staff is necessarily any more conducive to student learning than the other, but rather a question of whether or not the staffing matches larger institutional goals and values, for better or worse.

Questions of tutor staffing are inherently entrenched in institutional contexts, including issues of labor. Neither of the WCAs at the two institutions using professional tutors noted any particular feelings about having professional tutors over peer tutors, perhaps because this is the only writing center either of the participants had ever administered, meaning their perspectives may have been skewed toward professional tutoring. Additionally, both participants served as professional tutors in their respective centers before taking on their administrative positions, which clearly opened up a professional path for them that otherwise may not have existed.

Administrative labor is not the only concern when it comes to how staffing decisions are made at a SLAC. The wealthier the general student body and financially solvent the school is, the less need there may be for student jobs on the campus. Several participants noted in their interviews that students on work-study, the program in which students work somewhere in the institution as part of their financial aid package, were one of the foremost considerations they had to make when hiring new tutors and budgeting for the academic year, as work-study stipends would already be part of an institution's overall budget. In this case, institutions may decide that it makes just as much sense to hire professional tutors. Again, the issue of branding and prestige

is wrapped up with what Salem (2014) calls a "polarized" and "political" national education landscape. It is important to remember that who a center hires and why is part of the politics involved. Chapter Four goes into more detail about the issues involved in tutor labor, work study, and diversity in writing centers.

Once a writing center is staffed, then they have to be educated. As can be expected, tutor education models are different across all the institutions in this study. Professional tutors have some staff development through regular meetings (and, in the case of Institution 13, through professional development funding), but because they have advanced degrees related to writing, they do not take any kind of training course. All the undergraduate peer tutors at centers in this study take some form of a training course. Some take the course before the semester they start tutoring, and others take them concurrently with their first semester in their centers. One participating institution has a unique tutoring education series of three courses – one taken before tutoring and two taken concurrently with tutoring, all concentrating on a different aspect of writing center work, including research methods. And one center, due to its institution's unique academic schedule, does extended mentoring to make up for the lack of a full 14-to-16 week semester. All the centers in the study, even those with professional tutors, mention occasional professional development through staff meetings, extended training sessions, or guest speakers from different departments or offices across campus. Overall, nothing about the tutor education process at these small schools is noticeably different from what has been reported across other institution types, although further research may be needed to truly determine this.

The types of tutors who work in these writing centers, as well as the education and professional development available to them, impacts the kinds of communities built within the centers. For writing center administrator participants who commented on the community and culture of their writing centers, answers varied widely depending largely on institutional issues affecting students. Several participants reported a lack of bonded community among their tutors due to how busy the student population is in general. (Student busyness was a repeated refrain throughout the interviews, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.) Because students from private liberal arts institutions tend to be high-performing and because SLACs allow a lot of interdisciplinary exploration, many writing center tutors lack the time or identification process that might make them more likely to form a community within their centers. As Participant 9 noted, "our students are all extracurricularly [sic] very highly engaged, but also spread very thin.

So in a lot of writing center scholarship, you read about these dream writing tutors where all they want to do is be in the writing center. And I'm lucky if I get them for three hours a week." Participant 5B, a WPA, said that from their outsider perspective, there is very little sense of community among the writing center peer tutoring staff at their institution. They thought that this may be due to most of the tutors already being English majors who were acquainted with one another. It is possible that how much tutors identify with their fellow tutors as part of a community could be related to the identities they already claim and how divided their time is.

And yet, some writing centers do have very strong communities. Participant 2 claims that their tutors were incredibly close and active participants in each other's lives. This participant, a faculty WCA, certainly is a major reason for this closeness of Institution 2's writing center community. Along with providing the tutors opportunities to take part in collaborative research and bringing them to national and regional conferences, Participant 2 also has made their center welcoming and even advantageous to the students working there. The center has a refrigerator and microwave, as well as comfortable furniture and abundant space, which makes tutors want to gather there socially. Space can have a significant impact on the way these communities develop, but the overall writing culture of an institution perhaps plays the most important role. Institution 2 not only has the most close-knit writing center but also has the most writing requirements of any institution in the study (six W classes). That kind of dedication by the university to writing might imbue tutors with a sense that the work they do is not only important but necessary to the success of their fellow students. That sense of importance may be why they identify with their center and tutoring colleagues at such an intimate level. The combination of a dedicated WCA faculty line, the strong institutional culture of writing, and the allowances of space and location have greatly benefited the culture of Institution 2's writing center. Again, this would be an interesting area for future study.

In some ways, writing centers are the most standard part of writing instruction and support at SLACs. Most SLACs have a writing center, and most of those writing centers have their own administrator and their own spaces. And yet, even writing centers look different at each institution. Institutional factors such as financial stability and student populations change how centers recruit, hire, and train tutors; how they allocate resources; and how they fail or succeed in developing communities within their writing centers. Therefore, writing centers,

which are seen as a sort of equalizer among different institutions and institution types, have complicated existences that are contingent on the unique contexts of individual institutions.

Writing Fellows

One of the most common forms of WAC efforts at small liberal arts colleges is writing fellows (WF) programs. Writing fellows programs and initiatives have been a major part of WAC/WID development across many different types of institutions, and many scholars have written about the success or failures of their WF programs. Compared to other forms of writing support, WF programs are relatively inexpensive, have benefits for both the students and the fellows, and are actually possible to assess. These are all especially appealing benefits for SLACs, which have an abundance of students who are good writers and teachers and for whom the FYS and W course models are ripe for WF support. Regaignon and Bromley (2011), in their reporting on the success of the WF program at Pomona College, a SLAC, found that students who had a writing fellow in their classroom, compared to students who did not, statistically showed better improvement in their writing over the course of the semester. Institution 10 also did assessment that showed their now-defunct WF program had similar benefits; students in courses with a WF had higher grades in those courses than students who did not. WF programs are popular among SLACs because they are measurable and fit in with the student-centric curriculum of a liberal arts education.

Most of the institutions in this study have a WF program, did have one, or would like to start one. These programs are all run out of the writing center and are supervised by the WCA. They do not all use the title “writing fellows,” but that is the term used here because it is the most common in the literature. Institution 11 is particularly interesting because it has a peer WF program but has an entirely professional tutoring staff in the WC. That configuration appears to be quite rare across all institution types based on existing data. Table 4 lists which institutions have writing fellows programs, as well as which institutions have administrators who want a program or who once offered a WF program that no longer exists.

Table 4: Writing fellows programs

Writing Fellows Status	**Participating Institutions**
Offers a WF program of some kind	Institution 2 Institution 4 Institution 6[12] Institution 7 Institution 8 Institution 9 Institution 11 Institution 12
Used to offer a WF program, but no longer	Institution 10
Interested in establishing a WF program	Institution 1 Institution 3
No WF program	Institution 5 Institution 13

As this table demonstrates, WF programs are quite popular, although there are differences in how those institutions that have programs are configured. Participant 2 describes their version of WF as "ad hoc" and not formalized, unlike Institutions 9 and 11, which have both well-funded and well-established WF programs with a lot of campus support. Institution 8 does not run an official WF program but does offer liaisons through the writing center that can serve a WF-like role as an embedded tutor. Institution 10 used to offer a well-organized WF program but did not extend it beyond the two-year trial period. Participant 10, who actually served as a WF during their undergraduate years at that institution, regrets the lack of a WF program now and says there is hope among the campus that it will eventually return. Meanwhile, participants 1 and 3 both expressed a strong desire to establish a WF program at their institutions but said that a lack of financial resources were currently holding them back from doing so.

Of the two institutions without WF programs, there was no reason expressed for why they do not offer WFs through their writing centers. Institution 13 has an all-professional writing center staff and also does not require any writing courses beyond the FYS course, which means there is little expressed need on the campus for additional writing support. Institution 5 has only had their current separation of the WP and WC for six years, which could explain their hesitation to start a WF program. Additionally, the WCA is close to retirement, and because WCs are where most SLAC writing fellows are housed, a change in the current structure would be unwise.

[12] Institution 6 is actually in the process of developing their WF program, which will begin in Fall 2018. I am including it here because by the time this dissertation is defended, that program will be underway.

Writing fellows programs, as noted earlier, have positive outcomes. It is relatively simple to look at scoring and grade differences in courses with or without writing fellows, which allows institutions to easily advocate for their funding and staffing. Additionally, working with a peer can be less intimidating than working with a faculty member, especially on something like writing, and especially at the elite institutions in this study, where there is a lot of pressure on students to always be excelling in their work. "Small colleges, they are meant to be these, like, sort of high-touch, one-on-one personal interaction places," said Participant 12. "But many students still feel very intimidated by that, and so talking to a peer feels a lot less scary for them." The WFs also benefit from the teaching experience and close relationship-building they do through their work. Like having a writing center, WF programs can be a way for SLACs to offer the kind of intensive, extracurricular education model that is part of the liberal arts brand.

Perhaps the most important role for a writing fellows program, though, is its connection to WAC/WID. As discussed previously in this chapter, SLACs tend to be looked at as places where WAC "naturally" happens due to the diffused responsibility of teaching writing across all disciplines on campus. Writing Fellows programs are one way in which institutions can support faculty who may not be as comfortable with teaching writing or offering feedback as those trained in writing pedagogy. WFs are trained in the basics of writing pedagogy, either through their writing center education courses or through a WF-specific professional development module. They are peers, which means they are not responsible for grades or content, which means faculty are still the primary authority in these courses. Additionally, WFs are a form of faculty development. Most of the institutions with WF programs in this study require their WFs to meet at least several times a semester with the faculty member in their assigned course to discuss assignments, the kind of feedback that should be given to students, and patterns in student writing. As a result, faculty members are not only imparting some disciplinary writing knowledge to WFs, but are actually gaining pedagogical knowledge from the fellows. Fellows can serve as advocates of good writing practices to both students and faculty, which makes their work valuable and, often, highly sought-after at these small institutions.

Despite these positive aspects, WF programs have some drawbacks. For one, WFs are in danger of being mistreated or ill-used by faculty who may not understand what WFs should or should not be doing. Most WCAs managing WFs in this study try to avoid such a thing from happening by meeting with faculty and establishing clear boundaries with them before a class

utilizing a WF begins. At some institutions, faculty cannot even get a WF for their course until they have undertaken some form of training or development themselves. However, there are still times with an errant faculty member might slip through the cracks and either over- or under-utilize their assigned WF. The other issue with faculty, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five, is the issue of authority. Several study participants noted that faculty are wary of WF programs or even regular writing center peer tutoring due to concerns over course content knowledge. For some faculty, the lack of disciplinary knowledge in a WF means they cannot responsibly help students with their writing in that discipline. Unfortunately, there are not many ways for SLACs to combat this attitude besides continuing to offer pedagogical development in writing that can help faculty understand differences between disciplinary modes of writing and general writing practices such as the drafting and revision process, sentence structure, and organization.

The other issue of WF programs is one that is much more problematic and complex and which can certainly not be fully explained here in this limited chapter overview. Not many SLACs have faculty members with backgrounds in writing studies who are responsible for the majority of student writing at the institution. Even in places like Institution 2, where there is a FYW course taught by English faculty, there is no one besides the WCA who has an actual advanced degree background in WPA work or writing pedagogy. Instead, faculty across disciplines in which writing is not closely studied or taught are now in charge of teaching writing to undergraduate students. What does it mean, then, to put a WF in a classroom where a faculty member's only pedagogical experience in writing is an annual one-day workshop or an occasional professional luncheon hosted by the writing center? It puts the burden of writing instruction on a day-to-day basis on undergraduate writing fellows who lack advanced degrees and, more importantly, are paid only the tiniest sliver of what a faculty member makes. Writing fellows are not in charge of grading and do not make assignments, but they are responsible for helping students understand writing in a class with a very specific set of disciplinary practices. They do this work happily because they are learning to be better writers and educators, and they do get paid something in return. But they are paid relatively paltry sums in order to do the work that, at other institutions, faculty or well-trained TAs would. This lack of power on the part of the WFs means that they can easily take on the burden of labor for writing instruction at their institutions, often without even realizing it. When establishing a WF program at a SLAC, then, it

is important to think about how the WF program can be equitably established to avoid using WFs as replacements for writing instructors. While I do go into more detail about the more problematic side of labor practices for tutors at SLAC writing centers in the next chapter, I think it is important to note in this chapter that all configurations of writing instruction, however innocuous seeming and despite good institution-wide benefits, do not come without complications, unfair power structures, and pedagogical minefields.

Writing Committees

One of the most important parts of writing support at the small colleges in this study happens through the use of committees. Writing committees, which take on multiple forms or makeups, allow writing administrators to communicate their work and get feedback from faculty or other administrators who serve on the committee. Writing committees are where decisions come to fruition, as the committees, rather than the individual writing administrators, are the ones with the power to make more concrete and supported recommendations to the institutions. Finally, writing committees are a helpmate, as constructing new guidelines or outcomes for writing or making decisions about the future of a writing program or center, are difficult for only one person. Having a full committee helps ease the burden of labor, particularly at institutions with only a solo WPA or WCA.

Because most SLACs do not have a writing and rhetoric department, writing committees not only serve as decision-making bodies, but they also can help fill a support role that does not already exist for administrators. Participant 7A said, "I really wanted to keep that committee together when I started because, otherwise, not being in a department…I don't have any kind of contacts. So that group is really important." Because many writing administrators at SLACs do not have a home department and are not tenure-track faculty, it can be difficult for them to make institutional relationships with other people who share their concerns and interests related to writing instruction and support. Committees can prevent that kind of disciplinary loneliness. Additionally, they can provide a team, a united front that can present ideas to their institution, as well as make long-lasting, positive change for writing.

Writing committees are structured differently depending both on the needs of the institution and the ability or interest of people to serve on the committee. Writing center and writing program administrators serve on, and often chair, the committee, but it can be hard to

recruit other members from across campus. Several participants noted that their institution tries to get members from their three or four main academic discipline divisions. However, only a few have successfully been able to do so. Some committees only have one or two members besides the writing administrator(s), which means their ability to truly debate or discuss issues affecting student writing instruction and support are severely limited. Even for those institutions who do manage to have faculty from across disciplinary areas, the work of serving on a writing committee is still often seen as "less than." Multiple participants noted that only junior faculty serve on their writing committees and note that that "says something" about how the institution feels about writing and who should be involved in writing instruction and support. "I would say it's not a highly-sought position," said Participant 11, "but happily the people who are willing to run for it or be elected to it are people who care about writing." Writing committees, despite the benefits they hold for small colleges without a centralized writing program or without writing faculty, still lack the prestige of other types of committees.

The commitment an institution shows its writing committee, as well as the faculty perceptions of that committee, are evidence of the ways in which writing instruction and support are viewed by the larger institution. At Institution 5, making the first-year seminar committee part of the writing committee played into faculty misperceptions of the FYS course now being "the writing course." As a result, the institution is now considering going back to having separate FYS and writing committees to avoid that kind of confusion. Because faculty already are hesitant to teach what they perceive as a writing course, having a writing committee that discusses FYS makes it even hard to convince those faculty to teach that course. The standing of a committee also reveals political complications regarding writing committees. Some of the participants noted their writing committees were actually only subcommittees, usually within some larger academic committee. Some saw their writing committees go from a standing committee to a much smaller subcommittee. Institution 6, for example, now only has one committee member outside of the WPA and WCA, and now is just a small part of a larger academic committee. Participant 6A claimed this shows the lack of commitment to writing on the part of the larger institution.

Unfortunately, there is little external work with which to compare the committees in this study. Research on writing committees and advisory boards is nearly nonexistent in writing studies, and there are no professional guidelines or advice for starting and maintaining a committee, either (Watkins, Whiddon, & Conyers, 2018). Writing committees, despite being

nearly universal in the case of this particular study, are not understood by the larger literature in WPA or writing center studies as a part of writing instruction and support. They are an incredibly important, even necessary, part of the writing cultures of small institutions, and yet they remain ignored by the larger field of writing studies.

Despite these issues of institutional erosion, lack of support from faculty, and the dearth of research, writing committees are one of the most valued parts of SLAC writing administrators' jobs. Most study participants immediately mentioned their committee work when asked about their job duties during interviews, and many of them spoke of the collaborative nature of their writing committees. While some have had negative experiences, and several wish they could recruit more senior faculty to their committees, the benefits appear to outweigh the negative aspects of committee work. Writing committees connect vested parties across campus who are interested in writing instruction and support, and they can create and maintain collaborations that might not exist otherwise. Additionally, writing committees serve as a sustained relationship-building tool for WPAs and WCAs, which is especially important at institutions where those two roles may be unequal or serve different parts of the campus. Finally, and most importantly, writing committees can promote a culture of writing across the institution. Because culture is such a significant part of small colleges, having a standing, or even non-standing, committee that supports writing and writing administrators serves a very important role in developing a true culture of writing, one that affects not only students, but also the faculty and upper-level administration.

Faculty Development

A key part of writing instruction and support at small colleges lies in the role of faculty development in writing pedagogies, a task that largely falls to WPAs and WCAs. Because of the FYS model at the majority of these institutions, faculty across the disciplines must receive some sort of crash course in writing pedagogy. Faculty development was one of the most common responses when participants were asked about their job duties, with many remarking that they were the only person qualified to offer such development because they were the only writing "expert" on their campus. Faculty development takes many forms based on institutional need, the time faculty and administrators are able to put into it, and the funding allowed. Funding and time seem to be particular concerns when it comes to faculty development. Participant 8A told a story

about how they fed and housed their first guest speaker for faculty development at their own home to save money, as the institution provided very little funding. Faculty buy-in can also be a problem, especially when institutional issues are present. Participant 2 mentioned having such low turnout at faculty development lunches that they stopped offering them because they had become a waste of time and money. The participant thinks the institution's financial issues could be putting additional stress on faculty that make pedagogical development activities more difficult. "[Institution 2]'s going through money problems, retention problems, a whole bunch of difficulties. And people are not, people are stretched thin, or say they are, and there's not a lot of time and attention given to workshops like that. So I don't run them." Larger institutional issues can make faculty development more difficult than it already is.

Despite these institutional problems, faculty development is one of the primary relationship-building activities within SLAC writing ecosystems, which is why the success of development activities is so important – and so difficult. If faculty are disengaged, if they do not see the point of development, or if they are resistant to larger institutional change, that can make the work of an administrator particularly challenging, as it reiterates that the burden of labor regarding writing instruction is held by one or two appointed people, rather than the whole campus. Faculty development has to serve a wide group of people within the confines set by the higher-level administration in regards to funding and schedules. In order to serve the needs of their campus, WPAs and WCAs offer both required and more casual faculty development modules. Required faculty development includes day-long workshops for faculty teaching FYS or W courses. Casual, unrequired faculty development can take the form of lunches, voluntary talks or presentations, or writing center workshops. Some institutions have found that faculty development can also happen through other programming, too. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, writing fellows programs benefit faculty members through collaborative conversations about writing process and feedback. Participant 7A notes that the annual, all-day assessment scoring session that faculty can take part in serves as a form of faculty development because it helps them see what does or does not work in piece of writing and how it fits a formal rubric. One-on-one interactions and outreach between faculty and writing administrators is also a key part of informal faculty development. These sort of "accidental" forms of faculty development often tend to be highly congenial, which means they can help establish relationships between WPAs or WCAs and faculty members that will benefit more formalized development efforts in

the future. Table 5 lists the types of formal and informal faculty development each institution in this study does according to the participants.

Table 5: Faculty development at participating institutions

Institution	Formal faculty development	Informal faculty development
1	• voluntary faculty workshops • collaborations with other programs for topic-specific faculty workshops (such as working with international students)	• one-to-one outreach to faculty
2	• faculty WAC workshops	• one-to-one outreach to faculty
3	• FYS faculty training day (WCA assists) •	• in-class workshops with the faculty through the WC • one-to-one outreach to faculty
4	• FYS faculty workshops throughout fall semester • annual FYS faculty prep workshop every May • annual workshop for WID faculty	• one-to-one outreach to faculty • developing programs and writing communities for faculty
5	• summer faculty development workshop for W certification • voluntary faculty development workshops and presentations throughout academic year	• one-to-one outreach to faculty • WPA and FYS coordinator meet with new FYS faculty
6	• voluntary faculty development workshops	• one-to-one outreach to faculty • work with specific departments on writing goals/tasks
7	• faculty development workshops and presentations	• WC staff lunches with faculty • one-to-one outreach to faculty
8	• annual faculty development workshop	• one-to-one outreach to faculty • outreach to faculty through writing committee
9		• one-to-one outreach to faculty
10		• one-to-one outreach to faculty
11	• annual summer faculty development workshop	• one-to-one outreach to faculty
12	• faculty development work through WP	• one-to-one outreach to faculty
13	• annual FYS faculty prep workshop every May • faculty development workshops	• one-to-one outreach to faculty • in-class workshops with faculty

While faculty development efforts may take different shapes or approaches across institutions, as Table 3.4 demonstrates, there are two very common models, one formal and one

informal. Annual pedagogical workshops for FYS or W faculty are highly prevalent among the SLACs in this study. These workshops are developed and facilitated by the WPA, WCA, or both, and they aim to introduce faculty to writing process (drafting and revision), as well as best practices for providing feedback on student writing. Some of these workshops also focus on assignments or how to build writing into a syllabus. Helping faculty with assignment design and syllabi planning was perhaps the most common form of one-on-one, informal faculty development participants mentioned in interviews. The importance of one-to-one outreach is the single greatest common denominator when it comes to faculty development among participating institutions. That one-to-one outreach is based on building close, informal relationship with faculty and gaining their trust. Participant 3 told a story about making it their mission to sit next to faculty in the dining hall and introducing their position and the writing center, showing the faculty what the WCA offers in terms of faculty development. "In a small college," Participant 12 said, "relationships are everything." Relationship-building, then, is the single most important form of faculty development at small college, even if it is tricky to point down exactly what those relationships are. The labor involved in relationship-building can easily be ignored in examining writing cultures, as can the role of institutional issues such as faculty buy-in, student populations, and material resources. The following chapters of this dissertation will examine how these complications affect relationships between writing units at SLACs, with a particular focus remaining on this issue of faculty support.

Conclusion: A Diffused Culture of Writing

The idea that SLACs produce good writers is handed down over and over again to its students, faculty, and alumni. One of the reasons I chose a small liberal arts college as a teenager was because I loved writing and was told writing was incredibly important at small schools. The participants of this study repeat these truisms handed down by their institutions. When asked about the writing culture at their institutions, the theme of producing good writers came up over and over again. "They pride themselves on it," said Participant 2. "One faculty likes to tell the story that somebody told them that he knows [Institution 2] students come out and they know how to write. We have a lot of anecdotal evidence for that." Participant 8B provided anecdotal evidence, too: "Our career development center…one of the first things they'll always say is the thing that they hear from employers that makes [Institution 8] stand out is their writing skills."

And yet, despite the anecdotal evidence coming from faculty and career centers with significant professional stakes in the university, what participants really wanted to convey was their own discomfort over the idea that producing good writers means the institution is teaching writing well or supporting student writers as fully as it could. Responses to the question about the culture of writing were mixed, to say the least, showing that the issue of writing at SLAC is complicated and deserves more than just a simple gloss of "liberal arts educations produce good writers." Below is just a sampling of responses from participants when they were asked about the culture of writing at their institutions:

- "People expect that there will be a lot of writing, but I haven't heard of there being stipulations on writing instruction. Just lots of things to write." – Participant 3
- "I think it's central to the curriculum and central to the pedagogy of many faculty and not just in the humanities or social sciences….So students are writing quite a bit…. [But] there's no sort of structured approach to offering instruction to those students. It's pretty random." – Participant 6A
- "There's a lot of [writing] and it's kind of haphazard. I can't always tell why somebody's assigning something and they can't necessarily articulate why they're assigning it.… [Students are] expected to write at almost a graduate level but to do that without any courses or support in writing. So the approach to writing is very by professor…. So this is the attitude that's most prevalent: Assigning writing is equivalent to teaching writing here…. I mean, you're going up against this impossible, unspoken expectation." – Participant 6B
- "We have a first-year seminar program, and 80% of the grade is writing. And it's taught by faculty across disciplines, but it's not WAC. And some faculty see it as a writing class, and some faculty don't. All students see it as a writing class…. There's a line, I thought about getting this tattooed on my arm: There is a difference between teaching writing and assigning writing." – Participant 8A
- "I think writing, it's all over the place, it's hard to find a faculty member who doesn't value it in some way. I think there are faculty in the sciences who would say, like, of course, it's important, but it's not something that's showed up in [their] work all that much or their classes. But I think the college likes to think of itself as a college of writers. And I think that we have done a lot of work to help foster that. It's almost normalized, the

> ways that writing is difficult, writers need support, that writing is hard and that sort of thing. The college of high achievers, I think that's one of the really important pieces that we need to bring to the conversation about writing." – Participant 13

What strikes me about these responses is not that they are complicated, but that they show it is hard to pin down the culture of writing at an institution type that heavily relies on a dispersed model of teaching writing. Participant 12 perhaps put it best: ""It depends on who you talk to, obviously…. It's never particularly clear: What does it mean to teach writing?" The idea of what it means to teach writing versus assign writing is a refrain that came up over and over again in interviews, showing that WPAs and WCAs really worry about how to do faculty development well and how to actually change the culture of writing at their institutions. Anxiety about how to move beyond the anecdotal to real evidence for student writing strengths pervades this study. As this chapter demonstrated in its discussion of what writing instruction and support looks like at these thirteen institutions, and how they compare to data about other SLACs, there is no one perfect model for how institutions teach and support writing.

The complications are many when it comes to understanding and assessing writing instruction models at SLACs, and the complications are almost entirely located within the individual institutions. How can you compare Institution 3 (FYS class, no WPA, and a staff-level WCA) with Institution 8 (FYS sequence, no WPA, and a WCA with a PhD in writing studies who is heavily involved with writing across the entire institution) with Institution 13 (no writing requirements beyond the first year and with only professional tutors in the writing center)? You can't. Instead, we can look at how the writing instruction initiatives and requirements at these institutions exist within their unique contexts, the networks of people, locations, and cultural values that make up each institution. For this reason, I would argue that writing requirements can tell us a lot about writing instruction and curriculum at SLACs, but they are nothing unless looked at in terms of institutional histories and circumstances and the people who make up those histories and influence those circumstances.

CHAPTER 4: "TEN TO FIFTEEN TINY JOBS": LABOR AND POSITIONALITY OF SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE WRITING ADMINISTRATORS

It would be ethically unsound to not address the issue of labor and positioning when discussing cultures of writing at any institution type. In order to truly do institutional critique and examine how relationships and networks are distributed across a campus, it is important to pay attention to the work being done to build and maintain those relationships, as well as the positioning of those doing that work within the larger institutional structure. As scholars like Balester and McDonald (2001) and Geller and Denny (2013) have demonstrated, writing program administrators and writing center administrators are generally unequally positioned, both within their institutions and within the discipline of writing studies. WPAs tend to hold higher faculty ranks than WCAs by a fairly wide margin. Even at small liberal arts colleges, where WPAs are not as likely to be holders of doctoral degrees in writing studies, WPAs still tend to outrank WCAs. However, WCAs perhaps have the most power and influence on an institution's culture of writing at small colleges due to their centrality to the campus and their physical locations. How, then, does position affect the type of labor WPAs and WCAs do at a SLAC? Additionally, how are positions structured in ways that help or hurt a culture of writing at these institutions? In this chapter, I explore the positions of participant WPAs and WCAs in this study and how that data compares to national data. I also discuss the kind of labor writing administrators do in a small college, as well as how the labor of undergraduate tutors and writing fellows contributes to the institution. Finally, I connect the issues of labor and positionality to how programs and centers build and sustain relationships, as well as how these positions demonstrate power within the institution.

Labor and Responsibilities of Writing Administrators

During their interview, Participant 3 explained the culture shock they experienced transitioning from the large, public R1 where they did their Masters studies to the SLAC they would eventually work at. At their previous institution, Participant 3 said, the writing center was very large and job duties were distributed across multiple administrators, including both full-time or faculty administrators and graduate student coordinators. But at Institution 3, where the WCA

is the only person with a writing studies background, the writing center administrator does everything. “It’s like having ten to fifteen tiny jobs,” they said. Participant 9 echoes this in their assertion that “in the writing center biz, you kind of have to figure out how to do it all.”

“Ten to fifteen tiny jobs” and “[doing] it all” are accurate depictions of what writing center administrator jobs look like everywhere, but especially what they look like at a small college. Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, and Jackson (2016), in their book about new writing center administrators, note that there are three primary types of labor WCAs engage in: disciplinary (research, presentations, and other professional opportunities), emotional, and everyday (regular administrative duties, such as record-keeping, managing schedules, and staffing and training tutors). These three categories are not stable or isolated from one another. Instead, the types of work WCAs do crosses and combines these areas of focus. At a small college, the boundaries between job duties bleed in highly visible ways. At institutions where the WCA is the only writing “expert” on campus, the administrator ends up taking on any writing-related task that faculty or other administrators see fit.

One of the most important roles of a WCA is tutor staffing. During interviews, the first thing every participant said when asked what their job duties included was “recruit, hire, and train tutors.” The wording varied a bit, but all the answers included a variation of the idea that the foremost task of their position included staffing their center and making sure that staff was educated and prepared for their jobs. This mantra of “recruit, hire, train” is part of a kind of labor-centric version of Grutsch McKinney’s (2013) theory of the writing center grand narrative, which Grutsch McKinney criticizes as often hindering alternative ideas of what writing center work can look like. Despite the key role WCAs at small colleges play in the larger culture of writing on their campus, and despite the pressure they face as the figures in charge of teaching writing pedagogy to the faculty, the role of staffing and managing tutors is still the central defining feature of a WCA position, in part because the discipline has framed it as such.

Another reason the staff-centric positioning of writing center labor is prominent at SLACs could be due to the student-centered approach of this institution type. It would be interesting to see how this supervisory labor role compares to WCA labor at other types of institutions. In their study, Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, and Jackson (2016) have a broad range in which few institution types are repeated more than once, which means it is hard to truly compare institution types. The student-centric tradition of a SLAC, I would hypothesize, is why

the "recruit, hire, train" mantra came up over and over again in this study. As many participants noted, SLACs pride themselves on close relationships and mentorship between faculty (or in this case, administrators) and students, as well as highly unique paths designed to fit each student's individual interests and goals. Because writing center tutoring is one of the more prominent extracurricular paths open to students, as noted in the previous chapter, it would make sense for WCAs to focus on *how* they open up that path to students. While SLACs are not necessarily designated as "teaching colleges," teaching is at the heart of the liberal arts tradition, so it would make sense that tutor education and professional development are also at the heart of a SLAC writing center.

Staffing a writing center and educating tutors are hardly the only significant roles of a SLAC WCA, though. Every WCA in the study except for Participant 10, who only has a BA and is serving just as a one-year interim director, teaches classes. Participant 9, for example, who has an MFA, teaches some creative writing classes, while Participant 12 teaches in their social sciences discipline. Participants 2 and 8A, who are tenure-track faculty members with PhDs in writing studies, teach advanced classes in writing and rhetoric. Participant 1, who also has a PhD in writing studies, mentioned that they are the only person qualified to teach technical and professional writing courses at their university, and so they teach those courses every year. Some participants teach first-year writing or seminar courses as needed, and many of them also teach one-credit writing tutorial courses that are offered through their writing centers. And of course, all the WCAs in the study teach the writing center's tutor education course. However, despite this significant finding that even non-tenure track (NTT) or staff writing center directors have teaching responsibilities similar to tenure-track (TT) or other counterpart faculty at their institutions, teaching is still considered secondary in some ways to the more service-oriented work of a WCA. Even the WCAs with faculty roles, including the two TT faculty, only noted their teaching after discussing their writing center labor. And while that may in part be because participants knew this was a writing center-based study, it still strikes me as significant that the administrative work was so important to participants that they genuinely seemed more interested in talking about that part of their jobs rather than their teaching.

At a SLAC, the supervisory roles of a WPA are not wildly different from those of a WCA. While they may not be hiring or training tutors, they still are often in charge of staffing and making sure there are enough sections and faculty for first-year seminars or W courses.

Combined WPA/WCAs, of which there are many in this study, have to do both: staff their centers and make sure the writing component of first-year seminar is taken care of. WPAs and WPA/WCAs are also in charge of doing training unrelated to tutoring. They facilitate faculty development workshops and assessment protocols that involve some form of educating people on writing pedagogy and offer practical advice for giving feedback. In many ways, this development work is where the work of WPA and WCAs collapse into a general set of responsibilities. Again, as often the only writing experts on their campus, they are asked to take on service roles that have some component of supervisory labor. It is possible, too, that these collapsed roles are one of the avenues through which WPAs and WCAs are able to build relationships, as some of their labor concerns are so similar that it would only make sense to work together. Those service roles, in particular, are an area in which collaboration is not only sought after, but expected by the very institution.

The service aspect of administrative work is a particularly thorny issue because it is so central to the role of a SLAC WPA and yet is still considered a secondary concern within academic labor as a whole. During my graduate studies, I have been told over and over again not to let myself get too involved in committee work or other institutional service, especially once I became a faculty member. "It will drag you down," one professor told me. And yet, in this study, participants showed a great deal of enthusiasm for their service work. After the "recruit, hire, train" refrain, faculty development and committee work were the next two job duties every WCA study participant mentioned. WPAs echoed this importance, with service work as one of their first responses, as well. As explained in the previous chapter, faculty development and writing committees are incredibly important to an institution's culture of writing, and the amount of time participants gave to discussing these responsibilities demonstrates that point. Faculty development and writing committees are two important components of WAC work, and writing centers are deeply connected to the promotion and sustainability of WAC (Barnett & Blumner, 1999), especially on small campuses where there is likely not a separate WAC coordinator or formal WAC program. WPAs, too, are often leading programs that require contact with faculty across disciplines and departments, and service labor is one of the few ways in which this type of contact can be both more organic and sustainable. SLACs depend on the service labor performed by faculty and administrators. Handstedt (2003) points out that the role of service for small college faculty and administrators is necessary for small institutions to maintain their

institutional identities. He calls service "the institutional threads and fibers that when woven together by individual faculty members make up the fabric of the small school" (p. 78) and argues that doing service such as committee work, program leadership, and providing extracurricular opportunities for students, allows small college faculty (and, I would add, administrators) to make themselves invaluable and visible to their colleagues, students, and the institution. It can also be beneficial for tenure review or other promotions. The integral role of service work may be shared across all institution types, but at small colleges, it is even more important to be seen as a team player and good colleague.

While the daily labor of writing administrators at SLACs is similar to that of their peers at larger or research-based institutions, there are still findings from this survey, supported by the work of Gladstein and Regaignon (2012), that show the nature of this labor as *different.* Part of the difference lies in the ways in which certain aspects of labor are valued or seen by small institutions. The student-centric culture of SLACs means the "recruit, hire, train" role of writing center administrators is both the most visible and perhaps the most valued part of their positions. WPAs, meanwhile, may not be responsible for hiring and training new writing faculty like WPAs at research institutions, but they are heavily tasked with doing interdisciplinary collaborations and faculty development, often alone or with only a WCA to aid them. Finally, the role of intensive service work as one of the most important parts of a writing administrator's job is directly linked to the culture of SLACs. Collaboration, relationship-building, and student support are built into the very structure of SLACs, which impacts how writing centers and programs develop their own relationships. However, while labor may support collaborative infrastructures, the influence of positionality and status can erode some of that support.

The Rank, Title, and Background of WPAs and WCAs

It is impossible to separate WPAs and WCAs from each other in this discussion about positionality. While a few institutions in this study have an explicit writing program administrator whose responsibilities lie solely in the teaching and assessing of writing, most of the institutions have just a writing center director who tends to take on some WPA-like responsibilities or a combined WPA/WCA who manages all aspects of writing instruction and support. At some institutions, even the job title is one marked by some boundary confusion. At Institution 12, for example, both the writing program director and assistant director serve roles in

both the writing program and the writing center, which is a part of the larger program. The assistant program director in particular takes on many of the daily responsibilities in the writing center. Meanwhile, at a place like Institution 2, the writing center director supervises all aspects of the writing center but is also the primary point person for all writing-related issues at the college. The boundaries between job titles and positions are blurred at small colleges, and that means WPA and WCAs have to be examined in concert with one another, rather than simply positioned as two completely different administrative roles.

What complicates this WPA-versus-WCA labor and positionality distinction even further is the ways in which educational backgrounds and experience also function as indicators of how responsibilities and job titles are divided. The table below lists the title, status, and rank of each study participant, as well as their education background. However, this table only offers a surface view, telling us very little about the actual nature of these positions. While we can see that non-tenure track (NTT) is more standard than tenure track (TT) for writing administration positions at SLACs, we can also see that these distinctions mean very little in terms of the commonalities among specific titles or even education backgrounds. Additionally, the home department or disciplinary placement of these positions complicates the ability to tell a singular narrative around writing administration work at SLACs. Participant 5B, for example, is the WPA and does hold a tenured faculty position. However, that participant is located in a non-English field and, in fact, does not have any background in English studies. Instead, the WPA role at Institution 5 rotates among the faculty every three years, meaning that it is always likely to be held by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member who volunteers for the additional service position. Institution 13, meanwhile, has a tenured faculty director located in a social science discipline, but most of the actual supervision of the writing center is done by Participant 13, who is not faculty. In some ways, then, these types of faculty directors' status and rank become a moot point in the long and tough discussions about status and rank in WPA and writing center scholarship. It does, however, bring up some tricky questions about disciplinarity.

Table 6: Positions and titles of participant WPAs and WCAs

Participant	Administrative Position Title	Faculty Title	Status	Education
1	Writing Center Director	Associated Faculty	NTT	PhD (English, R/C)
2	Writing Center Director	Associate Professor of English	TT	PhD (English, R/C)
3	Writing Center Director		NTT	MA (English)
4	Director of the Writing Program		NTT	PhD (English, Lit)
5B	Writing Program Director	Professor of [Humanities field]	TT	PhD (Humanities field, non-English)
6A	Writing Program & Writing Center Director	Lecturer	NTT	PhD (English, R/C)
6B	Associate Director of the Writing Center[13]		Staff	PhD (English, R/C)
7B	Director, [named writing center]		Hybrid	PhD (English, Lit)
7A	Director of the Writing Program		Hybrid	PhD (English, R/C)
8A	Director of the Writing Center	Associate Professor of [English]	TT	PhD (English, R/C)
9	Writing Center Director		NTT	MFA (Creative Writing)
10	Program Assistant[14]		Staff	BA
11	Director of the [Writing Center]		Hybrid	MA (Counseling)
12	Assistant Director of College Writing	Assistant Professor of [Social science field]	Hybrid	PhD (Social Sciences)
13	Director of the Writing Center[15]		Staff	MA (English Education & Library Science)

[13] It should be noted that Participant 6B was recently hired to take over the position of Participant 6A, so by the time this dissertation is defended, Participant 6B will serve as the Writing Program & Writing Center Director. It is unclear, though, if they will have any kind of faculty rank in that position.

[14] Participant 10 is serving as an interim administrator, in collaboration with an interim faculty director, for the writing center at Institution 10, which is why they have an odd title.

[15] Participant 13 changed titles from Associate Director to Director of the writing center during the process of data analysis, so I am reflecting their current position here.

One of the most important positional concerns in SLAC writing administration that is not represented by the birds-eye view of the above table is the role of hybrid positions. Hybrid positions are ones in which administrators are considered to be located half in a staff role and half in a faculty role. These hybrid positions often get classified as NTT[16], which means it can be hard to distinguish them from a traditional term faculty role. However, they are not simply a faculty role with some administrative duties. Rather, administrators who occupy hybrid positions are asked to truly have a foot in both staff and faculty camps, which can be difficult and confusing, especially for new hires. Participant 1 said of their hybrid position:

> There was a little bit of trying to figure out where my position was. Because when I first got here, I was staff, but I was invited to the faculty stuff…. There was this very weird, *where do I belong, where am I supposed to belong,* that pretty much worked itself out. But occasionally there's still, *why aren't you in the English department*? Well, because I report to the dean, so…

Finding the location of a hybrid administrative position is particularly difficult because these hybrid positions at SLACs usually do not belong to a particular department. Participant 7A pointed out that, similar to Participant 1's experience, they have trouble navigating where they are located within an institutional culture of faculty and departments:

> Part of the experience we don't have – or, I'll speak to myself – we have administrative staff positions and faculty titles. So I would say that some of the differences that are interesting to think about is that the writing program is an independent academic unit. We have some colleagues and we offer classes. We're in the catalog. We crosslink with other departments and things like that. But we don't have majors, so that's a significant difference…. That's a big difference because the majors are really the center of gravity at [Institution 7].

As these administrators point out, not having a connection to a department or a major puts their position at risk of being removed from the faculty experience, even when they are often doing work that asks them to essentially represent themselves as faculty. In the case of many of the hybrid/NTT administrators in this study, there is the hope and goal of eventually becoming faculty and getting a faculty title. But despite the titles, they still do not occupy tenure-track positions and continue to lack home departments.

[16] The National Census on Writing, for example, lists Hybrid and NTT positions separately in their statistics about writing administrator positions; however, many hybrid positions are considered NTT or vice-versa, which makes these results hard to report on in the context of this study.

The other major impact of a hybrid position is that it can often become the modus operandi for so long that it does not allow for institutions to move forward in granting more tenure-track positions or clear paths toward promotion when reconfiguring or hiring for writing administrator jobs. One participant noted that conversations with higher-level administrators about the need to hire tenure-track administrative positions in order to attract better candidates have been ignored. However, that is not to say that change is impossible. Both Participant 1 and Participant 7, despite their struggles with locating their positions, have been able to discuss better roles and titles with deans and provosts. Making change at the local level has been an important part of SLAC writing administration, and continuing to advocate for that change, while difficult, remains a necessary avenue for bettering the discipline in general, even though disciplinarity is one of the most controversial aspects of writing administration positions.

WPA and, perhaps even more so, writing center studies have long argued about the types of disciplinary markers needed in order to do administrative work. These arguments are more vexed when applied to smaller institutions. While SLACs take great pride in their liberal arts programs like English, the actual composition of English departments at these colleges tends to be primarily made up of literature and creative writing courses (and therefore, literature and creative writing faculty). Some institutions do have majors in writing and rhetoric (Institution 8, for example, has a major in a writing and rhetoric area), and therefore do have some faculty with doctoral degrees in writing and/or rhetoric studies. However, those are the exceptions to the rules. Most of the time, a WCA or WPA who is hired specifically for those positions (rather than, in the aforementioned case of Institution 5, already-placed faculty who *serve* in those administrative positions) will be the only person to occupy a named writing "expert" type of position (the "boss compositionist," as Sledd (1991) calls this figure).

However, despite a lack of advanced degree in writing studies, many WCAs have a wide range of experiences working in or administering writing centers at other institutions. Additionally, in writing center studies, discipline and status do not necessarily impact the scholarly advancements of writing center theory and practice. Because the sub-field is largely made of NTT and staff-designated positions, and because people doing PhDs to specialize in writing center administration is a relatively recent phenomenon, much of the discourse is still dispersed among scholars from all sorts of ranks and backgrounds. That being said, the time and resources given to faculty members to do research is important and necessary, especially for

those balancing multiple institutional positions or who have families. Administrators who are classified as staff or certain NTT positions are not able to take sabbaticals and may not always be given professional development funding. Participant 12 summarizes the issue of navigating institutional support within a hybrid or NTT position succinctly:

> I think a lot of small institutions figure things out on the fly, and they don't sort of think through to, like, the consequences of the choices they're making or not making and the implications that that has for the individuals in those roles, but also for the center. Feels like, to me, pretty important that the students see me as a faculty member and see the writing center as an important part of the pedagogy that is at this place. And that means having that be a faculty role and having all the expectations that go along with that research – sabbatical, travel, conferences, teaching, all the stuff. And it's kind of like they want it all, but then they don't want to give all the things, all the perks. But they're not perks because you need to be able to do that stuff. And whether or not they would value the research that comes out of the program, that's also a conversation that I've been having with them.

While, as Gladstein and Regaignon argue, writing centers are the most visible site of writing on a SLAC campus, that does not mean the administrators are given the kinds of support that would actually help improve the work of their centers. Many of the institutions in this study have large endowments and are able to give some additional resources of time and material support to their administrators, but those are an exception to a general rule in the sub-field. And just because administrators at these particularly privileged institutions are able to have research be a significant part of their position does not mean SLACs should consider themselves separate from the problem of exploiting scholarly labor.

How writing studies and individual institutions "look" at their WPAs and WCAs, how they frame their positions and manage their promotions and labor, is important to understanding how the work of writing instruction and support is seen by higher education as a whole. As Geller and Denny (2013) note, writing center administration in particular tends to be viewed as a "lesser-than" sub-discipline, not only by academia but by writing studies in particular: "[C]ompositionists often enact the very marginalization they themselves often face in relation to wider literary-tilted English studies. [WCAs] are positioned as a substrata of writing program administration, even further removed from the academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry of English studies" (p. 98). Balester and McDonald's 2001 study also exposes these perceptions of inequality among writing administrator positions. While most of their survey participants described positive working relationships between program and center directors, problems arose

when WPAs felt WCAs lacked credentials to have any supervisory role outside of just managing the center, while WCAs worried they were looked down upon by their WPA colleagues. At SLACs, these inequities look different, but because the narrative of the writing studies discipline categorizes WCAs as "less than" WPAs, there are still problems of perception. While it may not be as visible or WCAs may feel integral to their campuses, the truth is that they still occupy unequal disciplinary positions compared to other faculty or administrators.

Institutions perpetuate these perceptions of inequity when they continue to classify positions as staff or when they do not consider a promotion schedule that would allow NTT faculty to move into tenured roles or have equal benefits to TT faculty. Limiting the possibility of administrators to do research or pursue professional opportunities at the institutional level perpetuates the larger disciplinary issues. The point of view of writing center work, in particular, as being service work, rather than academic work, does not only affect administrators, either. Tutors, writing fellows, and other writing center staff may be in danger of having their labor exploited or not seen as an intellectual pursuit, too. The cycle perpetuates itself.

Labor and Positioning of Tutors and Fellows

While WPAs and WCAs are responsible for developing and sustaining sites of writing on campus, and while faculty who teach FYW or FYS and W courses teach how to write within a disciplinary context, the most explicit form of writing instruction at SLACs comes from the work done by writing tutors and writing fellows. The peer tutors at the institutions in this study, as well as the professional tutors at Institutions 11 and 13, provide the kind of in-depth, individualized feedback that good writing pedagogy demands, feedback that faculty untrained in writing instruction may be unable to offer. Additionally. because the WAC model of writing instruction at SLACs is directly linked to disciplinary concepts, the "basics" of audience awareness, grammar and mechanics, and organization easily become the responsibility of tutors or course-linked writing fellows. It is important, then, to consider the ways in which tutors and fellows are asked to take on a significant burden of writing instruction and support labor at SLACs. Tutors and fellows gain a lot in their tutoring and teaching experiences, but they should also be fairly compensated for work that would likely be taken on by graduate students or faculty at other, larger institution types.

Professional tutors, as noted in the previous chapter, are highly-trained and therefore highly-skilled. They do not require the same extensive training as peer tutors because they already hold degrees and experience in writing pedagogy. At both Institutions 11 and 13, the professional writing center tutors are expected to have Masters degrees in English or a related discipline. In addition to their tutoring, they offer workshops and, in some cases, teach writing or tutorial courses. They work full-time or part-time, and while this study did not include information about their compensation, it can be assumed they are paid a significantly better wage than the work-study-approved pay of undergraduate tutors.

Undergraduate peer tutors and writing fellows do a great deal of instruction, although they work far fewer hours and for more limited pay than their professional counterparts. The professional and personal benefits of being a peer tutor are well-documented by the Peer Tutor Alumni Research Project (Hughes, Gillespie, & Kail, 2010). SLAC students tend to be high-performing and engaged in their academic communities, so they are likely seeking these types of beneficial opportunities. Tutors and WFs primarily work one-on-one with students on writing projects, but they also do workshops, take part in faculty development (this is especially true of WFs working closely with the faculty whose classes they are linked to, as noted in the previous chapter), and also contribute to special projects and research in their centers. Peer tutoring and WF programs are key parts, perhaps in some ways the heart of, writing support at SLACs, and so peer tutors have a high level of trust put in them by faculty, administrators, and students – for better and worse.

Despite the advantages of tutoring positions on undergraduate students' personal and professional development, there are still issues that deserve attention. For one, there is the level of responsibility they unknowingly may take on as tutors. Participant 8A explained that the diffused writing instruction on campus means that "the writing center [carries] the bulk of writing instruction on this campus, and it's done by undergraduates." Without a centralized writing faculty, and with everyone taking on different disciplinary aspects of writing, then the writing center is truly the only real "home" of writing on campus, the only physical site where writing can be located by everyone on campus. This spatial centrality means tutors occupy visible roles on campus in a way faculty with lots of writing experience might not. Unlike large research universities that might have graduate students or TT, NTT, and/or adjunct faculty available in offices or writing programs with an actual office or some other type of physical site,

SLACs' writing programs tend to either be hidden within other administrative structures or are located in the same place as the writing center. Tutors are the visible labor, and therefore they are associated with writing in complex ways that they may not be able to see themselves and which administrators and faculty should be hyper-aware of to avoid exploitation.

Because there is a high amount of responsibility placed on writing tutors at SLACs, tutor wages and material support are important, but often under-addressed, topics of discussion. Undergraduate tutors are often paid minimum or just above minimum wage ($7.58/hour is the average for private colleges, according to the WCRP), and for those whose pay is wrapped up in work-study payments that go towards their tuition rather than in their pockets, it can feel as though one is putting in free labor for the institution, free labor that also requires additional training. Participant 1 chalks up part of their writing center's struggle to recruit tutors to the low work-study pay at their institution: "[My tutors] get paid the same as the guy who folds towels over at the athletic center or who helps the barista down in the coffee shop. I mean, they get paid the same for that. It's like, why am I going to put in this extra time and class when it just gets paid the same?" Because tutors are expected to take a tutor education course, attend regular staff meetings, and take part in other professional development opportunities, it might not seem worth the additional labor if a tutor makes the same amount of money as someone doing much less intellectually rigorous work. Yes, tutoring might look better on a resume, but not all undergraduates have the time or resources to devote to that kind of future-benefit thinking.

Being paid less than eight dollars per hour for a tutoring position is especially problematic when compared to the material support given to the professional tutors at Institutions 11 and 13. Those tutors make significantly more money because of their advanced degrees, and some also receive benefits and professional development funding. They may do extra work such as teaching writing tutorial courses or faculty development and workshops, but the work they do in the center, working one-on-one with students to improve their writing, is not fundamentally different from what undergraduate peer tutors do. While I do not think undergraduate peer tutors deserve to make the same amount of money as professional tutors who have significantly more educational experience and expertise, I do think it is important to compare how institutions position intellectual labor on their campuses, and whether or not they reward those who do such labor.

Of course, another key part of this conversation about peer tutor labor is *who* these tutors are and how they do or do not reflect the population of their institutions. As stated throughout this dissertation, the students at the SLACs in this study tend to be from upper and upper-middle class backgrounds, overwhelmingly white, and from academically strong secondary schools. While the majority of students attending private SLACs are financially secure, SLACs also give generous financial aid packages and, often, merit scholarships, to students from underserved populations in order to boost up their diversity numbers (for better and worse). One of the primary reasons I attended a SLAC myself was because it was able to give me so many scholarships, including a large grant for being a first-generation student, that it ended up being cheaper than a state school over the course of four years. However, these students are still often disadvantaged in comparison to the majority of their peers, which means they tend to be overrepresented within student support services, such as writing centers. But not as staff: because of the relatively low pay, possible additional costs associated with tutor education courses, and the high bar for writing and communication proficiency to be hired in a writing center, these students are less likely to be working as tutors. Many of the participants in this study explicitly stated that they have increased their efforts to recruit and hire a more diverse tutoring staff. Additionally, as writing center studies takes a much-needed turn towards social justice, scholarship in the sub-field increasingly explores the disparities between tutors and clients, as well as avenues for increasing tutor diversity both within the field and in individual centers. Wrapped up in this is the need for increased material support for undergraduate peer tutors. Economically disadvantaged tutors, in particular, may be more likely to take on the intellectually rigorous work of writing center tutoring if there is a clear reward system. In a case like Institution 1, where a student has not a lot of time and all work-study pay is the same across positions, there may not be an advantage to choosing a harder job in the short term. Increases in pay, as well as a more visible connection between writing center work and the type of future professional benefits such work holds, might be one way to decrease the disparity between tutors and clients at SLACs.

The Impact of Position in Institutional Relationships

Labor and position are two of the most important factors that affect relationship-building between writing programs and writing centers. Unequal positioning or unfair demands on time

and energy can have a profound influence on how program administrators collaborate. Additionally, the positioning of WPAs and WCAs affects how they are perceived by others on campus – particularly faculty and students, the two primary stakeholders when it comes to student writing at SLACs. If a WPA or WCA occupies an NTT or staff position on a campus in which tenure-track faculty have a great deal of power (as I will discuss in the next chapter), building relationships across campus can be hindered by perceived lacks of authority from both sides. Even at Institution 8, where the WCA has tenure, a degree in writing studies, and many years of experience, there is still a struggle to not feel as though the position of a WCA is hampered by expectations of being the person who will solely solve all of the campus's writing ills. Additionally, a reliance on undergraduate peer labor in writing centers and fellows programs shows that SLACs think writing problems can be solved with already-available resources, an issue that can hinder administrators who are trying to push forward new ideas or programs. WPAs and WCAs in this study typically stated they were happy with their funding situations, but most admitted there were dreams and goals they had for their centers and programs that were hard to push through due to the constraints of their own time and energy, as well as a lack of interest from faculty or higher-level administrators who do not understand trends and developments in writing pedagogies.

The reliance on non-tenure-track WPA and WCA positions at SLACs is part of a larger problem of disciplinarity and labor across all institution types. However, SLACs are even less likely to have WPAs and WCAs with doctoral degrees in writing studies (National Census on Writing, 2017), which means they continue to be even further afield from important conversations and developments in the discipline. One possible reason for the lack of SLAC representation in WPA and WCA scholarship is that SLACs have a tendency to not offer tenure-track positions for particularly strong WPA or WCA scholars to apply to. And even the institutions that do have WCAs and WPAs who actively participate in the field may not offer a clear path towards promotion or reward them with additional material and professional support. As is the case in many disciplines and careers, being really good at something often means you are expected to do more of it, better, and often without benefits.

Despite these lacks, though, SLAC WPAs and WCAs genuinely love their jobs. Staff or NTT faculty administrators told me they were happier in their current positions at a small college than they were at larger schools in tenure-track positions. SLACs offer a great deal of freedom

and stability, especially at private institutions that do not have to worry as much about governmental whims. But such security and freedom does not have to come with penalizations of lesser pay, inaccurate job titles, and lack of promotion. The balance between positionality and happiness is difficult to achieve, but one way campuses can make things more fair is by continually assessing their writing administration staffing by looking at national trends and trends across SLACs. Using this data to reflect on and adjust the positioning of writing administrators could help SLACs not only change their current labor practices but to think towards the future. Changing promotion schedules and increases in material support could help recruit people with even more extensive training in writing program and center administration – those with doctoral degrees in writing studies with a particular focus in WPA or WCA, or those who have already begun to make a name for themselves within WPA and writing center scholarship. SLACs may not have graduate programs in writing studies, but they are also places that pride themselves on the writing abilities of their students, and such labor-based changes could communicate renewed commitment.

The truth is that the politics of administrative positioning in college writing programs and centers are tricky. Issues of disciplinarity, institutionality, and historical context all come together to make it difficult to parse out what the "ideal" position for a writing administrator might look like. These conversations are especially fraught at SLACs, where far fewer people on the campus have expertise in writing pedagogy and where departments are small, making it harder to get tenure-track lines funded. Additionally, there have been many interesting conversations in writing center forums (the WCenter listserv, conferences) about how we can recognize the work of writing administrators who took a non-writing studies path and contribute a great deal to the field while still advocating for more disciplinarity and more TT jobs. These are difficult conversations, and while this dissertation does not aim to solve those problems, it is necessary to consider how they affect relationship-building and collaboration between programs and across campus.

As I explore in more depth in the next chapter, faculty authority is an important part of the SLAC culture, and so it is especially important to consider questions of status and rank when looking at writing program relationships. The interactions between faculty and administrators over issues of student writing and pedagogical development are fraught with power dynamics that can influence the success or failure of new initiatives. When people come to collaborative

opportunities with unequal positions, the difficulty of building and sustaining those collaborations increases. As the most visible (and sometimes only) disciplinary experts of writing pedagogy at their institutions, SLAC WPAs and WCAs must be available to all stakeholders, meaning their interactions increase but their time and energy for establishing beneficial collaborations can falter as a result. It is impossible to remove labor and position from the conversation when addressing institutional contexts and relationships.

CHAPTER 5: "BELIVERS, ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS": INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS OF WRITING PROGRAM RELATIONSHIPS AND THE CHANGING CULTURE OF SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

As established in chapters three and four, the unique cultures of small liberal arts colleges are conducive to writing education because of their sense of community, focus on individual paths of learning, and cross-curricular focus. But these close-knit cultures can also hinder efforts to change programs or build new relationships at a small institution. Like all institution types, there is a double-edged sword when it comes to how the local culture influences programs. At SLACs in particular, the cultural traditions go far back into the nineteenth century, which can make it difficult to change the ways in which institutional stakeholders work together or view each other. Stakeholders in writing cultures at SLACs include general administration, faculty, students, and, of course, writing programs and writing centers. These stakeholders create a complex ecosystem of interrelated and interdependent networks, and those networks are largely where we see successes or failures for writing at the institutional level.

In this study, participants revealed a wide range of institutional experiences, and yet some themes commonly appeared that match up with previous scholarship about SLACs: the problems of bureaucracy, the ultimate authority of faculty, the privileged but also pressured student body, and the external issues of finances and cultural change. Participants also expressed the variable ways in which institutional stakeholders viewed their work in their writing programs and centers. Much of the work of a writing administrator at a SLAC is about the ability to create stakeholder buy-in. "You have to recognize that part of your work will always be evangelism," Participant 8A said. "It goes back to that believers, atheists, agnostics thing. You spend a lot of your time doing conversion therapy." The conversion narrative came up over and over again in interviews, with participants expressing both the frustrations and the joys of helping students, faculty, and administrators better understand the importance of writing instruction and support on their campuses.

The ways in which writing instruction and support units build and sustain relationships are directly impacted by the ways in which stakeholders view, understand, and engage writing cultures at their institutions. Because SLACs are such tight communities, in which a change in one part of the campus directly impacts the entire institution, stakeholders both affect and are

affected by the ways in which programs build, sustain, or break relationships. Understanding the positions and problems of campus stakeholders, as well as looking at the cultural changes that are affecting their role, is vital to mapping relationships within an institution. This chapter explores the ways in which stakeholders are positioned at SLACs and how stakeholders impact writing programs and centers, their administrators, and the relationships those administrators create or maintain. By examining the role of stakeholders, we might better understand the ways in which the unique cultural ecosystems of SLACs can make or break relationships between programmatic units, as well as the ways in which those ecosystems play into issues discussed earlier in this dissertation, such as curriculum, administrative structures, and labor and status. This chapter also discusses the unique cultural changes of the 21st century that directly impact the work of writing instruction and support units, as well as the relationships those units build across a SLAC campus.

SLAC Culture, Bureaucracy, and Networks

One reason I find the conversion metaphor from Participant 8A so compelling is that it not only describes the work of writing center evangelism, but actually applies to a larger narrative about SLACs. One of the reasons I am writing this dissertation is because of my belief in the importance of small colleges and the aims of a liberal arts education. Those of us who have attended SLACs have a tendency towards fetishizing, in the purely religious sense, these strange little institutions. I often find myself standing up for SLACs in conversations with colleagues struggling to imagine themselves anywhere but at an R-1 institution. Despite knowing that SLACs have their issues and that the idea of a private, privileged education is deeply problematic, SLAC believers maintain that the educational goals of community-building, citizen-making, and well-roundedness are important in a divided society. And yet, the atheists and agnostics are hard to convince of the importance of SLACs. Because these institutions educate so few students in comparison to their large public counterparts, because they are often expensive or very white, and because they are perceived as focusing on teaching and mentorship over research and professionalization, SLACs will always be in danger of being seen as unnecessary or unmodern.

The participants in this study range across the atheist/agnostic/believer spectrum. Some whole-heartedly buy into the SLAC culture, while others find themselves questioning the value

or future of these institutions. Undoubtedly, the fluid nature of participants' attitudes toward SLACs is due to the ways in which they have seen first-hand both the positive and negative aspects of small liberal arts colleges. Additionally, nearly all the participants of this study have attended or worked at a wide variety of institution types, which means they know better than anyone that there is not necessarily a "right" model for higher education. Some participants noted that they loved working in their current institutions, but others noted they still struggled with how different a SLAC's students, traditions, and expectations are from other institution types. Participants traveled up and down the range of negative and positive responses to questions about their institutions, and so it is important to see that there is no ideal institution, that SLACs, despite the love and care with which they are treated by their believers, have unique institutional problems that are compounded by an American society that is increasingly hostile to liberal arts education. The small size and relationship-centric education model of SLACs are both a benefit and a hindrance.

One of the primary benefits of a SLAC is its communal and casual nature. Despite the privilege associated with many SLACs, participants noted that they were actually very comfortable and laid-back in comparison to other institutions they had attended or worked. Participant 1 compared their previous R-1 institution to a business, where everyone adopted a very professional persona, particularly in their communication. They said when they started at Institution 1, "a couple of professors early on said, 'you are going to want to relax because [that] is not how we talk here.' And that took a little getting used to." Participants noted the focus on individual and cross-campus relationships, or a "lack of siloes," as Participant 4 put it. Participant 7A compared it to a "monastery model" of education, in which students and faculty are in some ways cloistered on their small campus, developing relationships around learning and teaching that guide the traditions of a liberal arts education.

This focus on relationships, the theme of this entire project, directly impacts the ways in which programmatic relationships are often supported by their institutions, at least on a surface level. Just as students, faculty, and staff are asked to build relationships with one another, so too are programs and units. Writing instruction and support structures are often encouraged, at an institutional level, to collaborate. In cases where the institution itself may not be supporting these efforts at relationship-building, the individuals who work within the institution feel compelled by the institutional culture to seek out their own collaborations with one another.

And yet, despite the importance of relationship-building at SLACs, the bureaucratic cultures of these institutions can also hinder efforts for programs and administrators to create or maintain relationships. In particular, participants noted that the lethargic movement and communication issues inherent in SLAC culture have been significant roadblocks in their efforts to make real change at their institutions. "SLACs can move very slowly," Participant 2 claimed. Participant 8A put it even more evocatively: "Things move slowly in academia. And they move particularly slowly at a small liberal arts college. And at [Institution 8], they move about as slow as molasses running up hill in January." Over and over again in interviews, the inertia of SLACs came up, primarily from participants who had worked at much larger institutions in the past. "You'd think there'd be a lot of flexibility at a small college," said Participant 12. "Sometimes that is true; sometimes that is really, really not." Later in their interview, Participant 12 reaffirmed this idea, claiming, "Bureaucracy can just freeze…. People can't believe in a different concept, [so there is a] frozen vision of what things are." Some participants chalk up the slowness and inflexibility of SLACs to tradition. SLACs tend to be married to long, hallowed campus traditions, and that can make it hard to move forward on innovative or new initiatives. Additionally, because SLACs use each other as their benchmarks, slowness seeps into the very system-wide culture. It is only once multiple small colleges make visible change that it begins to spread across SLACs. Elite SLACs in particular have the most potential to change SLAC culture, and yet the three most elite institutions in this study were the ones where participants were least happy with the pace of the institution and the view of writing from the upper-level administration or faculty.

SLAC culture is directly impacted by its stakeholders, just as it shapes the views and attitudes of those stakeholders. Like all institution types, SLACs have a unique set of cultural values and expectations that are common across individual campuses, in part because SLACs compare themselves to one another in ways that perpetuate the culture. As discussed in chapter three, one of the repeated cultural mantras of SLAC is that SLACs produce strong writers. That cultural mantra becomes part of the very bureaucratic function of the institution, with the larger administration either cementing what it thinks already works while trying to change what it thinks doesn't. Both these moves are informed by networks of stakeholders, including other SLAC institutions, but also faculty, students, and economic and political stressors. These stakeholders, the institutional culture and administration, and the actual writing programs and

centers all create a complex ecosystem of writing within not only individual institutions but across SLACs as an institution type. These ecosystems are the larger bubble within which programmatic relationships exist, and so it is incredibly important to understand how key parts of that ecosystem, especially the stakeholders in it, impact relationships in a variety of ways.

Faculty and Authority

One of the most important cultural touchstones of SLACs is the high level of power held by the faculty. While the role of faculty authority has changed somewhat with the advent of the corporate university, which has trickled down into even small humanities-focused schools, SLACs are still built around the idea that faculty have the most important role in shaping and directing the college. A changing focus on administration and hiring more administrative staff than new faculty has certainly made this less true over time, but faculty still remain at the heart of the institution. And in this study, faculty were certainly a looming presence throughout the participants' discussions of their institutions. "Faculty are forever," said Participant 12. They did not mean that individual faculty will stay a long time (though they certainly do); rather, the faculty culture is deeply ingrained at SLACs.

There are, of course, both positive and negative aspects to faculty authority, especially when it comes to writing at an institution. If faculty believe in a program, they are able to throw their support behind it publicly so that other faculty or administrators pay attention. But the opposite is also true: a faculty member can make the life of a writing administrator difficult if said faculty member wants to press their agenda. Overall, many participants agreed that the most significant impact of faculty authority on writing is, well, not much impact at all. Instead, because faculty are so fully in charge of their own courses and what they teach, faculty authority adds to the dispersed culture of writing that was described in chapter three. "It is very much a campus of…open curriculum," said Participant 13 about their institution. "Really strong faculty governance, a really strong sense of faculty independence, so the culture of writing is kind of hard to define because of that." This idea of faculty independence at a SLAC is another faculty-related theme that came up repeatedly in interviews. "[Institution 11] prides itself on that nobody is to tell anybody else what to do. Our [writing center's] efforts are always modest at best." While faculty governance is part of the success story of SLACs because it allows for truly creative and innovative pedagogies while also modeling for students the importance of

independent critical thinking, it also has a significant effect on the ability of writing programs and centers to guide the culture of writing on their campuses.

Faculty authority is one of the primary themes in the small number of published articles or books about writing administration at SLACs, backing up the experiences of these study participants. Falbo (2004) calls the teaching at small colleges "a private affair," which can make faculty development and WPA work difficult. Because teaching is so individualized from person to person and class to class, "developing a common language and an ongoing, intellectual conversation" (p. 95) about teaching is incredibly hard to do at a SLAC. Amorose (2002) and Jones (2004) evoke the term "power" throughout their discussions of WPA work at SLACs, with faculty and departments serving as one of the seats of power. In their book, Gladstein and Regainon (2012) assert that SLAC faculty "expect significant autonomy in their teaching and scholarly endeavors" (p. 20) to an extent that is unseen by any other institution types and that this autonomy "can make it difficult to suggest new pedagogical strategies" (p. 128). Gladstein and Regaignon, like me, see both positive and negative aspects to the strong sense of faculty independence at SLACs, but they do not necessarily discuss how it materially impacts writing administrators, tutors, or programs. They do see discipline, however, as one of the reasons why it is difficult to change faculty ideas about writing.

Disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary suspicion are both a help and a hindrance to writing programs and centers and their administrators. The cross-discipline approach to writing instruction can benefit greatly from the ways in which faculty are able to bring their knowledge of how writing and communication work in their fields to make writing both more tangible and relevant to students. Additionally, having conversations about writing between faculty from different disciplines allows for a more mature attitude towards writing to develop across the whole campus. Participant 4, for example, noted that the "lack of silos" at Institution 4 has allowed for a great deal of collaboration across disciplinary faculty in developing new writing instruction and support initiatives. And because of the visibility of writing across the entire campus, Participant 4 is actually given a great deal of freedom, and their decisions regarding writing at the institution are respected. But not every participant was able to tell this same story of respect. When faculty look with suspicion upon writing as its own discipline with its own scholarship and banks of knowledge, problems arise.

Skepticism towards writing studies has been documented by scholars essentially since writing studies began to form in the mid-1900s. This skepticism likely exists to some degree at every institution which hires at least one writing administrator or expert, but perhaps it is more keenly felt at an institution with such a small faculty and staff pool to begin with. In the last chapter, I demonstrated how participants in this study often felt that their positioning and rank on campus was a direct, material result of the lack of credibility given to writing studies (and especially writing center studies) by other faculty and higher-level administrators. Disciplinary suspicion, as I am calling this attitude and its material consequences, leads to only seeing WPAs or WCAs as service providers, rather than as scholars or fellow disciplinary experts. That perception or attitude trickles down, of course. Faculty may only see writing centers as a place that deals with the types of writing questions and "problems" that they don't see as part of their disciplinary or instructional duties. Many participants noted the negative attitude with which faculty treat the writing center. "Faculty know that we're here, they have a section about us in their syllabus," opined Participant 10, "but they just send people to us. They don't really want to interact with us." Most WCA participants claimed that they have good relationships with the faculty but that they struggle to bring faculty actually into their spaces. Often, the transaction only goes way. WCAs and tutors go to faculty classrooms to present workshops or talk about the writing center and receive the students that faculty point their way. But when it comes to trying to bring faculty to the writing center for development workshops or just to chat about the writing center over lunch, faculty repeatedly fail to show up.

Perhaps the most challenging and complicated manifestation of the faculty/writing administrator divide, though, comes through when discipline or faculty status directly impacts the relationship between a WPA or FYS coordinator and a WCA. Multiple writing center participants, both those with tenure-track faculty positions and those without, told stories about clashes with fellow faculty administrators over writing pedagogy or disciplinary expertise. These issues are particularly fraught at schools in which the WCA is the only "writing expert" on their campus. Additionally complicating issues of disciplinary expertise is how often WCAs and WPAs come from areas outside of writing studies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the problematic history of writing center labor has always made allowances for those not explicitly trained in writing pedagogy to enter administrative positions. Meanwhile, many WPAs and some WCAs occupy faculty roles at other parts in the university and act as a WPA as a service to the

institution. Nowhere was this more notable than when Participant 5B, a rotating WPA with a faculty position outside of English, expressed major skepticism of their institution's writing center, saying they "don't go over there" because they see it as wholly outside their purview as the WPA. It was not that they necessarily were discounting the work of the WCA, who is also a tenured faculty member but in English, it was more that they clearly saw writing instruction at their institution as two distinct and separate entities: teaching, which should be the concern of faculty across the campus, and tutoring, which should be the concern only of English. This particular situation at Institution 5 echoes, from a different point of view, what so many other study participants noted: that the idea of who controls what comes down to two things: discipline and position.

These sort of fraught issues of who belongs to what discipline, and the enduring questions over how one does or does not claim disciplinary expertise (with an advanced degree in the field? with lots of experience? with years of their own research and scholarship?) haunt WPA and WCAs across all institution types, but they are felt with extra force at SLACs. In institutions that have many siloes, to borrow language from Participant 4, disciplinary boundaries are harder to cross. Those boundaries are much easier to traverse at a SLAC, but such movement comes with consequences in relation to power. Relationships at larger institutions are difficult because it is hard to find and establish connections across campus. It is significantly easier to make these connections at SLACs. But with the increase in possible relationship-building comes questions of power, authority, and autonomy that go beyond just impacting a couple people. These things affect the entire campus at a small college. When a WCA or WPA is seen as "less than" because they are either not faculty or are seen to belong to a "less than" discipline, it creates problems at an institution in which the faculty are essentially trained in how to teach writing by the people they might perceive as encroaching on their territory. The complexities involved in faculty independence and governance at a SLAC profoundly affect the ways in which new writing initiatives are created, implemented, and assessed. And while those complexities would require a much more intensive study than the one I have done here to fully lay out, it is important to see how faculty operate at small colleges in order to understand the factors of authority and disciplinarity in how writing program relationships are configured at these institutions.

Students' Writing Perceptions and Experiences

Perhaps the primary stakeholder of, and also one of the biggest impacts on, writing programs and centers at small colleges is the student body. I still remember the complaint of one new creative writing professors at my undergraduate institution: "Students have too much power here." Students sharing power with faculty is one of the hallmarks of a small liberal arts education, and one of the things SLACs take great pride in. High-performing, deeply-engaged, and very visible on their campuses, small college students tend to take part in many activities and take on multiple majors or special programs. This culture of engagement goes hand-in-hand with the cross-curricular culture of writing at SLACs, but it also puts high amounts of pressure on students. And that pressure affects the ways that writing programs and centers operate and collaborate to support those students.

When asked about students at their institutions, most participants immediately pointed out how busy their students are. In chapter three, I noted that Participant 9 blames the over-packed lives of students for how disconnected Institution 9's writing center culture is. Several WCA participants noted that they have difficulty recruiting new tutors because students are already balancing so many other extracurriculars. The culture of busyness also impacts the psychology of students who participate in it. "Our students are intense," said Participant 6B, who works at an elite SLAC. They went on to describe how student and peer tutor anxiety made for a fraught environment in the writing center. Participant 6B compared these students to the largely working-class students at a previous public institution and a community college they taught at, remarking that the privileged students at Institution 6 actually seem less prepared for how hard their education will be, despite having more money, resources, and time to complete their degrees.

As the expense of private SLACs continues to increase, and as the culture of higher education in the United States ties itself closer and closer to career preparation, the expectations for writing education increases for these students. Students are savvy in their views toward writing education because of their understanding of the current social, political, and economic pressures they face. Institution 5 uses a pre-first-year assessment test in which students write an essay in response to a reading and then also write a reflection about their writing. This assessment has revealed an increasing awareness among students about the importance of writing. "There is an understanding amongst the students that writing is a vital skill," said

Participant 5B, "and that they are coming to college to learn how to write better. At least coming in they recognize that, and they want that." This student expectation could be linked to the ways in which SLACs self-perpetuate the idea that they produce good writers, an idea that was repeated over and over again by study participants. Students internalize these messages, so it is no surprise perhaps that they repeat them, whether or not they actually, truly engage in their own writing educations.

Students can often talk the talk when it comes to writing instruction and support, but they do not always walk the walk. When asked about student writing, many participants remarked on what one participant called the culture of "first-drafters." "There is some sort of social capital in being the kid that can sit down and bang out a paper in three hours," said Participant 6B:

> That's something to aspire to because it seems like that student does less work. Our students don't revise. If they do come in for revisions, it's almost exclusively copy editing. Some of our students are really rigid about considering large-scale revisions because there's no time to go through and do more research. So a lot of the recursivity is lost, and they have a hard time transitioning from a high school model that encourages and requires recursivity in multiple drafts to a system where they may not get any comments on any drafts.[17]

Perhaps because they tend to be high-performing students when admitted, students cling to the ideas that they do not need to revise. They also struggle with seeking out support. "Should I go to the writing center?" Participant 9 imagined students asking themselves. "Is that admitting I'm not a strong [writer]? That I don't belong?" Despite participants noticing that some of the most regular writing center visitors were the highest performing students in the institution, they also pointed out that the perception of writing tutoring as a remedial service affected how students viewed seeking out writing center resources. Some participants linked the privilege of the general student body at private SLACs, especially the elite SLACs, to the idea of students being reluctant to seek out resources that might position them as struggling. At Institution 6, for example, many students went to top-tier private and public high schools, and many see those secondary educations as preparing them for any challenges they might encounter, making resources like the writing center redundant. Participant 6B notes that the students they encounter

[17] As noted in my introduction to the first chapter, I fell into this trap myself as a SLAC student. I wrote all of my academic papers the nights before they were due and was envied by my roommates and friends, and because I was a fairly strong drafter, I received praise from faculty, which created a cycle of bad habits. Due to this social capital that came from drafting quickly and effectively, I never learned to be good at revising my own work. It continues to be the thing I regret most about my writing education.

at their institution have significantly less grit and a greater deal of anxiety than the more explicitly disadvantaged community college students they taught at a previous institution. Privilege can blind some SLAC students to the ways in which even good writers need support and feedback.

The problem with this analysis, of course, is that not all SLAC students are privileged. As discussed in the last chapter with peer tutor labor and compensation, SLACs put a lot of effort into recruiting students who come from marginalized identities, and often use scholarships and other funding as a way to secure places for these students. However, once the students are on campus, the institution does not always offer the support and resources needed. At Institution 6, students who do not come from privileged backgrounds or who are not as academically prepared as their privileged counterparts are immediately made "other" by the infrastructure of the writing program, which uses evaluations as a way to measure student writing. Participant 6A worries that while it can benefit students to be identified as needing additional support, it also sets up "a deficit model…meaning writing instruction is only something you're offering people who are struggling. And that's a very ground-in sensibility here on this campus…. And it tends to stigmatize students [who] already feel stigmatized. I don't like it that much." Earlier in their interview, the same participant noted their frustration with how writing instruction and support perpetuates a culture in which "the rich get richer and those who are struggling continue to struggle."[18]

Students who are U.S. citizens from marginal identities or who are not as academically advantaged as their classmates are not the only students who might suffer at SLACs. Almost every single participant in this study pointed out a lack of support and resources for international and multilingual students at their institution. Some institutions had an explicit multilingual or ESL support specialist. Institution 7, for example, has a postdoc that works closely with both the WPA and WCA on offering support for students. Institution 12 has a language specialist, but they are shared with another institution and only work a few hours a week. More typical is the situation faced by Institution 8, who had a faculty multilingual support specialist who developed

[18] This frustration is a common theme among the interviews, which really interested me and which I think deserves further analysis, that writing administrators loved being at small liberal arts colleges with lots of resources and committed students and faculty, but that they struggled with how their institutions played a role in maintaining socioeconomic and racial privileges (white supremacy, in particular). I would not necessarily go so far as to say that participants were conflicted, but I think there is some very real anxiety about higher education across all institution types that is interesting to look at from the especially rarefied perspective of SLAC students and educators.

a special version of the first-year seminar for international and multilingual students, only to eventually see their position knocked down to a staff status and then moved to part-time. Eventually, that specialist left that institution because of their frustration, and the university has made no moves to try and hire anyone in their place. The lack of support for international students at SLACs directly impacts the writing center and writing program, which have to make up for the lack of language-learning resources. This has the potential to both overburden the resources of writing centers and programs and negatively affect the ability of international students to work with an expert in multilingual learning, meaning they often instead have to rely on undergraduate tutors or administrators who may not have had ESL education as part of their own training or backgrounds.

The lack of resources for both marginalized and international students was one of the primary areas of concern for the future of the institution expressed by study participants. They saw these students being disadvantaged by a system that is not offering the support it should. "The mid-tier liberal arts college will take in more and more students who have significant writing challenges," said Participant 8A. "And that's not bad. That's great. But you've got to provide the resources because, for me, an acceptance letter from [Institution 8] is an implicit contract for success." Participant 12 agreed with this point of view: "I have this fundamental belief that if you admit students, then you have to support them. And if you don't want to support them, then don't admit them." The issue of supporting disadvantaged students was one area in which WPAs and WCAs seemed truly disappointed in their institutions, wanting them to do better by their most vulnerable student populations. They agreed the solution would be hiring a full-time, preferably faculty, multilingual learning specialist, as well as increased awareness among the upper-level administration of the day-to-day difficulties faced by the students the institution recruits, often for advantages related to reputation or finances.[19] Unfortunately, these calls tend to fall on deaf administrative ears.

Students, with all of their privileges, their lack of privileges, their identities and feelings about and experiences with writing, are, at least when we consider future material outcomes, the

[19] Many universities, not just SLACs, rely on international students to pay full tuition and expenses, meaning they are a windfall for the institution. With SLACs still reeling from the 2008 financial crisis, recruiting and admitting international students has been one way to increase revenue while also allowing schools to position themselves as diverse or culturally engaged. This trend has started to decrease as schools find themselves "maxing out" on how many international students they can reasonably support.

biggest stakeholders of writing instruction and support systems on a campus. The rhetoric of a SLAC is one of closeness and mentoring, which means it would be easy to assume SLACs are doing a "better" job at making their students the producers of knowledge and engaging them deeply on their writing processes and disciplinary discourses. However, students are at the mercy of programs and resources designed *for* them based on what other stakeholders (faculty and administrators, in particular) define as needs. In this way, the writing center is one of the only writing supports in place that actually positions students as the primary stakeholder in their work. And this is one of the reasons why it is so important for writing programs or other writing instruction units and writing centers to collaborate and develop relationships. With the expertise about students writing centers have and the faculty development role of WPAs, there is the potential for increased attention to student needs when WCAs and WPAs collaborate, and especially when they build the infrastructure for sustainable relationships. And this is also an argument for why institutions who have only a WCA who has WPA-like administrative duties, or when the WPA and WCA roles are combined into one general role on campus, should be committed to the kind of faculty development that allows that singular writing administrator to find and create supports that will help students. Students *do* have a lot of power at SLACs, but that power only extends so far, and many of the participants in this study readily claim that they see the point of a writing center or writing program as serving students just as much as faculty.

SLACs in Changing Times

While upper-level administration, faculty, and students are all primary stakeholders and influencers of writing program and center relationships, there are also extra-institutional issues that affect writing instruction and support. And right now, perhaps the largest issue facing SLACs is a changing political, cultural, and economic landscape. After the 2008 financial crisis and during a time when the rhetoric around education is shifting towards the popularity of career preparation, SLACs have struggled to maintain their central identity as institutions with a grounding in more classical forms of education. What Gladstein and Regaignon (2012) call the structures of feeling" that tie together small liberal arts institutions has already begun to change in the six years since that book's publication. Several study participants noted the increased pressure on their institutions to offer professional majors, more intensive internship and career preparation programs, and employment guarantees to more students. For example, one institution

in this study just started a program that guarantees students will get a good job after graduation if they follow a specific set of rules and seek out additional opportunities. While some colleges have resisted this trend and tried to set themselves apart from other institutions by clinging even more to their liberal arts roots, the trend towards job training in higher education has certainly affected the ways that SLACs market themselves. These changes in turn have affected the core curricula of SLACs who are worried about their future role in American education.

Small liberal arts colleges were profoundly affected by the financial crisis of 2008. When I graduated from my undergraduate institution, I was in the first class of students to graduate into the 2008 financial crisis, which left many of my classmates, and myself, with degrees that were no longer seen as prestigious in a depressed job market and in which graduate program application numbers skyrocketed, meaning advancement felt impossible. But we did not suffer alone. Institutions like my undergraduate were damaged severely by the recession, and suddenly endowments were losing money and value, all while cost of living was continuing to increase. SLACs stood in a particularly vulnerable place because of how they sold themselves as engaging educational experiences, rather than career-centric training places. The idea of learning to become a critical thinker and active member of a community suddenly seemed like more of a gamble to students and parents who worried about debt, especially as SLACs had to significantly increase tuition as a way to continue affording faculty and facilities.

In addition to the financial crisis and its fallout in terms of marketing to students who could no longer rely on a college degree to get them a job, SLACs have also had to contend with a significant change in American culture: the rise of anti-intellectualism as part of a larger, increasingly utilitarian public and political rhetoric. SLACs are institutions that have long tied themselves to being places of intellectual engagement and are based in original Greek and Roman ideas of a humanities-centric education. Therefore, the move toward practical, career-focused education models is the primary challenge facing the 21st century small liberal arts college. These cultural changes directly impact writing curricula. Perhaps the most noticeable cultural shift related to writing is the use of assessment by small liberal arts colleges to measure student writing. Assessment has become increasingly important (for better and worse) across the country, but small liberal arts colleges in general, and especially private SLACs, have resisted being associated with the type of assessments that have defined research or public institutions.

Now, though, SLACs cannot afford to not show measurable outcomes to all of their stakeholders, from the board of trustees right down to the prospective student.

Assessment has become one of the primary ways for writing programs and centers to communicate with stakeholders, including students and faculty. It also serves as one of the most concrete ways in which writing centers or WCAs can work with writing programs or WPAs. Building a relationship through a shared need for assessment is one way in which programs can create programmatically developed relationships that will benefit both programs over time. The potential for such a collaboration is particularly high at universities where the WCA is the primary expert on writing on campus and the WPA comes from another discipline or area. As has been discussed throughout this project, the role of "WPA" takes on many forms at SLACs and can end up encompassing such roles as the first-year seminar director or WAC coordinator. If a first-year seminar director and WCA worked together to build a concrete assessment plan, that would open up the potential for developing better working relationships that are mutually beneficial. As discussed at length in Chapter Three, assessment that involves faculty scorers also serves as a form of faculty development for a writing center or writing program, so there is potential built within that dynamic, as well.

Of course, while assessment would be a relatively natural way for programs to work together and develop relationships, this idea does not always work out so well in the real world context. At many small institutions, there is only a WCA with no WPA counterpart, and so assessment often can get left up to the WCA alone. Participant 11, for example, runs all of their writing assessment efforts because they are the only person with an administrative role on campus who is considered a writing expert. While the writing committee helps with some of the assessment, the majority of the work still falls on the WCA. Additionally, because the committee is headed by the WCA, it would be hard to call what the committee does a true collaboration, rather than simply a unique branch from the writing center. So while the idea of assessment as collaborative work is nice in theory, at small colleges where the job of writing support falls almost entirely on one person, assessment that is located with the writing center and WCA can actually serve as another way in which a relationship becomes non-forming or stalled.

The increased pressure for assessment also changes the labor of WPAs and WCAs. Assessment has a steep learning curve attached to it, and so WPAs or WCAs who are untrained in writing program administration often have to learn it from scratch and use other institutions as

models for assessment. That additional labor is a symptom of a larger problem faced by SLACs in our current economic and political moment: the problem of material support for positions. As indicated in chapter four, writing programs and centers are sites of fraught issues of labor, rank, and educational preparation. These issues have been directly impacted by the changing financial landscape of small colleges, but also by the increase in focus on career preparation and experiential learning that has consumed small colleges struggling to stay relevant. The problem of administrative bloat, in which more and more administrative staff is hired to lead new campus initiatives, centers, and special programs, affects the resources available to the rest of the university. And as writing studies as a whole already faces the problems of adjunctification and the devaluing of writing instruction as a service course, the decrease in material support directly impacts writing programs and centers. SLACs are less likely than most other institution types to hire high amounts of adjuncts, but most participants in this study said they have seen a sharp increase in adjunct labor at their institutions over the last few years. The devaluing of writing instruction as something not worth hiring full-time faculty to do impacts the hiring and support of WPAs and WCAs, as well. One of the reasons this study has so few tenure-track WPAs and WCAs is because institutions simply do not see the value of hiring a full-time, tenure-track faculty member with a writing studies background at a time when institutions have had to find ways outside of traditional models of teaching and mentorship to survive.

The problem of our current political and social rhetoric have had a direct impact on SLACs, particularly when combined with recent financial changes, such as the loss of endowment money during the great recession, and cultural changes, such as the increased pressure on all institutions to do constant assessment. These changes affect programmatic relationships in both profound and insidious ways. Not all these changes are categorically bad. For example, assessment can provide tangible collaborations that improve and make visible the relationships between writing programs and centers and their administrators. Cultural changes can also provide unique opportunities for programs and centers to redefine what it is they do on their campuses, and developing relationships can be part of that. But changes can also distract, destroy, or decay existing relationships or make it harder to develop new ones. As job duties morph, so too do the opportunities for outreach and growth across campus. While the internal factors examined throughout this dissertation are incredibly important to how relationships do or do not form within SLACs, it is important to also look at the external influences. Cultural,

political, and economic changes play a highly significant role in programmatic relationships in ways that can be studied and mapped.

In order to map and define programmatic relationships at institutions, it is essential to include stakeholders and bureaucratic functions as part of the complex web of influences on writing programs and centers. At small schools in particular, the student body, faculty, and culture of the institution impacts every single aspect of the campus, including the writing instruction and support units. The role of stakeholders is complex and weaves through all aspects of a writing administrator's work. Stakeholders both affect and are affected by the decisions made by writing administrators and programs, which directly impacts the ways in which administrators might strategically approach relationships. As the next chapter describes, the strength and weaknesses of program relationship types are shaped by the entire ecosystem of writing at an institution. Just like program structures and issues of labor and position, stakeholders are part of an intricate system that determines how relationships do or do not form and how they can be made sustainable.

One of the reasons stakeholders are so important to relationships is because, like institutions themselves, they are not static and invisible. As an institution changes – because of culture, finances, or other external and internal factors – its stakeholders also fundamentally change. Student bodies are becoming more diverse at SLACs, but they are also becoming more socioeconomically stratified. As many administrators in this study point out, the differences between senior and junior faculty at SLACs marks a major shift in how faculty interact with and invest in their institutions. And as the 2008 recession demonstrates, national shifts directly impact the ability of institutions to recruit students, hire faculty, and devote resources to writing programs, changing the very institutions themselves. Too often in WPA and writing center scholarship, institutions are portrayed as either the overlords forcing change on writing programs or the "saved soul" that has been changed profoundly by new writing initiatives. The "believers, atheists, agnostics" dichotomy continually perpetuates itself. These simple taxonomies make it easy to ignore the complexities associated with institutionality and how institutions are not just changer or changed, but always *in the process* of change. And those transformations affect every part of a campus, including the writing culture, which in turn can also change the institution. These complex ecosystems are ever-changing, which is why it is necessary to develop a new way

of thinking about relationships as evolving, multifaceted systems and to create emerging definitions that can help change the way we think about institutional relationships.

CHAPTER 6: A NEW WRITING CENTER-WRITING PROGRAM RELATIONSHIP TYPOLOGY

"In a small college, relationships are everything," Participant 12 told me during their interview. It was a theme that came up over and over again in conversations for this dissertation: in order to get work done at a SLAC, administrators have to develop strategic relationships. The types of relationships – between administrators and faculty, between students and programs, between programs – all help writing instruction and support units accomplish their goals and create new initiatives. The relationship between the writing program and the writing center is important to the ways in which SLACs can signal the importance of writing to their students and other stakeholders, but it also creates opportunities for new, innovative approaches to writing problems on a campus. All relationships are not the same, though. Some benefit one side of the relationship more than the other, and some relationships are untenable or can make a difficult situation worse. Additionally, relationships are hard to sustain. Because writing initiatives, especially at small colleges, are so heavily tied to individual people, relationships can easily fall apart once individual administrators leave the institution. For that reason, I am not here to wave my hand and say all writing centers and programs should develop relationships. Instead, I would like to posit that there is a range of relationship types that we can identify in order to better understand a culture of writing at a specific institution or institution type. Based on my study results, I have developed four relationship types common to SLACs, but which I believe can also be easily applied to other institution types.

In this chapter, I will be building on the programmatic, disciplinary, and institutional factors discussed in the previous three chapters to explore four types of writing center-writing program relationships: institutionally sanctioned relationships, personally developed relationships, programmatically developed relationships, and stalled or non-forming relationships. I will define and discuss each relationship type and then use specific examples of institutions from this study to explain how the relationship type looks in practice. I will also argue that relationship types can be found on a multidimensional scale with fluid movement between and across types. At the end of the chapter, I discuss how these relationship types can be applied to a range of institutions and institution types, finally arguing that institutional context is

absolutely necessary when looking at how relationships function within writing programs and centers at higher-education institutions.

Institutionally Sanctioned Relationships

The institutionally sanctioned relationship is one in which writing programs and centers are yoked together by institutional structures that exist outside of program-level goals or individual administrator desires. The institutions in this study that fall under this category are the ones in which the writing program is the umbrella under which the writing center is located, both financially and in terms of administrative oversight. Institutions 9 and 12 most explicitly fall under this category due to the writing center being part of the writing program and the writing center director (or in Institution 12's case, the assistant program director who largely oversees the writing center operations) having positions that are technically supervised by the program director. Institutions 6 and 7 are also linked to this relationship category, as they have clear, institutionally-structured points of contact.

Institutionally sanctioned relationships appear simple on the surface due to their "streamlined" public-facing nature, but they are actually incredibly complex because they do not always account for personalities, labor, or disciplinary differences. While these relationships have many benefits – including clear chains of command, established funding structures, and, often, clear campus visibility – they also have some problems. Of all the relationship types, institutionally sanctioned relationships are probably the most likely to become calcified over time. With most of the writing instruction and support on campus part of one larger structure, it can make change difficult because more bodies and spaces are affected. Additionally, as several participants pointed out, it can be hard for the writing program and writing center to be seen as individual units. Participant 9, for example, noted that the university president often referred to them as the director of the writing program, despite there being a totally separate WPA and Participant 9's attempts to increase their own visibility as the campus WCA. Participant 12, meanwhile, serves as an assistant WPA but is primarily responsible for the writing center that is part of the writing program, which makes their title confusing and hard to define for people outside the immediate context of that institution.

Despite the problems, institutionally sanctioned relationships can be fruitful and have the potential to make true institutional change. Institution 7 is a good example of the value of

institutionally sanctioned program-center relationships. Even aside from the positive personal collaboration of the WPA and WCA, described later in this chapter, having clear institutional ties between the two programs has helped legitimize both. The newer WPA was able to work with the more established WCA in order to gain faculty trust and legitimize the work both were doing, and the WCA was able to establish the writing center as more than just an arm of the English department. Additionally, the WPA and WCA both feel that they have a true writing colleague in their institution, a feeling that would be much harder to achieve if the writing center and writing program were structurally housed in different parts of the institution. While Institution 7 is the only one in this study that was able to talk so positively about their institutionally sanctioned relationship, they are not necessarily an anomaly. In fact, they may serve as a good model for institutions that are considering adding a WPA to their existing writing instruction and support structures. Institutionally sanctioned relationships are complex and have to be careful not to become too static, but they also have the potential of legitimizing existing or new programs or increasing campus visibility of writing initiatives.

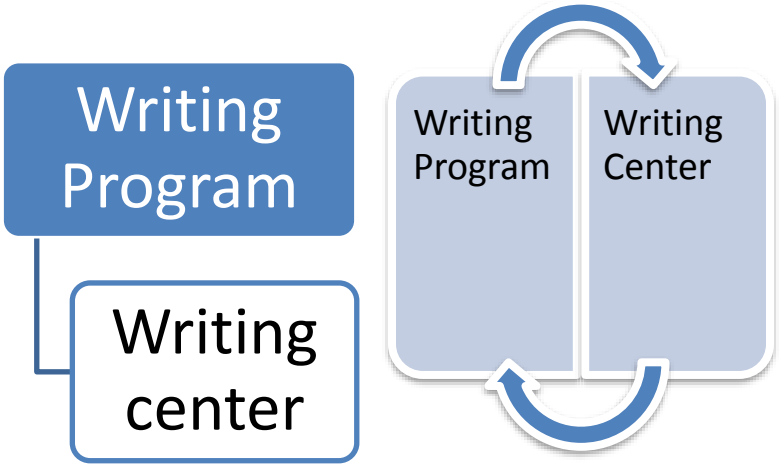

Figure 1: Two models of an institutionally-sanctioned relationship

Personally Developed Relationships

Perhaps the most common, and foundational, of all the relationship types is the personally developed relationship. These relationships are built on a connection between administrators or specific individuals who see mutual benefits in their working together. These relationships are common at small colleges because of the community spirit common to SLACs. Many study participants talk about the importance of talking to faculty and staff at lunch, at

reaching out to people they want to know or who they think could benefit from the writing center's services. The personal connections formed on a small campus are integral to the survival of new initiatives and programs that rely on word-of-mouth and faculty buy-in. Therefore, it is no surprise that the personally developed relationship is a bedrock for the other relationship types in this study. Even in places where there are institutionally sanctioned relationships between the writing center and writing program, personally developed relationships often coincide with the institutional relationship. Additionally, many institutionally sanctioned relationships begin as personally developed relationships and eventually evolve and solidify into something more official over time.

Personally developed relationships have many benefits but also many weaknesses. A personally developed relationship is built on that "cult of personality" so endemic to SLACs, wherein the magnetism of one individual allows for lots of changes and new ideas, but which, after said person departs from the institution, opens up those changes and ideas to failure because they become hard to maintain. Additionally, a personally developed relationship is susceptible to, well, personalities. And people are complex – with their little irritations and grudges, but also their need to look out for themselves and their own – and those complexities can be damning if they conflict at all with a professional relationship. These personal conflicts or, maybe more accurately, personality mismatches, can be especially problematic when administrative changes take place. For example, a rotating WPA position means a writing center director has to re-establish a personal relationship every few years, while non-tenured or staff writing center directors may come and go as they seek out better positions at other institutions, making a personally developed relationship untenable. The personally developed relationship is perhaps the most unstable of all the relationship types defined here because of the ways it relies so much on chance – the right people in the right place at the right time, with the right commitment to the institution – to succeed.

Despite all these challenges, personally developed relationships can also be genuinely beneficial and in some ways deeply gratifying to not only the administrators and programs involved, but for all other stakeholders affected by the relationship as well. Personally developed relationships that work well and are seen by the campus signal a positive culture of writing, which can allow for increased buy-in to new initiatives or attract faculty to take part in the writing curriculum, either through seeking out faculty development opportunities or joining a

writing committee. Additionally, personally developed relationships show the institution's administration that there is a need for programmatic collaboration that is being filled, and which, therefore, deserves to be rewarded or noticed in concrete, material ways. The personally developed relationship is also deeply strategic. It often emerges out of circumstances in which a need is recognized and two or more people work together to try and fill that need. It is a relationship type that is built on problem-solving rather than simple institutional streamlining, which means it has the potential to have significant impact on its campus and on the culture of writing at the institution.

Many institutions in this study have personally developed relationships between the writing center and writing program or other writing instruction units or had relationships like this at one time. Institution 1 currently has a personally developed relationship between the writing center administrator and the WAC coordinator. This relationship is somewhat ill-defined as the WAC coordinator's role on campus is relatively unclear and the WCA still does most of the work of writing support and faculty development on campus. Further complicating this relationship is the uneven positionality of the WAC coordinator and WCA; the WAC coordinator was a tenure-track faculty member already part of a department before taking on their extra WAC position, but the WCA is in a hybrid position unattached to any department. Despite these complications, the WCA and WAC Coordinator have developed an informal, unofficial relationship in order to improve writing support and instruction in the university. This personally developed relationship has not moved beyond this category currently because the desire to work together comes directly from the two parties involved with nothing official being cemented by the university or individual programs. Due to institutional issues of uneven position, a lack of formal writing or WAC program, and the desire of the WCA to strengthen the campus culture of writing, Institution 1's relationship type is firmly categorized as personally developed.

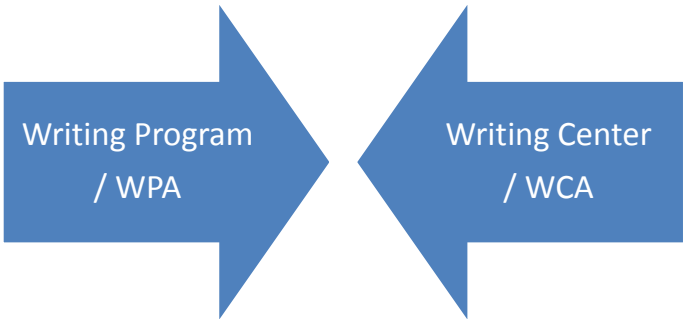

Figure 2: Model of a personally developed relationship

Programmatically Developed Relationships

The programmatically developed relationship happens when individual programs develop a relationship that crystalizes over time. Unlike the personally developed relationship, which happens because of individual administrators developing a connection of some kind, the programmatically developed relationship comes out of a mutual need between programs that exists regardless of changes between administrators.

Programmatically developed relationships are the most unusual relationship type in this study. Part of this is because of their particular spot of existence on the spectrum or scale of relationship types. Often, personally developed relationships will eventually evolve into programmatically developed relationships, and many programmatically developed relationships become institutionally sanctioned relationships over time. Additionally, a programmatically developed relationship can be hard to identify due to several factors:

1) Because the "cult of personality" and "boss compositionist" culture that can build up around small college writing programs, it can be difficult to separate programs from individual administrators. Judging between a personally developed versus a programmatically developed relationship opens up space for confusion of who is responsible for collaborations.
2) Programmatically developed relationships require actual programs to be at the epicenter; however, identifying what is or is not a writing program is incredibly difficult at a small college. The culture of writing at a SLAC can be diffused across campus, and so programs are often not explicitly called "programs." Instead, programs often hide within

other parts of the university. A writing center might be easy to "find" on a campus, but a writing program is less so, and that makes it difficult to see programmatically developed relationships.

3) Programmatically developed relationships are not as stable as institutionally sanctioned relationships, but also not as cared for or codified as personally developed relationships. Therefore, while I would not go so far to say that they are the most likely to fail of all the relationship types, they can be susceptible to outside pressures and administrative changes that can easily lead to their loss or which will turn into a personally developed relationship.

Despite the difficulties in identifying these types of relationships, there are significant advantages to a programmatically-developed relationship.

Unlike an institutionally sanctioned relationship, which relies on a hierarchical relationship between individual units or administrators, or the personally developed relationship, which relies on personality factors and constant communication, the programmatically developed relationship has the ability to operate outside of purely social or institutional structures. Additionally, relationships that emerge out of programmatic needs are able to address the specific issues and problems identified by those programs. For example, a writing center and first-year seminar program that both recognize a need for more explicit instruction of style can create a relationship based in that need that then transforms into a more structured collaboration that allows for a whole new host of needs and goals to be met.

Perhaps the most common form of a relationship that is programmatically developed can be found in the ways in which programs collaborate on faculty development. Writing centers and writing instruction programs or units often seek each other out in order to fill a campus-wide gap in pedagogical training for faculty required to teach cross-disciplinary writing courses, including first-year seminars. The role of the writing center in faculty development is one of the primary reasons I identify Institution 13 as a programmatically developed relationship. Institution 13 does not have an explicit writing program and beyond the first-year seminar type course, does not have writing requirements that would necessitate a program. However, the writing center develops the annual faculty workshop for writing pedagogy in order to fulfill that particular need. This relationship is not based in individual administrators but rather in programmatic

outcomes that need to be addressed and assessed. Even if the current faculty director of the center were to leave their position, the writing center would still be in charge of faculty development.

The example of Institution 13 also highlights my above points about why programmatically developed relationships can be hard to identify. Because there is no writing program or even much of a formalized writing curriculum, Institution 13's writing "program" resides within the faculty development for instructors. Being able to see or find this program requires a strong knowledge of SLAC writing cultures and curricula, as well as familiarity with the unique institutional context of Institution 13. The writing center is truly the primary location of writing on the campus, and yet, the faculty who actually teach and evaluate writing are not part of the writing center. Therefore, what could look like a non-forming relationship due to the lack of a writing program as its historically been defined is, in fact, a programmatically developed relationship between the faculty development in writing pedagogy and the writing center.

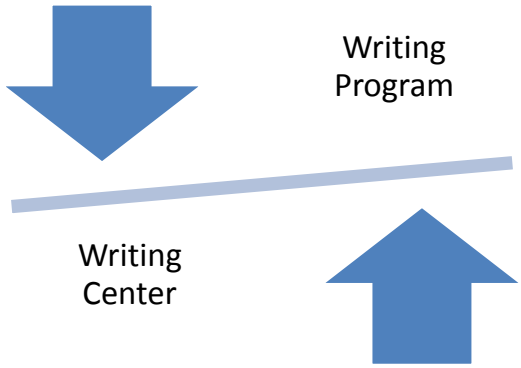

Figure 3: Model of a programmatically developed relationship

Stalled or Non-forming Relationships

When a relationship between a writing center or writing program does not form or has ceased to move forward, it is still a relationship, just one that is invisible to most of the campus stakeholders, often including the program and center themselves. Stalled relationships are formed when a relationship essentially goes stale. This freezing could happen because an administrator leaves the institution or a program gets de-funded. Stalled relationships can also happen when a relationship no longer becomes useful or beneficial to the parties involved.

Writing centers and programs, especially at institutions where the center and program are not part of the same funding source or department, also might not be able to sustain relationships due to the institutional structures in place. A stalled relationship can signal an ununified writing culture or a culture that has been disrupted, but it does not always have to be inherently negative. In fact, a relationship that has become problematic or toxic should probably be allowed to end rather than continue to erode the writing culture already in place.

Non-forming relationships are relationships that, for one or more reasons, fail to ever develop between a program and a center. The reasons for this could be programmatic or institutional in nature, as well as personal. A non-forming relationship is invisible in terms of what it produces, but it is clearly visible when looking closely at an institution's writing culture. Unlike a stalled relationship, a non-forming relationship never involved a relationship that existed in the first place, or has not existed in so long that the institutional memory no longer accounts for it. It is possible that a stalled relationship can *become* a non-forming relationship, mostly due to personnel changes. For example, if a WCA leaves their position and their relationship with the WPA dissolves, then the WPA may not be invested in forming a new relationship with the incoming WCA. Writing programs and administrators in particularly bad or toxic institutional cultures may also be so preoccupied with trying to stay afloat that a relationship just never has the opportunity to develop. It is important to note that a stalled or non-forming relationship is not necessarily the categorically *worst* relationship type; rather, these types of relationships form out of unique institutional contexts or programmatic and personal needs.

Figure 4: Model of a stalled or non-forming relationship

Relationship Types as a Multi-dimensional Scale

While there are four types of program relationships that have their own defining features and their own sets of benefits and consequences, these four types do not exist in isolation from one another. Instead, writing centers and programs can develop or maintain relationships that actually encompass multiple types at once. Additionally, programs can evolve or move along a kind of spectrum, transforming from one relationship type to another over time or as circumstances change. This constantly shifting nature of program relationships means that this is a typology that exists on a multi-dimensional scale. Writing units can move across the scale but they can also build up from the scale by existing within multiple categories simultaneously. The scalability of relationship types is a key component of institutionality, actually. The complexities of institutional contexts and administrative positionalities mean relationships are not static and should not be seen as such. Writing center and program relationships do not exist in vacuums, and as a result they shift and shudder across time and contextual change.

One example of this type of multi-dimensionality can be seen in Institution 9, which simultaneously occupies two relationship types: institutionally sanctioned *and* stalled or non-forming. Institution 9's writing program is made up of two units: the writing center and the required writing portfolio program. The WPA is a faculty director who manages the portfolio program and also technically oversees the WCA. However, the WPA has almost no actual role in the operations of the writing center. And while the writing program and center share some funding, the center also has access to other funding sources on campus. These financial and structural ties are classic examples of the institutionally sanctioned relationship category. And yet, there is almost no real relationship between the writing center and program in terms of collaborative work, administrative sharing, or outreach. Participant 9, the WCA, says the WPA has actually offered for the WCA to have more of a role in curriculum development, but Participant 9 has declined these offers due to not only an already-busy teaching and administrative schedule, but also because they want to maintain an intentional separation between the writing center and writing program. "The director and I are on the same page about wanting our messaging [to say] that we're separate but equal entities." Participant 9 said that the messaging is for the benefit of students who need a reminder that the writing center exists for them as a service. The writing program evaluates students; the writing center helps students improve their writing. Therefore, by maintaining a distance from the program and portfolio, the

center is able to better communicate its purposes to students. In this case, the WCA sees the writing center benefitting the institution by having a stalled or non-forming relationship with the writing program.

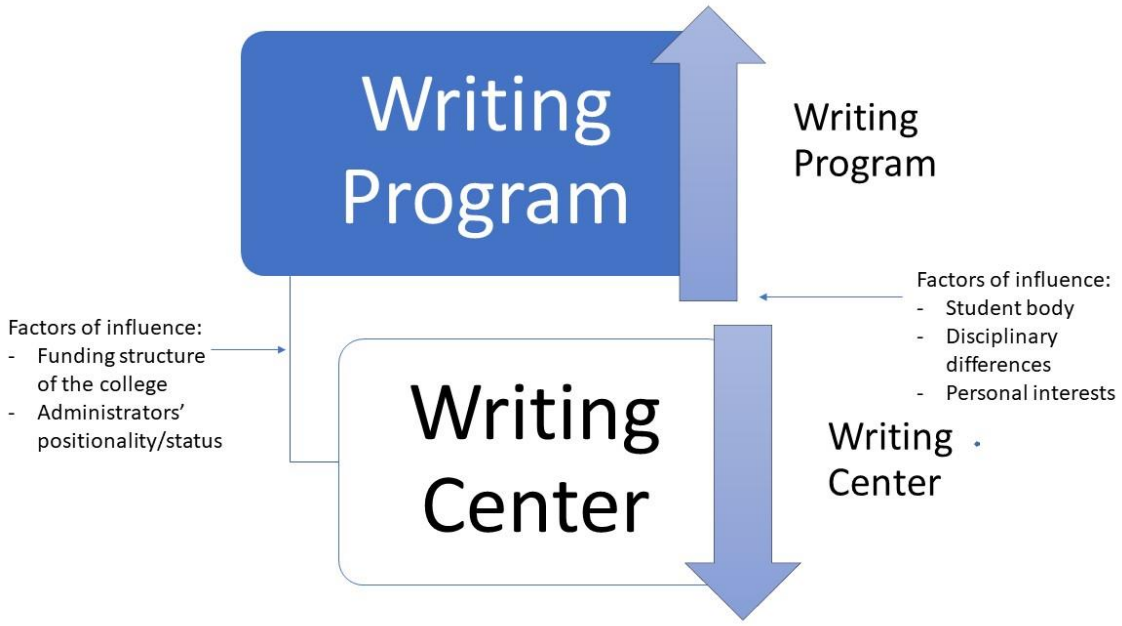

Figure 5: Model of relationships at Institution 9

The example of Institution 9 not only illuminates how programs can have multiple types of relationships, it also shows the ways in which institutional context matters deeply to how relationships are built and maintained. The need for the writing center to maintain distance from the portfolio-focused program in order to avoid student confusion about the evaluative versus service arms of the larger writing program shows that relationships are not simple accidents of fate. Instead, they happen because institutions, administrators, and other stakeholders shape relationships, and, in turn, are shaped *by* relationships. Relationships are not static and always changeable, and as we have seen from the previous chapters of this dissertation, they are affected by a myriad of influential factors.

Meanwhile, Institution 7 serves as an example of how relationships can be institutionally sanctioned but also thrive because of an overlap with another relationship type – in this case, the personally developed relationship. When the institution hired its first writing program administrator half a decade ago, signaling the beginning of a new structure for writing instruction

and requirements at the college, the center was placed within the new writing program structure. The current WCA was already working as the WCA at the time, and so they now would be collaborating on an institutionally-sanctioned level with the new WPA. However, the WPA and WCA found that they enjoyed collaborating and were able to build on each other's expertise to make both of their programs better. They regularly conduct research and assessment together and have published together, as well. While their programs were brought together by an institutionally sanctioned move, the WCA and WPA developed a personal relationship that has greatly benefited the programs, the administrators (both of whom note that they feel less alone now that they have a true writing colleague in the college), and the stakeholders. This type of relationship is able to exist because of the way it spans two relationship types in concrete, beneficial ways. Like Institution 9, the relationship here emerges out of unique institutional, programmatic, and personal contexts that are also changed by the relationship itself.

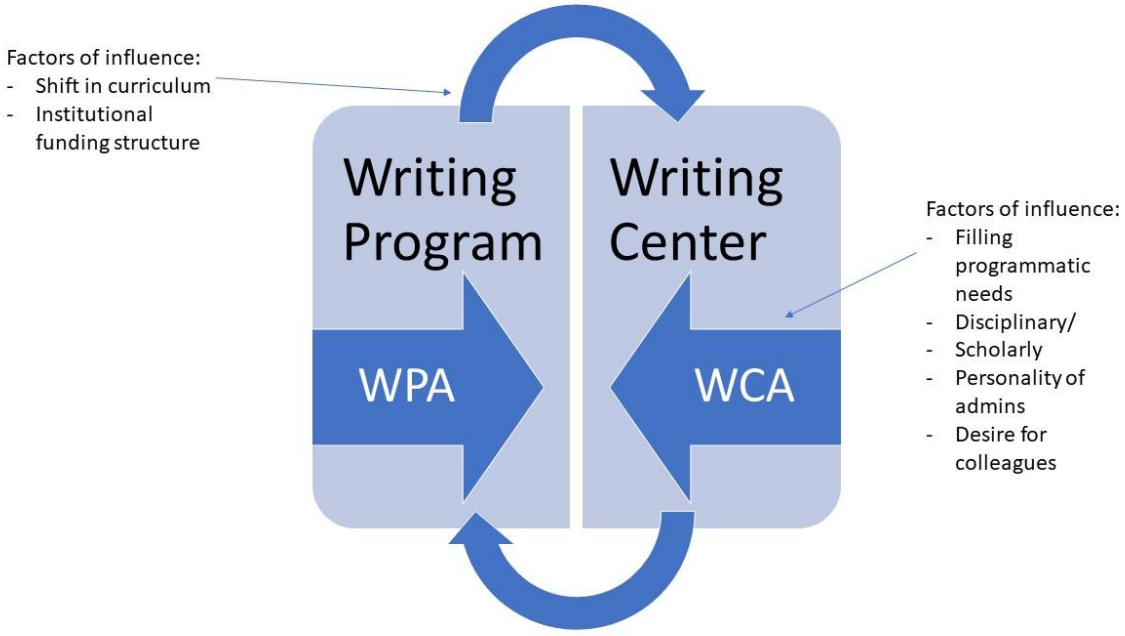

Figure 6: Model of relationships at Institution 7

While Institutions 7 and 9 are examples of how a writing center-writing program relationship can take on multiple types of relationships at once, Institution 8 is an example of how a relationship can evolve over time. When Participant 8A started as the writing center administrator, they were asked to serve on a writing assessment committee that was caught up in

institutional politics and served very little value to the institution. Participant 8A personally oversaw the transformation of that group into a writing advisory committee that actively worked towards faculty development in writing pedagogy. This institution has a first-year seminar model of writing instruction, as well as writing intensive courses, but there is no official writing program. Therefore, the work of the writing advisory committee and the faculty teaching writing intensive courses have become the form of the "writing program" as we might traditionally think of these relationships. In this case, the relationship between the program and center is personally developed in the fullest sense of the word. Participant 8A personally built the relationship between the center, which became the home of faculty development, and the faculty teaching writing. However, over time, that relationship has begun to take on the dimensions of a programmatically developed relationship because of the power of time and having a dedicated tenure-track line for the WCA. Now that the assessment committee is a writing advisory committee and faculty development has an actual structure, there is an increased possibility of the relationship between the "program" and the center becoming more stable separate from the role of Participant 8A. Certainly, Participant 8A is still the face of the program-center relationship, but there are now real programmatic structures in place that can help the larger institution. Again, relationships are not static. They can strengthen and become more institutionalized, but they rarely stay in one place if there is a dedicated WPA or WCA involved who has the potential to make real change on their campus.

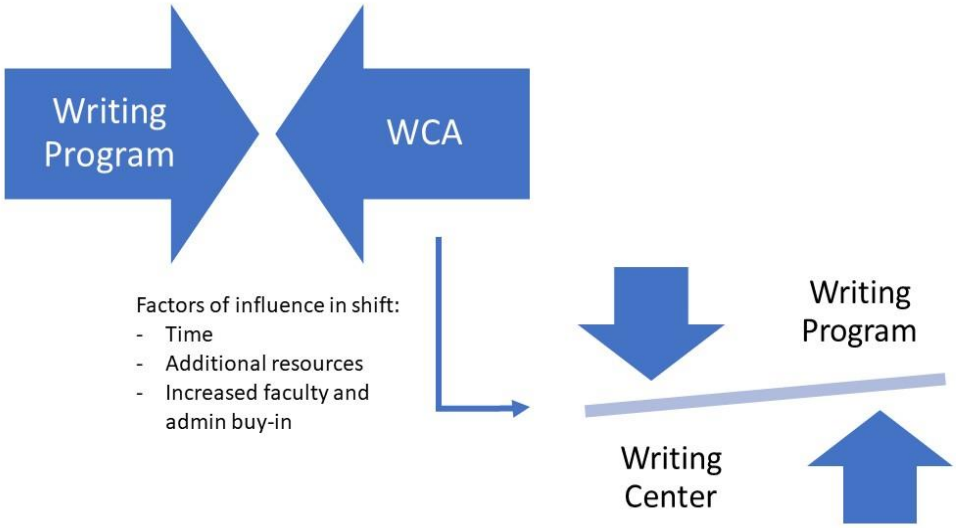

Figure 7: Model of evolving relationship at Institution 8

Within the unique ecosystems of small liberal arts colleges, relationships between writing instruction and support units become their own tangled webs that not only form between parts of the institution already in place, but which actually can support other connections that might form later. As stated previously, relationships are not only products but also producers. A relationship between a writing program and a writing center has the potential to change some part of the culture at an institution. For example, Institution 11 only has a writing center and no formal writing program. However, there is a required first-year seminar-type course taught across the campus. The writing center has formed a relationship with the faculty teaching those courses – the faculty in this case serving in some ways as a kind of de facto writing program – to offer professional development. And over time, as the WCA has made the writing center more central to the mission of writing instruction on campus through this development work, there have been chances for the culture of writing to change at the institution. The resulting writing committee and, even more importantly, the new writing fellows program, is a product of the relationships being built between writing instruction and support units on campus. That work would not exist without Participant 11's dedication to making writing stronger on the campus, and now those relationships can continue to exist after Participant 11's retirement during the conclusion of this

study's data collection. Like Institution 8, Institution 11 has moved from personally developed relationships to a more programmatically developed relationship over time.

Of course, not every relationship structure is wholly beneficial to an institution or individual programs, even if it does profoundly affect the writing culture. Institution 5, for example, has seen a deterioration of the relationship between the center and the program that has had both positive and negative effects on the campus at large. When it was decided that the institution should have a formal writing program separate from the writing center, the center no longer became the primary home of writing on the campus. The center now occupies a peripheral role, with the current WPA claiming very little affinity or desire for a relationship with the center. The disconnect has likely helped the university develop a stronger writing program and improve the cross-discipline relationships between writing instruction development and faculty, but the advent of this split between the program and center also makes the relationship between the faculty and the writing center more fragile, which in turn affects the ability of the center to cater to students from across campus. While the creation of a writing program and WPA role has helped the university make writing a more central part of the campus culture, it also has made it harder for the writing center to take on a strong role as part of the writing culture on campus, which sets it apart in many ways from other institutions in this study for which the writing center is *the* alpha and omega of a campus writing culture.

Institution 5, then, serves as an example of how relationships can potentially shift around on the typology scale, sometimes in unexpected ways, but can also become static or crystallized due to institutional, programmatic, and personal hindrances. Because there was no formal writing program and what part of writing development there was was run through the writing center and by the WCA, the relationship at Institution 5 could be characterized as non-forming originally. However, when the program and WPA position were created, there was potential for a programmatically or personally developed relationship to form. And yet, it did not. So while the scale of relationship types can be incredibly dynamic and multifaceted, that does not mean all relationships are equally dynamic.

The multidimensionality and evolution of a relationship typology scale is absolutely central to studying how programs interact with the scale. Relationships are ever-changing and rarely neat and clean. Therefore, keeping a dynamic and layered view of the ways in which relationships function within institutions is incredibly important. While the typology I have

developed here can tell us a great deal about the institutions that exist as part of this study, with relative certainty that they can also apply to other SLACs, I do not want this scale to itself become static. My hope is that, if scholars working in different institutional contexts pick it up, they will continue to change it so that it better meets the needs of programs and institutions. Additionally, while this typology scale is the result of a study of writing programs and writing centers, I believe it could also be easily shifted into different contexts, to measure nearly any institutional relationship between two or more programs, entities, or even individuals. It may even be possible to examine relationships between subfields within writing studies using this type of method. The always-evolving nature of having a multidimensional scale keeps the study of relationships becoming too static, too dated, or too self-contained.

Institutional Research as a Way Forward

While previous studies on writing center-writing program relationships have focused on individual actors – administrators, in particular (Balester and McDonald, 2001; Waldo, 1990) – this study shows that relationships are a product of complex networks that are institutionally-bound. The ways in which programs are configured over time, the positionality of those who do both administrative and teaching labor, and the influence of stakeholders all profoundly affect the ways in which programs and centers develop, sustain, or end relationships. That being said, as this chapter demonstrates through its typology of relationships, there are still shared or common experiences and structures that can be mapped and defined so that institutions might think more carefully about how they do or do not foster environments in which relationships can develop or flourish. Additionally, these relationship types can be mapped across institution types. While this dissertation focused on small liberal arts colleges, all institutions that have some form of a writing program or writing initiative and a writing center can use the typology developed here to measure and assess relationships.

Institutions that have been historically under-studied and misunderstood by the larger field of writing studies could particularly benefit from the study of programmatic relationships as a way of furthering discussions about their unique contexts. Regional comprehensives, small teaching colleges, and community colleges are similar to SLACs in that they have been largely ignored in writing scholarship, particularly within WPA studies. As my first chapter argued, there is a need for increased focus on different institution types within the discipline if we are to

better address how writing instruction and support functions within the changing face of higher education in the United States. Instead of retreating to our institutional siloes, it is important to read and research across institution types and contexts in order to better understand the problems facing the larger field, as well as finding unique solutions we may never have before considered. This dissertation focuses on a single institution type, but the framework used in the early chapters and developed in the later chapters can be easily picked up and used by scholars working within other institutional contexts. Additionally, the SLACs presented here are not universal even among the wider range of SLACs, and so this study can be picked up, transformed, and reworked to apply to other types of SLACs, including public SLACs, small liberal arts HBCUs, and other, more diverse colleges. My hope is that this project can shift the focus away from the current paradigm in which we become mired in one of two conversations: either context is everything and we can't make larger claims within the field, or context should be left aside in order to move the field forward as a whole. Instead, I offer here a third path: that we consider institutionality one of the primary factors of our scholarship on writing programs and writing centers in concrete but changeable ways that allow us to look *across* institutional contexts rather than simply *through* or *within* institutional contexts.

Understanding how institutional stakeholders, labor and positionality, and curriculum design change the ways in which writing cultures are products and producers of unique institutional ecosystems is central to this goal. Cross-institutional studies such as this are one way in which institutionality can play an important role in analysis while still allowing for larger claims to be made. As higher education in the era of a politically and ideologically divided nation finds itself at a crossroads between economic and intellectual values, it is absolutely necessary to think beyond the research-one institution in our scholarship. And while what this study offers is only a small and contained set of data and a relatively simple new typology of relationship types, I think it can serve as an example of the type of work that will matter in the future: engaged in real problems, situated within or across specific institutional contexts, and designed to be used and transformed by other scholars. Including underrepresented institutions, developing new models for studying writing programs and centers, and utilizing institutional critique as a methodology for examining relationships and collaborations can provide a path for changing the narrative of writing studies so that it is more inclusive and representative.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Participant 12's assertion of relationships at small colleges being "everything" passed through my mind on a daily basis while I was working on this dissertation. All of the participants in this study echoed some version of this truism during their interviews, and it ended up being a rallying call of sorts for me as I worked through this project. However, the truth is that relationships are important everywhere, not just at small colleges. Every institution has its own ecosystem in which people and programs are connected by complex ties of history, discipline, labor, and circumstance. And all institutions are also deeply contextual, with these relationships taking on unique forms and shapes, creating complex networks of power and support. Relationships are everything everywhere, but, perhaps, they are just more deeply felt at small colleges.

At the very least, relationships at small colleges are more visible. One of the primary findings of this study, but one that has largely been implied up to this point, is that small colleges are fascinating places to research. The ecosystem of a small college is highly interdependent. If one program or initiative changes or fails, the ripple effects are felt across the campus, impacting students, faculty, staff, and other programs. These impacts mean that small colleges have a real investment in their relationships in a way that larger, siloed institutions might not. Small colleges fascinate because they exist as a kind of microcosm for understanding larger issues at play in higher education in America. If a culture of writing cannot be fostered at an institution type that is already invested in the humanities and intellectualism, then what hope is there for other institution types? This is not to say that SLACs are a litmus test for the future of all of higher education, but they are invested in students and learning in a way that harkens back to an older time while still looking toward the future. And therefore, they offer an interesting view into how institutional change happens and how changemakers can operate within complex institutional settings. Additionally, SLACs provide models for how the liberal arts, which have historically included writing as a primary foundation, can shape an institution in successful and interesting ways. Studying the programmatic relationships within these institutions allowed me to have deep insights into just how many complex factors affect what, on the surface, seem like "positive" cultures of writing.

The Universality of Relationship-Mapping

SLACs are not the only institution type that benefits from this research, though. While the specific factors described here – the highly-contextual writing instruction and support infrastructures, the student bodies and faculty authority, the interdisciplinarity of small schools – are somewhat unique to SLACs, similar issues can be found at any institution type. More importantly, the four relationships I outlined in my final chapter could easily be picked up and applied to other institutions, even schools that look nothing like SLACs on their surface. One of the reasons this work has the potential to be so transformative is because relationship mapping as a methodology or framework for understanding cultures of writing is not inherently made for small colleges.

When I was originally developing this dissertation, I ran a very limited pilot study for a qualitative methods course at Purdue University. At that time, I was serving in administrative positions within both the first-year writing program and the Writing Lab at Purdue, and I was struck by the ways in which the relationships between the two programs seemed largely informal, despite both programs being located in the same department. By interviewing the program directors and reading annual reports and self-studies, I discovered that historical, departmental, and programmatic factors had a massive impact on how the relationships between these two arms of writing at Purdue developed and shifted over time and with different administrators. The lack of formal relationship between the Lab and first-year writing was not necessarily a problem; rather it was a result of various factors that were institutionally specific. Additionally, the relatively limited culture of writing at the university (the lack of writing requirements beyond a one-semester FYW course, no WAC/WID or writing fellows programs) seemed to help produce this lack of relationship, which is what I found so interesting and decided I wanted to pursue further: how writing program relationships could act as bellwethers for cultures of writing within specific settings.

Now that I have completed an actual study utilizing what I learned in my pilot at Purdue, I believe that understanding how relationships function within institutional cultures is important at any institution type. Purdue and the schools in my study have every little in common as institutions of higher learning, and yet I could easily trace the writing center-writing program relationship at Purdue in the same way I could at these small colleges. (My verdict, by the way, would be that Purdue would be classified as an institutionally sanctioned relationship, with

occasional forays into personally developed or stalled or non-forming relationships depending on the administrative faculty in charge). Nothing about relationship-mapping is institutionally specific in nature. This work could easily be picked up by scholars studying a multitude of institution types or sizes.

But while relationship mapping as a method for studying institutional cultures of writing might work across institutions, the individual factors are likely very different. Some issues described in this dissertation – such as labor disparities, disciplinarity, and economic shifts – are universal, and other things are not. Both the tangible and intangible factors that affect how an institution supports student writing and faculty instruction are incredibly context-specific. Intangible factors are particularly contextual: the ease or difficulty with which people across disciplines can meet and talk, the values or mission of a university, or the personalities of administrators and other faculty and staff. These things matter just as much as the material consequences of a functioning institution. But they are also things that are hard to pin down, which is why qualitative research matters. Relationship-mapping could be done through extensive surveys or focus groups, yes, but what cannot be seen through these methods can be illuminated through in-depth interviews. Therefore, if relationship-mapping should become a method in which we can reliably participate in institutional critique and make change, it still must be a method based in qualitative methods and in human-based research.

Limitations

One of the reasons relationship-mapping must be inherently humanistic in nature is that relationships do not exist on a binary. As I detail in the description of Institution 9 in my last chapter, I cannot reliably say a relationship within an institution is "good" or "bad." Only individual institutions can examine their own programmatic relationships and then precede to understand how those relationships fit or do not fit with its institutional mission and values, or with how it perceives its support and instruction of writing. Relationships are not prescriptive in nature. Instead, they are complex, unique, and constantly changing. For that reason, I argue, the ideal version of this work would include more than one or two interviews at an institution. In a dream world, students, faculty, and administrators would be able to describe how writing operates within their college or university. A culture of writing would be understood from every level, rather than just from the point of view of one or two administrators. In the meantime, this

dissertation offers one small window into how relationships impact, and are impacted by, institutional cultures of writing and labor. It also provides a new method and typology for better understanding programmatic relationships. And while the focus here was on writing programs and writing centers, I imagine both relationship-mapping as a method and the typology I have described could be easily applied to other types of relationships. What is the relationship between a writing center and a student support program for marginalized students? What is the relationship between a writing center and an academic resource center, especially at a small college? How might we understand the relationship between WAC/WID programs and individual departments? Perhaps an ambitious person could even map the entire, complex web of personal and programmatic relationships in place across a university, all tying back to the writing center, a place that purports to serve all.

Relationship-mapping is not perfect, nor can it solve problems on its own. It has to be used in conjunction with institutional critique, institutional ethnography, or another methodology that pays close attention to individual actors across a network of contextual influences. This study, while a step forward in how relationship-mapping can be done across institutions, had clear limitations. I was unable to travel to each individual college, and therefore, the context of space, which is incredibly important to institutional critique, is lacking from my analysis in ways that would have made this study much more insightful. Additionally, this study was severely limited by who I was able to interview. A better study would include multiple perspectives from each institution, including the perspectives of writing instructors, tutors, students, and other administrators. I imagine that in the near future I will do a concentrated version of this study focusing on only a single institution so that I can better understand how an institution's culture of writing relies on many, many connecting threads that make up a larger tapestry, a more robust narrative. This study only offers a small glimpse into the potential of relationship-mapping as a way of understanding writing instruction and support at institutions.

Implications

Despite its limitations and small scope, this dissertation offers three important implications for the field of writing studies generally and writing center studies in particular:

Implication 1: Small liberal arts colleges are rich sites for research.

First, I believe this dissertation offers a key insight into an under-studied and often misunderstood institution type: the small liberal arts college. While Gladstein and Regaignon's 2012 book, *Writing Program Administration at Small Liberal Arts Colleges*, does a very good job of introducing the unique writing structures in place at SLACs, it is mostly a surface-level work that does not ask us to consider the often troublesome material condition of small schools or the specific problems associated with economic shifts or student support failures. I tried to be more critical in my examination of small colleges. SLACs offer incredibly valuable models for a liberal arts education at a time when such an education is being eroded by political and cultural forces. However, they are not without their own issues, including staggering tuition costs (and therefore often privileged student bodies), lack of material compensation or fair status for service jobs such as writing center administration, and an unexamined (and therefore problematic) assertion that their students are naturally gifted writers by the time they graduate. My goal with this dissertation was to show that SLACs are as complicated as any other institution type, and that they have specific issues that should be better studied and addressed by writing studies.

Implication 2: Relationship-mapping is a valuable method for institutional critique.

This dissertation introduces relationship-mapping as a new method for how we think about institutions and how we understand writing instruction and support within those institutions. Relationship-mapping comes directly out of calls for institutional critique as a methodology concerned not just with how units within institutions function, but also how those units can promote and act towards change. Relationship-mapping requires a careful balancing of details, and it must be done with qualitative methods that give voice to the various stakeholders in those relationships. While that type of focused work can be difficult, it is also rewarding because it illuminates specific aspects of institutional culture that might otherwise be invisible. When we think about relationships as products of material, cultural, and circumstantial factors, it changes the ways we see those factors as actually mutable and transforming, rather than as static or isolated blips in a larger machine. Relationship-mapping is an effective method because of its ability to make the invisible visible, the intangible real. It shows possibilities for moving forward with institutional critique, a methodology that is fascinating but has largely been ignored in writing studies, in part because it lacks suggestions for actual research methods that can be used

to do the work. Relationship-mapping fills this gap in interesting ways. Additionally, as a proposed method here, it has the ability to continue evolving and improving through new research by myself and any others who attempt this kind of work.

Implication 3: Institutionality is as important as disciplinarity and history when we discuss writing center and program administration as unique sub-disciplines.

Second, this dissertation highlights the importance of doing institutional research that is contextual in nature and qualitative in methods, even when being done across multiple institutions. Writing studies in general, and writing center studies in particular, has to be very careful to avoid delving so far into specific contexts that there is nothing universal about the knowledge made via research. However, the danger of removing institutional context completely divorces research from the real-world problems and factors that shape and change how writing operates within an institution. By using a cross-institutional approach to develop a new typology for relationships, I tried to show a kind of "middle path" between being too contextual and not contextual enough. I wanted to show how institutions both change and are changed by relationships between writing instruction and support units. As described in my introduction, I believe institutionality is the third dimension, along with history and disciplinarity, through which we can study writing programs and writing centers. Writing center studies at this current moment is very concerned about issues of positionality, material compensation and resources, and labor. And those things are impossible to study without understanding how institutions in and of themselves contribute to these issues. SLACs may have money and prestige and see themselves as places for writing, but they also largely employ staff or non-tenure track faculty to run their writing centers. As many people in this study point out, serving in those position types can actually be a blessing. But whether or not you see the lack of tenure-track writing center jobs at SLACs as a positive or negative, it is certainly a condition of specific institutional politics and cultures that deserve attention in our research. My hope is that I have shown how institutionality is not just an idea or even a position from which we might view our own work, but that it is absolutely necessary to the ways in which we understand the development and evolution of writing center studies as its own discipline or sub-discipline.

Moving Forward

My greatest hope with this project is that it will inspire other researchers to study cultures of writing by looking at how programs and centers develop, maintain, or disavow relationships in order to best serve their institutions. While this study focused on SLACs, I do, as I describe above, believe the actual work of relationship-mapping to be generalizable across institution types. However, that being said, I think it is important for me to continue using this work to study small liberal arts colleges as institutions worthy of consideration in writing center and WPA scholarship. At an IWCA workshop in October 2018, I found myself among a group of new administrators from small colleges who were trying to understand how they might better do assessment. It was somewhat disheartening to hear how these administrators not only knew almost nothing about writing center scholarship but how they struggled within the machinery of their individual institutions to even get to a point where they could have the time and inclination to learn that scholarship. It made me realize that my dissertation was problematic because the very process of recruitment meant I had weeded out those who were not as invested in writing center scholarship – people who were not part of SLAC-WPA or at schools that are well-known or in the same tier as the type of SLAC I attended as an undergraduate and was therefore familiar with. That workshop made me realize that one of the goals of this project as I move forward must absolutely be a better representation of small liberal arts colleges. I need to find a more diverse pool of participants in terms of both individual identities and backgrounds, but also in terms of the types of institutions and administrative positions that exist. My hope is that as I look towards turning this dissertation into a book, I can do a better job of articulating why this work is important and appealing to possible participants or readers who would truly benefit from this type of cross-institutional examination of writing centers and programs and their often-overwhelmed administrators.

If the types of participants and colleges represented changes, the method of relationship-mapping might improve as well. I want to continue developing relationship-mapping as a method for doing institutional critique. I think what I have done here is useful and served the purposes of my study, but it could be much better. Relationship-mapping will be tested and transformed through its continued expanding use. As I continue to use it and as others hopefully pick it up and use it for their purposes, I think it has a true future as a method, not just for WPA and writing center studies, but for any circumstance in which individual programs or units within an

institutional setting are being studied. Writing center studies in particular though, would benefit from this type of method because writing centers are so often centrally located on their campuses – if not physically then at least psychically. Writing centers value relationships in their very pedagogy, and that extends as well to administrative practices and philosophies. Collaboration is essential to writing center work, and so relationship-mapping across its various stakeholders might serve as a way to better understand and shape collaboration. It goes beyond scholarship or research, though. Relationship-mapping can help aid in assessment practices, positioning of administrative roles and labor on a campus, and making the case for increased budgets or staffing. Relationship-mapping, as a single method within the larger methodology of institutional critique, has the potential to help transform institutions. I know that in my own work I have begun to advocate publicly for increased tutor wages as a direct result of better understanding the role those tutors serve within larger institutional relationships. Continuing to test, improve, and eventually formalize relationship-mapping as a method is therefore one of my primary goals as I move forward as a scholar and administrator.

Relationship-mapping, despite its ability to help us better understand and study institutions, is in and of itself, concerned primarily with human beings, as are writing centers. Being in writing centers has taught me a lot about the ways in which labor can be both rewarded and exploited, and I often find myself feeling deeply cynical about the role I will be playing as an administrator once I graduate. This study confirmed some of my fears about exploited labor and disciplinary status, but it also reminded me of why writing center work is so important and why the labor writing center administrators and tutors do is worth fighting for. The relationships writing centers and the people who work for them build across their campuses is vital to the life of institutions. As we face a culture that is increasingly hostile to both the humanities and critical thinking, writing centers serve as one of the few places on a campus where students are intensely engaged in an act of communicating across disciplines, across languages, and across cultures. The knowledge-making that happens every day in writing centers is necessary to the intellectual culture of higher education. Like Grutsch McKinney (2013), I believe we are in need of a radical change to the way we think of the grand narrative of writing centers. We need to open ourselves to new ways to reach across campuses and communities, but we also must be willing to take stands and constantly examine ourselves to make sure we are doing the work that needs to be done for our fellow human beings. During my study, I spoke with individuals who, no matter

their position on campus or their relationships with various programs, are always thinking first and foremost about students and their ability to live and thrive in a changing world. The work being done in their centers deserves attention from their institutions and the larger discipline of writing studies.

In that spirit, then, my greatest wish for this dissertation is that it might illuminate possibilities for new ways to think about writing center scholarship and administrative work. I suppose, at the end of the day, I am less cynical than I thought, because as treacly as it sounds, what this dissertation taught me was to be bold: bold in my research, my everyday work with others, and my belief in what I have chosen as my profession. I hope this project inspires other writing center scholars to be bold, too.

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APPENDIX A. PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name and Title:
2. Institution:
3. Size of institution:
4. Position as defined by the institution (check one):
    a. Tenure-track faculty
    b. Non-tenure track faculty
    c. Staff
    d. Other (please describe)
5. How long have you been in your current position?
6. How long have you been at your current institution?
7. Highest degree completed (check one):
    a. PhD in Rhetoric/Composition or similar field
    b. PhD in other area of English (literature, second language studies, creative writing, etc.)
    c. PhD in some other field (describe)
    d. MFA
    e. MA in English area
    f. MA in some other field
    g. BA or BS in any field
8. What experience did you have with writing programs or writing centers before coming into your current position?
9. Check all that apply to your institution's writing program:
    a. The writing program is an independent unit.
    b. The writing program is part of the English department.
    c. The writing program is part of another campus unit/program.
    d. The writing program is primarily focused on teaching first-year composition.
    e. The writing program is primarily focused on a WAC/WID style of writing instruction.
    f. The writing program is focused on both first-year composition and WAC/WID.
    g. The writing program routinely and regularly collaborates with the writing center.
10. Check all that apply to your institution's writing center:
    a. The writing center is an independent unit.
    b. The writing center is part of the English department.
    c. The writing center is part of another tutoring/learning program or unit on campus.
    d. The writing center is staffed by peer tutors.
    e. The writing center is staffed by professional tutors or instructors.
    f. The writing center routinely and regularly collaborates with the writing program.

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Writing Center Administrators

1. Tell me the story of how you got to this position.
2. What responsibilities do you have according to your job description as director?
3. What is it like to work in this institution? In this particular center?
4. What is the place of writing at your institution? What role does it play in your institution's everyday teaching or overarching mission?
5. Tell me about your writing center. What do you think an outsider should know about it?
6. What is the history of your center? How did you learn that history? What do you make of it?
7. How would you describe the culture and community of your writing center?
8. How would you describe the culture and community of the first-year writing program at your institution?
9. In the pre-interview questionnaire, you noted that your center collaborates with the writing program. Tell me more about those experiences.

Writing Program Administrators

1. Tell me the story of how you got to this position.
2. What responsibilities do you have according to your job description as director?
3. What is it like to work in this institution? In this particular program?
4. What is the place of writing at your institution? What role does it play in your institution's everyday teaching or overarching mission?
5. Tell me about your writing program. What do you think an outsider should know about it?
6. What is the history of your program? How did you learn that history? What do you make of it?
7. How would you describe the culture and community of your writing program?
8. How would you describe the culture and community of the writing center at your institution?
9. In your pre-interview questionnaire, you noted that your program collaborates with the writing center. Tell me more about those experiences.