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## **Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty: Finding and Enacting a Professional Identity in Basic Writing**

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# Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty: Finding and Enacting a Professional Identity in Basic Writing

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*ABSTRACT: This essay considers the critical need for pre-service and in-service basic writing faculty to define and enact a professional identity, specifically within the context of faculty development and graduate course settings. The essay describes a graduate course in teaching basic writing offered primarily online with four in-person weekend workshops. As a result, the course has faculty development implications. Key features of the class are professional mentoring through participation in the Council on Basic Writing discussion list, which offers visibility for students as emerging basic writing professionals; creation of Composition Frequently Asked Questions wiki material on basic writing, which serves as a kind of intermediary “publication”; and encouragement to present at conferences and submit manuscripts. The essay also explores the issue of faculty development generally for emerging and current basic writing professionals who are often working as contingent faculty and asks how a professional identity can be developed given these realities.*

*KEYWORDS: basic writing; digital community; faculty development; graduate courses; graduate education; professional identity*

Current basic writing faculty are quite diverse, holding degrees in rhetoric and composition, literature, or linguistics, as well as English education, reading, or developmental education; others have an MFA or a general degree in humanities of some kind. We have MAs and doctorates (PhD, EdD, DA), and, in some cases, people with a bachelor's degree may be hired. Similarly, graduate students may be working toward a degree in any of these fields. I view our diversity as a strength. Indeed, the professional organization which

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Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty has been my academic home since 1981, the Council on Basic Writing, has played a shaping role in welcoming practitioners and theorists of any kind at any level, from beginner to highly experienced, and celebrates the work of all who take on the critical task of teaching basic writing. The varied academic histories faculty bring to the field offer a democratic, inclusive approach to teaching and research.

Yet the diversity of backgrounds weakens the claim that basic writing is a field that requires special preparation. If everyone with broad education and experience in the humanities and education can teach the course, then anyone can, and no special training is needed; further, faculty can be hired at the last minute without benefits, resulting in contingent working conditions and undermining claims to professional identity.

Complicating the question of diverse education and experience are our diverse local situations: particular student demographics and campus profiles—urban or rural, two-year or four-year, public or private—as well as departmental structures, resources available, and much more. Further, since about 2010, basic writing has increasingly been folded into first-year writing through the adoption of accelerated and add-on studio models of delivering basic writing. A prominent example is the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP); as of October 2018, 300 colleges had adopted the ALP approach to instruction or similar models, in which basic writing is linked directly to first-year writing.<sup>1</sup> With this model, basic writing students take first-year writing and a smaller linked support course; both courses work toward a single set of outcomes, those of first-year writing (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, and Roberts).

Given this reality, some may ask, do we then still need basic writing instructors and graduate courses in teaching basic writing? My answer is yes. I view the ALP model as situated well within earlier models for basic writing course delivery identified by William Lalickler in his classic article; the accelerated model with concurrent support derives from the studio model, the intensive combined basic writing and first-year writing course, and other formats that directly support first-year writing. If for no other reason, the sheer number of students formerly identified as basic writing students who are now taught by an acceleration approach compels us to provide the best available teaching. In an attempt to differentiate first-year writing from basic writing, I have argued that in basic writing we slow down instruction, demonstrate more, work more directly on active, engaged reading, on the writing process, and on editing (Uehling, “Creating a Statement”). Accelerated models of teaching call upon these unique skills of the basic writing instructor; in what might be called “responsive teaching,” the instructor

responds directly to student needs and is likely to slow down, provide more examples, as well as preview and review course materials. Thus, the need for basic writing teaching strategies remains critical, as even more first-year writing instructors teach the ALP sections.

While I continue to value Basic Writing as a field and celebrate our diverse faculty, I believe we must develop a broad consensus about the skills and abilities needed to teach basic writing if we are to survive as a discipline. A greater sense of disciplinary identity would strengthen our argument that basic writing needs resources built into institutional budgets, resources that support our students and allow faculty to perform their jobs adequately. Questions of diverse professionals, working conditions, and disciplinary identity are not new within our field. Jeanne Gunner, in her address to the Fourth National Basic Writing Conference in 1992, called for a statement of professional identity to improve the status of basic writing faculty; such a statement would say “who we are, what we do, and why we matter” (61). Twelve years later, Ann Del Principe described the “paradigm clashes” of basic writing faculty, noting that “the varying background experiences of faculty . . . rather than creating a richly diverse group of pedagogical approaches that enhance the quality of basic writing classes, . . . are often obstacles to building strong basic writing programs” (65). On the other hand, in 2016, Edward M. White and William DeGenaro assert the value of the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement (OS) and related threshold concepts in defining the teaching of writing; they believe that the OS context is enough to sustain basic writing and argue for the value of “serendipitous engagement” within the field. Such engagement is attractive, and I admire the OS, but I feel basic writing will be stronger if we work to create a greater sense of professional identity specific to basic writing.

To strengthen our sense of identity, we might begin by building connections among our diverse current and potential basic writing instructors. We need the voices of those from many academic backgrounds to describe how they were drawn to this work, how they pursued a professional identity, and the kinds of bridges they see or have constructed from their original discipline to basic writing. Collecting our “origin stories” and analyzing them might lead to some sense of what we need as basic writing professionals. It would be especially helpful to know if faculty who have not had a course in the teaching of basic writing feel at a disadvantage and to learn whether they have any suggestions for what they may be missing. This special theme issue of the *Journal of Basic Writing* on graduate courses and faculty development and its companion issue are welcome starting points for this conversation.

In addition to writing our own origin stories and analyzing them for patterns, we can turn to the basic writing literature for information on faculty development and graduate courses. I have found relatively few essays focused *primarily* on faculty development for basic writing professionals, and those that take up this issue, do not offer clear guidance.<sup>2</sup> An exception is Jessica Schreyer's "Inviting the 'Outsiders' In: Local Efforts to Improve Adjunct Working Conditions" in the *Journal of Basic Writing*. Schreyer, who focuses on a small liberal arts college of 1600 students with five tenure-track English faculty and six or seven contingent faculty, describes several possible faculty development strategies, including improved digital communication, improved scheduling of meetings, increased visibility for basic writing faculty through presentations that showcase their expertise, as well as increased personal contact between the Writing Program Administrator and faculty to learn their concerns informally. Although these strategies help develop a sense of community, there is no change "to the most critical working conditions such as stability, pay, or benefits" (96). Still, Schreyer contends, "It is worth the effort to make small, local changes ... [to] draw attention to the commitment and hard work of part-time faculty . . ." (97). I agree that small changes are better than no change, but I'm disappointed that "critical working conditions" were unaffected. I wonder how long minor improvements will sustain this or any faculty.

In an earlier study focused exclusively on basic writing, Carol Kozeracki considers how faculty view their preparation for teaching developmental English; she interviewed 36 community college instructors who taught at large institutions on the east or west coasts. Kozeracki reports "a substantial gap" between what graduate school offers and what community college instructors say they need, specifically in the areas of "instruction in how to teach basic grammar, pedagogical information on lesson planning and presentation, and strategies for recognizing and working with students with learning disabilities" (48). Kozeracki also learned that, to be helpful, faculty development needs to be practical and informal, presenting significant theories briefly as support for practice.

Of course, a number of authors touch on faculty development when focused on other basic writing topics, mentioning in-service workshops or faculty meetings. Others encourage all faculty to engage with the scholarship of teaching and learning: sensible advice. For instance, in their recent essay on a transcultural ethos in basic writing developed through code-meshing, Michael MacDonald and William DeGenaro describe how they plan to offer faculty development workshops on code-meshing for faculty across the

curriculum through their campus center for teaching and learning. In other instances, faculty development is offered as “consulting,” supported by grant-funded efforts, textbook publishers, or others. We find this example in Peter Adams and other ALP faculty who offer consultant services to colleges or college systems seeking to reinvent themselves. Such consultation is in the form of workshops, which run one to three days, and focus on topics like backward curriculum design, active learning, integrating reading with writing, thinking skills, non-cognitive issues, student editing skills, aligning developmental and first-year writing syllabi, selecting texts and readings, as well as grading (ALP website).

Faculty development and graduate courses in teaching basic writing are, I believe, inherently linked, and the need for graduate courses is apparent in the professional literature. Shannon Carter, in “Graduate Courses in Basic Writing Studies,” describes three such courses, while Barbara Gleason in her argument for more graduate education (“Reasoning the Need”), could find only ten courses being offered on campuses. Conference on College Composition and Communication panels have also addressed graduate courses: Gleason, Dudar, and Ferdinand; Kirk; Uehling (2012); Doddy, Goen-Salter, Troyka (2009); Goen-Salter, Rios, Troyka (2007).

Perhaps the most direct and useful work on graduate courses and faculty development is that of Susan Naomi Bernstein. Her anthology, *Teaching Developmental Writing* (four editions as of 2018), offers a range of historical, theoretical, and practical scholarship and includes apparatus for using the book in a graduate course or professional development setting, such as suggestions for keeping a teaching journal and guidance on writing conference proposals or articles. In addition, a number of full-length books on basic writing have been released over the years (for example, Kutz, Groden, and Zamel; Soliday; Sternglass; others—see Duttagupta and Miller and earlier editions of *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*); and most recently, *Basic Writing*, by George Otte and Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk, which offers an excellent summary of basic writing scholarship in a readable, thought-provoking manner.

## **A GRADUATE COURSE IN TEACHING BASIC WRITING**

I have taught a graduate course in teaching basic writing 11 times since 1990, with the most recent offering in 2017 as “English 540: Issues in Writing, Teaching, and Learning.”<sup>3</sup> Originally my course was offered as an in-person senior undergraduate/graduate course, then as a hybrid course,

Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty and, most recently, as primarily an online course. Prior to 2017, the course was “English 563: The Theory and Teaching of Basic Writing,” approved by my institution’s English Department in 2004.

My graduate course is situated, as all courses are, in a particular time and place. I live and teach in Boise, Idaho, and I originally designed the 2017 course for the intermountain west or other areas characterized by distance and open space, although it could be adapted to any environment where people lack the time to meet in person regularly. The course can enroll up to fifteen participants and is offered primarily online with four weekend workshops; the workshops meet on the university campus. This delivery system targets graduate students in our English MA programs as well as current basic writing instructors who may have previously lacked access to such a course. The larger goal is that together these combined audiences will work to build a basic writing community within local regions.

Like the field of basic writing generally, recent students have diverse interests in English studies, and have tended to be full- or part-time graduate students at Boise State pursuing an MA in English, especially the MA with emphasis in rhetoric and composition, MA students emphasizing literature, or those pursuing an MFA or an MA in teaching. Some were simultaneously teaching assistants in first-year writing or graduate consultants in the writing center. Others were currently teaching or had taught a variety of classes, including online basic writing courses, in-person writing workshops, writing and humanities courses, as well as secondary English. Most lived in Boise or in surrounding communities, but not all. A recent student commuted in from the eastern side of the state to take several courses. Because we meet in person four times, the course is designed to fit the needs of a region, but could be adapted for a wider online audience. Within this diverse group, I want to cultivate excellent and committed basic writing faculty for the future.

### **Texts and Assignments**

The main texts for the course are the Bernstein anthology and Otte and Mlynarczyk’s book (noted above). Students discuss essays and chapters from both texts in threaded discussions on Blackboard. We also read *Lives on the Boundary*, by Mike Rose, and sample excerpts from other print and digital literacy narratives, such as Keith Gilyard’s *Voices of the Self*, Joyce Carol Oates’s *Them*, and Victor Villanueva’s *Bootstraps*.

The final course project, originally developed by Linda Adler-Kassner and worth 50 percent of the course grade, asks students to create a wiki

entry collaboratively on a topic of significant local, regional, or national importance and post it on the Composition Frequently Asked Questions (CompFAQs) wiki. The posting, a simplified form of “publishing,” provides students visibility as emerging basic writing professionals. Other course assignments include online discussions, familiarization with digital technologies, as well as presentations, discussions, and group projects at weekend workshops. Within this framework we explore important issues in the field, such as adult learners, assessment, diversity and valuing difference, English language learners, the history and politics of basic writing, learning styles, reading and writing instruction, the teaching of grammar, and teaching and learning perspectives.

The structure of the course, online with some in-person meetings, allows for building a sense of community through both digital interaction and in-person meetings. Each “place”—the digital space and the in-person workshop—has its own strengths and weaknesses, its own “place-based pedagogy,” requiring the instructor to decide which activity is best suited to an online or an in-person workshop environment.

### **The Digital Community**

The digital space allows for conveying information, viewing materials, responding, and collaborating online. At the beginning of the course, when students read *Lives on the Boundary*, they discuss this book online and that discussion helps build community as students move from not knowing other class members to learning about their peers through their online responses to the text. Each student chooses a chapter, character, or theme that resonates for them, for instance, the chapter “Entering the Conversation” on Rose’s experience as an undergraduate; or Sergeant Gonzalez, a student in the veteran’s re-entry program; or a theme like error as a sign of growth. In this early post, students explain why that item is memorable and how they might use some portion of *Lives* in their own teaching (or might not).

Later, students continue to develop a sense of community by leading two relatively formal online discussions, one an essay from the Bernstein anthology and the other, part of a chapter from Otte and Mlynarczyk’s text; students also participate in all the discussions others lead. The leader posts an introduction that includes a summary of the piece, some representative quotations with commentary, an overall response and evaluation, the connection of the piece to basic writing teaching, and “something about the



Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty author”; the leader also poses four to six questions for discussion and keeps the discussion going over the course of a week.

In addition to discussing texts online, students view digital materials and discuss these informally. Sample digital materials include narrated presentation slides on teaching strategies, such as how I have used an excerpt from *Lives on the Boundary* in a basic writing class, especially how these strategies support active, engaged reading. Another digital component is Mike Rose’s blog, which contains recent, substantive posts and links to interviews. I have also tried a digital narrative, Frontline’s “Country Boys,” a publicly available video that tracks two young men from Appalachia during their senior year at an alternative high school—both boys seem destined for college, yet only one actually enters the next fall. “Country Boys” may provide insight into one sector of our student population—those who come from remote, isolated places and have experienced what Marilyn Sternglass calls “difficult lives.”<sup>4</sup>

Not only does the digital environment include online discussions and digital learning materials, but also the opportunity to develop digital skills; such skills are incorporated into the course through several learning activities which provide incentive for students to immerse themselves in specific technologies and explore how they work. Students first familiarize themselves with the resources of the Council on Basic Writing and sign up for the council’s listserv, a process that opens the door to this professional community. The listserv is not only a source of information about teaching, but also a place where teaching jobs are posted, so it has particular relevance for those soon to enter the profession. I encourage students to “lurk” for a while on the list and get a feel for the discussion, then make their presence known. They often enter the dialogue when they reach the major research project and need to pose a question about their research.

Other digital technologies include Composition Frequently Asked Questions (CompFAQs), crucial for the final course project, and Composition Pile (CompPile), a rhetoric and composition search engine and the parent site of CompFAQs; both are “go to” places for composition researchers. We also review digital archives of literacy narratives, specifically the *Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives* and the companion analysis tool *Stories that Speak to Us* (Ulman, DeWitt, and Selfe), which offers frames for analyzing literacy narratives. Another digital archive we consider is the National Survey of Basic Writing Programs, developed by the Council on Basic Writing. We examine professional survey tools like Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, or Google forms; and collaborative digital platforms (GSuite, perhaps Dropbox, others). Inceas-

ingly, our profession depends on digital media to create materials jointly. Those who can navigate such tools or are willing to try are more apt to thrive in the current professional climate than those who cannot.

### **The In-Person Community**

While the digital space offers asynchronous collaboration and community building, the in-person aspect of the course is collaborative and interactive in the moment. The four weekend workshops are face-to-face meetings held roughly a month apart on Saturdays, on the university campus. I envision each workshop as a kind of mini-conference, similar to an informal professional conference or workshop. In a sense, this approach “flips” the classroom by making the most of face-to-face time and the personal interaction afforded by workshops.

*Weekend Workshop One: Introduction.* This workshop occurs at the end of the first or second week of classes. I preview the course, answer technical questions, and distribute free professional resources, graciously provided by Bedford/St. Martins.<sup>5</sup> Students bring a journal entry on their literacy narrative of choice (Gilyard, Oates, or Villanueva) to this first workshop and, as they introduce themselves, they share at least a portion of this piece of writing with other class members. Students also read Mina Shaughnessy’s “Diving In,” and we view “A Conversation with Mike Rose,” a Bill Moyers video interview from the PBS Series “A World of Ideas.”

*Weekend Workshop Two: Faculty Panel.* The second workshop, about a month into the course, offers a live resource: a panel of faculty who teach developmental writing at the local university and community college. To prepare, students read everything available about local programs (websites, catalog copy, published histories and discussions of the course). This panel has several goals: getting to know current faculty, understanding the day-to-day realities of teaching the course from instructors’ perspectives, becoming familiar with local conditions, and identifying possible research topics for the major course assignment.

*Weekend Workshop Three, first half: Grammar and Language.* Grammar and language, the focus of the first half of this workshop, are complicated, potentially polarizing topics with many “answers,” and we need time to talk in person about practice, method, and process. I emphasize the decisions that instructors must make about if, when, and how to focus on language issues (Uehling, “Teaching about Language”). Students must become aware that there are no easy answers for language learning, that this is a topic they

Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty will have to return to again and again and will need a perspective from which to view and evaluate linguistic innovation and other language work. Actual demonstration of how some editing techniques function is helpful, especially after students have read various theoretical approaches to language. For instance, I show a video of the late Professor Jay King, a talented former colleague, as he patiently coaches a student in editing her work using an adaptation of Rei Noguchi's "writer's grammar."

*Weekend Workshops Three-Four: Research and Publishing.* In the second half of the third workshop, students meet with others with similar research interests to form groups of two to four for the final course project. Afterwards, students meet independently in person or online to further plan and collaboratively carry out their projects, including digital or in-person conferences with me as projects develop.

At the end of the term, we meet to "publish" and celebrate the work research groups have done. Each group makes an oral presentation of their research findings as posted on the Composition Frequently Asked Questions (CompFAQs) wiki. For example, in 2017, one posting focused on threshold concepts and basic writing (*CompFAQs, Basic Writing, "Threshold Concepts and Basic Writing"*). A 2011 posting offered the first analysis of data from the CBW "National Survey of Basic Writing Programs" with graphic representation (a spread sheet and bar graph analysis) (*CompFAQs, Basic Writing, "CBW Survey Results by Type of School"*); other postings have ranged from the varied ways basic writing courses are counted for college credit to such topics as service learning, placement, and Generation 1.5 learners (*CompFAQs, Basic Writing, "Course Credit," "Service-Learning and Basic Writing," "Best Practices for Basic Writing Placement," "Generation 1.5 Students"*).

These posts, like others, represent the diverse interests of students in our graduate programs. In 2017, those who were working as Writing Center consultants considered similarities and differences between writing centers and basic writing courses, as well as how Writing Centers can serve basic writing (*CompFAQs, Basic Writing, "Using Writing Centers"*). Those interested in technology explored the concept of "techno-pragmatism" in 2015 as a way into the use of digital materials in basic writing (*CompFAQs, Basic Writing, "Google and Web 2.0"*). In short, the workshops provide students with an opportunity to experience and "practice" interacting in a semi-professional space of dialogue, discussion, and collaboration.

## **BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONSIDERATE OF CONTINGENCY**

Our richly diverse faculty can undoubtedly offer a variety of innovative approaches to assist students. But too often the unique teaching skills of faculty are undercut by the realities of contingency; instructors may lack the time, energy, or resources to perform this work to the best of their abilities. And, although faculty development and graduate courses may help foster prepared faculty, this effort is also often undermined by the larger issue of contingent working conditions. Graduate students and early career faculty may perceive contingency as the main form of basic writing teaching, and consequently have little incentive to stay in the field and develop an identity as a basic writing specialist.

The use of contingent faculty in first-year writing is well documented; according to the American Association of University Professors, "Today, more than half of all faculty appointments are part-time," while "non-tenure-track positions of all types now account for over 70 percent of all instructional staff appointments in American higher education" (n.p.). Basic writing, often less valued than even first-year writing, is of course dependent on contingent faculty. Moreover, as I noted in a history of the Council on Basic Writing, contingent faculty are often given "the complex job of teaching [basic] writing to students who desperately need to write well to survive in college and attain their goals" (Uehling, "The Conference," 10).

This teaching assignment is particularly challenging because the students "represent a diverse and shifting population," including first-generation college students, people of color, English language learners, refugees or immigrants, reentry students, and those who have experienced erratic secondary educations, among others (Uehling, "The Conference," 9). Such students are especially dependent on their instructors to promote best practices in writing instruction. Depending largely on contingent instructors devalues these students we serve. If we are willing to hire people at the last minute to teach under exploitative conditions, we are saying that that is all the planning and support that students deserve.

Eliana Osborn summarizes this reality of contingency in the title of her 2012 blog posting: "Faculty Working Conditions Are Student Learning Conditions." Eileen Schell also articulates this idea as early as 2002, when she writes, "quality writing instruction cannot happen when [contingent] faculty do not have quality working conditions" (183). Similarly, student learning and faculty culture are linked by Carol Rutz, William Condon,

Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty Ellen R. Iverson, Cathryn A. Manduca, and Gudrun Willett in their 2012 study, “Faculty Professional Development and Student Learning: What Is the Relationship?” Rutz et al. look at the effectiveness of faculty development generally and find that “the development of a culture that values ongoing learning about teaching, coupled with the development of skills that support reflective teaching based on observations of student learning, is as important as the individual lessons learned in a particular [faculty development] workshop” (47). Poor working conditions demoralize faculty and undermine this kind of culture.

A culture that values teaching and learning is essential for faculty development and graduate courses in teaching basic writing. A number of professional organizations have issued position statements in support. Sue Doe and Mike Palmquist note:

Professional organizations relating to English studies have published more than two dozen position statements [on contingent faculty], with the highest number coming from the Modern Language Association (MLA) and a steady stream of others from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Association of Departments of English (ADE), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), the Association of Writing Programs (AWP), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). (24)

These statements focus on working conditions, compensation, and shared governance. They also call for faculty development.

We might particularly consider recent position statements of the Two-Year College Association (TYCA) for guidance on faculty development and graduate courses in teaching basic writing. For instance, the “TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College” (Calhoon-Dillahunt, et al., 2016) argues for graduate courses and programs that provide professional development opportunities and community college partnerships with graduate programs (7). In addition, there is follow-up discussion in an entire special issue of *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (September 2017) on the theme of “Preparing Two-Year College English Teachers.”

Perhaps the factor that has most influenced my recent thinking about faculty development and graduate courses is the almost impossible challenge for basic writing faculty to find and enact a professional identity. A

key issue is time: how much time and energy is it realistic to ask for faculty development, especially of contingent faculty, those instructors who may be teaching many classes often at more than one institution, who may commute between sites or work another job? I hope to open a dialogue on these issues with this essay.

I am committed to identifying practical, doable methods of publishing and gaining visibility for pre-service and early basic writing professionals, endeavors that graduate students and overworked beginning faculty, especially contingent faculty, can actually accomplish and be motivated to finish, given the exhausting nature of their work. We need, for example, venues to spotlight teacher research or means to contribute to basic writing scholarship, such as abstracts for *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*, a Council on Basic Writing project, or other public bibliography. Early career instructors of basic writing quickly appreciate the reality of their positions, especially the time- and labor-intensive work of response. Too often such faculty may, by practical necessity, come to view basic writing as a step toward other kinds of academic work; yet if they are aware of ways to frame that work and make it visible, perhaps they will remain in the profession and commit to it. We need those with experience and financial stability (tenure track faculty and full-time instructors) to publicize, encourage, and support the professional efforts of early career faculty. See the appendix, “Gaining Visibility: Connecting through Public Conversations and Gaining a Voice,” for ideas.

Whatever ideas we come up with for enacting a professional identity and gaining visibility, these strategies must be specific and focused enough to complete within a relatively short period of time. Teaching-oriented contributions are especially valuable, such as collaborative teacher research projects or practical examples of how the theoretical ideas in a larger collaborative piece have played out in particular teaching sites. Such projects acknowledge that the survival of beginning and contingent faculty depends on everything working together to support both the reality of teaching and the need for visibility. Somehow, often within the reality of contingency, current and pre-service basic writing faculty must define a professional identity that can sustain them over the years.

I have no illusions about the difficulty of this challenge. Skyler Meeks, a 2017 student in my graduate class who had previously taught basic writing as contingent faculty, became in 2018 a full-time Coordinator of Academic Support services at Utah Valley University; he explained, “As an early career scholar, there’s not really a reason to have any more than a casual engagement

Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty with basic writing. I love teaching basic writing, and I'm a better teacher because of my time with those students, but it just isn't a prudent decision: it's not likely to sustain my career as a teacher."<sup>6</sup>

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

And so, what to do? As I consider these topics, I am left with more questions than answers:

- Respectful of our rich diversity as basic writing professionals, can we develop at least a broad consensus about the skills and abilities needed to teach basic writing, principles that will guide graduate courses or faculty development efforts and shore up our claim that basic writing is serious work?
- What exactly do we mean by "faculty development"?
- Is there a way to consider working conditions and faculty development together, perhaps by linking faculty working conditions to student learning conditions, and bringing them to public consideration?
- What opportunities are possible for defining and enacting a professional identity as basic writing instructors and creating visibility?

Let me sketch out some areas we might consider in response.

*Respectful of our rich diversity as basic writing professionals, can we develop at least a broad consensus about the skills and abilities needed to teach basic writing, principles that will guide graduate courses or faculty development efforts and shore up our claim that basic writing is serious work?* The critical work of articulating the kind of education and experiences that may be ideal for the teaching we do must acknowledge our differing educational backgrounds and teaching contexts; this effort will necessitate difficult conversations and require generous, patient listening, a process that will take time. Key stakeholders in this conversation are current basic writing professionals from a range of backgrounds, contingent faculty with little time for faculty development, graduate students who trust the field of basic writing to provide a quality and necessary background for teaching and research and making a life, and, most importantly, basic writing students themselves who depend on faculty for quality instruction.

*What exactly do we mean by "faculty development"?* That is, what specific teaching methods are essential to basic writing? A broad consensus about skills and abilities are essential to answer this question. I would identify,

for instance, demonstrations of drafts in process; active, critical reading methods; approaches for multi-lingual learners; knowledge of non-cognitive issues; ways to handle the response and assessment load of student papers, and creative, interesting practices to develop editing skills, among other approaches. Further, what generally applicable teaching methods might be useful in basic writing? We might consider active, “flip” the classroom teaching strategies or engage-the-community teaching strategies (through something like service learning) often offered by a college’s center for teaching and learning, as well as skill with digital platforms that support collaboration, as described above in my graduate course.

Faculty development also brings up the issue of who is involved, where, and for how long. Leaders might be experienced teachers who design and present material. Perhaps beginning faculty themselves should identify areas they wish to learn about, research, and then present their findings. There are also grant-funded projects, whether supported by public nonprofits or corporate entities, which may (or may not) be useful sources of faculty development. Another question is whether faculty development should be a function of textbook publishers. In what formats might we create faculty development opportunities? Some options include online courses, professional conferences and workshops, local short-term workshops or presentations, or continuing meetings over the course of a semester or year. Most importantly, how much time and energy for faculty development is it realistic to ask of people teaching many classes, often at more than one institution?

*Is there a way to consider both the pressing issue of working conditions and faculty development together, perhaps by linking faculty working conditions to student learning conditions, and bringing them to public consideration?* Any such effort depends on the collaborative, joint efforts of stakeholders. Thus, the goal of creating a community of basic writing professionals is critical; in addition, we must think widely about who shares common interests: professional organizations like College Composition and Communication, the Council on Basic Writing, the Two-Year College Association, the National Association for Developmental Education, the Accelerated Learning Program and similar projects like the California Acceleration Project, perhaps secondary English teachers, as well as teachers’ unions.

Joint efforts might focus on publicizing the working conditions of contingent faculty. Sometimes students are shocked when they learn how little their instructor is making and why their instructor cannot answer questions in a leisurely manner because she is rushing off to her next class on a different campus. Another option is to work collaboratively to create change through



Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty persistent, continuing efforts to shape policy within a state or professional group; for an instructive example, see Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Lloyd Duman on “relentless engagement” within the state of Idaho.

*What opportunities are possible for defining and enacting a professional identity as basic writing instructors and creating visibility?* The ideas in the appendix offer a starting point, and I look forward to learning other ideas readers may have; I hope that the creation of such a resource will be an ongoing project of Basic Writing as a field.

To begin to answer these questions, we must return to our primary reason for being: *what do we owe basic writing students of the future?* Our concern for students has been a motivating force throughout the history of basic writing and has drawn a richly diverse set of professionals, yet diversity can be seen as lack of special preparation or professional identity. By keeping students at the forefront of our thinking we may be able to develop some basic principles that undergird basic writing. Of course, every program and population of students differ, and this will be difficult, but the consequences of doing nothing may be worse: continued contingency and no time to even think about best practices.

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## **Notes**

1. According to the ALP website, colleges “around the country have adopted/adapted ALP, and six states have launched wide-scale ALP adoptions: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, and Virginia.”

Boise State University where I teach adopted the ALP approach in 2013. We worked with our partner community college, the College of Western Idaho (CWI), to develop this method in a collaborative grant funded project in 2013-2014. Other public Idaho institutions also adapted the ALP model at that time to fit their student populations. At Boise State, we previously offered a non-credit developmental writing course, the equivalent of three credits, followed by two required first-year writing courses. With the new model, a one-credit Writer's Studio (maximum nine students) was added to the first of the two required courses for students previously placed in basic writing. Students in the studio receive four graded credits for their work, while those not in the studio earn three graded credits. See Michas, Newberry, Uehling, and Wolford for details.

2. In the early 1980's, the *Journal of Basic Writing (JBW)* issued two theme issues on training teachers of basic writing, which reveal diverse perspectives on what might be done. See vol. 3, no. 2, 1981, and vol. 3, no. 4, 1984. Sarah D'Eloia, editor, in her introduction to the first issue, notes "fundamental differences in perception about what basic writing teachers really need" (1). Twenty years later, Thomas Reynolds, in "Training Basic Writing Teachers: Institutional Considerations," offers training strategies to build a local basic writing community within a larger institution.
3. In 2018, I retired from full-time teaching and created an alternative form of the digital portion of this course, revised just for faculty development. Current instructors can use it to prepare for teaching basic writing; in this form, the digital material becomes an online study tool that instructors can undertake at their own pace. Each instructor will also have a faculty mentor who they will meet with, observe in class (and observe other classes as well), and shadow on the job.
4. "Country Boys" can be viewed online, but I also ordered the videodisks for our library reserves; I found that during times of heavy use, it was difficult to see the video in a timely fashion. In 2017, some students objected to the "Country Boys" Frontline video, arguing that it reveals too much about individual people and their poverty; this criticism introduces the issue of how much we should know about potential students. I am considering the students' criticism and whether to drop such videos or search for other widely accessible digital materials offered by a mainstream group like Frontline, and, which like Frontline, were made for use in schools and offered with full pedagogical apparatus.

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5. In 2017, Bedford resources included *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*, 4th ed., editors, Chitralekha Dutttagupta and Robert Miller (2015); *Teaching Developmental Writing*, recent editions, editor, Susan Naomi Bernstein; and *Teaching Developmental Reading*, 2nd ed., editors, Sonya Armstrong, Norman A. Stahl, and Hunter Boylan.
6. Used with permission.

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## **Appendix: Resource List**

### **GAINING VISIBILITY: CONNECTING THROUGH PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS AND GAINING A VOICE**

#### **Council on Basic Writing (CBW)**

*Council on Basic Writing listerv (CBW-L)*: A listserv focused on basic writing and related issues. To subscribe: send an e-mail message to: [listserv@umn.edu](mailto:listserv@umn.edu). The content of the message should read subscribe CBW-L firstname lastname. For example, write subscribe cbw-l jane doe. Leave the subject line blank and remove your signature for this message. In response, you will receive e-mail confirmation of your subscription and instructions for sending future mail.

*Council on Basic Writing Blog*: Forum for discussion and information about basic writing policy, curriculum, news, issues, and classroom practice.

*Council on Basic Writing Resource Share*: Post teaching materials or search for ideas.

*Council on Basic Writing Facebook Group*: 1.2 K members as of October 2018.

*Basic Writing e-Journal (BWe)*: Peer-reviewed, online, open-access journal sponsored by the Council on Basic Writing; publishes scholarship on teaching and learning in various basic writing contexts.

*Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Basic Writing*: Abstracters and editors from the Council on Basic Writing; four editions as of October 2018; a free book and originally also digital.

#### **Other Opportunities**

*Composition Frequently Asked Questions (CompFAQs) Resources for Basic Writing*: Intermediary “publishing.” <http://compfaqs.org/BasicWriting/Home>



Faculty Development and a Graduate Course for Pre-Service and In-Service Faculty  
*Composition Pile (CompPile)*: Online search tool, offers projects for emerging professionals; Associate Editors are needed as CompPile moves into partnership with the WAC Clearinghouse, an open-access publishing site (May 2018). <https://wac.colostate.edu/comppile>

*Two-Year College English Association (TYCA)*: Position statements including 2016 statements on placement reform and two-year college faculty preparation, 2014 statement on developmental education reforms, and others.

*Teaching English in the Two-Year College (TETYC)*: Journal of the Two-Year College Association: publishes theoretical and practical articles on composition, developmental studies, and other topics.

*National Association for Developmental Education (NADE)*: Conferences, blog, web site, publications.

*Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), Community College of Baltimore County*: Yearly conference; bibliography, sourcebook.

*California Acceleration Project (CAP)*: Professional development network.

*The Journal of Basic Writing (JBW)*: A national refereed print journal founded in 1975 by Mina Shaughnessy, who served as the journal's first editor. *The Journal of Basic Writing* is published with support from the Office of Academic Affairs of the City University of New York. Web site and archives hosted by WAC Clearinghouse.

## **Blogs**

*Teacher-Scholar-Activist*: Award-winning blog, created in response to Patrick Sullivan's essay "The Two-Year College Teacher-Scholar-Activist," *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 2015.

*Literacy & NCTE*: The official blog of the National Council of Teachers of English—includes post-secondary issues.

*Teachers, Profs, Parents: Writers Who Care*: A reviewed blog, maintained by the Conference on English Education.

*College Composition Weekly: Summaries of Research for College Writing Professionals:* Weekly summary of composition related research essays—guest bloggers may contribute.

*Journal of Writing Assessment Reading List:* Brief book reviews on assessment.

*State Higher Education Policy Analyst for National Council of Teachers of English:* Post reports on higher education policy affecting English studies in your state, providing information for national, state, and regional policymaking.

*State or Regional Blogs:* Example: Nebraska Developmental Education Consortium (NDEC) Blog: Start a blog if none exists in your region.

### **More Ideas on What Established Faculty Can Do**

*Ask contingent or full-time two-year college faculty to speak* about teaching realities to a graduate class, as an individual or panelist, in person or through Skype. Little preparation involved: provides a short, focused way to gain visibility as a professional (Spiegel and Blaauw-Hara).

*Forward textbook review opportunities,* which usually offer honorariums, to early faculty.

*Suggest collaborative conference presentations and collaboratively written essays;* faculty with more time and experience should do much of the basic work. Perhaps contingent faculty can add a shorter section that still gains them authorship, such as a sidebar on the application of ideas in the essay to their teaching context.