THE CHANGING HORIZON OF COMPOSITION STUDIES: AN EXAMINATION

OF THE INFLUENCES OF COLLABORATIVE AND ONLINE PEDAGOGIES

ON FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE WRITING

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, SPEECH, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

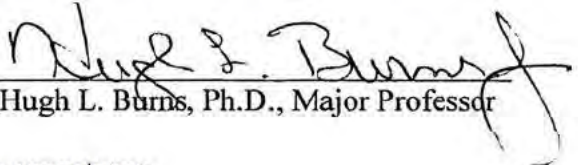GARY H. WILSON, B.A., M.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST 2011

June 9, 2011

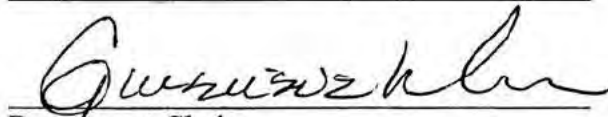To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Gary H. Wilson entitled "The Changing Horizon of Composition Studies: An Examination of the Influences of Collaborative and Online Pedagogies on First-Year College Writing." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Rhetoric.

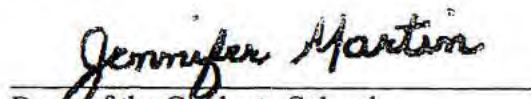_____
Hugh L. Burns, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

_____

_____

_____
Department Chair

Accepted:

_____
Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

To my wife, Cynda: thank you for your love, encouragement, and patience. Any positive benefits accruing from this study should honor you.

To the memory of my parents, Howard E. and Alyce V. Wilson: what incredible models of love, support, inspiration, and commitment your lives represented.

To my son, John, and daughter, Jennifer: you were continually in my thoughts as I researched and wrote this study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Hugh L. Burns, Ph.D., the chair of my committee. Dr. Burns' professional and personal *ethos* is exemplified by his daily actions in sharing his love for the field of rhetoric and his abiding dedication to all his students--demonstrated through his support, mentoring, zeal, faithfulness, persistence, enthusiasm, passion, patience, and even occasional cajoling. Dr. Burns personifies for me Geoffrey Chaucer's precept for the profession: "And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

I express my appreciation to the other professors on my committee—Dr. Russell Greer, Ph.D., and Dr. Guy Litton, Ph.D. I continue to benefit from the many insights in literature, literary analysis, rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and writing that Dr. Greer shared with me in his graduate classes. I am also fortunate to have Dr. Litton on my committee: his unwavering commitment to his students and his cultivation of an institutional environment of scholarship are felt throughout the academic community.

Additionally, I wish to thank Dr. Rene Paulson, Ph.D., for her insights in the design of online surveys and for her statistical expertise and mentoring. Thanks also to Dr. Tommy Boley, Ph.D., Emeritus, The University of Texas-El Paso   a gifted teacher of composition—who was willing to share his vast experience in teaching students *how to write*. I thank Dr. William Fueller, Ph.D., for sharing his helpful insights and

iv

experiences in digital instructional courseware and for allowing me to observe his online faculty training sessions.

Furthermore, I am thankful for the camaraderie of my extended "first-year writing family" of graduate teaching assistants. We not only shared office space, workstations, and food, but also shared our daily challenges, teaching methods, and aspirations in ways that made the doctoral journey more rewarding. The very best to each of you!

And, finally, I acknowledge the sovereignty of Christ in all aspects of my life. *Telestai.*

ABSTRACT

GARY H. WILSON

THE CHANGING HORIZON OF COMPOSITION STUDIES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCES OF COLLABORATIVE AND ONLINE PEDAGOGIES ON FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE WRITING

AUGUST 2011

Scholarship involving writing process theories and composition pedagogies undertaken in the last 25 years suggests that the writing-as-process model has experienced and will continue to experience significant change. The thesis statement of this dissertation argues that developments in the writing process over the last 50 years in composition pedagogy, as well as ongoing contemporary developments in collaborative learning and CMI, have transformed the writing process and first-year writing instruction to a progressively learner-centered and digital media-supported collaborative pedagogy. My dissertation's thesis advocates that composition pedagogy and the writing-as-process model is changing, due to the innovative influences of collaborative learning and online learning management systems. My research thesis facilitates an investigation that assesses the dynamics of writing theory, from the classical Greco-Roman period to the present, social learning theories, and the online digital media of Web 2.0 as they interrelate to facilitate, modify, and enhance college composition instruction. This study encompasses an extensive literature review, as well as replicable qualitative and quantitative studies.

These studies are implemented through first-year writing program directors' interviews and online surveys of first-year writing instructors and their students.

The conclusions and recommendations reveal that the changes occurring in composition pedagogy in American academe will continue at an ever-increasing pace. These changes will transform the landscape of college composition   the way first-year writing is taught, as well as the roles of instructor and student. Online course management systems and digital innovations will facilitate more collaboration in the writing classroom and will enhance all recursive phases of the writing-as-process model. This dissertation's conclusions suggest how the prevailing pedagogies of social constructivism and digital media can be strategically applied to improve students' writing skills. Specific pedagogical strategies are recommended as ways that writing program directors and instructors can use to more fully accommodate and exploit the challenges and opportunities awaiting them in the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

EXAMINING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING PROCESS THEORIES

Theories hatch pedagogies.

-Dr. Frank Sullivan, Ph.D., Professor of
English, Emeritus
Graduate Course in Bibliographical Studies (1974)
Loyola University of Los Angeles

Introduction: Scope of the Study's Investigation

Writing in his article, "The Case for Writing Studies as a Major Discipline,"

Charles Bazerman argues that composition is considered by numerous scholars as the

most pervasive and encompassing form of modern rhetoric (33-38). While some scholars

may argue that our society is increasingly moving toward a visual or "pictorial turn" in

human discourse (Mitchell 14-19), I contend that the written word will continue to unite

and inform millions of people living in our digitally-connected world. While the written

word will doubtlessly continue for centuries conveyed through varied and innovative

media, the pervasive influences of what is currently termed "New Media" and the digital

technologies of Web 2.0[1] will continue to modify the field of composition in new and

different ways. In so doing, these digital advancements will also change the scope and

direction of composition pedagogy and foster new theories of a "writing process" that can

be applied to teaching composition.

---

[1] "Web 2.0" is a term used to connote the contemporary "generation" of digital technologies and media, including the World Wide Web, that are now used throughout the world and in the first-year writing classroom.

1

Online discourse is now ubiquitous, a phenomenon generated by discourse communities segmented among numerous professional, academic, and social interests. As some contemporary scholars in the field of New Media emphasize, such digitally-centered discourse will not totally displace our teaching and learning of composition through words, sentences, and paragraphs. Rather, it will expand our recognition that composing messages for certain audiences will constitute digital forms that the words-on-page rhetorical structures cannot completely accommodate (Barber and Grigar 7-18).

Composition studies research undertaken in the first decade of this century reveals that the theoretical models and approaches instructors are using in college classrooms are changing and expanding. In "Key Questions for a New Rhetoric," Andrea Lunsford advocates that contemporary pedagogies are changing due to the growing influences of digital media and can be characterized as "deeply technologized, with orality, performance and delivery returning to the classroom" (Lunsford 16).

The generic label of a "writing process" has undergone changes not only in its meanings, but also in its applications to the instruction of composition over the last 100 years in American academe. Composition studies has now assumed an academic status that transcends the once internecine rivalry between the literary-formalist-traditionalists and the composition-rhetoricians in college English departments. As a contemporary field of serious academic inquiry, composition studies has grown beyond its original walls surrounding the humanities and is finding new roots in the fertile soils of other academic disciplines, such as the social sciences and computer studies (Young 91).

2

Organization of the Dissertation: Chapter Reviews

In chapter one, I conduct a literature review to identify and discuss the key developments regarding the pedagogy of writing-as-process. Since the phases of the writing process pedagogical model are inherently related to the five rhetorical canons (invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery), I will also examine how these canons are influenced over the last 100 years in U.S. college classrooms through composition pedagogies. This chapter sets the stage for my subsequent discussions in chapters two and three regarding the impact of evolving collaborative learning theories and computer-mediated instruction (CMI) on contemporary face-to-face (FTF) and online composition pedagogies.

Chapter two researches the literature regarding the increasing use in first-year writing of collaborative pedagogies and social learning theories, as well as assesses their impact on the writing process. Of particular interest in this chapter are the findings validating the degree to which currently evolving collaborative theories assume in supporting students' efforts to learn and enhance their writing skills.

Chapter three reviews scholarly research pertaining to the developments of CMI and their impact on writing pedagogies in the composition classroom. In this chapter, I investigate the key theories and strategies used in CMI (also interchangeably referred to as digital pedagogy and digital media) and assess how these contributions have impacted writing instruction. Several contemporary digital media, course management systems (LMS) and learning management systems (LMS) are critiqued regarding their

proficiencies in teaching writing as a process, supporting students' appreciation and use of the rhetorical canons, and facilitating collaborative learning for writing classes.

Chapter four describes and analyzes the qualitative research findings conducted through telephonic interviews with nine college writing program directors and one director of instructional technology at randomly selected institutions. The transcriptions of these interviews are subsequently analyzed to determine what they reveal regarding pedagogical objectives and strategies, writing program assessments, and the perceptions of writing program directors regarding contemporary issues and trends in composition pedagogy.

In chapter five, I provide detailed examinations of all responses accruing from the online confidential surveys emailed to first-year composition faculty and students at 115 randomly selected colleges and universities. I will analyze all findings and discuss how and in what ways these responses to the online surveys disclose meaningful findings about composition pedagogies. To foster the credibility of the online surveying process, I used the PsychData™ survey instrument that is endorsed by the University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP).

Chapter six provides detailed conclusions and correlates the findings in chapters one through three, as well as the qualitative and quantitative research findings described and analyzed in chapters four and five. The conclusions reached in this chapter will focus how specific computer-mediated courseware and pedagogical theories interrelate with the trends, issues, implications, and needs surfaced in the online interviews.

These conclusions also provide insights into the status of contemporary writing

instruction and how such instruction is influenced by contemporary pedagogical theories

and practices.

Additionally, this study demonstrates that conventional theoretical models of

teaching composition are changing as a result of the emergence of new theories and

digital technologies. Composition instructors should not be surprised how the current

influences in composition pedagogy—writing process theories, collaborative theories,

and digital pedagogy or computer-mediated instruction[2]—constitute what I call the

"theoretical axes," illustrated in Figure 1 below, that interrelate to produce the changes

we are now witnessing. To adequately analyze and understand these past, present, and

evolving influences on composition pedagogy, I designed my research strategy to analyze

the components of these triangular axes and how the "rhetorics" of each pedagogical axis

influence and continue to define and redefine the direction and scope of contemporary

composition pedagogy. The axis denotating writing process pedagogies encompasses the

evolution of "composition-rhetoric" that I trace to the classical Greco-Roman period in

my literature review. I investigate the axis signifying collaborative pedagogy through my

literature review, by analyzing the responses of faculty and students to my online

surveys, as well as syllabi of composition instructors at a large regional community

---

[2] Computer-mediated instruction or CMI is a term defined in this study as encompassing the use of any digital media (computer workstations, software, web courseware, and similar digital resources) used to teach composition in face-to-face and distance learning environments. While CMI is a succinct way of expressing such instructional resources and approaches, I may also use this term interchangeably with the term "digital" as do some scholars cited in this study. The term CMI is becoming synonymous with "digital instruction," as validated by my surveys of college writing program directors and by current articles published in online journals, such as in the online professional journal *Kairos*.

college. I examine CMI or digital pedagogy through the faculty and students' responses

to the online surveys, as well as through my own analyses of online learning management

systems courseware.
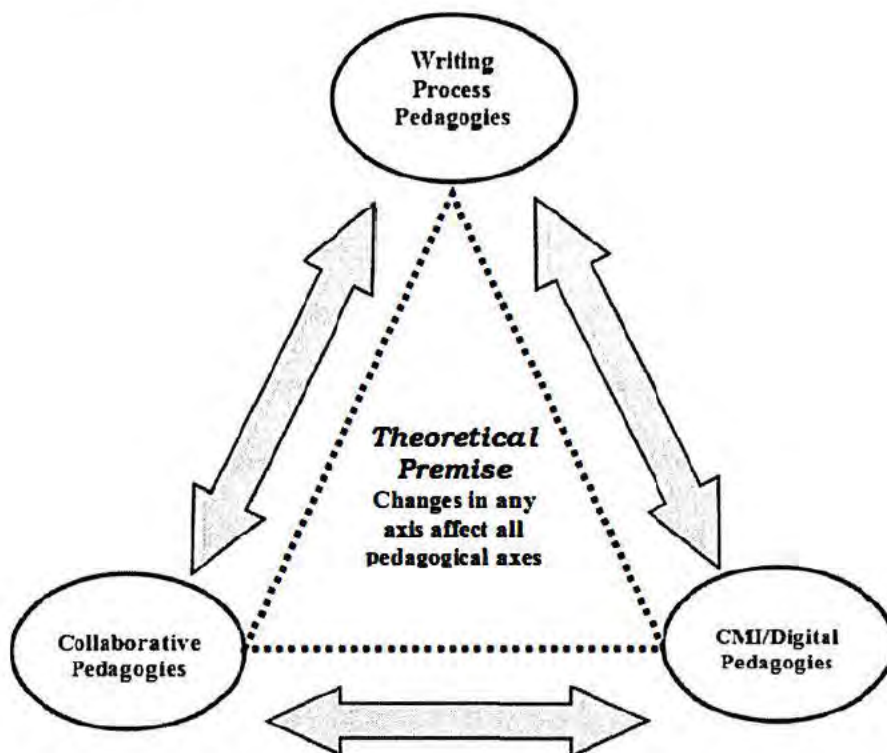
Fig. 1. The interrelated theoretical axes of composition pedagogies. Contemporary composition studies is a dynamic field due to the interrelationships of pedagogies and theories encompassing the writing process, collaboration, and digital or computer-mediated instruction.

In surveying the instructional practices at varied institutions, my research reveals

that college composition program directors often adopt a "best practices"[3] institutionally-

---

[3] "Best practices" is a term often associated with using varied or assimilated instructional approaches that prove to be effective over time and consistently meet the needs of writing instruction in differing contexts and environments. While the term experiences semantic "drift" from one academic or professional discipline and setting to the next, it has become associated with achieving desired learning outcomes with consistently effective results. From the viewpoint of composition pedagogy, the application of a "best

standardized model wherein instructors incorporate several pedagogical approaches and theories that will meld successfully to support a composition program's instructional objectives (Appendix A). One key reason driving such instructional standardization is the growing emphasis on program assessment. Institutional, governmental, and accrediting agencies each require program assessment data that influence how composition pedagogies are designed.

Using a triangular axis model to conceptually frame my dissertation's research enables me to also examine how changes in any one of the axes produces changes in one or two of the other axes. An important consideration worth noting is that scholars engaged in composition studies research should be mindful how they identify the where, when, and kinds of influences that effect change in the instruction of first-year writing. Moreover, I argue that long-term research competency in the field requires that scholars investigate how the use of digital technologies and collaborative practices influence the phases of the writing process as well as the rhetorical canons. For example, do digital media benefit some of the phases of the writing process more than others? This question was posed in my online faculty surveys, and the responses are illustrated and analyzed in chapter five of this study.

---

practices" approach may require that a first-year writing department privilege certain pedagogical theories over others in order to meet objectives and learning outcomes monitored and assessed at the departmental, institutional, or even accrediting agency level. Such approaches may also assimilate "what works best" from varied theoretical perspectives to accommodate a variety of needs: student writing improvement, institutional prerogatives, courses availabilities, institutional economic realities that determine teaching resources, classroom size, as well as the experience level of instructors.

The Dynamics of Change Influencing Composition Pedagogy

In introducing this research study, I foreground the views of several prominent scholars who maintain that those examining writing pedagogy can only fully appreciate the changing landscape of composition studies when they consider the dynamics of those key confluences, both within and without academia, that affect it (Sanchez 12).

Digital technology undeniably exerts a growing influence on how students learn and how instructors teach a variety of subjects in the contemporary college classroom. Recent scholarship in the field of composition pedagogy urges that digital media/CMI and collaborative pedagogies used in teaching the writing-as-process model require more detailed investigations of their influences on each stage of the writing process. In validating this impetus for more scholarship, Gail Hawisher, a strong supporter for using computers to teach writing, emphasizes in her essay, "Electronic Meetings of the Minds: Research, Electronic Conferences, and Composition Studies," that the development of digital media/CMI coincides with college instructors' pervasive orientation toward writing-as-process pedagogy and social constructivism[4] (Hawisher 81). According to Spitzer in his article, "Local and Global Networking: Implications for the Future," digital technology abets collaborative learning:

> Many teachers who have used computers in a process-based writing
>
> classroom have discovered, sometimes serendipitously, that computers

---

[4] Social constructivism (also interchangeably termed by scholars as "constructionism") is a concept that advocates the development of knowledge and writing skills through social interaction and collaboration in the writing classroom. Social constructivism and collaborative pedagogy are examined in detail in chapter two of this dissertation.

promote collaboration . . . . In an environment in which students write collaboratively, their writing becomes more meaningful to them and their efforts are more productive . . . . (59)

Scholars who question the positive effects of using computers in composition share concerns regarding CMI's contributions to collaborative pedagogy and teaching the writing process. These scholars suggest that digital media do not always help this process, but may inhibit it. Notably, Linda Myers-Breslin questions the generally-accepted positive benefits of student collaboration in CMI or digital environments. In her essay, "Technology, Distance, and Collaboration: Where are These Pedagogies Taking Composition?," she states that ". . . [w]e hope that students read what others have to say and convey their own ideas, forming a community of writers who write carefully and critique thoughtfully. But is this what is really happening?" As she emphasizes, ". . . [t]he terms community, collaboration, and conversation, when applied to the Internet, need more thorough consideration than most of us have given up to this point" (162). These comments highlight the problematic aspects of teaching composition and learning in digital collaborative environments. They clearly counter-argue any notions that all online and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning composition are always positive. In "Rescuing Community: Sociality and Cohesion in Writing Groups," David Foster makes a similar viewpoint that collaborative pedagogy experiences its share of critics: "In seeking pedagogical community . . . writing teachers too often gloss over or deny the reality of competing voices . . . . The critics assert that community, as presently conceived and practiced in writing classrooms, is inherently inequitable and oppressive"

9

(Foster 2). These scholars' perspectives converge around the notion that while digital media facilitates collaboration in teaching the writing-as-process model, further assessment is required to validate the pluses and minuses of using these pedagogies.

What is important to the academy—and to this research study—is the assessment of how and in what ways the interdependent dynamics of CMI and collaborative writing strategies impact the writing-as-process model. As a composition program director of a large southwestern university noted during a recent interview with me:

> ". . . our writing program philosophies in our [English] department are becoming increasingly linked to needs within the university and outside the university . . . the various needs of the university's academic departments with designated "writing intensive" courses will require that we [composition instructors] teach basic composition in ways to satisfy their varied and changing requirements . . . . From my perspective, I sense composition program directors in many colleges and universities will need to become increasingly sensitive to the interdisciplinary needs of their faculties, the cultural diversities of their students, and also to those [needs] in the outside workforce community. (Appendix A)

In this present-day era of innovative digital technology, known as Web 2.0, my research investigates the premise that composition pedagogy in first-year writing is changing due to the confluence of digital technologies and collaborative practices in the classroom. Importantly, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, composition

instructors are increasingly realizing that these dynamics affecting their classrooms will require appropriate adaptations to assure their pedagogies are relevant to the times and the culture. Perhaps, in the prior sentence, I should designate "culture" in the plural sense, because the impact of students from diverse cultures creates challenges that continue to shape the teaching of college composition.

The field of college composition is *changing in obvious and subtle ways*. Composition instructors continue to learn from the ever-changing dynamics of their classrooms that reflect their students' varied ideologies and multicultural norms. Linda Woodson emphasizes in "Imaginative Literature: Creating Multicultural Conversations in the Composition Classroom" that instructors should facilitate teaching that is more meaningful and learning environments that are more relevant to students' contemporary ideologies. (Woodson 187-192). *Relevancy*[5] is a term that is increasingly found in the lexicon of composition pedagogy scholarship in the twenty-first century.

---

[5] While a textbook definition of *relevancy* would suggest that composition pedagogies are relevant to the degree they are "appropriate" for students' needs and requirements, I would enhance and expand such a definition by using specific criteria. First, I suggest that relevancy connotes a capacity for adapting and using instructional resources that produce effective student writing skills over time. Sometimes, the latest trends in teaching are just that—"trends." New is not always better; however, using only tried and true methods to the exclusion of innovative ones can be just as ineffective as embracing every trend or fad. Second, I advocate that relevancy should possess some predictive value about student writing skills outcomes encompassing past, present, and future teaching approaches. Teaching methods that worked 20 years ago may not be as effective as ones that are more current. Instructional practices need to be systematically and periodically evaluated to assure their ongoing relevancy. Likewise, instructors should not just continue to teach first-year or basic writing in a "vacuum" wherein they are oblivious to the changes impacting their pedagogies that are occurring inside and outside academia. And, third, I emphasize that relevancy, as one important indicator of teaching and learning effectiveness, should privilege feedback and assessment mechanisms whereby teachers, instructors, and college administrators can contribute to, better understand, and evaluate "what works" in teaching composition in contemporary college environments. By framing the concept of relevancy within these parameters, I believe it can be used and adapted more intelligently and effectively.

11

Relevancy is facilitated by instructors' awareness of the requirements for flexibility and sensitivity in designing assignments that enable students to write about topics that tap into their cultural attitudes, perspectives, and backgrounds (Yancey, "The Plural Commons" 384-88). Relevancy is also one helpful guideline to assess the effectiveness of contemporary composition pedagogies practiced in classrooms that are comprised of diverse college student demographics. I hold to the belief that relevancy is a notion that also signals if change is needed to meet evolving student aptitudes and learning patterns in the composition classroom (Prince). While the concept of relevancy should not be considered the single most important indicator of pedagogical effectiveness, it should be considered as one key aspect to be used in assessing teaching and learning practices in the composition classroom.

Research Focus and Methodology

In considering the parameters and scope of my research, I designed a methodology that assesses the rhetorics of composition pedagogy through four principal avenues of investigation: 1). a literature review of published scholarship on composition pedagogies and writing processes; 2.) primary research undertaken through online surveys disseminated to composition faculty at 115 colleges and universities; 3.) telephonic and in-person interviews with composition program directors of 10 public and private institutions; and, 4.) online surveys of students in first-year writing courses at the same institutions noted in item 2.

The thesis statement of this dissertation argues that developments over the last 50 years in composition pedagogy, as well as ongoing contemporary developments in collaborative learning and CMI, have transformed first-year writing instruction to a collaborative student-centered and digital media-supported pedagogy. This central research thesis fundamentally advocates that composition instruction is evolving, because of the developments in collaborative learning and digital technology, to accommodate instructional pathways that integrate social learning, digital media, and learning management systems. Conceptualized in this manner, my research thesis facilitates an investigation that actually assesses the development, changes, and influences encompassing collaborative, digital/CMI, and writing process pedagogies over the last 50 years. My dissertation's thesis also encompasses the investigation of five key research questions:

1. What approaches and theories do first-year composition instructors at colleges and universities follow to facilitate writing-as-process instruction?

2. What are the most prevalent changes and trends occurring in first-year writing at these institutions?

3. What are the predominant contemporary CMI and collaborative writing pedagogies used by college composition instructors?

4. What are the predominant digital media/CMI currently being used in face-to-face (FTF) and in distance learning online instructional environments? As a corollary question, how do these digital media influence writing process pedagogy?

5. As validated by the instructors and students who responded to this study's online surveys, what instructional needs and training in CMI and collaborative writing strategies would be necessary?

In addition to the key research questions noted above, there are also important *assumptions* that affect my research topic. Following are the key assumptions of this research study:

1. Students' recursive writing activities undertaken during all phases of the writing process enable them to improve their writing skills.

2. The writing process model with all of its phases (prewriting, composing, revising/editing, and proofreading) is a process that students are instructed to use to enhance their writing skills.

3. Collaborative activities undertaken by students during the writing process are helpful and contribute to positive learning experiences with peers as well as help improve writing skills.

4. Digital technologies, and the learning and teaching resources they provide, continue to enhance both the pedagogy of composition and the application of writing skills by students.

My examination of this topic through the research methodology outlined above allows me to corroborate the findings of online faculty and student surveys with the findings obtained from the qualitative research used in personal interviews of writing program directors (WPD). In turn, these findings can be further corroborated with the findings and assessments I obtain from my literature review. The corroborative strategies

14

noted in Figure 2 below facilitate correlation with the literature review and surveys, thereby enhancing the validity of my research conclusions.

Corroborative Research Strategies

Literature Search
Collaborative Pedagogies

Literature Search
Writing Process Pedagogies

Literature Search
Digital Pedagogies

Qualitative Research
Interviews of Writing Program Directors

Quantitative Research
Faculty & Students' Online Surveys
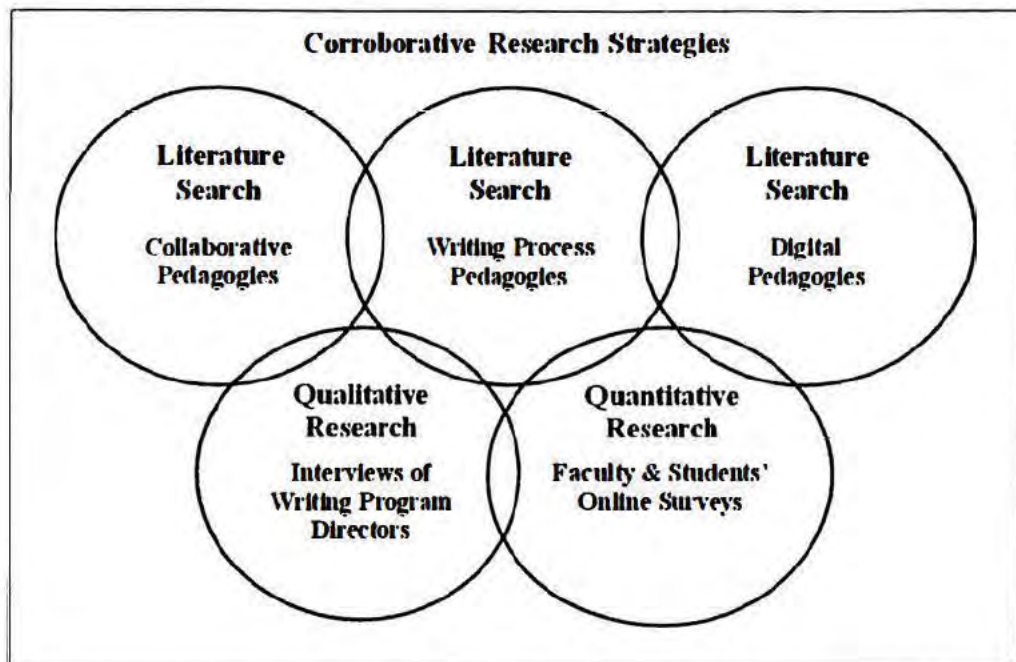
Fig. 2. Corroborative research strategies. The design of this study's research strategy, comprised of "cross-checking" approaches, helps assure the overall research process is thorough and produces valid findings.

My research methodology design is conceived in this manner to assist the analysis and assessment of meaningful survey responses to help advance this study's credibility and validity.[6] Its design promotes the accuracy of findings pertaining to questions and

---

[6] The validity of a research study demonstrates whether the research strategy and its findings truly measure what it was intended to measure, as well as its degree of accuracy and thoroughness. In other words, does the research instrument (e.g., a questionnaire) allow the researcher to hit "the bull's eye"? Researchers foster validity by carefully specifying their research objectives, determining their audiences, their sampling strategies, and also the ways to corroborate their sampling or survey findings. This is the basic approach undertaken in this study. Without validity, a research study lacks overall credibility. To foster the credibility and validity of my research methodologies undertaken in this study, I worked closely with Dr. René Paulson, statistician in the University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, while implementing and analyzing my quantitative and qualitative research phases. *Methods and Methodology in*

15

topics generated from the primary research obtained from key audience segments of faculty, students, college composition program directors, and the literature reviews' findings. The overall objective of my research methodology is to accurately identify and assess findings obtained from each of these segments so that accurate analyses and conclusions are derived regarding changes in the three theoretic pedagogical axes shown in Figure 1. I will expand upon my research methodology in more detail as I describe and analyze my study's findings in chapters four, five, and six.

I believe that research in the field of composition studies should be considered only complete when it is examined in the crucible of the composition classroom where theories find their testing and application (praxis) with varying students and instructors in diverse learning environments. Educational research theorists John Best and James Kahn echo this precept in their co-authored 10th edition of *Research in Education*:

> The researcher would achieve little of practical value if . . . relationships were valid only in the experimental setting, and only for those participating. External validity is the extent to which the variable relationships can be generalized to other settings, other treatment variables, other measurement variables, and other populations. (171)

Composition Research, edited by Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan, was consulted as an excellent text for appreciating how to design and use research methodologies in composition research.

16

Initial Considerations: Composition Theory and Praxis in the Classroom

One important caveat merits attention before proceeding further in my literature review on the development of the writing process in this chapter. This caveat recognizes that college composition instructors (a group to which I belong), who are concerned with helping students become better writers, are inclined to be pragmatic. Speaking candidly, I argue that composition instructors lean toward teaching strategies and suggestions that they can adopt immediately to improve their students' writing skills. Once these teaching strategies are adopted, and instructors develop a level of comfort in using them, they tend to be very reluctant to relinquish them for newer ones. Pragmatism in pedagogy is a worthy objective, I argue, as long as it does not become an end unto itself. Based upon my 12 years of teaching first-year composition alongside my peers, I believe these instructors are constantly vigilant in their pursuit of methods to cure their students' writing ills. This commendable trait sometimes contends impatiently with implementing meaningful research findings that substantiate innovative composition pedagogies. Such research activities might seem, to the over-worked graduate teaching assistant, as "pedantic obstacles" that impede more relevant or results-oriented teaching approaches in the writing classroom.

As an instructor of composition, I visualize that teaching college composition in the present day is becoming an increasingly challenging undertaking due to the dynamics and influences occurring inside and outside the classroom that affect instructors and students alike.

To support this assertion, I reiterate a prevalent question that surfaces from instructors in composition programs and in other academic departments as well: "What should be the purpose of teaching composition in the college curriculum?" After posing this question (and many department chairs and composition program directors doubtlessly do), they then encounter a plethora of needs, solutions, and opinions from college faculty. Answers to this question reveal there are growing needs that are more complex than many instructors initially assume (Darrell 85-93).

Each new academic year brings increasing challenges for composition instructors regarding their pedagogies. Over the last decade, I have observed how my peers have labored to help first-year college writers overcome their ingrained perceptions and attitudes that uphold writing as a *product-oriented activity*, that mechanical correctness is the true measure of effective writing, and that they should write to "please" their solitary instructor-evaluator audiences. Augmenting these recurrent issues confronting instructors and students in the composition class are the expressed views of college professors originating from a variety of academic disciplines. In a recent opinion survey of college faculty members in varied disciplines, 44 percent of the surveyed faculty responded that their students are *ill-prepared* for the level of writing required for college level-work (Sanoff). Such research studies should serve to redouble the efforts of first-year writing directors and instructors so that they are committed to teaching a process of writing that will help students succeed in their academic writing and even beyond their college careers. To reveal how first-year college pedagogy has developed into its current

approaches in the college classroom, the following literature review starts at its very beginning and traces its roots to the present era.

The Classical Origins of Composition and the Writing Process

My review of the literature shows that Aristotle and Quintilian's rhetorical schema, appropriated in following centuries by writing teachers for composition instruction, entail students following the sequence of the five rhetorical canons—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Importantly, however, students in the Roman academies were also instructed to recursively[7] revise their written texts and "re-visit" each of the canons as a part of their *progymnasmata*[8] exercises (Hagaman 22-27). In all of these academic exercises, students are encouraged to challenge and revise the original written text to improve its clarity and its impact on an audience. Quintilian writes in his *Institutes of Oratory* that none of these activities should produce ". . . mere

---

[7] Recursive activity or recursion is a term used in composition pedagogy to signify the dynamics of repetitive composing/revising and creative interactions engaged in by a writer between any or all phases of a writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting/composing, revising, proofreading, etc.) at any time, in any frequency, and in any order. In its contemporary usage, recursion undertaken in a writing process does not accommodate any notion of writing as a linear progression of stages or steps which a writer must sequentially complete to produce a final product. Recursive activity in composing is not only individualistic, but also accommodates peer and group collaboration at any point in the writing process. Recursion fundamentally avows that all phases of the writing process are interactive and can be "re-visited" or accessed as the writer develops his or her ideas and written text. Jill Fitzgerald's *Towards Knowledge in Writing: Illustrations from Revision Studies* provides an excellent examination of recursive revision in writing.

[8] *Progymnasmata* were the academic exercises undertaken in the trivium that Greek and Roman students practiced in learning the rhetorical rudiments of discourse. These exercises were also used throughout the European Middle Ages and revived in the Renaissance as part of the classical trivium. Progymnasmata foreground recursive revision since they require students to follow the principle of repetitive practice and improvement of oral and written discourse. The progymnasmata teach key precepts of classical rhetoric, including the three genres of discourse (epideictic, forensic, and deliberative), and the five rhetorical canons. George Kennedy's *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* provides excellent insights into the writing and revision exercises practiced by students in the academies.

19

passive reproduction, but to rival and vie with the original in expressing the same thoughts" (X.5.5).

Quintilian's pedagogical views, as well as those found in the precepts of contemporary composition pedagogy, focus on the writer's key objectives to write more clearly in order to improve the initial attempt or draft of a prepared speech or text. As students advance in their composing experiences, the extent to which they are able to "compete" with the original text should also improve, according to Quintilian. In fulfilling this process, students were required to read their own work critically, revise it, and then read their compositions aloud to others in the class. This pedagogical approach facilitates students being essentially their own critics and editors. According to Quintilian's notions, a student should revise what he has written (X.5.1). Because students were required to complete these activities of the progymnasmata, Quintilian's approach clearly encourages the recursive actions of composing and revising in a writing process—not merely a linearly-sequenced end-stage product approach that students used to emulate a model. Based on Quintilian's progymnasmata, such activities impact the composing activities of a writing-as-product model *and* a writing-as-process model by accommodating these two pedagogical approaches. Basically, students fulfilled writing-as-product by applying and completing the five canons of rhetoric as stages in their compositions. However, these students also engaged in writing-as-process when they *revised their own texts to improve them*. They also did some of this revision work in a

collaborative manner and not just in individual isolation. By reading their texts aloud to the class, their writing could benefit from the views of their classmates and instructors.

In also consulting Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*, I discovered that rhetoric does not just provide the means to produce a finished product; it is also inherently a process (Bk I, Parts I and II). Aristotle's classical model of discourse entails a five-phase schema that enables a writer to follow standardized activities (i.e., the rhetorical canons) to help generate written discourse. The finished product that is so often prioritized is also a function of the successful adherence to the recursive process of invention (thinking and discovering), composing, organizing, and revising. However, one could objectively counter-argue that there are elements of both writing-as-process and writing-as-product that originate from the classical rhetorical exercises.

The nature of successful composition instruction fundamentally requires, in my opinion, that instructors should not only teach students to write effectively to complete their assigned compositions, but also to teach them *how* to compose applying the recursive phases in the writing-as-process model. To achieve this end, writing instruction can be conceived of as both a journey and a fulfillment of a process. While my comments may seem to tactfully "tie everything together into a neat package," the following findings and their discussions reveal how the pedagogies of a linear end-stage product model and a recursive process model evolved in American college composition classrooms.

Follow the Rules: Nineteenth-Century Composition Instruction in American Academe

College composition instruction in U.S. colleges and universities has not always been considered by scholars, instructors, and English departments as a process that encourages recursive revision. As Robert Connors' scholarship reveals in "Grammar in American College Composition," first-year writing in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century American colleges was originally instructed from the perspective of a *linear end-stage product model* (11-13). This pedagogical approach was instructed and adopted progressively in the English departments' curriculums of most American universities and colleges. Its pedagogical approach emphasized that students must follow a linear sequence of composing, a strategy some professors believed emphasized Aristotle, and Quintilian's sequential order of the rhetorical canons used to develop discourse. This early adoption by American colleges of the five canons as *linear elements* that must be completed in a progressive sequence surfaces yet another fundamental irony in my research. The literature review highlights that the first composing models used in American college composition classes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were clearly product-oriented and linearly-staged because of their *heavy pedagogical emphasis on style and eloquence*. The product model acquired its name principally due to its focus on students' finished writing products, such as compositions, reports, and research papers. This orientation resulted from the theoretical and pedagogical prerogatives of scholars who followed the prescriptive rhetoric-composition model adopted by English departments in several key universities during this time, such as Harvard College (Connors 11-13).

As James Berlin and Albert Kitzhaber note in their respective examinations of nineteenth century composition instruction in the U.S., a composing model, emphasizing *linear stages* to be fulfilled by student-writers, that focused on an end-stage *product*, was adopted by numerous U.S. colleges (Berlin 58-67; Kitzhaber 11-71). This approach, with very few modifications, strongly guided the instruction of basic composition in the later decades of the nineteenth century, as well as in the first five decades of the twentieth century. To highlight the linear-stages and pedagogy inherent in a model that privileges a product orientation, I visually interpreted these activities in Figure 3 below. Note the roles that instructor, student, and handbook fulfill in a product-focused pedagogy. Also, note that this pedagogical model demonstrates that students and their instructors engaged in *minimal contact* pertaining to their compositions both inside and outside the classroom. Instructor-student contact usually occurred during the time students were in lecture-type classes and *after* their written compositions were evaluated according to the instructional norms of that period (Kitzhaber 15-70). Because of this limited instructor-student contact, discussion between instructor and student about their compositions, and the writing process itself, was minimal or entirely missing, a situation I examine more thoroughly in the subsequent literature reviews in this chapter.
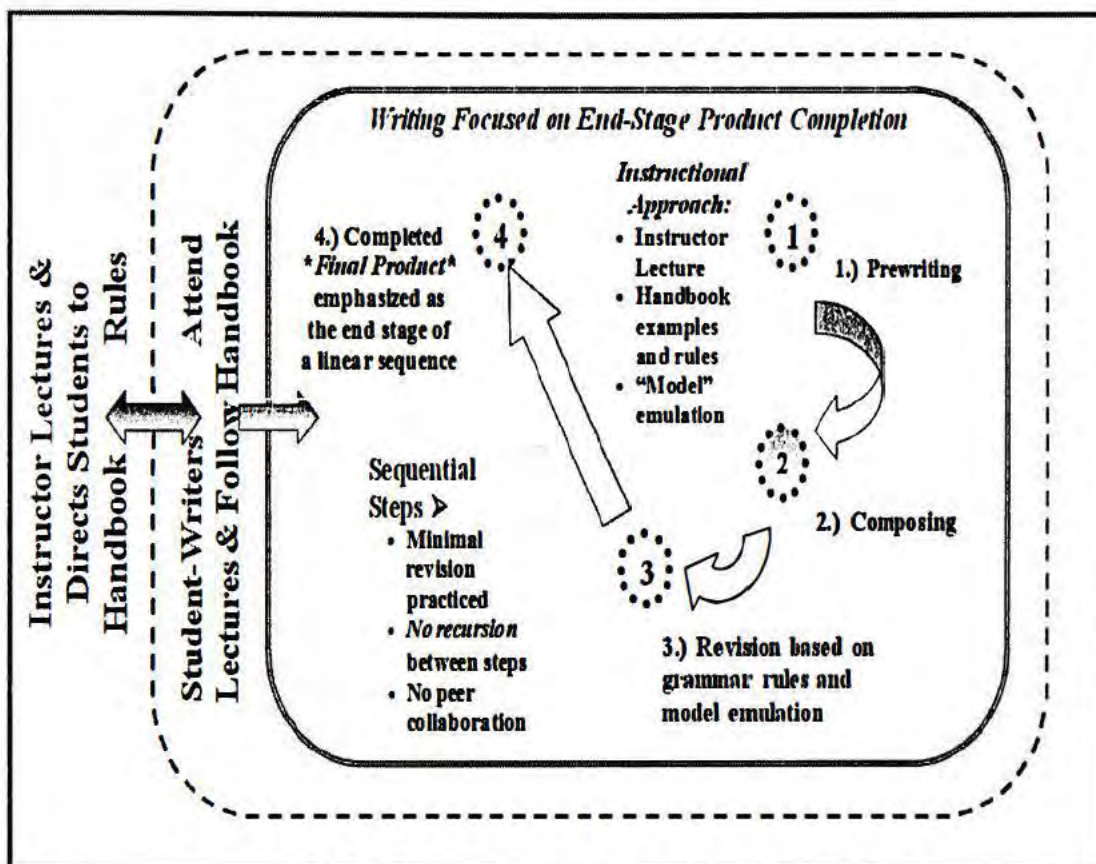
Fig. 3. Visual interpretation of a nineteenth-century end-stage product pedagogy. This figure depicts the processes and stages of an end-stage product model used in many U.S. colleges beginning in the late 1800s and continuing through the mid-twentieth century.

The illustration above depicts the dynamics of instructor and students, as well as designated stages of students' composing and revising based on completing a predetermined form, model, or mode of writing. Fundamentally, this graphic representation of a basic end-stage product model accommodates no student peer collaboration, minimal prewriting, and emphasizes the student's sequential completion of linear stages that lead to the final product or finished composition.

In the linear end-stage product model, the communicative and learning relationship between instructor and student privileges *instructor-centered pedagogy*; there is no provision for recursive revision. In lecture-type teaching environments that were predominant in colleges during that era, there was very little opportunity for students to interact with their teachers on assigned compositions, particularly before they were submitted for evaluation.

As Kitzhaber notes in his *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1990*, there was no discernible scholarly or pedagogical attention focused on writing-as-process during most of the nineteenth century and into the initial decades of the twentieth century (13-71). College writing instruction in America during this period could be accurately characterized by instructor-centered lectures, students' written critiques of major literary works, students' memorization and application of the rules of grammar and rhetoric (style, arrangement, and memory were emphasized), workbook exercises, and students' practice exercises in writing sentences, paragraphs, and essays on specified topics (Connors, "Grammar in American College Composition" 3-20). Another key textbook published during this era expounding the rules-based end-stage product model is Richard Green Parker's *Aids to English Composition*. It was published in 1863 and used throughout the remaining decades of the nineteenth century. Parker's text provides indisputable evidence concerning the pedagogical emphasis on usage and an end-stage product model orientation instructed in schools and colleges of that era (18-99). I was able to locate and read a first edition copy of Green's book in digital format, which

afforded me the opportunity to appreciate just how much emphasis was placed on stylistic issues to the detriment of teaching a writing process during the later decades of the 1800s and early 1900s.

Tracing first-year pedagogy of key U.S. institutions of higher learning during the latter 1800s, Berlin's research shows that composition instructors primarily evaluated their students' writing based on correct language (grammatical) usage or "correctness," and a product-focused approach often identified as a central feature of what was once labeled as "current-traditional" composition instruction (59-69). What is often termed by composition studies scholars as "current-traditional rhetoric" is essentially a composition pedagogy that evolved in the late nineteenth century and was prevalent in U.S. college classrooms until the early 1960s. Beginning in the 1960s, this composition pedagogy was increasingly challenged by theoretical and pedagogical approaches started even decades earlier (Connors, *Composition- Rhetoric* 15). Current-traditional rhetoric is termed by Berlin and others as a theoretical fusion of "British New Rhetoric" (strongly influenced by the rhetorical and compositional theories of George Campbell, Hugh Blair, Herbert Spencer, and Richard Whately) and modifications of Greco-Roman classical rhetoric. It circumscribed the pedagogical approach that characterized American first-year writing from the late 1800s through the first several decades of the twentieth century (Connors, *Composition Rhetoric* 4-31).

Writing in her book, *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric,* Patricia Crowley notes that this product-focused pedagogy was founded on what she calls the "formalist" elements of written texts, such as grammatical correctness

26

and logical organization. Crowley further explains in her book that the prominent late nineteenth-century Harvard College Boylston Chair Professors of Oratory and Rhetoric—Adams Sherman Hill, Francis Child, and Edward Channing—followed the precepts of the so-called British New Rhetoric and adapted it with their own views of classical rhetoric to formulate an end-stage product pedagogy (234-48). This composition pedagogy spread to other American universities and colleges and progressively became the predominate pedagogy practiced in undergraduate composition classrooms.

In his 1978 article, "Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention," Richard Young emphasizes that the features of late nineteenth-century pedagogical approaches exemplify the *end-stage product*:

> The emphasis [is] on the composed product rather than the composing process . . . [the] analysis of discourse [is categorized] into description, narration, exposition, and argument; . . . [there is a] strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis) . . . . (31).

As Connors also stresses in one of his published studies on the subject, composition pedagogy of the nineteenth century was very codified and structured. It was ". . . characterized by a . . . love for lists, rules, and laws . . . ." (Connors, "Static Abstractions and Composition" 356). During this era, most institutions of higher learning privileged the critical analysis of canonical (well-known "classical") texts and excluded instruction encompassing rhetorical approaches to writing (Berlin 61-70).

27

A notable consequence of this focus on an end-stage and rules-based schema that influenced nineteenth-century American college composition pedagogy was the students' requirement to *memorize grammar rules*. Such activity was ironically considered conducive to developing mental discipline (Woods 22-23). Accordingly, grammar drills associated with this pedagogy became entrenched in college composition courses. As John Brereton observes in his study of college composition studies in the nineteenth century, first-year composition *devolved* to a pedagogy of prescriptive rules with a focus on the efficiencies of instruction (Brereton 10).

With very few exceptions, American college composition courses began adopting a *product-oriented and rules-based pedagogy* as presented in the British style guides and handbooks in the middle and late 1800s. In his *English Composition and Rhetoric*, published in 1867, British scholar Alexander Bain emphasized the need for a type of "mechanical clarity" that by itself would create an audience's appreciation of a text's meaning if it were presented plainly enough (148-49). Bain's theoretical premise argued for clarity of style within every section of a piece of writing (from introduction to conclusion), by asserting that "[e]ach paragraph has a plan dictated by the nature of the composition . . . every pertinent statement has a suitable place; in that place, it contributes to the general effect; and, out of that place, it makes confusion" (142). According to Bain, the arrangement of paragraphs discloses the meaning of written discourse: ". . . confining of each paragraph to a distinct topic avoids some of the worst faults of composition" (142). Importantly, Bain's book also outlines a modes-based linear end-stage product approach to teaching writing, in which students were required to follow the

prescriptive rules inherent in narrative, descriptive, expositional (definitional), and persuasive models for composing. Subsequently, this modes-based pedagogy was used and expanded upon by prominent American composition scholars and handbook authors (Connors, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse," 443-51).

British writer Herbert Spencer noted in his 1892 text, *The Philosophy of Style*, the theory of "economizing" written expression with the intended purpose to better hold an audience's attention in every section or part of a composition. In discussing an approach to composition, Spencer advocated the use of "direct style" where writing imparts ". . . each thought into the mind step by step with little liability to error" (1). Essentially, Spencer theoretized that all discourse should be transmitted clearly, plainly, and as efficiently (economically) as possible. He believed that if these guidelines were followed, without the inclusion of superfluous ideas or sentences, clarity would then result. Spencer further notes in his book that writing should be viewed as ". . . a *mechanical apparatus* (emphasis added) . . . the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced" (9).

Harvard College and Boylston Chair Professor Adams Sherman Hill effectively incorporated into the curriculum the principles of the type of rhetoric emphasized in the British style guides and handbooks of the 1800s. The rhetoric of this period stressed style and eloquence. It also reflected Spenser's notion of "economical composition," and Bain's concept of "mechanical arrangement" and modes-based composing. Hill's *The Foundations of Rhetoric*, published in 1892, was comprised of over 300 pages that were classified into sections on word use, sentence construction, and paragraph construction.

Its basic thesis argued that college students' writing skills would improve if they mastered the basic parts of grammar (Hill 2-23).

The significant outcome of the successive adoption by American colleges in the late 1800s of predominantly Bain, Spencer, and Hill's published writings was the institutionalizing of a composition pedagogy that viewed student composition as *finalized products that should be structured logically and eloquently through correct grammar and style.* This American belletristic-based composition pedagogy provided the processes and forms that instructed several generations of college-trained writers who could analyze literature with stylistic panache, but lacked the rhetorical skills necessary for invention and the important utility of communicating successfully with audiences (Connors, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse" 443-51). Bain, Spencer, and Hill's emphases on stylistic forms and correct usage were included in most of the American college writing handbooks of that era. As Connor's research on the pedagogy during this era in academia reveals, the dogmatic insistence on style and usage rules inevitably created a situation where the evaluative criteria for student compositions were based solely on the classroom instructor's correlation of the final product with the prescribed usage and handbook style rules.

Repercussions of Rules-based Nineteenth-Century Pedagogy on Composition

The privileging of mechanical correctness as the *sine qua non* in first-year college composition, beginning in the late 1800s, creates tremendous implications for many decades regarding the evolving direction in basic college composition instruction and the writing process. Based on the preceding scholars' contributions that facilitate insights

30

into nineteenth-century American composition instruction, this scholarship highlights that correctness and prescriptive grammar rules made teaching composition perfunctory since the focus was on assessment and not on instructing students how to write through a learnable process. In this pedagogical environment, composition instructors could seemingly facilitate all their student's evaluations with red ink corrections and annotated references to page and section numbers in a writing handbook of rules (such as Professor Parker's 1863 handbook cited above). While this prescriptive approach to teaching and assessing writing created time efficiencies for instructors, it generated unguided and, most likely, non-productive activities for students. This pedagogy prompted students to find and then interpret usage and style rules on their own (see Kitzhaber 190-196).

The zenith of absurdity of this rules-based approach to teaching and learning composition manifests itself in an American textbook published in 1907. In that year, Edwin Campbell Woolley's *Handbook of Composition[:] A Compendium of Rules Regarding Good English* contained 350 rules and their explanations.

As one entry in Wolley's *Handbook*, "Literary Ornament, Section 14, advises students:

> Note. — Literary ornament is good when it is attractive and appropriate. But the writer who uses such expressions as those in the foregoing list or those mentioned in Rule 16 uses ornament that is displeasing; and the writer who drags such expressions into a matter-of-fact context, where any ornament is incongruous, commits a double offense against good taste. (7).

I can imagine the reactions of students who, intent on completing their compositions, were made to contend with similar guidance provided in their handbooks. What were the definitions or standards that first-year writing students were to apply for the criteria of "attractive," "appropriate," and "good taste"?

A rules-based, end-stage product pedagogy produced inherent liabilities in students' abilities to learn writing skills and practice them. From a practical perspective, this pedagogy would make composing difficult for many students since they were expected to memorize and apply the rules of English grammar and their numerous exceptions and irregularities. This aspect alone presupposes that students would be able to engage in grammatical memorization and apply it in their compositions apart from any classroom instruction. This instructional approach also begs the question, "What should students do when they have questions?" When such questions or issues occurred in students' "interpretations" of grammatical rules (such as that cited above from Wolley's *Handbook*), they had to defer to the teacher's own authoritative "interpretation."

As Connors research reveals, the lecture approach to instruction would not necessarily provide critical instructor support during important times when the students might need such guidance (Connors, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse," 443-51). When composition instruction prioritizes mechanical correctness as the most important criteria for measuring student writing effectiveness, it concurrently reduces the instructor's scope of writing instruction in ways that mitigate the teaching of basic writing. Importantly, such instruction emphasizing prescriptive usage and adherence to modes practically diminishes creativity in the writing process and also hampers the

32

invention (prewriting) phase of writing. Furthermore, a diminished role of the composition instructor inevitably occurs. The instructors' teaching writing to their students becomes secondary to the efficiencies of grading compositions and the implicit notion that students must teach themselves regarding the nuances of the rules of correct usage found in their handbooks. From a contemporary perspective, instructors and scholars alike would not have to imagine too long to recognize that composition instruction in these environments was diminished to learning scenarios in which students attempted to follow prescribed forms or decipher grammar rules. Given the dynamics of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century college composition instruction, one could correctly assume that these pedagogical theories entangled nineteenth-century American college composition in a web of handbook rules and emulative forms.

Connors' scholarship concerning late nineteenth-century "current-traditional rhetoric," as it was called, basically highlights a pedagogy that privileges mechanical correctness and a final "product" emphasis to writing instruction. Connors' insightful research foregrounds the pedagogical directions in American academe that changed misguided notions of "rhetoric" into "composition" in the nineteenth century. This change, as Connors notes, also "... transmogrified the noble discipline of Aristotle, Cicero, [and] Campbell into a stultifying error-hunt" (Connors, "Mechanical Correctness" 63-64). By the middle of the nineteenth century, as Connors emphasizes, American scholars and students were more concerned with *avoiding error* than instructing and learning sound principals of written discourse (62-71). In the classrooms during this period, instruction was preoccupied with the academic essay and the research paper

33

(Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric* 12-14). Given these pedagogical approaches to composition highlighted in this literature review, one can more completely appreciate why students' written "products" dominated the focus of composition pedagogy during the nineteenth century and into the first five decades of the twentieth century.

Factors Creating Change in Twentieth-Century Composition Pedagogy

My literature review also reveals that a growing number of American composition teachers and scholars in the middle decades of the 1900s began to question the foundational theories and assumptions supporting a product model pedagogy. Inherent in the concept of a product model is also the tacit assumption that students will effectively analyze their own completed writing assignments and thereby understand their strengths and weaknesses. One major presupposition in this rules-based pedagogy is that students will correctly focus their compositions with an effective thesis statement and possess the innate skills to write a well-organized essay. Another "given" in this pedagogical approach is the assumption that students will carefully read their instructors' diacritical editing marks and comments on their papers and understand how such marginal notes provide directions to improve their writing skills. Published research studies on product-centered pedagogies, however, indicate that all of its inherent assumptions prove invalid and are non-productive (Straub 97-115; Ziv 362-77). These pedagogies focused on informing writers they made usage errors, since students were essentially required to avoid such errors through self-instruction. In my opinion, this type of composition pedagogy *sets the stage for mediocrity in the college composition classroom.*

34

As a first-year writing instructor, I hold firmly to the notion that a naive oversight would occur if students and instructors were not appropriately attentive to the finished written products that result from writing instruction. However, I also believe that it is "not the end-game, but the "in-between game" that constitutes successful pedagogy and learning. Based on my own experiences in the college composition classroom, I advocate that focusing on the end-product and a "grade" suggests writing instructors can somehow successfully teach composition by simply informing their students about what constitutes "good writing." My 12 years' experience in teaching college composition also enables me to appreciate that it is overly optimistic to believe that students will completely understand and apply their instructors' evaluative comments penned in the margins of their essays.

Students who learn how to compose effectively based on instructor-centered lectures, grammatical correctness, rules-based assessment, and handbook rules are decidedly in the minority. John Hillocks and Michael Smith's study, "Grammar and Usage," notes that usage or grammar should *never be taught separately* (emphasis added) apart from the actual practice of writing (596). In this pedagogical approach, students are shown why grammar (mechanical correctness or usage) contributes to improved clarity of sentence expression and audience comprehension in their writing assignments. The instructional objective developed by Hillocks and Smith is focused on increasing students' awareness of how sentence-level clarity impacts their audience's understanding of their writing. Similar recent studies show that students' knowledge of grammar does not always produce effective writing (Fearn and Farnan 63-87). Reinforcing these

35

several studies is Martha Kolln's *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*. Kolln carefully illustrates in each chapter of her text how using a rhetorical approach to grammar in composition pedagogy enables students to understand how and in what ways their own conscious strategies of correct word choices, elements of style, and word arrangement exert controlling effects on an audience.

Writing-as-Process Pedagogy Emerges

Beginning noticeably in the 1960s in American academe, the "winds of change" were fanned by composition studies scholars who began reassessing the efficacy of the time-worn product model. This scholarly reassessment represented a significant reorientation and inquiry into the long-standing pedagogical traditions of the nineteenth-century composition pedagogy that is based on a linear end-stage product that privileges grammatical correctness (Connors, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse" 445-50). Despite its long-standing application in the college composition classroom, the product model pedagogy encountered numerous scholarly examinations challenging its continued legitimacy. Notably, this new wave of interest in composition studies was truly interdisciplinary: its purview extended beyond college English faculty.

In the early 1960s, the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE), empowered by a Carnegie Foundation endowment, funded research to review the status of composition instruction in American academe (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer 1-4). The results of its funded study were published in Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer's *Research in Written Composition*. These three researchers found that the instruction of composition studies in the U. S. could be characterized as

36

somewhat ambiguous and inconsistent in its approaches. The authors noted in their published report that, "Some terms [of composition] are being defined usefully, a number of other procedures are being redefined, but the field as a whole is laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations" (5). Their studies exemplified analytical investigations of the actual processes students undertook while composing (31-32). The key emphasis is that this study reflected a focus on the *actual processes* students engaged in writing, rather than on the stages they were to complete or determining if the end product reflected certain thresholds of grammatical correctness. In their expansive study, these three authors analyzed 504 studies of writing instruction and student writing. In so doing, the findings confirmed that that during the 1960s, the prevailing pedagogical emphasis was on students' completed written products (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Shoer).

Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Shoer's study also motivated composition studies scholar Stephen North to signify 1963 as the year that composition studies began its ascendance in status within many departments of English and within other academic disciplines (15). During this time period, a noticeable "process turn" in composition studies evolved that was punctuated by numerous research studies and published articles that sought to find pedagogical relevance beyond end-product primacy. North's book, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, advocated that academe in the 1960s experienced the most comprehensive re-evaluations of writing theory and writing pedagogy in over 100 years (North 26).

Another important article signaling new directions in how scholars viewed the composition was Gordon Rohman's 1965 "Pre-Writing the Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process." In his article, Rohman compares the writing process to an organic process:

> . . . [W]riting is usefully *described as a process, something which shows*
>
> *continuous change in time like growth in organic nature* (emphasis added)
>
> . . . it is crucial to the success of any writing that occurs later, and it is
>
> seldom given the attention it consequently deserves" (106).

Importantly, during this same time, composition studies scholar Donald Murray posited in "Teaching Writing as a Process" that writing should be instructed as a process, not as a product. Murray categorized the writing process into three distinct phases: prewriting, writing, and rewriting (4). He also stressed that "unfinishedness" in composition should be "gloried" since unfinishedness facilitates exploration and helps writers makes choices about their ideas and writing (4). James Britton's scholarship contributed to the developing academic discourse on the writing process. His research undertaken in the 1970s emphasize the importance of a writing process that parallels how students discover ideas, create, and think: "Teachers have many reasons for being interested in writing processes . . . their pupils require that they understand how something came to be written, not just what is written" (21).

Academe's growing interest in the writing-as-process model prompted the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) to jointly sponsor the 1966 conference at Dartmouth College on the

teaching of English and composition (Dixon 373). The "Dartmouth model" pedagogy

that subsequently developed from this conference advocated more interaction among

instructors and students with a *pronounced emphasis on collaborative activities*. The

Dartmouth College Conference was one source that facilitated academe's adoption of the

writing-as-process model of composition, characterized by its inherent phases of

prewriting, composing, revising/editing, and proofreading. Although there were varying

scholarly opinions as to what constituted process approaches to the teaching of writing

during its early growth phases of the 1960s and 1970s, they all generally converged

around the notion, as Arthur Applebee conveys in his 1981 article, that ". . . instructional

activities [are] designed to help students think through and organize their ideas before

writing and to *rethink and revise their initial drafts* (emphasis added)" (Applebee 95).

The notions of thinking before writing, organizing, and revising appear to be those

guiding principles that came to characterize composition process pedagogy in American

academe starting in the 1960s.

Commenting on the developing scholarship in the processes of thinking and

writing, Donald McQuade notes that "a surge of first-rate research and scholarship on

student writing charged the *listless state* (emphasis added) of composition pedagogy in

the late 1960s and early 1970s" (McQuade 482). Mina Shaughnessy's book, *Errors and

Expectations*, is considered by many composition studies scholars to be one of the first

careful investigations of writing issues experienced by first-year college writers. Using a

rubric, Shaughnessy systematically analyzed 4,000 English placement essays written by

incoming freshmen at The City College of New York in order to appreciate more fully

the strengths and weaknesses of first-year writers. Donald McQuade pays a high compliment to Shaughnessy's scholarship: ". . . [she] exemplified the professional dignity of scholarship and research in composition, underscored what is at stake in that work, established a scholarly standard for it, and set a direction for a great deal of the scholarship and practice that followed it" (483). After reading her study, I must acknowledge Shaughnessy's research predominantly focuses on the end-product usage-based aspects of writing where grammar is privileged—since that was the pedagogy in vogue in the early 1960s at the time of her study. However, in chapter seven of her book, she describes student composing in terms suggestive of the recursive phases that incorporate thinking (prewriting), composing, and revision (Shaughnessy).

As scholars carefully examined the varied and interrelated aspects of composing during this period, their efforts revealed that learning how to write encompassed cognitive, creative, recursive, and even social or interpersonal dimensions. (North 25). Their initial research virtually parted the curtain of 100 years of rules-based academic hegemony and expanded the concept of composition beyond its traditional teaching boundaries of usage and end-product emphasis. As instructed in many American colleges during the early 1900s through the 1960s, the end-stage or current-traditional product model gradually transformed to a *recursive* or non-linear model of pedagogy (Phelps 134-35). The contributions of this recursive model positioned writing as a process wherein the writer can prewrite, compose, rewrite, and then return to any of these phases in any order and in any sequence.

The epistemic functions of writing and rhetoric in generating knowledge [9], and

the practices of argumentation and persuasion, were aspects that helped shift the

pedagogical emphasis away from the product and rules-based formalistic approaches to

the more creative and rhetorically-oriented processes that emphasize invention and

composing (Nystrand et al. 276).

Developments of the Writing-as-Process Movement in America

Writing-as-process theories have acquired a cachet of respectability since they

persist into our contemporary era to provide a teaching foundation for both instructors

and students. In actuality, the writing process model is really more correctly conceived

in the plural sense of models of writing process theories that have evolved and were later

modified through *praxis*—transformed from their theoretical notions into functional

pedagogies tested in the writing classroom. As Berlin notes in his article, "Contemporary

Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," ". . . everyone teaches the process of

writing, but everyone does not teach the same process" (Berlin 776). Berlin argued that

composition instructors should be able to understand and justify the kind of process they

teach.

In her provocative 1982 article, "The Winds of Change," Maxine Hairston

develops a valid and logical perspective for understanding the changes in composition

instruction and theory that occurred in the 1960s through the 1970s. She refers to

---

[9] Rhetoric is argued by some theorists to be epistemic since they follow the notion that it is through the use of language in social discourse that knowledge can be constructed.   James Berlin writes that language gives our experiences form and structure, allowing us to form "conceptions of ourselves, our audiences, and the very reality in which we exist" (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 166).

Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigmatic change as her theoretical basis to posit that the teaching of writing experienced revolutionary changes during this period. The term "revolutionary" does not convey hyperbole since, in a relatively short period of one decade, the prior 100 years' pedagogical norms were replaced by concepts and tested hypotheses that were validated by an emphasis on what writers think and do in composing. Hairston appropriates Kuhn's hypothesis of paradigm shifts—changes occurring in a discipline from existing models to newer ones. These new paradigms generated the theories that supported viewing contemporary composition as less a *finished product and more a process-oriented* approach:

> It is important to note that the traditional paradigm [of composition and its
> teaching] did not grow out of research or experimentation. It derives
> partly from the classical rhetorical model that organizes the production of
> discourse into invention, arrangement, and style, but mostly it seems to be
> based on some idealized and orderly vision of what literature scholars,
> whose professional focus is on the written product, seem to imagine is an
> efficient method of writing. It is a prescriptive and orderly view of the
> creative act, a view that defines the successful writer as one who can
> systematically produce a 500-word theme of five paragraphs, each with a
> topic sentence. (Hairston 115)

The arguments above beg the question: "How and in what ways did the process model, or, more accurately stated, writing process *models* change from what is called the antecedent "product model"?

Lester Faigley argues his own viewpoints on the process model in his insightful article on the topic:

> The problem, of course, is that conceptions of writing as a process vary
> from theorist to theorist. Commentators on the process movement (e.g.,
> Berlin, *Writing Instruction*) now assume at least two major perspectives
> on composing, an *expressive view* including the work of "authentic voice"
> proponents such as William Coles, Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, and
> Donald Stewart, and a *cognitive view* including the research of those who
> analyze composing processes such as Linda Flower, Barry Kroll, and
> Andrea Lunsford. More recently, a third perspective on composing has
> emerged, one that contends processes of writing are social in character
> instead of originating within individual writers. Statements on composing
> from the third perspective, which I call the *social view*, have come from
> Patricia Bizzell, Kenneth Bruffee, Marilyn Cooper, Shirley Brice Heath,
> James Reither, and [other] authors . . . . (Faigley 527-528).

As Faigley notes in his comments above, the writing-as-process model represents a pedagogical approach that entails individualist *and* transactional (social) dimensions in composing.

Gordon Rohman and Albert Wlecke conceptualized a linear stage model of composing that was comprised of prewriting, writing, rewriting, and editing in their jointly researched 1964 study (Rohman and Wlecke). Rohman subsequently published an article, "Prewriting: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," that advocated that prewriting was the most important phase of the composing process. What is interesting, ironic, and revealing in this situation is that Rohman's initial study with Wlecke on the linear aspects of composing provided the conceptual pathway for his subsequent emphasis on prewriting as an element in composing that can inform all other phases of the writing process model. This emphasis proved to be an important development in the ways instructors viewed and taught composition since it highlighted the cognitive and creative processes that writers experienced before they compose. It also served as an important means to help change instructors' focus on the traditional linear stage product-focused paradigm to that of a more expansive notion of how the invention processes can be used in all other phases of the writing process (Rohman, "Prewriting the Stage of Discovery 106-12).

Foundational Studies Focusing on What Writers actually Do while Composing

Creating major waves in the placid waters of academe was Janet Emig's study entitled *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Emig's important 1971 study of 12th graders' composing patterns revealed that their composing processes do not occur in

a linear pattern, *rather they were found to be recursive* (emphasis added). Her research

on the composing process attracted the attention of other scholars, who, in turn, were

motivated to pursue research on the composing process and theories of the cognitive

process.

In *Research in Written Composition*, Braddock et al. analyzed over 500 empirical

studies of writing instruction and of student writing. These authors revealed the

prevailing emphasis among instructors and institutions on students' written products. As

Louise Phelps notes, composing process pedagogies of the 1960s and 1970s arose in part

as a reaction against product-focused pedagogies and research (134).

Throughout the 1970s, scholarly interest in the writing process encouraged

inquiry by cognitive psychologists who began exploring the associations between how

writers' thoughts are generated and developed as they think, create, compose, and revise

their writing. Composition scholars began during this time to refer in their published

writings not to the "writing process," but to the "composing process," a conceptual term

that Emig popularized in her own pioneering research on the writing processes of

students (176, 228). During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the emphasis on

improving national literacy standards and the need to accommodate increasing student

enrollments were situations that helped change the "traditional" and formalist[10]

pedagogies in the composition classroom. No longer could composition studies remain

---

[10] In the context used here, "formalist" pedagogies suggest teaching composition by following prescriptive forms, grammar and stylistic correctness, as well as rules-based methods. Accordingly, formalist pedagogies would focus on the student's completed product as the form that best represents the student's writing skills. Little or no attention would be paid to the actual "how-to" *process* of writing in using this instructional method.

anchored to their so-called "composition-rhetoric" roots, which were not really rhetorical in the true sense. (Connors, *Composition--Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* 180).

James Moffett advocates in his 1968 book, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse,* a basic college writing program that highlighted a process pedagogy *that privileged more interaction and reflection among students and instructor during each phase of the composing and revising process* (381). Another important essay of this period, Donald Murray's "Teach Writing as Process, Not Product," describes prewriting as ". . . everything that takes place before the first draft" and " . . . takes about 85% of a writer's time"(4). This initial emphasis on invention provided instructors with a new perspective on teaching first-year writing.

From Linear End-Stage Product Models to Recursive Process Models

In 1980, the so-called "linear" end-stage product model of composing was directly challenged by composition scholars Nancy Sommers and Sonja Perl. In "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," Sommers advocates that experienced writers continually "invent" new ideas as they revise (43-53). Similarly, in another article, Perl describes composing as a *recursive process* that entails rewriting and revising to facilitate writers' cognitive and creative processes as the compose, reflect, and revise (Perl,"Understanding Composing" 363-68). Both Sommers and Perl's scholarship stresses that "composing" involves the adaptive and free-flowing processes of cognition and creativity that allow writers to generate new meanings as they write, think, and rewrite. Figure 5 below visually illustrates the "free-flowing processes

46

of cognition and creativity" that Sommers and Perl reference in their writings that constitute *recursive phases* in the writing-as-process model.
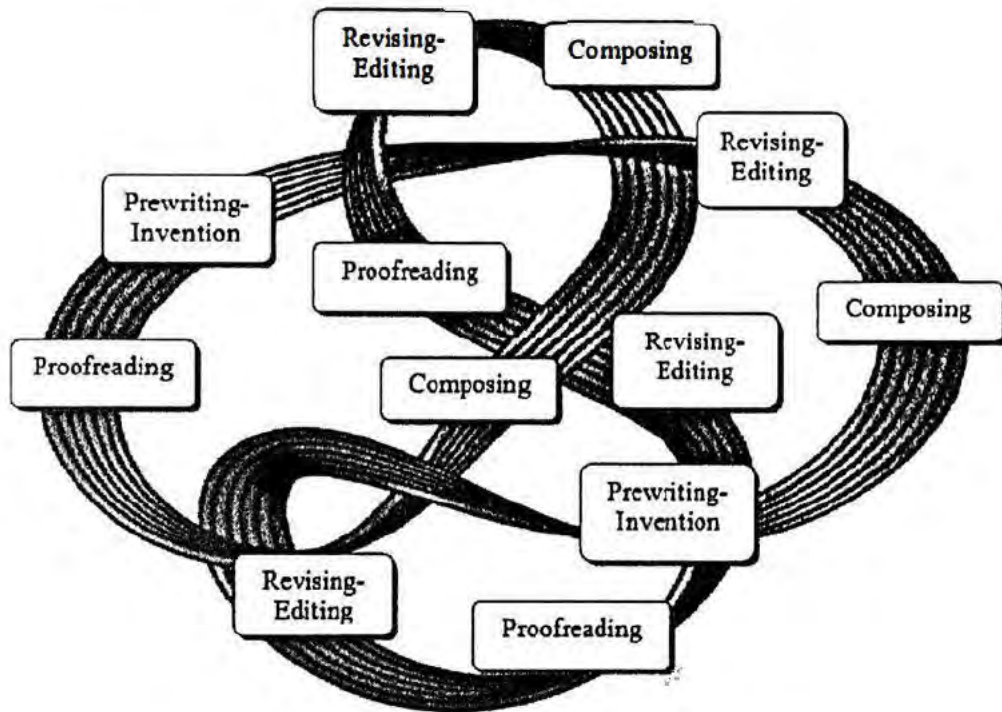
Fig. 4. An illustrative interpretation of recursion in the writing-as-process model. Evolving during the 1960s and 70s, the recursive writing process model illustrated above conceptualizes that writers begin and engage the writing phases shown any number of times, at any place in the process, and in any sequence.

"Composing" emerged during the 1970s to connote the situations that occur *inside* the writer's head and is then recorded in the act of writing. The writing-as-process movement began with scholarly examinations focused on the psychology of a writer— what the writer thinks and feels while composing. In the works of Emig, Perl, Sommers, and others mentioned in this study, *the individual writer is the focus*, not the text. *This is a very important shift*. It represented a major change in the conceptualizing of how

47

composition should be instructed, which provided the impetus for composition theorists and instructors to turn away from the formalist and limiting norms of product pedagogy. Due principally to the scholarly impetus provided by composition studies scholars, like composition scholar Linda Flower and cognitive psychologist John Hayes, other scholars began to reconceptualize what actually occurs in the writing process. In 1980, Flower and Hayes diagrammed their theories on the cognitive processes of composing, based on their studies of students engaged in the process of writing. Summarized below are the two authors' findings related to the cognitive acts they believe writers engage in while composing:

1. Writing is a set of unique thinking processes which writers devise during the phases of the writing process: pre-writing, writing, and revising

2. These processes are organized in the mind of the writer and are *embedded within other phases* (emphasis added) in the writing process.

3. Composing is a goal-directed thinking process that is shaped by the writer's own developing goals.

4. Writers can create both high-level goals and supportive sub-goals that convey the writer's developing sense of purpose.

5. Writers can change their goals or even create new ones based on what they learn during the actual composing process. (Flower and Hayes 366).

As illustrated in Figure 6 below, Flower and Hayes' assessment of the composing process reveals the perspective that writers, in the act of composing undergo numerous

48

cognitive and creative acts, which are *recursively* enacted throughout the composing

process itself (Flower and Hayes 365-87).
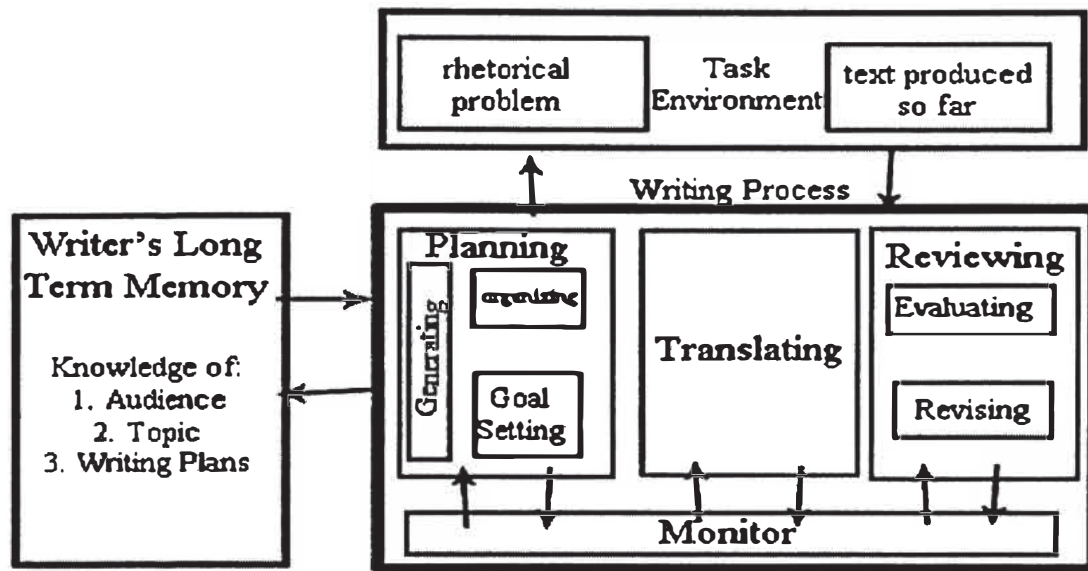
Fig. 5. Flower and Hayes' cognitive theory of composition. This diagram shows the recursive processes in which writers engage during the composing process.

Note: Image digitally copied and adapted from Flower and Hayes' "Uncovering Cognitive Processes in Writing: An Introduction to Protocol Analysis."

Berlin offers his views in *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* on the evolving writing-as-process movement and the *cognitive mode's* contribution to the writing process:

> Although cognitivists distinguish three parts of the writing process, they
>
> are quick to point out that it is recursive, meaning the different stages
>
> repeat themselves in no special order. Essentially, "the elements of the
>
> process can be identified and their functions described, but the order of
>
> their operation will vary from task to task and from individual to

49

individual, even though the practices of good writers will be very similar

to each other . . . ." (684).

A "Rhetorical Turn" Reconnects Writing to its Rhetorical Roots

Helping to promote the "reintegration" of rhetoric and the validation of writing-

as-process pedagogy into college composition studies, scholars James Kinneavy, Maxine

Hairston, Patricia Bizzell, Edward P.J. Corbett, and James Berlin began investigating the

rhetorical canons and the ties between composition and the tenets of rhetoric. A

"revival" of classical rhetoric during the late 1960s and 1970s in American academia

sparked scholarly interests in the origins of composition attributable to the five rhetorical

canons (i.e., invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) (Nelms and Goggin

11). The gradual rise of "rhetoric and composition" and "composition studies" as

recognized fields within English departments clearly emerged in many colleges during

the 1970s (Rosner, Boehm, and Journet). Scholars in this period engaged in research that

viewed rhetoric and composition studies through a variety of critical lenses. In every

case, *their findings highlighted the benefits that a rhetorical focus could provide when*

applied to the student writing process (emphasis added) (Corbett 17-21). This scholarly

impetus changed the orientation of composition pedagogy away from a monolithic rules-

based linear end-stage product approach to a more-encompassing evaluation of the

processes that student-writers undertake as they "discover" and create ideas, and arrange

their ideas in sentences and paragraphs that effectively meet the needs of their audiences.

Kinneavy's scholarship in the late 1960s and the 1970s helped strongly realign classical rhetoric with composition studies by reaffirming the application of Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals—*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*.

In Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse,* he carefully examines Aristotle's rhetorical schema. These examinations helped generate a revival of the role of rhetorical discourse and its impact on composition studies. By revisiting classical rhetoric and its canons, Kinneavy essentially revitalizes the heuristics[11] of invention and the significance of focusing written content that best conforms to the audience's needs. According to Kinneavy, all written artifacts constitute an "encoder (writer or speaker), a decoder (reader or listener), a signal (the linguistic product) and a reality (that part of the universe to which the linguistic product refers)" (Kinneavy 134). As Figure 6 illustrates below, Kinneavy classified rhetorical situations according to their emphasis on the writer (expressive), audience (persuasive), subject matter (referential), or verbal medium (aesthetic) (Kinneavy). Emphasizing Aristotle's arguments on the inherent dynamics of message and audience, Kinneavy contended that all written artifacts could be categorized by the author's rhetorical goal or desired aim of discourse.

---

[11] The term *heuristics* is used in the context of the cognitive and creative acts engaged in by writers to "discover" or "invent" ideas during the prewriting phase of composing. In later writing process models developed in the 1990s and in the twenty-first century, writers are empowered to employ heuristic strategies at any time during the writing process.

Encoder
(Writer)
Expressive

Decoder
(Audience: reader)
Persuasive

Message
(written discourse)

Topic/Subject
Referential
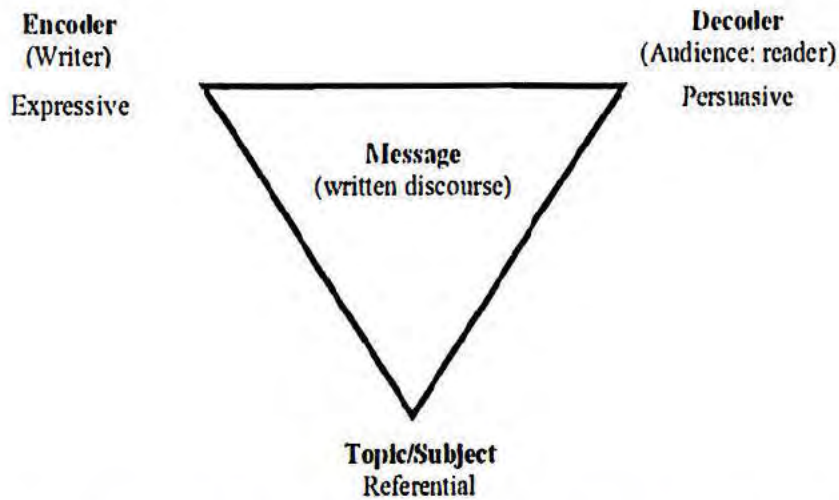
Fig. 6. Kinneavy's communication triangle. This figure diagrams the relationships of the rhetorical situation involving writer, reader, message, and subject while also revealing the inherent dynamics that always exist in written discourse.

Note: Adapted from the figure illustrated in James Kinneavy's "The Basic Aims of Discourse." *College Composition and Communication*, 20. 5 (Dec. 1969), 297-304.

In validating Aristotle's premise about the dynamics of message and audience, Kinneavy credibly re-engaged written discourse with its formative roots in classical rhetoric. This re-engagement to the original texts and precepts of rhetoric served as a guiding light for subsequent scholarship. Other scholars in the 1970s began to appreciate that this rhetorical emphasis generated a pedagogical model that could be used to help students better understand there was a *process occurring in writing* that involved an audience and a message. Kinneavy's notions are indisputably based on the rhetorical canons, which in turn, then provide a valid epistemological (knowledge generating) model for teaching and learning.

Kinneavy's findings are clearly founded on Aristotle's rhetorical schema in *The Art of Rhetoric*. Kinneavy's classical rhetoric-based theories did not go unnoticed by other scholars who were also investigating the fundamental activities of thinking, creating, and composing in the writing process. My own studies in rhetorical theory convince me that many composition studies scholars would agree with my viewpoint that Kinneavy's renewed rhetorical emphasis helped liberate composition pedagogy from its rules-based linear end-stage product basis. Kinneavy's basic communication triangle, illustrated in Figure 4 above, represents one important conceptual paradigm among several emerging theoretical designs that scholars developed during the 1960s and 1970s. These theoretical models about writing emerged as scholars began to "think outside the box" and assessed in depth *the relationships of classical rhetorical theories with the actual processes students undertake as they think about writing and compose.*

Richard Young's 1976 essay, "Invention: A Topographical Survey," presents a wide spectrum of invention strategies for use in composing. Young's study foregrounds the roles that the rhetorical *topoi* (topics, commonplaces, or heuristics) create based on his analyses of classical rhetoricians, such as Quintilian. Young's published study also references the rhetorical theories of Kenneth Burke and Kenneth Pike, two respected American rhetoricians, whose theories developed creative strategies for writers to use during the invention phase of composing. Young emphasizes the heuristics that Burke's theoretical construct of the dramatistic pentad[12] provides, as well as Pike's concept of

---

[12] Kenneth Burke developed in his *Grammar of Motives* a heuristic technique or "pentad" that encompasses five questions a writer can ask to facilitate composing during the invention stage:

tagmemics.[13] These two theoretical notions were very important contributions to the

writing-as-process model since they addressed strategies that could be used during the

composing process. In this essay, Young anticipates the growing challenge to the linear

end-stage models of composing by commenting that ". . . the act of writing itself can be

seen as a heuristic for discovering content" (35).

As Maxine Hairston and Hugh L. Burns note in their respective studies,

composition instructors and rhetoricians in the 1960s and 1970s "rediscovered" neglected

rhetorical canons, undertook studies that produced helpful strategies for stimulating

invention, and created a *new paradigm* for instructing first-year college writing (Burns;

Hairston 111-16). Many major features of the new paradigm that Hairston argues

include important characteristics of classical rhetoric. Importantly, Burns and Hairston

each advocate in their writing that a writer's focus on the writing process, rather than on

the written product, is related to the activities in which writers engage in the invention

phase of writing.

In Figure 7 below, I have illustrated an "early process" model. It conveys the

dynamics of the writing-as-process pedagogy that emerged in the 1970s, as well as the

---

1. Act: What happened?
2. Scene: Where is the act happening?
3. Agent: Who is involved in the action?
4. Agency: How do the agents act?
5. Purpose: Why do the agents act? (Burke)

[13] Kenneth L. Pike introduced linguistic and rhetorical concepts that could help a writer discover or find
the optimal communicative bridge or "tagmeme" that would yield mutual insight for writer and audience.
From a tagmemic perspective, writers should use heuristics (discovery or inventional processes) that would
assist them in using words and concepts that approximate a certain audience's perceptions, so that a writer
can best communicate with an audience. Writers using tagmemic approaches would basically see the
canon of invention as a "problem-solving" activity (Pike).

roles of instructor and student in teaching and learning composition. Note that while an initial or early process model still reflected a degree of instructor-centeredness, it also emphasized revising between the "revising-editing" phase and the "proofreading-final editing phase." Such revising and editing, when it often involved peer critiques of drafts, were hallmarks of this early process model practiced in the composition classroom. Also, note that the directional arrows between students and instructor suggest more "dialogue." While it is correct to argue that some college instructors used composition or grammar handbooks for student reference purposes and instructed composition using a "essay mode" approach while teaching "process," *the early emphasis on revising and student collaboration* are two strong indicators of a developing change from the prior product pedagogy. The scholarship and published studies that brought the rudimentary process model to the attention of college instructors in the late 1960s and early 1970s, also brought to the classroom a new focus on student-writers as "thinkers" during the prewriting or invention phase and during the revising/editing phases. The complete dynamics of holistic recursion in the writing process, wherein students can start and re-engage in any of the phases of the writing process at any time, were not yet as developed in the pedagogies during the introductory phase of the process model in U.S. composition classes. However, Figure 7 below does illustrate the revision that typically was emphasized between the revising and proofreading phases of this "early" process model. Note that in this early theoretical model of the composition *process*, recursive activity or revision was generally instructed to occur between phases 3 and 4 shown in the figure below. The key dynamic illustrated is *that iterative revising and collaborating were to*

55

be enacted by student-writers between phases 3 and 4 as "peer editing." This visual interpretation of the early 1960s and 1970s process pedagogies shows that the dynamics of revision and student collaboration were beginning to exert their influences on the writing process. What is noteworthy about this visual representation is that the focus in the model is not on a finished product per se, but rather on *fulfilling the phases of a composing process.*
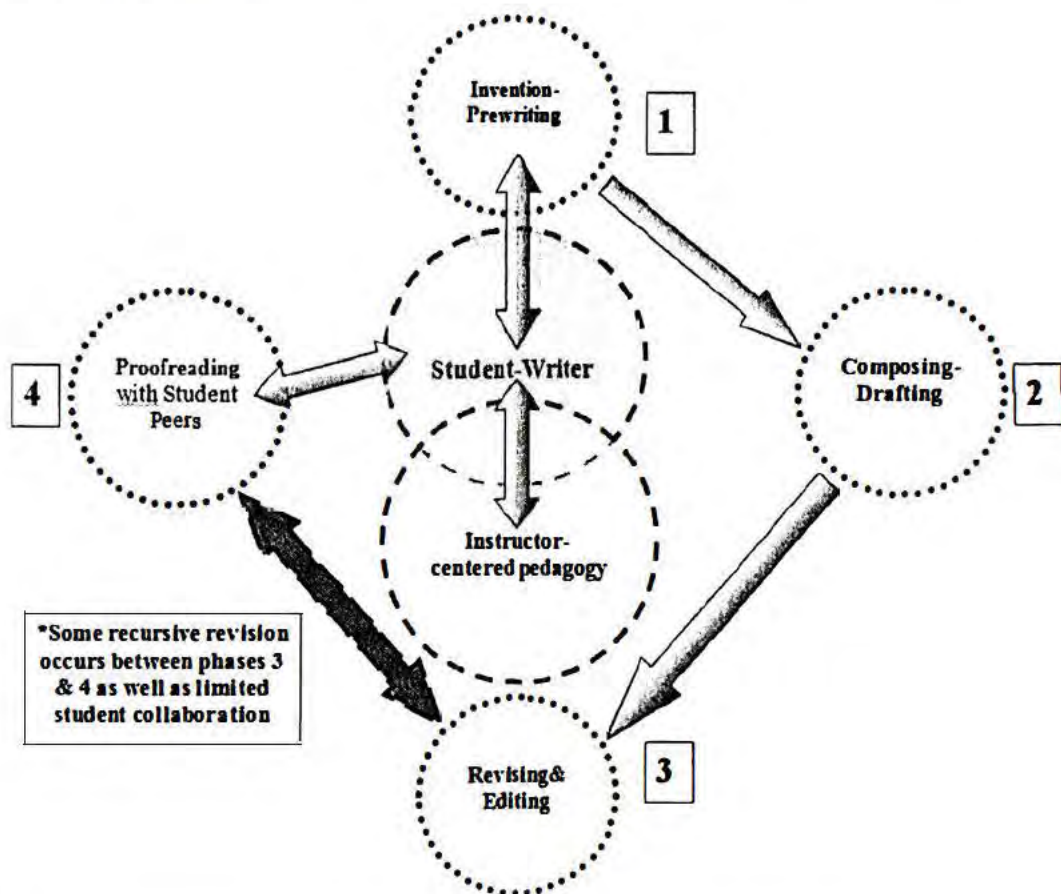
Fig. 7. An interpretative illustration of an early writing-as-process model. My interpretation of a basic writing-as-process pedagogy conveys the processes that the literature review validates were instructed in U.S. college composition classrooms beginning during the late 1960s and 1970s.

56

The 1970s and 1980s: The Development of New Composing Process Theories

The significance of an evolving shift from product to process, and from linear stages to recursive phases represents more than mere semantics. Driving this change, as discussed previously, were the research studies that focused on how students were actually composing (e.g., Emig, Rohman, Flower, and Hayes). The insightful scholarship of Emig and Kinneavy examined the composing processes by focusing on the classical rhetorical canons.

Lester Faigley's research examines the evolving composing process theories developing in the 1970s and 1980s. He categorizes these theories under the headings, *expressive, social*, and *cognitive* (Faigley, "Competing Theories of Process" (527-42). As discussed previously in this chapter, cognitive theory was principally the outgrowth of Flower and Hayes' scholarship. The following discussion focuses on expressivist and social theories used in the classroom.

The Influence of Expressivist Theory on Composition Pedagogy

Using an expressivist pedagogical approach, instructors approach first-year composition class as an environment for developing voice and style in their students' writing. Rather than focusing on texts, ideologies, or issues, an expressivist-oriented pedagogy instructs students to focus primarily on their writing as a very personal and individualistic mode of written discourse. Expressivist pedagogy encourages writing that reveals a writer's individuality and unique ways of thinking. As Peter Elbow notes in "Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic: A Conflict in Goals.":

I'm not trying to get first-year students to commit to making their living by writing—nor to get a Ph.D. and join the academy . . . But I would insist that it's a reasonable goal for my students to end up saying, "I feel like I am a writer: I get deep satisfaction from discovering meaning by writing . . ." (72).

Expressivist theory is often taught in composition classrooms and in composition texts where creativity and individual style are valued (Bowden 285). According to Beth Hewett, one important orientation of expressivist pedagogy is that peer response groups privilege the writer's voice over a group or discourse community's collective voice often prevails in the classroom. Considered in this context, expressivism may circumscribe an approach where peer response does not support effective dialogue among student participants (Hewett 45-48). Some scholars take the expressivist theory to a polarized position, believing that writing cannot be taught and is uniquely learned by the individual writer. Murray, a noted expressivist theorist, argues along these lines in his journal article:

What is the process we should teach? *It is the process of discovery through language* [my emphasis]. It is the process of what we know and what we feel we know about language. It is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world (4).

The Influences of Collaborative Pedagogy on the Writing Process

Faigley's third category for organizing developments in the writing-as-process

model is *social*. The American scholar Kenneth Bruffee is considered a key proponent

for social learning in the composition class. In his essay "Collaborative Learning and the

Conversation of Mankind," Bruffee writes: "What the term [collaborative learning]

meant in practice was a form of indirect teaching in which the teacher sets the problem

and organizes students to work it out collaboratively" (Bruffee 418). According to

Bruffee, the most widely accepted form of collaborative learning in the composition

classroom is *peer group work*. Collaboration taps into the existing informal and formal

groups, networks, and communities in which student-writers participate. A collaborative

theoretical orientation in the writing classroom also presupposes writers can compose

texts in response to the social and ideological discourses of these groups, not just in

response to an individualistic need to communicate or express themselves. Collaborative

theory views composing as an interaction between writers and their environments.

Scholars refer to the social learning that occurs in such groups or discourse communities

as *social constructionism* or *constructivism*.[14]

---

[14] Social constructivism (sometimes referred to as "constructionism" in a more generic sense) is a body of learning theories that adhere to the notion that knowledge can be socially constructed through group interaction or collaboration among students. Lev Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* provides insights into how social interactions affect thought, as well as oral and written discourse. In the context of the writing process, the elements of social learning are realized in how peer interaction can support learning and applying writing skills. Kenneth Bruffee's "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation of Mankind" is a foundational article on collaborative pedagogy and social learning that I will discuss in more detail in chapter two of this study.

As composition scholars Donald Rubin and Bennett Rafoth highlight in their "Introduction" to *The Social Construction of Written Communication,* there are four ways that written communication is socially constructed:

1. Writers construct mental representations of the social contexts in which their writing is embedded.

2. Writing as a social process or system can create or constitute social contexts.

3. Writers—in some senses *all* writers—create texts collectively with other participants in discourse communities.

4. Writers assign consensual values to writing and thus construct a dimension of social meaning. (2)

The groups or discourse communities to which writers belong may consist of other writers with shared interests and goals. However, in the case of peer collaboration in first-year writing courses, students are often members of a broader discourse community (called "first-year writing") and its individual members may or may not share the same cultural ideologies or interests. Members of discourse communities usually form such associations based on *shared* values and ideologies, as well as language and language conventions. In practice, however, discourse communities in the college composition class may reflect more heterogeneity.

Important insights that provide theoretical grounding for collaborative pedagogies are provided by Marilyn Cooper's informative 1986 journal article, "The Ecology of Writing." Her article clearly outlines a collaborative model of composition pedagogy,

characterized as the "ecology" of composing. In Cooper's view, groups define their

members, imparting an identity and often requiring them to follow certain behaviors and

language. Members also define themselves on the basis of their membership, but they

also, at the same time, define the group through their participation in it (Cooper).

Another important study on the effects of collaboration was undertaken by Hicks. As

Hicks notes in her study of collaborative groups and their effects on students' writings,

improvements can occur in how students view their writing rhetorically, such as how

audience awareness improved in her own study (72-80). Berlin argues for a specific type

of collaboration in his book, *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English

Studies:* "In teaching people to write and read, we are thus teaching them a way of

experiencing the world. This realization requires that the writing classroom be dialogic"

(110). In using the term "dialogic," Berlin implies that the writing classroom should

develop a strong sense of shared values and ideologies.

While my dissertation focuses on the influences of social and collaborative

theories on writing pedagogy, my review of the literature in this chapter is intended to

show how these theories became inherently ingrained in writing process models. A more

revealing examination of collaborative pedagogical models will follow in chapter two.

However, I believe I should relate what my literature review reveals regarding

collaborative theories and how they impact the writing process model. From a

foundational perspective, the theories of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist and

linguist writing in the 1920 and 1930s, offer interesting insights into the relationships

between thought and language. As Vygotsky argued throughout his book, *Thought and Language*, language is a social activity. Using this basic theoretical premise, he then posits that language and thought are intrinsically social constructions developed during oral and written discourse. Berlin provides additional contemporary perspectives on collaboration in the writing classroom. He argues that social constructivists view written discourse as ". . . a political act involving a dialectical interaction engaging the material, the social, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation" (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges* 692). Berlin makes another revealing argument in his article, "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," which is that *collaborative activity encourages review and revision of students' writing* (488). Summarizing the premise of his own arguments, Berlin states that writing instructors who privilege expressivist pedagogy would also agree that effective writing is a result of social interaction within the discourse community (488).

The Synergies of Collaborative Pedagogy and Digital Media

I argue that the theoretical notions inherent in collaborative theories clearly contribute to and facilitate process pedagogy. A collaborative approach builds on the composition process model, providing a more accurate and valid depiction of how students generate text in the writing classroom that is increasingly more socialized and relationship-oriented in our contemporary era due to the pervasiveness of digital media. The social networking web sites of MySpace and Facebook, as well as the ubiquitous use of smart phones and other personal digital devices, create a highly social and digitally-

networked communications environment. Composition scholars throughout the 1980s and 1990s focused on the social nature of writing in varied ways, building upon previous work influenced by the cognitive theorists and scholars whose studies highlighted the creative and recursive phases that writers undertook during the composing process. Bruffee's pioneering work in collaborative writing theories advised writing instructors to avoid relying on the view that learning is ". . . reflecting and synthesizing information about the objective world" (433). Bruffee argued that composition instructors should embrace the idea that learning is a social process that enables students to "join . . . larger, more experienced communities of knowledgeable peers" through ". . . interests, values, language, and paradigms of perception and thought" (427).

From my analytical perspective, a major impetus to collaborative theory and a major contribution to writing pedagogy are the emphases that writing theorists, starting in the late 1960s, and continuing to the present, have placed on *recursive revision* in the composing process. These emphases on recursive composing, revision, and reflection support social collaboration and peer involvement in constructive ways *for use at any point in the writing process*. Without the emphasis on recursion demonstrated in the findings of the process model theorists, such as Emig, Rohre, Flower and Hayes, as well as others previously examined, *there would only be minimal opportunities available for helpful collaboration in the linear or sequenced stage-based writing models*. Expressed another way, students would not adequately interact and dialogue about their writing since their attention would be immersed on "doing what it takes" to complete one step of the writing process so they could proceed to the next. While collaboration could occur in

the "editing step" of a linear stage-based model, I argue it would be often inadequate since it would be the first instance where students undertook any revision in a model that did *not* encompass recursive revision during prewriting, composing, and reflection.

Social Expressivism: Balancing Individualism and Social Constructivist Pedagogies

Social expressivism incorporates the individualism of expressivism in composing, as well as the social learning and collaboration through which students can construct knowledge and develop their writing skills. In her 1995 book *Romancing Rhetorics: Social Expressivist Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing*, Sherrie Graddin develops how a composition classroom can function through a social expressivist pedagogy if instructors are careful in their practices and are aware that ". . . the focus on individual vision and voice isolate our students from the social aspects of writing and selfhood" (121). Graddin's arguments effectively mediate what some scholars note as the polarity between expressivist and social constructivist pedagogies. As a prominent theorist of social expressivism, Graddin is careful to note that social expressivism also recognizes that student' personal views are important and can be enhanced by the social relations they experience in their daily lives and in the writing classroom. According to Graddin, this pedagogical approach helps to reduce the polarity or tension between the individual voice of the student-writer and the collaborative aspects of social learning in the first-year writing class. She concludes her arguments by noting that social expressivism can facilitate the ideas and practices derived from collaborative pedagogies because ". . . group work provides a built-in forum for differing perspectives to be heard, tried out, revised, and sometimes rejected" (123).

Theoretical Roots of Collaboration in the Writing Classroom

Importantly, collaborative pedagogy is based on the premise that knowledge can emerge from social interaction in a discourse community. Student interaction, conducted among peer group members and with the instructor, is critically vital to successfully facilitating this pedagogical approach. For example, Rafoth, in "Discourse Community: Where Writers, Readers, and Texts Come Together," suggests ". . . that *discourse community* may be conceptually more useful than the term audience for capturing the language phenomena that relate writers, readers, and texts."

He also states in his article that ". . . [w]hereas the audience metaphor tends naturally to represent readers or listeners as primary, and to admit writers and texts only as derivatives, discourse community admits writers, readers, and texts all together"(132). Other activities in a collaborative first-year writing classroom could include frequent peer group interaction. Student-instructor conferences would focus on *dialogue* between student and instructor (not focused on merely instructor-directed sessions or an essay "editing" conference).

Learning to write in ways appropriate for academic discourse would be the singular objective for instructors and students who participate in a collaborative writing pedagogy. Discourse groups or communities that facilitate effective peer group interaction at any stage of the writing process is another hallmark of collaborative composition pedagogy, according to Patrick Dias' journal article entitled "Social Constructionism" (287-292). Exploring cultural or social issues and using writing as a

means to explore one's views and develop solutions through collaborative peer activity are the hallmarks of collaborative pedagogy (Evans 1-5).

One of the key ways collaborative theories help students write is through their inherent *heuristics*. The collaborative exchanges among peers at each phase of the recursive writing process provides student-writers with a fundamental heuristic for invention, as well as ongoing recursive activity for interaction during all phases of composing, revision, reflection, and repetition of these phases in any sequence and any time in a collaborative process model. Another key heuristic the collaborative model affords to students is its emphasis on using writing to find solutions for issues and problems. In my critical view, this is an effective heuristic for students to use during the invention phase of writing, as well as during the composing and revision phases.

The Influences of Post-Process Theory on Contemporary Composition

Beginning in the 1990s, composition studies scholars published articles around the theme that the writing process model had outlived its usefulness. As a pedagogical theory, post-process essentially conveys that the theory of writing developed during the process movement relied too much on expressivism and, as such, does not account for the historical, social, cultural, and political milieus of writers, readers, and texts. Composition scholars who reject the process theory by arguing it is too "formulaic" also believe that composition cannot be instructed. In taking this view, their theoretical ideas implicitly convey that post-process theory is not a pedagogical theory or approach either, and, therefore, it cannot be taught. Closely aligned with the social constructivist theories of Bruffee, post-process theorists validate the social and collaborative nature of writing,

affirming that writing is a public, interpretive, and situated process (Kent 1). Because writing is social, however, these theorists also claim that it ". . . cannot be reduced to a generalizable process" (Kent 5). Consequently, Bruffee's theoretical precept that collaboration should be used to help students *master academic discourse conventions* is considered flawed by post-process advocates because conventions cannot be universally defined or mastered (Breuch 116). Post-process scholars argue that ". . . no codifiable or generalizable writing process exists or could exist" (Kent 1). As Lee-Ann Breuch writes in her 2002 published article, "Post-Process 'Pedagogy': A Philosophical Exercise," ". . . process is no longer a viable explanation of the writing act" (97). Furthermore, Breuch also notes in her article that ". . . there is no identifiable post-process pedagogy that we can concretely apply to writing classrooms" (98).

Taking a somewhat different and moderating view on post-post composition theory, Bruce McComiskey conveys in his 2000 published text, *Teaching Composition as a Social Process*, the most helpful meaning for the "post" in post-process is ". . . extension, not rejection" (47). The author notes that post-process theory should not be considered a rejection of the writing process, but a "social turn" because it is a process that facilitates a different discursive inquiry. According to McComiskey, post-process includes three areas of composing: textual, rhetorical, and discursive. At the *textual level*, the author believes that writers tend to focus on the linguistic aspects of writing. At the *rhetorical level*, McComiskey says writers pay attention to the ". . . generative and restrictive exigencies (audience, purpose, etc.) of communicative situations" (6). Finally, at the *discursive level*, McComiskey explains that we (writers) ". . . focus our attention on

the institutional (economic, political, social, and cultural) forces that condition our very identities as writers" (6-7). At this discursive level, according to McComiskey, writers intellectually struggle with the social and institutional contexts in which writing occurs. He emphasizes that ". . . all of us instruct students at all three levels, whether we do it consciously or not" (7).

Ironically, the previous post-process critiques seem to point out that the writing process in the last 10 to 15 years has taken on an *expanding* influence of social constructivism and the recognition of cultural diversity in the first-year writing classroom. In agreeing with McComiskey's views, I believe that his statement that instructors should focus their attention on the "institutional, economic, political, social, and cultural forces" are those very aspects that are being accommodated by the writing-as-process model in the twenty-first century.

The Impact of Cultural Diversity

As composition studies scholars and composition instructors acquire a better understanding of the complexities of students' literacies and identities, composition pedagogy continues to respond to issues of diversity in American classrooms, institutions, and communities. For example, most English-as-second language (ESL) students in college possess capable writing skills. The nature of the academic discourse community can often confuse these ESL students. In their text, *The Discovery of Competence: Teaching and Learning with Diverse Student Writers*, Eleanor Kutz, Suzay Groden and Vivian Zamel argue that ESL students are writers ". . . who bring with them

a set of conventions that are at odds with those of the academic world they are entering"

(30). Culturally-based ideologies and learning systems that constitute the ways specific

groups and cultures "view the world" pose difficulties for students writing in their second

language (L2). As a consequence, any effective contemporary pedagogy must take into

consideration the influences from various educational, social, and cultural experiences

that are embedded in students' native languages.

Ilona Leki's 2007 book, *Undergraduates in a Second Language: Challenges and

Complexities of Academic Literacy Development*, discusses how difficult it is for NNES

students to write in English despite their efforts made in writing and their often high

English language proficiency scores (Leki). The American scholar Robert Kaplan

reveals in his findings in "Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education" that

many L2 writers, even those who possess adequate sentence-level knowledge of grammar

and vocabulary, exhibit difficulties writing well-organized essays. He examined written

discourse beyond the sentence level or organization patterns of written texts. Kaplan's

study is valuable to the field of composition studies because it represents the first attempt

to *analyze L2 texts* to find out why (Non-native English Speakers) NNES students write

with a "written accent." After a careful examination of essays written by L2 writers,

Kaplan advocated that different cultures and languages have their own unique ways of

organizing texts. These culturally-based rhetorical inclinations transfer to L2 students'

writing, thereby making L2 texts appear different from L1 texts written by native English

speakers (Kaplan, "Cultural Thought Patterns Revisited" 10-20).

69

The use of cultural metaphors to enhance students' abilities to discourse with others from varying cultures and ideologies are exemplified in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. The author argues throughout her popular book that multicultural differences help educators to focus on the need to better understand and accommodate diversity in our academic discourse communities. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* can motivate writing instructors and students to acquire the cultural sensitivities needed to expand their abilities to discourse more effectively during peer interactions in the composition classroom. For this reason alone, such discussions can enhance student collaboration on writing assignments, serve as inventional aids by expanding student awareness, and support positive peer group work.

Interdisciplinary scholarship in composition studies continued to grow through the late 1990s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Such scholarship was undertaken by scholars outside the traditional departments of English and composition, as well as by composition studies scholars who evaluated theories and contributions of writers in other academic disciplines. Anis Bawarshi's 2003 book, *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*, provides new insights in using aspects of genre theory to foster invention in the writing classroom. Principally, Bawarshi integrates definitions of genre from various writers and develops a working definition of genre as being the rhetorical actions, social roles, and cultural identities that help writers to understand how to incorporate their own identities and ideologies into the writing process. Bawarshi also uses some of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of discourse to demonstrate how the genre function makes possible many kinds of identities within discursive practices (Bawarshi

146). Bawarshi's innovative ideas regarding genre theory can help composition instructors more effectively appreciate how the social and ideological viewpoints of their students can be used productively as part of the inventional process in the first-year writing class.

Continued scholarship in the rhetorics of multiculturalism and genre studies may prove to be beneficial aspects of post-process theories that can continue to support inventional activities and enhance collaborative peer work in the first-year writing class. The orientation that multiculturalism and genre theories provide to the writing process is its support of students' abilities to discourse in the "give and take" of a diverse discourse community and also to facilitate peer group work. Figure 8 below visually interprets my concept of how the writing-as-process will need to encompass the growing twenty-first century challenges in the writing classroom that will create change in first-year writing pedagogies.

Discourse Community 1　　　　　　　　　　　　**Discourse Community 2**

Invention

Writing Resources
- Writing Centers
- *Online Blog Sites (Cultural/ideological Relevancy)
- Research Sources
- *Support from other L2 Students

Invention

SAE Student-Writers　　L2 Student-Writers

Composing

Proofreading

SAE Student-Writers

L2 Student-Writers　　SAE Student-Writers

Composing

SAE Student-Writers

Proofreading

Revising-Editing

Instructor Facilitation
- Feedback
- Writing Conferences
- Sensitivity to Cultural Diversity

Revising-Editing

Fig. 8. An illustration of the dynamics of a contemporary writing-as-process pedagogy. This figure visually interprets the challenges and dynamics of a contemporary writing-as-process model that encompasses two varied discourse communities in a college composition class comprised of Standard American English (SAE) writers and also writers whose second language is English (L2). The blending of SAE writers and L2 writers highlights the growing presence of diverse student-writers that can occur within a specific composition class.

Note: The concentric circles convey the recursive phases of the writing process, the interrelationships of collaborative peer activities, the strategic uses of writing resources, and the student-centered strategies that an instructor can apply to instruct first-year writing in culturally-diverse discourse communities.

The Dynamics of Digital Media

The uses of digital media, online course management systems (CMS), or learning management systems (LMS) are now ubiquitous in contemporary college classrooms.

Since the invention of the desktop computer in the early 1980s, computer technology has progressed from individual workstations to global networks. It has evolved in quantum leaps from stand-alone software for single users to web-based blogs, CMSs, and wikis in less than two decades. Now, in the year 2011, most all college composition is instructed in classrooms with workstations that use word processing software and CMSs that truly foster collaboration. However, college composition classes were not always like this in the early days of computer technology.

An early pioneer in using digital technology to teach writing was Hugh L. Burns, Jr. His 1979 doctoral dissertation, "Stimulating Rhetorical Invention in English Composition through Computer-Assisted Instruction," is the first doctoral dissertation written in the U.S. on the subject of using computers to teach writing. Using rhetorician Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) as a heuristic model, Burns wrote computer programs whose interrogatives helped students during the prewriting or inventional phases of their compositions (Burns). With the invention of the desktop computer and writing software in the middle 1980s, CMI was incorporated, in varying degrees, into most all college composition classes by the late 1990s. Alan Kay's 1997 essay, "Computers, Networks and Education" argues that the key benefit of digital media in the first-year writing classroom was *collaboration*. Kay argues that digital media greatly *facilitates peer review*, which is an essential part of the writing-as-process model (156). For that very reason alone, digital media has become an ongoing important element in all phases of the writing-as-process model.

My literature review reveals yet another important perspective regarding how scholars perceive the impact of digital technology on the writing process. This perspective suggests how composing with digital media keeps students totally absorbed in the writing process. Gail Hawisher comments in her article, "Electronic Meetings of the Minds," the importance of this total involvement: "When participants in an electronic conference communicate with one another . . . they are totally immersed in writing" (Hawisher, "Electronic Meetings of the Minds," 84). Later in this article, Hawisher advocates that the networking aspects of digital media ("electronic conferences") are two-fold. First, digital media create a sense of writing community and, second, they facilitate peer reviewing since the focus is on the text, not on the personal attributes of the writer:

> . . . [T]his idea of a real audience and of many communicating to many is a growing sense among participants and researchers that writer participants perceive themselves as part of a community. . . . Electronic conferences foster an openness to other discourses and to multiple perspectives, making the weaving together of such disparate views possible. . . . [Students] are less likely to react to other participants' gender, social class, appearance, or status markers. (87-89)

As noted in Kay and Halasek's views above, digital media provide the tools for students to *collaborate*, *peer-review*, and *revise* their compositions. By the last decade of the twentieth century, American colleges and universities overwhelmingly adopted CMSs—such as Blackboard, Desire2Learn, and Drupal—that provide the shared

"electronic platforms" fostering student peer commentaries in each phase of the writing-as-process model.

As this literature review foregrounds, digital media used in the composition class will continue to occupy a strong position in composition pedagogy because they support the current "multi-literacy" needs of current and future students. In *Computers and the Teaching of Writing,* Hawisher et al. notes that "[t]he ability to write well—and to write well with computers and within digital environments—we believe will continue to play an increasingly important role in determining if students will be able to participate and succeed in school, work, and community" (643). In their 2004 text, *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy From the United States*, Cynthia Selfe and Hawisher argue that the ". . . heavy use of computers in the United States, and increasingly elsewhere, for education, entertainment, employment, and empowerment has also changed the use and meaning of 'literacy,' which now needs to be linked with such words as technological, digital, and electronic" (2). The current prevalent use of CMSs/LMSs, wikis, and blogs provide the necessary media and tools to enhance students' collaboration. These collaborative digital media accommodate our students' multi-literacy familiarities with their use in a social-media context, a context that carries over to reinforce social constructivist practices in the first-year writing class.

Conclusions and Implications: Composition Theories and Pedagogies

When I began researching my literature review regarding the development of theories of composition and the writing process, no one would have convinced me that my starting point would be in the middle of the third century B.C. and my concluding

75

point would be an indeterminate date in the future. I do not believe that I would be overstating my point if I said that very few theories or even epistemologies can trace their roots over the span of some 2,300 years—and yet still be evolving. As my literature review in this chapter demonstrates, there are numerous theories and theorists whose ideas influenced the evolution of the writing process and composition pedagogies. Clearly, the scholarship on the subject reveals composing and teaching began in the rhetorics of Aristotle and Quintilian. While this finding may be common knowledge to many in the field, what is not common knowledge is that Quintilian highlights in his *Institutes of Oratory* that students should engage in *revising their texts* and read them aloud to the class for comments. (X.5.1)

In the progression of writing theory and composition pedagogy, my literature review uncovers one fundamental irony. The "classical" precepts of rhetoric upon which key scholars in the 1800s based the instruction of college composition in America were "rhetorical in name only." Professor Adams Sherman Hill's *The Foundations of Rhetoric* was one influential text in guiding the pedagogy of composition in American colleges for nearly a half-century. Judged retrospectively through the lens of scholarly analysis, Hill's text is decidedly *not* "founded" on rhetoric, but on the belletristic and prescriptive rules-based theories argued by British rhetoricians of the 1800s, such as Bain and Spencer. Perhaps, a more apt title for Hill's text would be "The Foundations of Style and Grammar," since as Hill writes in his text, students were to master and practice the grammatical rules as the key requirement to improve their writing (1-23). While this process did constitute somewhat of an approach to composing, it placed the burden of

"learning to write correctly" on students who were required to master "correct" usage and apply it to their compositions. As scholars Kitzhaber, Connors, and Berlin note in their thorough examinations of composition pedagogy in the nineteenth century in this country, little, if any, attention was paid by college composition instructors to the precepts of rhetorical writing. The composing process of this era was heavily influenced by literary explication of "canonical" texts and the concept of audience was implicitly defined as the sole instructor-evaluator. In terms of a writing pedagogy, it encompassed students receiving instruction in lectures on the prescriptive rules of usage. The pedagogy of that period could be characterized as instructor-centered with no provisions for peer collaboration.

To use Maxine Harrison's phrase, the "winds of change" describes a series of events beginning in the 1960s that clearly reflect a turn in scholarly inquiry toward what *actually constitutes the processes involved when students compose*. Using Kuhn's hypothesis of paradigm shifts, Hairston argued that the surge of scholarship questioning the end-stage product model signified that composition theory was undergoing a change from end-stage product to *process-oriented* models. Shaughnessy and Emig's studies of the writing process were motivated by their desire to learn *what students actually do*, and why they do it, as they engage in the composing process. Flower and Hayes' analytical studies focused on the cognitive and psychological processes in which writers engage. Their own scholarship should be considered a major turning point in composition studies and writing pedagogy. In 1980, Nancy Sommers and Sondra Perl directly challenged the continued legitimacy of the linear end-stage product model of writing, dispelling its

century-long theoretical underpinnings, and advocating their replacement with the recursive phases of a writing-as-process model.

Kinneavy's writings throughout the 1970s argued for composition teachers to heed the precepts of Aristotle's rhetorical theories on persuasion: the importance of invention, considerations of audience, and the appropriateness of writing that is best suited for the occasion or *kairos*. Kinneavy's careful examination of writing's inherent rhetorical roots served to help reconnect American composition pedagogy and the writing process to a valid and provable rhetorical foundation.

On another front, academe witnessed *a turn toward social learning* or constructivism in the composition classroom. Kenneth Bruffee's theories were crafted around Lev Vygotsky's theories showing how social learning (interaction) helps expand the cognitive processes of individuals so they can achieve higher thresholds of learning. In applying social learning or constructivism to the composition class, Bruffee's studies argued how collaborative peer interaction could generate a consensus in the discursive community that would facilitate learning and help students develop their writing skills. Bruffee's writings helped initiate momentum in scholarship about collaboration and social learning. Presently, collaborative peer group interaction constitutes an intrinsic component of collaborative pedagogy that is instructed, in whole, or in part, in most all college composition classes.

Theoretical Implications of the Writing-as-Process Model

In the composition classroom of the present and future, the writing-as-process model will continue to be the pedagogical model optimally suited to teach first-year

college writing. A key reason that supports its longevity in the composition classroom is because its theoretical construct—recursive phases—approximates the cognitive and creative workings of the mind as one composes. Flower and Hayes' study on the cognitive aspects of writing served to strongly legitimize and anchor writing-as-process in the disciplines of not only English and rhetoric, but also in learning theory and psychology. The growing influence of social constructivism, primarily implemented as collaborative peer group activities, is informed and facilitated by each of the writing-as-process model's phases—prewriting, composing, revising/editing, and proofreading. While the tenor of the term "post-process" seems to convey the demise of the writing-as-process model, the influence of multi-culturalism and genre theory—considered by scholars as two sub-genres of post-process theory—contribute to the writing-as-process model's continued vitality in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Multicultural dialog can spark meaningful discussions and provide a new way of viewing how variant ideologies influence the writing process. Genre theory empowers L1 and L2 students to tap into their uniqueness, differences, and ideologies as commonplaces to foster invention and make the writing process more relevant to their perspectives about life. Together, both multi-culturalism and genre theory serve as effective heuristics for these first-year writers so that feel they have an "entry point" into academic writing.

As this literature review reveals, writing-as-process theory has emerged over the last 50 years to currently encompass a theoretical structure that is decidedly more driven by the forces of digital media, social learning, and multiculturalism. I argue that these forces do not diminish the efficacy of the writing-as-process model since they facilitaae

the model's emphasis on collaboration and social learning. I further believe that the inherent benefits of digital technology are found in how they enhance collaboration and social learning through online courseware, blogs, and other collaborative digital media that facilitate peer group collaboration.

The future of the writing process will foreground how collaborative peer groups, assisted by digital media, will enhance composition pedagogy and our students' writing skills in innovative ways. As Kathleen Yancey emphasizes throughout her published studies, writing is being "remediated" through digital technology in ways that may well change the essay from linear sentences and paragraphs to any conceivable mediated form that technology may provide in the future.

CHAPTER II

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATIVE THEORY AND PRAXIS ON FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE WRITING

. . . Collaboration is hardly a monolith. Instead, it comes in
a dizzying variety of modes about which we know almost nothing.

-Andrea Lunsford
"Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing
Center."

Overview and Purpose

My literature review in this chapter enables me to assess how evolving

collaborative theories influence students' writing skills, to what degree they support

students' fulfillment of the writing process, and if they facilitate rhetorical approaches in

their writing. However, before I begin this examination of collaboration, I must pose

several important questions to establish the framework of my research on this topic.

First, what is collaboration as applied in the first-year writing class? Second, what are

the theoretical notions underlying collaborative pedagogies? Third, why did

collaboration evolve into its current practices in the writing classroom? Fourth, how is

collaboration being used to facilitate the writing-as-process? And, five, what are the *pros*

and cons of using collaboration to teach first-year composition? The literature reviews in

this chapter clearly address the above questions that can also be summarized by the single

question posed by one of my instructor colleagues: "Why collaboration?

For purposes of clarification, published studies reveal that scholars are not always careful in using the terms collaboration, collaborative writing, collaborative pedagogy, and collaborative learning. However, I believe it is important to distinguish the differences between them, however slight they may seem. As several of the scholars I cite in this chapter acknowledge, *collaborative learning* focuses more on the process of acquiring knowledge, whereas *collaborative writing* focuses more on specific text-centered activities undertaken by writers. *Collaborative pedagogy* pertains to those strategies and processes that instructors use in their classes to facilitate both collaborative learning and writing. Composition scholars often use the term "collaboration" in a generic context to connote a wide range of activities in which students engage as part of their peer group activities accomplished in face-to-face (FTF) and distance learning environments.

The Developments of Social Learning Theory and Collaboration

Citing the key researchers' perspectives on the teaching, learning, and interactive aspects of collaboration in the writing class provides some insight into its development and application over the several decades. According to composition scholar Kenneth Bruffee, collaboration in its most basic application in the writing class encompasses "a form of indirect teaching in which the teacher sets the problem and organizes students to work it out collaboratively" (Bruffee 418). Bruffee points out: "Students' work tended to improve when they got help from peers . . . . (418). Bruffee's article, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" provides an excellent foundational inquiry into the subject. Fundamentally, collaboration is rooted in the theories of social learning

82

or social constructivism. Social constructivist or constructionist (these two words are often used interchangeably) theory privileges interactive exchanges among peers rather than isolated individualism, and collaborative practices instead of instructor-centered classroom practices. Bruffee argues that social learning is "reflecting and synthesizing information about the objective world in which students . . . [join] larger, more experienced communities of knowledgeable peers" (651). Implicit in this pedagogical concept is that learning is clearly active, not passive, and the social milieu in which learning takes place enhances and reinforces the individual's cognitive abilities. In social learning, teaching is considered student-centered, not teacher-centered. Because of the iterative and ongoing encounters through which students learn, social learning privileges the recursive process model for learning and teaching, not the end-stage product model. Just as the recursive writing process facilitates revision among and between all its phases of prewriting, composing, revising/editing, and proofreading at any time, collaboration invovling student-writers is also recursive and ongoing at any of the phases in the writing process.

Social constructivism finds it theoretical underpinnings in the notion that knowledge   such as learning to write—is not exclusively imparted by the instructor to individual students. Inherent in the idea of collaborative learning is the theory of *social constructivism*, the basic precept of which is that *students construct knowledge socially*. Seemingly, constructivists use a construction metaphor in their writing pedagogy because it clearly describes the epistemological knowledge that is built by students and teachers engaged in social learning. Numerous contemporary scholars writing on the subject of

social learning and collaboration, such as Bruffee , trace its early roots to the writings of the Russian scholar Lev Vygotsky. Writing in the 1930s, Vygotsky argued *that social interaction is a fundamental aspect of individual cognition.* Vygotsky theoretized that learning is a continual process from one's present intellectual level to a higher level that more closely approximates the learner's potential or "zone of proximal achievement." (Vygotsky 121).

In applying these fundamental theories of Vygotsky and Bruffee, student-writers essentially help to create meaning and knowledge as they fulfill the writing process. This theory does not imply that students have to know a lot about the writing process or the ramifications of social constructivism. Also, social learning should not be appreciated in ways that imply it somehow diminishes a complete learning experience. When I envision social constructivism underway in my first-year writing class, I think about a student-centered dynamic. I visualize peer group discussions developing knowledge, and students depending on one another to help improve their writing skills. I want my students to be engaged in some form of peer review on a weekly basis regarding their assignments, so they can become more comfortable with each other in a learning context, and not just as "individuals" who show up in class several days a week. In such a social learning environment, students can acquire enhanced skills and insights from their peers in their discourse communities. This knowledge continues to grow throughout the semester as students learn to appreciate the importance of diverse views and how collaborative exchange makes them think more about their writing. The ongoing generation of knowledge acquired in this way can help orient their thinking to accommodate a broader

range of thought. In this process, I argue that their collaborative activities augment and extend the development of ideas and information beyond the vertical and often one-way flow of information from instructor to students or from written texts to students. As the process evolves in the writing classroom, students are able to converse about each phase of their writing process and develop their writing skills.

Bruffee argues these very ideas in his text *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge*. He advocates that "our students, however poorly prepared academically, did not come to us as blank slates. They arrived in our classes already deeply acculturated, already full-fledged, competent members (as we were, too) of some [discourse] community or another" (17). While students do not walk into a composition classroom as homogenous members of that specific class's discourse community, they do walk in as members of several other discourse communities. After they begin learning about each others' communities, they become exposed to a wider scope of available knowledge and writing skills.

According to Bruffee's analysis in his article, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" collaborative activities in the classroom find strong support in M. L. Abercrombie's text *The Anatomy of Judgment*. Her research, while conducted primarily in the field of medicine, found "that diagnosis, the art of medical judgment and the key element in successful medical practice, is better learned in small groups of students arriving at diagnoses *collaboratively* (emphasis added) than it is learned by students working individually" (qtd. in Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation" 417).

Based on this study, Abercrombie also argued "that students learning [about] diagnosis collaboratively acquired good medical judgment faster than individuals working alone" (qtd. in Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation" 417). Abercrombie's research facilitated the idea that collaborative learning could improve education and help students succeed in the classroom. As Bruffee points out, many American college students in the 1970s experienced problems ". . . adapting to college life and work," which Bruffee attributes to the fact "that many [students] refused help when it was offered because the kind of help provided seemed merely an extension of the socially-accepted structure of traditional classroom learning" (Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation" 419). As Bruffee further notes, college peer tutoring evolved represents one of the early *institutionalized* forms of collaborative learning.

Perhaps, the most well-known application of collaborative learning in the composition classroom is peer criticism ("critiquing") or peer reviews of students' compositions. Bruffee describes peer criticism by saying, "students learn to describe the organizational structure of a peer's paper, paraphrase it, and comment both on what seems well done and what the author might do to improve the work" (Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation" 418). Peer criticism provides numerous benefits for students. Peer critiquing of students' compositions entails multiple readers and their perspectives on the same writing assignment. Peer criticism can help students resist any prior engrained habits of writing for only an instructor-evaluator audience and also teaches them to write for a more diverse audience.

This one aspect often generates a type of writing activity, as Bruffee notes, wherein ". . . [s]tudents' work tended to improve when they got help from peers; peers offering help, furthermore, learned from the students they helped and from the activity of helping itself" (Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation" 418). The author emphasizes that "[c]ollaborative learning, it seemed, harnessed the powerful educative force of peer influence *that* had been—and largely still is—ignored and hence wasted by traditional forms of education" (Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation" 418).

Bruffee also outlines his collaborative learning theories and pedagogy in *A Short Course in Writing: Practical Rhetoric for Teaching Composition through Collaborative Learning*. The author's approach to collaborative peer group work is essentially dialogic in nature: it privileges consensus and negotiation during the students' revision work as part of the writing process. Bruffee's collaborative learning and pedagogical model is based on students working in small groups who can "converse effectively" about their writing assignments as a "community of writers." According to Bruffee's theoretical views, the principal objective of the collaborative composition class is to bring this conversational ability back into the classroom.

Bruffee sees the instructor's role in the collaborative classroom as someone who can facilitate a variety of peer group communications, such as designing and organizing tasks to enhance student conversations about a writing project, a key component of which may be the resolution of differences, and the evaluation of students' writing regarding their input into the overall process. Bruffee emphasizes that the instructor should be able to design peer collaborative activities that will facilitate students' *talking about their*

writing in an atmosphere of give-and-take that is conducive to consensus. The writing

community that an instructor organizes should also help students understand and apply

their collaborative-based knowledge to critiquing their own and other students' writing in

meaningful ways (Bruffee, *A Short Course* 9).

As one might determine from reading the above tasks, the instructor in Bruffee's

collaboration class is tasked with a myriad of responsibilities. While Bruffee discusses

these instructor tasks more fully in his text, *A Short Course,* he, nonetheless, places a

very high level of expectation on the performance of the instructor. After reading

Bruffee's text, I find it very helpful in focusing the various aspects of collaboration in the

writing classroom.

Building Consensus and Dissensus in the Discourse Community

Composition studies scholars Ede and Lunsford build upon Bruffee's ideas of

collaboration, particularly emphasizing those aspects of *attaining consensus* in peer

group work. Their collaboratively written text on collaborative writing, *Singular Texts,*

Plural Authors, incorporates the notions of *dialogic* collaboration and *hierarchical*

collaboration in the composition class. The authors' use of the concept of "dialogic"

appears to be loosely appropriated from its literary and linguistic connotations as

originally articulated by Mikhail Bakhtin (Holquist 183). Ede and Lunsford's definition

privileges a consensus-building, group-oriented, non-authoritative approach to

collaboration. In this context, both authors privilege dialogic collaboration because they

argue it centers on developing the process of writing among peers and the dynamic

relationships between writers:

This dialogic mode is loosely structured and the roles enacted within it are

fluid: one person may occupy multiple and shifting roles as a project

progresses . . . . Furthermore, those participating in dialogic collaboration

generally value the creative tension inherent in multivoiced and

multivalent ventures. (Ede and Lunsford 133)

The authors differentiate *hierarchical* collaboration from dialogic collaboration as an

approach that focuses on the completion of activities and the final writing product, rather

than the process itself and the learning relationship between writers:

. . . [T]he hierarchical form of collaboration is carefully, and often rigidly,

structured, driven by highly specific goals, and carried out by people

playing clearly defined and delimited roles . . . . Because productivity and

efficiency is of the essence in this mode of collaboration, the realities of

multiple voices and shifting authority are seen as difficulties to be

overcome or resolved . . . . (133)

Collaborative Theory: Challenges, Examinations, and Embellishments

In his 1989 article, "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning," John

Trimbur echoes some of the prevailing collaborative concepts put forth by Bruffee, Ede,

and Lunsford—with one notable difference. Trimbur argues that collaborative activity

should *not* always result in consensus among those participating in collaborative

undertakings (Trimbur 462). Trimbur's theoretical assertions call for students to *accept*

differences in the collaborative process, as well as identify the presence of authority and

ideological power structures so they will learn how to work within them to accomplish

common goals (462). Trimbur further critiques Bruffee's emphasis on the consensus model in collaboration in the following manner:

> The politics of consensus depends on the teacher's practice. Consensus, I will argue, can be a powerful instrument for students to generate differences, to identify the systems of authority that organize these differences, and to transform the relations of power that determine who may speak and what counts as a meaningful statement. (462)

Trimbur advocates that consensus in collaboration should not always produce complete agreement among viewpoints in the classroom. His operative definition for consensus is "a strategy that structures differences by organizing them in relation to each other." Apparently, this definition provides a common ground where both agreements and disagreements within a discourse community are expressed and acknowledged: ". . . consensus cannot be known without its opposite—without the other voices at the periphery of the conversation" (468).

According to Trimbur, his definition further proposes a "rhetoric of dissensus" that he emphasizes is a key element to the intellectual "negotiations" and power struggles inherent in a consensus-based discourse. Although Trimbur does engage in some intellectual wordplay with the words "consensus" and "consensual," his arguments appear to be more consistent with the realities of the cultural and ideological diversities found in the first-year writing class. Trimbur's pedagogical approach to collaboration affirms that dissensus requires students to critically recognize that collaborative learning in the college writing class is always influenced by the ideological and intellectual power

structures existing in academe and how such structures function to disseminate knowledge (462). Social constructivists believe in learning from "conversation," a term that Trimbur posits is a "code word to talk about knowledge and teaching and learning as social—not cognitive" (465). He continues this line of argument by stating that: "Learning, therefore, "cannot be understood strictly on cognitive grounds; it means rather joining new communities and taking part in new conversations" (465).

Rebecca Burnett is another scholar who provides a critique of collaboration that argues that conflict can be a positive force in collaborative groups. In her article, "Conflict in Collaborative Decision-Making," she asks instructors to welcome dissensus, much in the same manner of Trimbur's views on collaboration. In her published study, Burnett outlines three types of conflict: substantive, affective, and procedural. In using the term *substantive*, Burnett means the forms and features of the writing process. In conveying the idea of *affective,* Burnett focuses those situations stemming from interpersonal communications. In using the word *procedural*, the author conveys activities involving the actual implementation of the process (144-62). Interestingly, she discovered a positive correlation between the quality of the completed writing assignment and the amount of substantive conflict which the writers experience.

Rebecca Howard, writing in the 1990s after Bruffee and Trimbur, contributes to the growing critical studies about collaboration in the composition class through her discerning perspectives on what she considers are the types of collaboration. Howard emphasizes that ". . . scholars throughout the disciplines recognize that collaboration is an aid to learning. Students who work together learn more and retain more" (Howard 54).

The value of Howard's scholarship to the field of composition studies is her insightful

observations regarding how collaboration *can be applied* in the writing class. She defines

four categories of collaborative pedagogy that instructors can use in the first-year

composition classroom. These are collaborative learning, collaborative writing,

collaborative contributions to solo-authored texts, and writer-text collaboration. Howard

exemplifies collaborative learning in terms of either partial or total class discussions or

small group discussions (58). Comparable to collaborative learning, collaborative

contributions to single-authored texts are "most often used in writing classes for

collaborative responses to individually drafted texts" (59-60). The primary difference

between collaborative learning and collaborative writing appears to be the focus Howard

gives to text production. She defines collaborative writing as those situations and

activities when writers write together (62). Howard contends that the least recognized

category of collaborative pedagogy is what she calls "writer-text collaboration." She

defines writer-text collaboration occurs when a writer "overtly collaborates with a written

text" as in "quotation, paraphrase, summary, synthesis, research—or plagiarism" (66).

Howard further states that "[b]ecause composition studies includes pedagogy as a

central concern, collaboration holds a particular fascination for the discipline. As in other

disciplines, *small-group discussion has become a staple of composition pedagogy*"

(emphasis added) (54). Howard's categorizations are very useful in framing the range of

collaborative activities that can occur involving students and instructors in the writing

classroom. These categorizations have doubtlessly helped composition instructors, such

as me, better appreciate the relationships of collaborative learning, writing, and pedagogy.

More recent to the published writings on collaboration and social learning by Bruffee, Ede and Lunsford, and Howard is Lynee Gaillet's 2009 published article, "A Socially Constructed View of Reading and Writing." Gaillet clearly conveys her polemic that the best student writing is produced in a social context. Gaillet's critique centers on the term *community of writers*, which she mentions is the *ideal learning environment* where students can collaborate with one another on their writing projects. She posits that collaboration is the key to improving the growth of students' reading and writing abilities. Much like the discursive practices in the Greek *polis* or in Plato's Academy, Gaillet's concept of the writing classroom is a place where civic (public) engagement is practiced:

> Current community-based courses encourage the study of invention, arrangement, and style to determine a particular discourse community's conception of principles of good writing . . . students must study texts to understand the community's culture, what subjects it finds worth writing about, how readers and writers relate to one another, what value people place on experience, observation, interpretation, speculation, objectivity, and so on (173).

Gaillet advocates that peer collaboration enables students to contribute to the overall improvement of writing by adopting everyone's writing according to the "good" writing standards of a specific community. She also contends that collaborative writing

undertaken in a social learning environment supports the composition instructor in creating a classroom wherein students will acquire increasing "ownership" of their own writing and that of their peers as well. Notably, Gaillet makes use of Bruffee's concept of collaborative writing and formulates it into the praxis of civic or communal discourse. As any composition instructors reading my words here will certainly reflect, the concept of writing to the "good" standards of the discourse community is somewhat nebulous and can lead to a wide latitude of interpretations.

Focusing on the Nexus between Theory and Pedagogy

Another recent investigator in the field of social learning and collaboration is Mark Windschitl. Windschitl's examination provides very cogent arguments regarding social constructivism and why it should be studied more thoroughly to validate the pedagogical strategies that are currently in use in academe:

> Implementing constructivist instruction, however, has proved even more difficult than many in education realize. The most profound challenges for teachers are not associated nearly with acquiring new skills but with making personal sense of constructivism as a basis for construction, reorienting the cultures of classrooms to be consonant with the constructivist philosophy, and dealing with the pervasive educational conservatism that works against efforts to teach for understanding . . . *There is little literature that probes, systematically or in depth, the full scope of challenges faced by teachers in creating constructivist classrooms* (emphasis added).

94

And there has been no examination of the articulations between the

conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political planes of the constructivist

teaching experience . . . within this perspective, constructivism in practice

does not refer to the sample application of instructional strategies in which

the teacher is the principal actor students are objects upon whom action is

taken. It is the complex of concerns and invested activity that binds

together teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community

members as they participate, in various ways in reform-oriented education

. . . . (130-31)

Based on the tenor of Windschitl's statements above, his arguments are very

focused on the nexus between theory and praxis as it relates to social learning.

In subsequent pages in his article, Windschitl cites several studies *that question the use of*

social constructivism as the foundational theory of collaboration and make it problematic

in the contemporary college composition classroom. The author cautions his audience to

be aware of the "disconnection" between theory and practice in the use of social

constructivism:

One of the most powerful determinants of whether constructive

approaches flourish or flounder in classrooms is the *degree to which*

individual teachers understand the concept of constructivism (emphasis in

original). Without a kind of working understanding, teachers cannot be

expected to teach constructivist objectives for learning. (138)

95

Heeding his own words above that emphasize the importance of evaluating collaborative and social learning theory (or at least understanding its varied ramifications) before applying it to the classroom, Windschitl refers in his article to the findings of several studies that attempt to show what happens when constructivist theory is applied in the college classroom:

> . . . [R]esearchers found that "efforts to employ student-centered, constructivist pedagogy were routinely thwarted by the lack of opportunity for teachers to delve into the theoretical underpinnings of the practices they were expected to enact . . . . Unfortunately for teachers, principals of instruction that derive from constructivist explanations for learning have not cohered into any comprehensible, widely applicable models . . . . This is not only because constructivism is a theory of learning rather than of teaching, but also because the implied precepts for instruction break radically from the traditional educational model in which teachers themselves were schooled, making it especially difficult for them to visualize constructivist pedagogy. (138)

Windschitl's polemic in his journal article on social constructivism within the broader context of collaboration convincingly frames all of the interrelated aspects of social learning and urges continuing investigation of the subject. He conceives four areas—*conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political*—that he argues pose significant hurdles for instructors and students to overcome in their understanding and application of collaborative strategies in the classroom (132).

96

Throughout his published study, Windschitl perceptively advocates that social learning and collaboration encounter these four "dilemmas" as *teachers struggle to understand the epistemological foundations of constructivism* and how these dilemmas emerge as instructors and students engage in social learning. He aptly concludes his article with an unmistakable caveat for those in academe who might extol the virtues of social constructivism without first testing its implications in the classroom:

> Putting constructivism into practice requires a host of teacher skills . . . . Teachers, for example, must learn to capitalize on, rather than suppress, differences in students' existing understandings due to background; they must become critically conscious of the dynamics of their own classroom culture; and they must attend to patterns of classroom discourse as well as to the thinking that goes with them. (160)

Windschitl's examination should prompt us to think about the varied dimensions of collaboration, particularly collaborative pedagogical strategies that first-year writing instructors use in the classroom. The author's thesis in his article calls for further ongoing research to validate how and why collaboration promotes social learning—and how and in what ways it contributes to the composition class. His critique of collaboration, however, is not without stipulations. He strongly advocates continuing research to accurately assess its effectiveness—a requirement that he believes is lacking. Windschitl's comments above resound with a challenge for composition scholars: "What are the specific techniques of collaboration that writing instructors should use in their

97

classes?" And, how should we assess the effectiveness of collaboration in teaching the writing process?

Based on my 12 years' experience in teaching first-year composition, I have observed one issue that repeatedly occurs in collaborative peer group work. This issue stems from the fact that not all students are able to converse with their peers with the same levels of insight, as well as with the same levels of writing and language proficiency. It should not come as a surprise to many first-year writing instructors that students come from varying and unique backgrounds and cultures. The writing classroom is increasingly becoming a place where students convey diverse ideologies and different viewpoints. From a rhetorical perspective, the college composition classroom reveals a makeup of students from different discourse communities. More and more, consensus-building as a prime objective of peer collaboration is becoming increasingly more difficult to achieve since the presence of heteroglossia[15], rather than monoglossia or uniformity, predominates. As one scholar notes: "one does not step cleanly and wholly from one community to another, but is caught instead in an always changing mix of dominant, residual, and emerging discourses" (Harris 17). Also, Stevens, another composition studies scholar, believes that collaboration must be planned and implemented carefully: "even with considerable planning, collaboration can quickly

---

[15] Heteroglossia is a term that conveys a diversity of voices, multiple viewpoints and ideologies, as well as discourse styles, which can exist within a single composition classroom. Monoglossia, on the other hand, connotes a uniform or singular ideology or viewpoint. These terms find their way into the lexicon of composition studies from their original literary and linguistic usages conceived by the linguist and rhetorician Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin 259-422).

become an exercise in social reproduction, a rehearsal for a drama of tacit control"

(Stevens 2).

As first-year writing instructors inevitably learn over time, we have to design effective collaborative pedagogies that are characterized by specific learning objectives with detailed instructions to students. I have observed that even when instructors implement meaningful collaborative activities for their classes, their inadequacies in understanding social learning sometimes thwart the positive fulfillment of such pedagogies. Bruffee posits that social learning, and its pedagogical application of collaboration, conflicts with academe's longstanding Cartesian view of knowledge being "information impressed on the individual mind by some outside source" (Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning" 427). As instructors, *we want to believe* that collaboration can help our students write better. We are motivated by this desire to implement collaborative strategies—usually peer group work at each stage of the writing process. However, we are often unable to demonstrate that these collaborative activities generate specific improvements in our students' writing. I argue that the most important reason for implementing collaborative teaching and learning strategies in the first-year college writing course should be to improve our students' writing skills. This should be our prime objective, and it should be an objective that we can validate through some form of assessment undertaken directly in the writing class. We need to be able to accurately determine how collaboration facilitates each student's writing skills. If we cannot competently validate our collaborative pedagogies in this manner, then we may be only applying theories in the classroom that we *hope* produce positive results.

Figure 9 below illustrates the dynamics of students in peer groups, the instructor's facilitative role in collaboration, and the recursive phases of the writing process in a first-year writing classroom that uses a fundamental collaborative pedagogy.
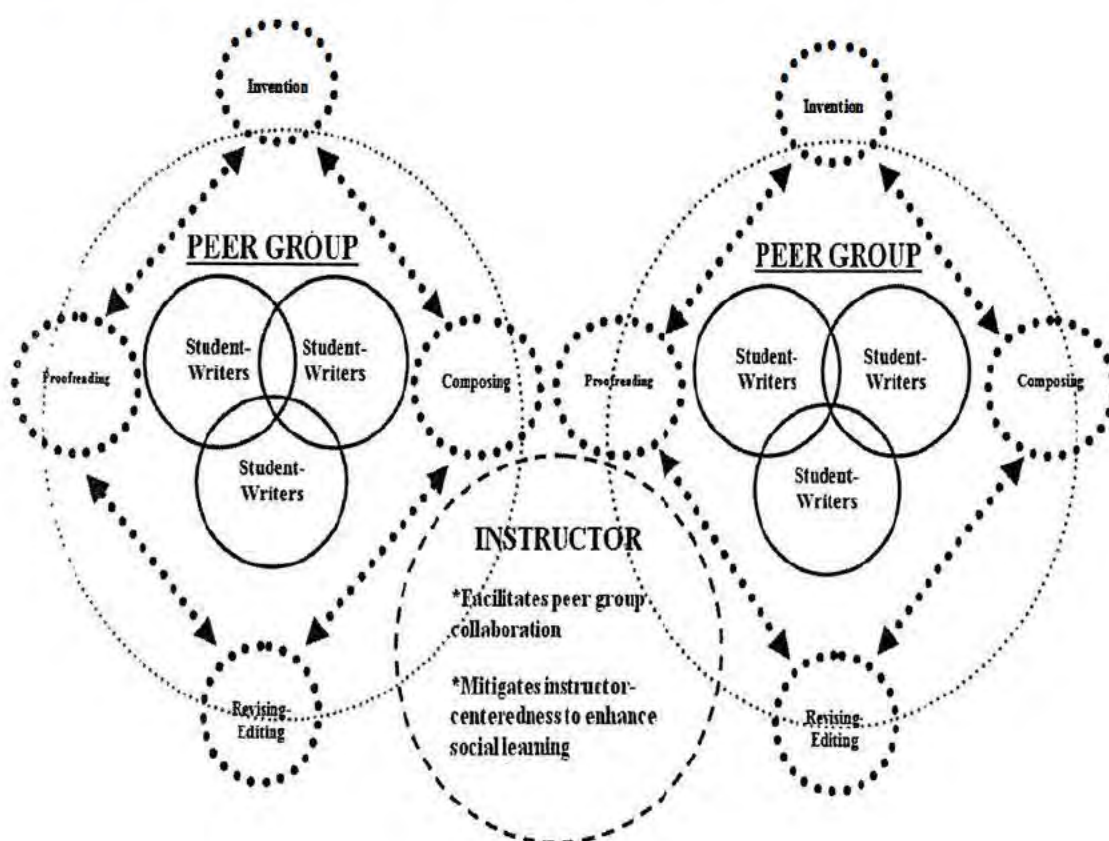
Fig. 9. The dynamics of an effective collaborative pedagogy. This figure is an illustrative interpretation of the processes and dynamics occurring in a contemporary collaborative writing-as-process pedagogy.

A Growing Trend in Analytical Studies of Collaborative Theory

This review of the literature on collaboration reveals a *developing trend* by scholars over the last several decades to undertake meaningful studies to assess the pros and cons of collaboration in the composition classroom. Many of these studies challenge

the theoretical positions advocated by scholars whose writings might be considered as "pioneering" on the subject of collaboration. In the practical environment of the first-year writing class, where students are grappling with the fundamentals of the writing process, unproven theories used as pedagogical approaches can be hindrances to their writing skills. Requiring students to grapple with untested assumptions about collaborative learning adds layers of non-productive work on top of their writing development concerns. As this literature review demonstrates, many of the contemporary studies discussed in this dissertation pose an inquisitive attitude toward the theoretical premises of collaboration. While the scholars whose works are cited in this chapter approach the assessment of collaboration in varying ways, their central focus is always to determine if collaborative theory works with students and why it works.

For example, one key assumption that several of the studies challenge is the role of the writing instructor as someone who should design collaborative learning based on consensus building among students. In adhering to this consensus model of collaboration, writing instructors are required to design and implement collaborative processes that will enable their students to learn to function appropriately in the academic community by obtaining consensus with its shared ideologies and processes. In my view, this approach to collaboration in the college writing class surfaces several distinct problems. Notably, Bruffee emphasizes in his writings on collaboration that *the goal of group work should be consensus*. This emphasis places the "authority of knowledge in the assent of a community of knowledgeable peers" (Bruffee, "Liberal Education" 231-39). Scholars Marilyn Cooper and Michael Holzman actively challenge Bruffee's

101

assumption that the student's goal in collaborating should be to join the academic

discourse community, an academic environment with its somewhat nebulous prescriptive

standards that are somewhat difficult to perceive and attain:

> Our students' purposes in coming to college are various. They
> want to get a better job, they want to be certified for a particular
> career, they need some more time to grow up before taking on real
> world responsibilities—some even just like school. Their teachers
> have equally varied purposes. Some of us want our students to
> learn to think critically and be able to handle language so that
> they will be able to cope with an increasingly literate and complex
> world. Others want them to assimilate the central ideas and texts
> of the dominant culture. Still others offer training in particular
> techniques and procedures. *Except at an extremely general level,*
> *it is hard to discern a shared purpose and shared values of what is*
> *sometimes called the academic discourse community.* (Cooper and
> Holzman 217)

Cooper and Holzman question the assumptions behind some current misconceptions

about discourse communities. Their arguments above clearly demonstrate why

collaboration should not be solely based on one theoretic pedagogical model or paradigm.

Furthermore, their critique surfaces a very delimiting factor—understanding how and

why to discourse in an academic setting—that must be reconciled if students are to have

positive experiences using collaboration in the first-year writing classroom.

The actual critiques of collaborative learning raise important issues about the implications of theory as it is instructed into actual practice (praxis). The following classroom studies identify problems that instructors experienced in peer collaborative activities and then propose workable solutions to the problems. These scholars' examinations reveal some very discerning analyses as each writing instructor identified and dealt with collaborative pedagogies in his or her classroom. The key aspect of their examinations is that each scholar is attempting to accurately assess how collaboration positively or negatively affects writing pedagogy in the writing process.

Richard Newkirk, a composition instructor and rhetorician, surfaces a fundamental quandary that clearly compromises effective collaboration. He notes in "Direction and Misdirection in Peer Response" that one of the major issues stemming from collaborative peer work centers on the instructors' degree of active participation in the overall process. According to Newkirk's study, *minimal guidance from the instructor* on peer collaborative revision of writing assignments results in students writing to an audience that is different to their intended or specified audience—that should be the academic community. Newkirk's study encompasses students' and instructors' numerical rankings of four essays based on provided criteria. Newkirk found that students based their criteria for a good essay on very different aspects (303). Students preferred the essays that were written with an informal audience in mind, while the instructors preferred the essays that were written with an academic audience in mind (304). Stated another way, Newkirk believes that if students are required to write to an academic audience, then they should be initially instructed about the requirements of this audience

as part of their *peer review training*. Newkirk further argues that writing instructors should assume "the responsibility of making the norms of the community clear . . ." (310). He convincingly argues his study validates the premise that when students are assigned to write to an audience of their peers, their writing will be less formal in tone. However, when students are writing to an academic community, he believes they can accommodate the needs of this audience, adjusting their style and formality—but, they first must be instructed how to do so. One of the problems that Newkirk points out in his assessment of peer revision is that the writing instructor will evaluate student papers based solely on the criteria of how they are written to an academic community (309).

What is important about Newkirk's study is that it employs a basic *survey assessment approach* in which the 10 instructors and 10 students participating in his study's survey can rank their choices based on certain predefined criteria (304). While Newkirk's 1984 study is very fundamental in its analytical approach, it does reveal how one scholar attempted to achieve effective validation of collaboration by surveying students and teachers who are actively working together in the writing process. In this way, Newkirk's study provided an *analytical pathway* that enabled subsequent composition studies scholars to recognize similar approaches they could use to effectively assess the outcomes of applying collaborative theory in their pedagogies.

Published two years after Newkirk's collaborative study in 1986, Nancy Grimm's "Improving Students' Response to Peers' Essays," also acknowledges Newkirk's identification of the source of dysfunction that occurred in the collaborative peer reviews analyzed in his study. Grimm's article encompasses proposed solutions for collaborative

pedagogies that do not stem from the results of a formal analytical process, such as that used by Newkirk, but are validated by several years of her own direct observations in her composition classes.

At the very beginning of her article, Grimm notes that inadequately planned and presented collaborative work in the writing classroom can produce the effect of ". . . the blind leading the blind" (Grimm 92). She continues her listing of deficiencies in the collaborative process by noting that if composition students are only guided in the collaborative process by completing peer review checklist forms, then they only feel they are engaged in perfunctory busy work (92). She also states that students should be taught collaborative group etiquette (being courteous, fulfilling all tasks, and showing respect for others) that is vital to successful collaboration in the writing class (92). Grimm warns that the lack of peer group etiquette will compromise the overall process of collaboration (94). She further advises that a ". . . typical group session starts awkwardly, gropes for direction, ends on uncertainty, . . . motivates and guides revision" but will improve over time (94).

After carefully describing the issues in collaborative peer reviews that she observes in her composition classes, Grimm then proceeds to a detailed series of proposed solutions that I have summarized below:

1. She first advises that students should spend two days on peer revision, since doing so assures students will provide more thorough critiques of their peers' compositions.

105

2. The author emphasizes that the first type of response should be oral followed by a written response.

3. In accomplishing this initial phase of the peer review process, a writer should read his or her paper aloud and then wait for peers to create thoughtful responses.

4. Following initial reading of the paper, a writer should then ask his or her peers about any problem areas noted in the essay. Grimm indicates that this is an important phase in the overall process because it enables a writer and peer group to develop a sense of audience and reach agreement on those items that should be implemented to improve the paper.

5. Grimm points out another aspect that is important to the overall process: students must role-play the audience to which the final paper is submitted or evaluated. She emphasizes that students must know the criteria that will be applied by the evaluator to the paper.

6. A very important aspect that the author services is her comment that students should "[e]llaborate on one another's responses and encourage everyone to contribute. Discussion should be between three or four people, not two people."

7. Grimm advises that students should point out the specific parts of a paper that seems strong to them and ask others for their responses on these parts as well. The author qualifies this group activity with the comment that giving compliments on the student's paper often and early in the peer review process

sometimes proves counterproductive and inhibits important critical insights from surfacing in the group. However, Grimm is quick to point out that the collaborative process should be concluded in a positive manner to foster positive group relationships.

8. Grimm also suggests that a forty to sixty minute conference be held with each peer group. The rationale for this comment is based on her observation that "[s]tudents frequently tell me that they have a better idea of what is expected of them after having watched a 'pro' do it."

9. Grimm designates collaborative group work as twenty percent of each student's grade and in response, students are ". . . more comfortable accepting the responsibility of group work."

10. Grimm makes a very strong point when she asserts that in doing peer work students should always keep in mind the assignment and the audience, so that this knowledge will help to serve to strengthen the student's paper (92-94).

Grimm's *problem and solution approach* to those issues enumerated above highlights the careful analysis that one composition scholar undertakes to adequately determine the impact of collaborative pedagogies in her composition classes. Her methodology is very sound in terms of its assessment of collaborative theory: she *carefully observes* those aspects of collaborative learning that generate issues in her classes and *then proposes* workable pedagogical solutions. In this manner, Grimm exhibits to other composition instructors and scholars how theory can be effectively examined for its pedagogical application in the crucible of the first-year writing class.

Grimm's solutions to issues in collaborative peer work should be considered essential reading for composition instructors since her focus directly addresses common objections that some first-year writing instructors share regarding their attempts at collaborative learning. I argue that these objections similarly follow the premises I have heard over the years from instructors that first-year writers are not ready for collaborative learning since they have not been sufficiently prepared for it in high school or other undergraduate courses. Also, a common objection I hear often is that students know very little about the basics of writing, and because of this, they cannot effectively learn from each other. Another objection, but one which I am reluctant to note here, is that first-year writing students are considered academically and socially "immature"—a condition that prevents them from working effectively in peer groups. It appears that Grimm's solutions, as proposed in her article, address each of these issues effectively in terms of the requirements that students must undertake as members of collaborative peer groups. Unless scholars specifically analyze theory in terms of its praxis in the composition classroom, accurate and complete understanding cannot be realized regarding the effects of collaboration on the writing process model.

Continuing in the chronological succession of scholars critiquing collaboration in the composition classroom is Mara Holt's 1992 published article, "The Value of Written Peer Criticism." In her article, Holt argues that the main problems with collaborative peer critiques is that they are often hastily completed, produced in checklist format, and emphasize "editing" techniques, instead of focusing on the more intrinsic areas of writing (348). Holt argues that these several situations only produce an "exercise" that is not

being taken seriously enough by either student or instructor (384). Holt's examination of

collaborative peer reviewing in the composition class also surfaces, in the same manner

of Newkirk and Grimm, the students' feelings of inadequacy. They experience these

feelings of inadequacy as they attempt to perform peer critiquing without sufficient

training in how to write for academic communities or audiences (392). The author also

identifies a major recurrent problem in peer group work and that is collaborative sessions

often devolve to students' "editing" their peers' composition drafts with varying degrees

of success. Holt perceptively develops the structure for effective peer reviews by

developing a schema that incorporates a balanced blending of expressivist and social

constructivist approaches[16] to composition pedagogy. Recognizing that many instructors

would not completely abandon their expressivist orientation even amid the popularity of

collaborative pedagogies, she astutely assimilates the theoretical constructs from the

published works of Kenneth Bruffee concerning collaboration, and also from

composition scholars Peter Elbow and Patricia Belanoff who value a more expressivist-

centered approach in writing pedagogy. In doing so, Holt advocates that this melding of

two theoretical views used in composition pedagogy will "work best in tandem in the

collaborative classroom because together they capture the struggle between individual

expression and social constraint that most of us experience as writers" (384). Holt

assimilates peer critique guidelines that Bruffee describes in his text A *Short Course in*

Writing and Elbow and Belanoff in their jointly-authored text *Sharing and Responding*

---

[16] An expressivist approach to writing emphasizes a more individualistic approach, as contrasted with the social and interpersonal aspects of social constructivist theory.

(387). Holt's combination of these two orientations enable composition instructors to have the "best of both worlds" regarding peer reviews in their writing classes. In so doing, Holt believes that the individualist or expressivist voice is accommodated while students undertake their collaborative peer critiques of their writing assignments.

I find Holt's peer review schema are very insightful and certainly meaningful for any instructors who wish to convey in their teaching that there is an appropriate balance between the expressivist and constructivist approach to peer review work in the composition class. Holt's tabular synthesis[17] of the peer review orientations developed by Bruffee, Elbow, and Belanoff is very creditable because it focuses on those aspects of collaborative peer work that *directly influence the students' invention and revision activities of the writing process.* While her study does not use any testing or surveying-based findings regarding instructor and students' collaborative work in the writing process, it does focus the expressivist-constructivist tension that inevitably occurs in composition pedagogy. Her published study proposes workable solutions for this frequent tension using the scholarship of several noted composition studies scholars.

In the late 1990s, David Bleich proposed some very liberating principles encompassing collaboration in the composition class. Bleich viewed composition and the college curriculum as essentially social or socially-communicative. His basic polemic is composition instructors should embrace the differences shared by students, yet encourage collaboration. Bleich's "pedagogy of disclosure" asks instructors and students to share

---

[17] Holt's schema, found on page 387 in her article cited above, assimilates Bruffee's collaborative peer review guidelines, which can be found on pages 140-52 in his text *A Short Course in Writing.* Elbow and Belanoff's expressivist peer critique guidelines can be found on pages 64-67 in their text *Sharing and Responding.* Both of these texts are included in the Works Cited page of this dissertation.

and explore their inner feelings and thoughts, moving them from "their traditional ventures of complete privacy to the classroom" (Bleich 44). To participate in this very liberating form of collaboration, the author argues that instructors should be willing to change their curriculum based on the makeup of students who are in their classrooms and also subscribe to the position that curriculum content is contingent upon the variables constituted by the members of each class (50). One of the assumptions of this "pedagogy of disclosure" is that both instructors and students possess an individual history or story that they can share as part of their collaborative activity. Bleich emphasizes that the pedagogy of disclosure provides a sense of meaning for the group, as well as the individual and provides a meaningful way to focus on issues of authorship. I included Bleich's views on collaboration since they seem to expand the concept of collaboration and its social learning aspects to a very idealistic degree.

Collaborative Pedagogy: A Solution for the Needs of Multiculturalism?

Multi-cultural diversity in the college composition classroom becomes increasingly important to our understanding of social constructivist thought and its impact on collaboration. In the opening sentence of their jointly-authored article, "Embracing a Multicultural Rhetoric," Bonnie Lisle and Sandra Mano emphasize that while diversity is a "hot topic" in today's composition classroom, the "talk" does not match actual classroom practice (12). While the general sentiment expressed by composition instructors is that multi-cultural diversity needs to be appropriately acknowledged, there appears to be a dearth of change in our writing classes to accommodate such variances in cultures and ideologies. Based on my experiences, I

believe that first-year writing instructors would candidly validate that multiculturalism does exert an important influence in the design of syllabi and pedagogical approaches. But, in reality, does it? In response to this strategic question, Lisle and Mano propose a discourse that will facilitate the "awareness of varied audiences, purposes, and social contexts" in collaborative activities in the writing classroom. Creating a classroom, in which all students can examine differing ideologies and cultures through the perspectives of students whose backgrounds and views are different than their own, seemingly empowers the students to think more critically. This critical view is considered by the authors as a key foundational component of social constructivist theory (26). Their arguments build credence for their guiding principle that instructors should develop collaborative classrooms that can effectively accommodate the ideological and cultural orientations of students in order that effective pedagogy can be designed based on these needs.

Lisle and Mano's polemic focuses a situation that may continue to exert its impact on not only the collaborative pedagogies of the first-year writing class, but on the content of syllabi and pedagogical strategies as well. While their main proposal could be characterized as being more theory than praxis, their arguments address a key need that will continue to influence the direction of collaborative pedagogies in the writing classroom. The authors spotlight an issue, which if not appropriately accommodated by the collaborative strategies undertaken in the classroom, could negatively impact quality of instruction in first type in your writing classes. The authors call for more scholarship in the area of multiculturalism and its impact on the writing classroom.

Collaboration: Helping Students Join the Academic Discourse Community

Another scholar who voices a problem that impacts the collaborative culture of the composition classroom is Patricia Bizzell. Her article entitled, "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College," addresses the needs of students who are *least prepared* for college. Bizzell emphasizes that basic composition should be instructed so it will benefit each student. Engaging students in social learning to accommodate their frames of reference is central to the heart of collaboration and social constructivism. Collaboration in the writing classroom, to be truly accommodating, must also engage very basic students in the "conversation" of social learning. Bizzell's arguments promote a first-year writing pedagogy that is very inclusive and very supportive of students who are joining the college discourse community for the first time and who are unfamiliar with its requirements and idiosyncrasies. Bizzell views collaboration as one means of creating effective bonds among students that will help them in transitioning from their prior discourse communities to the first-year writing community. While Bizzell does not offer any short-term or long-term strategies for helping students overcome the problems they would probably encounter as they acquire facility in writing in their new academic discourse community, she points out a very significant hurdle that students often deal with in their first year composition classes. It is a problem that needs to be further examined in depth and further qualified by scholars since its continuance militates against students successfully engaging in the academic writing process.

A Union Made in Cyberspace: Collaboration and Digital Media

As one of my graduate teaching colleagues said to me several years ago, "collaboration and technology were made for each other." As one ponders the implications of this statement, several aspects come into sharp focus regarding how digital media provides the tools, resources, and strategies to augment the collaborative environment in the first-year writing course. While I examine online technology and digital pedagogies in the following chapter three of this study, perhaps the following findings in my literature review in this chapter will serve to focus current scholarship concerning the nexus between collaboration and technology and also provide an effective transition to the next chapter.

Researching this literature review in the year 2010 enables me to accurately state that remarkable innovations in digital technologies over the last two decades have also brought numerous changes in the ways that first-year writing is viewed by faculty and students and in the ways it is now being instructed. With only a few exceptions, every college and university's first-year writing class either uses networked student workstations or computer-assisted instructional media to teach and enable students to apply their writing skills. A cursory view of the titles of published journal articles dealing with composition studies over the last decade reveals a growing scholarly interest in examining the various facets of collaborative learning and collaborative writing as they are facilitated by digital media.

This literature review of recent scholarly publications regarding the relationship of technology to collaboration in the writing classroom led me to several revealing

perspectives on the topic. Composition and rhetoric studies scholar Lester Faigley's "Beyond Imagination: The Internet and Global Digital Literacy" advocates how collaboration is reinforced by the use of digital media. The author notes that "introducing technology has made learning more student-centered, encouraged collaboration, and increased student teacher interaction" (138). Patricia Boyd concurs with Faigley's central premise noted above by identifying this type of collaborative classroom as a learner-centered environment (LCE). She advocates that a "LCE positions students as co-constructors of knowledge by situating them as active, disciplined participants in their education rather than passive receivers of pre-constructed "truths" (224). Boyd has undertaken an extensive study of the effects of online and hybrid composition courses on LCE collaborative classrooms:

> The courses described in my survey used the discussion board feature extensively, suggesting that the instructors valued the kinds of interaction that online environments make possible. Some of the students' responses to the open-ended questions emphasized that the discussion boards fit well with the goals of a writing class because they were *required to write their ideas* (emphasis added) rather than speak them as they would in an FTF course. (239)

The author's comments above emphasize the use of discussion boards or forums and online digitally-based course management systems (CMS) that enable students to provide written responses or "threads" to online electronic texts. These written responses are characterized by menu-driven routines and can be viewed online by other students.

115

Discussion forums enable students to read and comment on various written documents during simultaneous "live" (synchronous) online encounters or during subsequent (asynchronous) encounters at any time students choose. The value of such discussion forums in CMS platforms, such as Blackboard, Moodle, or Drupal, to mention a few popular ones, is that they require students to *write* their peer critiques. They do not necessarily detract from the desired "conversation" that Bruffee argued was so important in collaboration; rather, they enable students to practice their writing skills as they provide their peer critiques and responses regarding their compositions. Another perceived advantage of using discussion forums in an online LCE is that students can view one another's comments, thereby *expanding awareness* of the assignment and the overall peer review process.

Recent studies validate that when students engage in collaboration in the writing process through wikis or blogging, it ". . . enhances peer interaction and group work, and facilitates sharing and distributing knowledge and expertise among a community of learners" (Parker and Chao 58). Further studies show that when blogs and wikis are used in the composition class, this activity enhances the ongoing use of collaboration in writing assignments since it ". . . allows the focus to shift away from the instructor as the sole audience" (Vie 69). Writing in her 2008 essay, "Teaching with Wikis: Toward a Networked Pedagogy," Rebecca Lundin proposes strategies in which wikis can be used to accomplish the growing requirements for collaborating with new media in composition classrooms. She emphasizes that some of the key advantages of using wikis are that

"they require little specialized knowledge and no specialized software to manipulate multimedia elements" (436).

Composition scholars are acknowledging that inherent in the collaborative pedagogies of first-year writing are the evolving elements of networked (collaborative) writing and peer criticism. The term "networked writing" connotes that a writing assignment is shared online among multiple peer audiences and receives the benefit of their critiques. According to Elizabeth Klem and Charles Moran, "a networked computer environment may encourage previously unheard voices to enter [the] discussion . . . ." (90). Lundin shares her views how such networked activity helps to socialize the process of writing: ". . . By viewing writing as a networked activity, students focus on the connectivity and complexity of rhetorical situations *rather than understanding writing as the decontextualized product of a single, isolated worker*"(432).

The continuing adoption in the first decade of the twenty-first century of digital media—online discussion forums, blogs, and wiki's— for collaboration in the first-year writing class is *making the writing process more of a social undertaking* since more of the writing process is conducted through peer participation. These digital media help to minimize the isolation that occurs in the individualized writing process by enabling students to collaborate at every point in the process. Rather than only collaborating to revise drafts, students are facilitated by these digital media to engage with their peers at the earliest stages of pre-writing and also actual draft creation.

In their 2006 article, "Remediation, Genre, and Motivation: Key Concepts for Teaching with Weblogs," Kevin Brooks, Cindy Nichols, and Sybil Priebe examine the

117

experiences and attitudes of first-year writing students regarding weblogs. Their findings

demonstrate that weblogging (i.e., online "journaling") is more popular and most

successful when introduced as a journal on a community blog. Their findings show that

collaboration is more widely accepted by students, perhaps because students use many of

these collaborative technologies outside the classroom already (Brooks, Nichols, and

Priebe). The authors used basic questionnaires to obtain responses from their students.

Cited below, their recommendations highlight the need for instructors to more fully

understand how students perceive the value of weblogs or journals in the context of a

first-year writing class:

> The preference for journal weblogging is a generic issue (in terms of form
>
> and motivation) that instructors will want to heed. In both semesters, our
>
> students preferred the journal weblog regardless of which course they
>
> were enrolled in, and as student awareness of weblogging increases, the
>
> personal, daily reflection seems likely to be the defining characteristic of
>
> weblogging. As academics, we might be more comfortable and familiar
>
> with notebook weblogs and filter-weblogs, but our students coming out of
>
> high school are likely to know the genre as an expressive and social space.
>
> Rather than work entirely against the grain of the dominant weblog genre,
>
> instructors in any discipline might draw on scholarship in rhetoric and
>
> composition that values freewriting and sharing. Peter Elbow (1981), a
>
> leading advocate of both practices, recommends ten minutes of freewriting
>
> each day in order to help students learn to "separate the producing process

from the revising process," to develop the habit of writing "even when you

don't feel like writing" and, quite simply, to "improve your writing."

(Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe 14-15)

The authors' study of weblogs demonstrates substantial credibility in its scholarship as it

provides findings and comparisons from questionnaires used in both the fall and spring

semesters of the first-year writing class.

Based on the findings of the studies above, I contend that collaborating through

blogging and similar online discussion forums provide enhanced meaning to student-

writers. They are engaged in writing for reasons other than they must complete

assignments that are scheduled on a syllabus. Blogging, and its related forms of

discussion forums and wikis, clearly provides platforms for students to write and develop

their writing skills. In one very important sense, I believe when students collaborate

through these forms of digital media, they are writing in ways that may well empower

them and give them the confidence that they could not acquire from only writing their

assigned essays. First-year writers may have difficulty recognizing and appreciating

opposing views. Continuing exposure to the views of other students through the

commenting features of wikis, CMSs, discussion forums, and blogs can provide student-

writers with meaningful opportunities to interact with and learn to intelligently argue

these differing views. While this interaction can be undertaken in a traditional FTF

(onsite) classroom, students with differing views are sometimes hesitant to share their

views in these settings to avoid contending with opposing viewpoints. Computer-

mediated discussions provide sufficient "distance" so that students may be more willing

to voice their ideas and viewpoints. Composition researcher Jane Fife, writing in her 2008 published study, "Enhancing Face-To-Face Class Discussion through Electronic Discussion Forums," notes that "online discussion forums are wonderful tools for exploring multiple viewpoints" (64). The commenting or discussion features of wikis and blogs provide students with the collaborative tools to exchange ideas about their writing and also examine others' ideas in peer group work.

Challenges to Collaborative Theory

In reviewing the current literature about collaboration in the composition classroom, I believe it is important to research how instructors and their institutions view collaboration. According to Shawn Bohen and James Stiles' published article on faculty perceptions regarding collaboration, the authors note that many faculty members are still apprehensive about the growing use of collaboration in academe. The authors' main argument is that "[t]he sole experience of collaboration for many faculty members has been through serving on academic administrative committees that are characterized by endless meetings readily described as painful, process-intensive events in which little happens" (41). Bohen and Stiles' study surfaces several issues that hinder instructors' endorsement of collaboration in the curriculum. Based on their study, the authors argue that college faculty members are *not trained effectively* to work together. Furthermore, they argue that tenure often favors individual effort, and that academic administrative structures often do not recognize and promote individuals for their contributions which are collaborative in nature (41). Instructors must "practice what they preach" regarding collaboration. In other words, if instructors are reluctant to give up a portion of their

instructor-centered authoritarianism to foster a more student-centered pedagogy, then students and instructors will doubtlessly experience a "bumpy ride" when it comes to implementing collaborative work in their writing classrooms. Bohen and Stiles' journal article also conveys the notion that it is important that departments and universities attempt to mitigate any problems that might hinder collaboration in the writing classroom. Instructor training in collaborative pedagogies could be scheduled as a recurrent activity for first-year instructor workshops.

In order to acquire a better perspective as to how one large community college, with over 30,000 undergraduate students, views collaboration in its first-year writing courses, I reviewed the instructors' first-year writing syllabi that are linked on the college's website. Since the college is state-supported, the state legislature requires that it post all of its instructors' syllabi for public access. My cursory review showed there are approximately 500 individual syllabi for class sections posted for academic year 2010 (encompassing two full semesters and four abbreviated sessions ("Winter-mester and "Spring-mester") by all the instructors who teach first-year composition classes and writing-based literature classes ("First-Year Writing Syllabi"). While this number may seem somewhat high, it is important to realize that it represents all the multiple sections that approximately 70 instructors (including fulltime and "adjunct" instructors) teach during the academic year. All of the syllabi contain "boiler-plate" thematic statements regarding collaboration as part of student learning objectives, such as this one: "Understand and utilize the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes by learning to critique their own and others' work." I would agree with the inflection of the

statement that basically those of us who teach first-year writing at the college "learn by doing" as it relates to collaborative activities. I believe all of the instructors, in varying degrees, explain the peer review process to their students. Certainly, instructors provide guidance as well as written instructions, and even, sometimes, written guidelines and checklists. However, I am not certain if all instructors engage in collaboration and social learning beyond the most perfunctory routines of student peer criticism. I cannot recall the subject of collaboration or even workshops on small group collaboration being offered either through the English department or through another training and development area at the community college where I teach. Perhaps, this review of all the first-year writing syllabi published online at the community college validates the assumption that many scholars who write on the subject of collaboration convey. The assumption is that instructors are using collaborative theory to some degree in their classrooms, but are *not sufficiently knowledgeable or are not sufficiently trained* to use those pedagogical strategies that will assure their students receive optimal desired benefits.

Implications of Collaborative Practices in the Writing Classroom

Kenneth Bruffee's theories on collaboration in the writing process have been adopted over the last 35 years by many American college composition programs. Bruffee's collaborative learning approach is designed to develop a "community of writers" in the classroom where students work together in small groups, converse about their writing, review it, and critique it. Bruffee's theories on collaborative practices convey an intrinsic dynamic for the writing classroom. This dynamic is found in the

ways that collaboration fosters active peer discourse between each phase of the writing-as-process model. Collaboration facilitates the interactions of students engaged in peer groups whose singular focus is improving their writing skills. Such interaction fosters student discourse about writing. It would be impossible for students in collaborative writing classes to develop their compositions in isolation. Bruffee's theoretical notions, based predominantly on the social learning theories of Lev Vygotsky, spawned numerous subsequent studies, most of which focused on testing and validating the theories of collaboration through analytical studies of student-writers. Several of these studies, as noted in this chapter, expound and expand upon Bruffee's notional concepts of working toward consensus in collaborative activities in the writing community through a dialogic approach or consensus-building approach. Several other scholars published writings that basically validated Bruffee's concepts, but advocated that writing skills could also be facilitated from dissensus, not just consensus in collaborative practices. Other published studies actively challenged Bruffee's assumption that the students' goal in collaborating should be to join and participate in an academic discourse community, noting that an effective understanding of the discourse may be difficult for them to grasp and then apply in their writing assignments. Lisle and Mano emphasize in their published article that instructors should design collaborative strategies that can support the ideological and cultural orientations of students so that an effective pedagogy can be designed based on these multicultural needs.

The important implications of these evolving scholarly examinations of collaborative theory is their *critical focus on praxis*. Expressed another way, "how and

what ways does collaborative theory foster or inhibit writing pedagogy for first-year writers? I argue that one of the key benefits of Bruffee's published articles on collaboration and social learning theory is that such theories generated a lengthy succession of composition studies scholars who examined collaborative theory through the lens of analysis. While many first-year writing instructors might say that collaboration *seems* to be a positive influence in their classes, numerous scholars in the 1980s and beyond began to investigate the pedagogical applications of collaborative theory, rather than just critiquing collaborative theory. These studies created a growing scholarly temperament toward validating how collaborative theory is *applied* in the first-year writing class. Some of these studies provided important insights into the benefits that students can accrue from collaborative pedagogy. However, the primary research I personally undertook in 2010 showed that collaborative practices may only be receiving "lukewarm" acceptance in some settings. I reviewed approximately 500 first-year writing syllabi linked online at a large community college's website for the duration of one academic year. My own findings revealed that other than generalized "boilerplate" statements" regarding the theme of collaboration as a desired student learning outcome, none of the syllabi provided specific or directional language concerning how collaboration would be used to improve students' writing skills. Complementing this finding is my own observation that no published or announced training sessions on collaboration for English faculty occurred during the same one-year period at the college. One of the key conclusions of this chapter—that also has direct implications for the

future of collaborative practices in first-year writing—is that training in collaboration for writing instructors should be provided at least annually at the departmental level.

Another important conclusion obtained through the literature review in this chapter is that student training in collaboration should be undertaken. Clearly, Grimm's published article focuses predominantly on the importance of training students in the rudiments of collaboration. Newkirk also references this important need in his article as well. The implication of such student training in peer group collaboration is that heightened students' awareness of their roles in collaborative practices is tantamount to the successful use of small group work in a first-year writing class. Very few, if any, studies are being undertaken that validate the benefits of small peer group collaboration in the first-year writing class.. The above are a few of the noteworthy studies reviewed in this chapter that highlight the need for more analytical studies of collaborative pedagogy in the college writing class.

Implications of the Blending of Collaborative and Digital Media Pedagogies

Faigley and Boyd's investigations encompass how the tools of digital media are truly making collaboration a learner-centered experience, wherein students can be co-constructors of knowledge rather than "passive receivers of preconstructed truths."

Online discussion forums, wikis, and blogs are expanding the discourse about writing through digital networks with multiple participants. An important conclusion for this chapter, with future implications for first-year writing pedagogy, is the progressive incorporation of blogs, discussion forums, and wikis into the composition classroom. Such digital media can help mitigate the authoritarianism of the writing instructor and

serve to make the class more student-centered. The written response or commenting features of discussion forums, wikis, and blogs can provide students with the opportunity to interact with others of differing views and ideas. Computer-mediated discussions are believed to be an aid to help students become more willing to voice their views in digital formats over an FTF classroom. Again, such benefit-laden ideas about the uses of digital media need to be validated through analytical studies in the writing classroom. The use of pre and post-assignment studies, planned by writing program directors and implemented by instructors, possess the potential to assess if students—and their writing skills—are truly benefiting from digital media as aids to further collaboration.

A Key Requirement: Continue Analytical Studies of Collaboration

Collaborative theories initiated a far-reaching transformation of the traditional teacher-centered writing class *toward a more student-centered class*. Of course, in actual practice, the degree of student-centeredness is contingent on the willingness and the comfort level of many instructors to facilitate effective collaborative pedagogies. Increasingly, composition classes are being organized around small "peer groups" in which students function as supportive audiences for each other, instructed through a workshop approach.

One of the key revelations of my literature review involving collaboration is that composition studies scholars have engaged in the kinds of analytical studies that will help validate if the theoretical notions supporting collaborative theory, when applied as praxis, will help students improve their writing. My strategic question concerning this effort is: will such systematic inquiry continue in the future? I argue this is the only way that we

126

can effectively judge the merits of collaborative theory as applied currently in the first-year writing classroom. Scholars must continue to investigate collaborative pedagogies to determine if they are being truly supportive to student-writers at each phase of the writing process.

In chapter six of this study, I will address the continuing need for instructors and first-year writing program directors to use systematic inquiry to better assess collaborative pedagogies by proposing a series of evaluative pre-and post student writing assessment instruments to validate the effectiveness of their pedagogies. As this evaluative effort continues, I argue that instructors and students will begin to reap its benefits. These ongoing assessments will serve a very important function. They will provide validated findings that enable instructors and first-year writing program directors to make the necessary modifications that improve collaborative pedagogies in the first-year writing class. The continuing credibility of composition studies in the college curriculum may well hinge on how its adherents and practitioners assess and validate theoretical approaches, such as collaboration, in the writing classroom. The findings in this literature review prompt me to advocate that such assessments should encompass systematic studies of composition theories, such as collaboration, in order to validate with analytical findings to what degree they are actually providing benefits to first-year writers.

CHAPTER III

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.

-Lewis Carroll, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*.

Early Developments: Computers and Writing

Beginning in the middle 1980s, computer technology occupied a growing presence in the college composition class. Once confined to the domains of science and technology in the form of mainframe operating systems, or cumbersome card-punch machines, computers evolved as desktop models during this time to become increasingly popular in academic environments. Most of the impetus for this surge was the development of a disk operating system (DOS) and the development of word-processing and related software. In this context, the computer was considered a "stand-alone" personal productivity machine that greatly increased the efficiencies of typing and generating documents and then printing them as paper documents. While some electronic archiving of documents was available, such storage capacities were limited and often used removable disks with limited storage capacities. In retrospect, these early desktop computers increased efficiencies in generating text, but also generated substantially more printed documents than its predecessor, the typewriter.

The progressive contributions of the Apple™ computer and operating system, Microsoft Windows™ operating system, word processing software, presentation software, as well as increased computing efficiencies and digital storage space, made the desktop computer increasingly widespread in academic, business, and home settings. Except for some of the networking capabilities of very large mainframe systems, desktop computing was essentially a one-on-one environment involving the user and the computer.

During this period of rapid development in the 1980s of computer-based technologies, composition studies scholars began appreciating the application of the computer in the writing process. In 1979, Hugh L. Burns, Jr. authored the first dissertation in the United States on the subject of using computers to teach the writing process. His dissertation, "Stimulating Rhetorical Invention in English Composition through Computer-assisted Instruction," examines how computers could assist students in the invention and composing process (Burns). Burns' examination signals an increasing interest in using digital technology in the writing classroom during this time. Subsequent to Professor Burns' initial research on the topic, other scholars, such as Gail Hawisher, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, and Cynthia Selfe, advocated the benefits that microcomputers could provide to composition studies and to the writing process (31). During the initial introduction of desktop computing into the college writing classroom, computers were basically used to increase the efficiency of word processing of the writing process and to help students proofread for grammar and spelling mistakes.

129

In one very ironic sense, this initial use of computers in the composition class essentially focused on the end-product of writing, a situation that seems very antithetical to the prevailing pedagogy of writing-as-process. Throughout most of the 1980s, increasing numbers of composition studies scholars wrote articles on the application of computer technology to writing pedagogy. While progressive innovations in the Windows™ operating system, word processing software, and localized computer networking occurred, it was not until the commercial launch of the World Wide Web (Web) in the U.S. in the early 1990s that the relationship of digital technology and the pedagogy of writing was strengthened.

The Influences of the Web on Composition Pedagogy

At the start of the 1990s, several U. S. commercial firms developed programs wherein users could access the Internet. The Internet or Web had been evolving over the prior decades through a succession of developers, starting with the Department of the Defense in the 1960s and proceeding to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Minnesota development teams in the 1990s. Delphi was the first national commercial online service to offer Internet access to its subscribers. It started email connection in July 1992 and offered full Internet service in November 1992 ("A Brief History of the Internet"). Scholars describe this early Internet as "Web 1.0." It was the digital learning environment of the mid 1990s to approximately the end of the 1990s.

130

During this time, people received information in a user "read-only" format from web sites or similar Internet locations.

In the current digital technology environment of the new millennium, now known commonly as "Web 2.0," users have advanced from being "one-way" consumers of digital information to users who share information between a variety of other users and web sites. *The dynamic change that Web 2.0 brings is not only its read-only environment, but also its read, write, and collaborative digital environment.* Learning technologist Stephen Downs, writing in the October 17, 2005 edition of *eLearn Magazine*, argues that Web 2.0 represents a dramatic shift from being a medium ". . .where information was transmitted and consumed, to being a platform, in which content was created, shared, remixed, repurposed, and passed along" (Downs). The author also outlines what he believes are the key components of this new Web 2.0 learning technology:

> . . . [T]he dominant learning technology employed today is a type of system that organizes and delivers online courses   the learning management system (LMS). This piece of software has become almost ubiquitous in the learning environment; companies such as WebCT, Blackboard, and Desire2Learn have installed products at thousands of universities and colleges and are used by tens of thousands of instructors and students. The learning management system takes learning content and

131

organizes it in a standard way, as a course divided into modules and

lessons, supported with quizzes, tests and discussions, and in many

systems today, integrated into the college or university's student

information system. (Downs)

Notably, the innovative digital media comprising and evolving in Web 2.0

represent a major *paradigm change* in how instructors and students use such media in

their college composition classes. This change occurred during the last 10 to 12 years—

and is still occurring. Perhaps, the easiest way to distinguish Web 2.0 from the previous

Web 1.0 is the operative concept that users (such as students and teachers) are now

providers to the knowledge that they receive from online web pages and networked sites,

rather than just consumers of such knowledge. Web 1.0 websites could be characterized

as fairly "static": any changes or modifications to their content were made by

"Webmasters"—specialists who maintained them on a regular basis. In Web 1.0, the

flow of information was one-way—from the online source to the end-user.

Digital Media Enhances Social Learning

An important finding in this literature review is that digital technologies, as encompassed

in the concept of Web 2.0, *strongly gravitate toward social constructivism*[18], a significant

development in this study prompting scholars to use these technologies in ways to foster

---

[18] I discuss and document the sequential development of social constructivism and social learning theory in
the first-year writing class in chapter two of this dissertation.

132

collaboration and social learning. As personal computers became more efficient, computer-mediated instruction (CMI) also evolved in the classroom.

Accompanying the growth of personal computers in this country in the late 1980s, CMI—or digital pedagogy as it is sometimes called—emerged in academe as well. As Stephen Bernhardt, Penny Edwards and Patti Wojahn note in their 1992 study of 20 classrooms of student writing with computers, "Teaching College Composition with Computers: A Timed Observation Study," instructors agreed that composition classes using computers *showed more improvements* than in classes without them—a strong validation of their worth in writing pedagogy (65).

However, CMI or digital pedagogy is not without its critics. As scholars Ellen Evans and Jeanne Po reveal in their well-received 2007 article, "A Break in the Transaction: Examining Students' Responses to Digital Texts,". . . the efficacy of incorporating digital culture into the English classroom often dissolved into the now quite familiar disputes between the 'technophiles' who extolled the endless virtues of new technologies and the 'technophobes' who avoided technology altogether" (57). Edwin Sapp's informative and sometimes amusingly-written perspective on the subject probably captured the thoughts of many composition instructors in the 1990s considering the use of digital pedagogy:

> Computers have never qualified in my mind as docile household pets.
>
> *They eat data and delight in rearranging the written word* (emphasis

133

added). They perversely warn you in an alternate language just before doing something drastic, but they often give no indication at all of what lies deep within their hearts. So it was with fear that I first contemplated using a computer as a teaching tool in a writing class. (137)

The Rise and Implications of a New Literacy

Computers and the Teaching of Writing, by Hawisher et al. is a very foundational text. The authors relate one very important reason why CMI/digital pedagogy is becoming more accepted in the first-year writing classroom. This reason foregrounds how the presence of digital technology, particularly in the form of personal digital assistants, smart phones, wikis, blogs, forums, and laptop computers, creates an evolving type of literacy that spans all cultures and global regions. This new type of developing literacy, known as digital literacy, or multimedia literacy, was prioritized in the early 2000s for further scholarly inquiry by both the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The NCTE's "Guidelines on Multimodal Literacies" advocates that ". . . the use of different modes of expression [text, speech, art, visual graphics, etc.] in student work should be integrated into the overall literacy goals of the curriculum and be appropriate for time and resources invested" ("NCTE Guidelines on Multimodal Literacies"). In like fashion, The "CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing

in Digital Environments," published in 2003, issued a very expansive, and at the same time, important manifesto. CCCC's policy statement advocates that ". . . the focus of writing instruction is expanding . . . composition is widening to include not one but two literacies: a literacy of print and a *literacy of the screen* (emphasis added)" ("CCCC Position Statement"). CCCC and NCTE's official pronouncements on the topic of digital literacy legitimizes its status as an area that influences writing pedagogy and is deemed worthy of further research effort. In *Computers and the Teaching of Writing*, Hawisher and her fellow authors unequivocally advocate why digital literacy is tantamount to students' success, not only in the college composition class, but in society as a whole:

> In the United States, for example, the ability to read, compose, and communicate in computer environments—called variously technological, digital, or electronic literacy—has acquired increased importance not only as a basic job skill but also, every bit as significant, as an essential component of literate activity. Today, if students cannot write to the screen—if they cannot design, author, analyze, and interpret material on the Web and in other digital environments—they may be incapable of functioning effectively as literate citizens in a growing number of social spheres. The ability to write well—and to write well with computers and within digital environments—we believe will continue to play an

increasingly important role in determining if students will be able to

participate and succeed in school, work, and community. (643)

Further validation of the growing acceptance of digital technologies in the writing

classroom can be found in Selfe and Hawisher's text, *Literate Lives in the Information

Age: Narratives of Literacy From the United States*. In this effectively argued and

documented text, both authors advocate that the ". . . heavy use of computers in the

United States, and increasingly elsewhere, for education, entertainment, employment, and

empowerment has also changed the use and meaning of 'literacy,' which now needs to be

linked with such words as technological, digital, and electronic" (2). An additional

important perspective from Selfe in another co-authored text addresses academe directly:

> . . . [I]f we continue to define literacy in ways that ignore or exclude new
>
> media texts, we not only abdicate a professional responsibility to describe
>
> accurately and robustly how humans communicate, and how they compose
>
> and read in contemporary contexts, but we also run the risk of our
>
> curriculum holding declining relevance for students" (Wysocki et al. 55).

Kathleen Yancey has written extensively on the changing panorama of

composition studies created by new digital media. In her article, "Made Not Only in

Words: Composition in a New Key," Yancey notes that ". . . [l]iteracy today is in the

midst of a tectonic change. Even inside of school, never before have writing and

composing generated such diversity in definition" (298).

In his 2007 book, *The Two Virtuals*, Alexander Reid discusses the evolution of symbol systems (such as writing) by correlating their evolution directly to the evolution of technology. Reid's polemic highlights that ". . . this shift can be characterized as moving from a limited, internalized form of consciousness to consciousness that functions liminally between *internal and external cognitive processes* (emphasis added) and intelligent networks" (23). Reid's scholarship surfaces another critical component dealing with contemporary post-process theories about writing and the writing-as-process pedagogical model. Reid calls for writing teachers to develop an awareness that inherent in the cross-cultural currents of multiculturalism are the ideologies that assume important roles in social learning and thereby help develop our students' discourse communities.

Writing in her article, "Writing, Technologies, and the Fifth Canon," Andrea Lunsford calls for a new and more relevant metaphor for writing, while providing her own innovative one in the following:

> . . . Writing: A technology for creating conceptual frameworks and creating, sustaining, and performing lines of thought within those frameworks, drawing from and expanding on existing conventions and genres, utilizing signs and symbols, incorporating materials drawn from multiple sources, and taking advantage of the resources of a full range of media. (171)

137

Lunsford's definition of writing is demonstrative of a perceptible shift in the way that many people in many cultures generate and consume information. Unlike printed text, digitally-created documents can include a variety of multimedia to accompany the written word to enhance the audience's more complete understanding of their content.

The Impact of Social and Networking Media

I do not believe I would be guilty of hyperbole if I state that the incoming college freshmen classes over the last decade constitute a segment of the U.S. population that has literally "grown up" with digital technology in some form. Many new high school graduates in first-year composition are more adept with the tools of technology than instructors might initially believe. Over the last five years, I have conducted informal surveys in each of my first-year composition classes to determine to what degree my students are conversant with the tools of technology. My principal reason for doing so is to assess if there might be any issues that could arise if some students are not proficient in basic computing skills. Another reason I conduct these surveys is to assess my students' familiarities with online CMSs and determine if they participate in what we call "social networking" web sites, such as MySpace and Facebook. These findings are important to my overall pedagogical approaches since I use Blackboard in all my classes—particularly employing its discussion forums—to foster peer collaboration. Without only a few exceptions, students' responses to my informal surveys reveal that they have been active

computer users since middle school, and over 90 percent are actively engaged in a social

networking site. In my writing classes over the last three years, every student has

indicated that he or she daily carries a cell phone. More recently, I have learned that

approximately 50 percent of my students use cell phones or "smart phones" that also

enable them to have Internet access. Nearly 30 percent of my first-year composition

students who own laptops also have them configured with a wireless modem so they can

benefit from using the free "Wi-Fi" zones available at the two colleges where I teach, as

well as in their homes and in campus residence halls. A growing number of my students

inform me that they participate in live video conferences with other colleagues or

customers in varied regional location as part of their work environments. I also continue

to observe a growing number of my students come to class with I-Phones and I-Pads,

both of which represent leading-edge digital technologies. These digital technologies

clearly signify those social and communicative phenomena that strongly influence our

students' lives on a daily basis. Such digital devices also circumscribe how they

socialize with others and relate to the world around them.

Our students' experiences with a wide variety of digital technologies are important

factors that instructors should acknowledge as we develop our composition pedagogies. I

believe it is important for instructors to recognize that a significant daily amount of our

students' interpersonal relations occur through digital media. *As instructors, should we*

not use the innovative aspects of digital media in our pedagogies to make first-year

writing more relevant for our students?

Digital Media: The Right Technology for Collaborative Pedagogy

Hawisher et al. share in their informative 2004 article, "Becoming Literate in the

Information Age: Cultural Ecologies and the Literacies of Technology," that many writing

program directors design their composition curriculums with distinct orientations toward

collaboration and peer group work, as well digital pedagogies (642-92). Writing program

directors' responses to interview questions that I designed and implemented for this study

dealing with curriculum preparation reinforce the assertion made by Hawisher et al.

above (Appendices A-J). These findings are discussed and analyzed in detail in chapter

four. Computer technologies have been used since the early 1980s to help students in

their prewriting or inventional activities (Burns) and in their "peer reviewing and editing"

routines. However, the social constructivist and collaborative aspects of Web 2.0 digital

technologies foster innovative media and CMSs that now clearly enhance such

pedagogies. As my literature review in chapter two dealing with collaborative

pedagogies reveals, writing-as-process pedagogy presently incorporates the use of digital

media and online CMSs that facilitate collaboration and peer communications during

each phase of the writing process. The discussion forum modules in Blackboard, Google

Docs, Wimba Classroom, Drupal, Desire2Learn, and Sakai, to mention only a few CMSs

140

with which I have familiarity, have progressively improved during the last decade to

facilitate the instruction of collaborative and social composition pedagogies.

These CMSs provide online electronic forums ("discussion boards") where student-

writers can interact and exchange ideas online—an important modality that is currently

being used in online distance learning and FTF classes as well.

One of the key goals of a writing-as-process classroom is to foster students'

writing skills not only so it will enable them to complete their "assignments," but also to

stimulate the practice of prewriting (freewriting, outlining, diagramming) and journaling.

Online forums, as provided in CMSs and blogs, are very effective in facilitating students

to write *about* the writing process and surface issues that may be addressed by others. I

believe that online discussion forums offer students the settings where they can learn

from others and where they expand upon the peer "conversations," as Bruffee calls them,

in the writing classroom. Importantly, online forums, as provided through CMSs and

blogs, generate more writing activity by students and also enhance the learner-centered

environment—a direction toward which our contemporary composition classes are

clearly heading. Scott Warnock advocates in his informative 2009 text, *Teaching Writing*

Online: How and Why, that online discussion forums serve to enhance the ". . . sheer

amount of writing exchanged among students and the teacher." He continues this line of

discussion by emphasizing that ". . . few onsite courses offer the chance for this amount

of writing" (xi).

Kenneth Bruffee writes in his frequently cited article, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" that ". . . to study and teach English is to study and teach the social origin, nature, reference, and function of symbolic structures" (432). His article conveys that teaching and learning English is a socially-constructed activity, and for composition pedagogy to be relevant, it should adopt social learning and collaborative approaches. John Trimbur echoes these views in his 2003 article, "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." He argues that ". . . collaborative learning is a process of re-acculturation, of learning to participate in the ongoing discussions of new communities" (465). As I mentioned in chapter two of my study, Trimbur and Bruffee advocate in their own respective studies that social constructivism and collaborative pedagogies in the composition classroom provide the pathways that help students acquire the abilities to discourse about their writing as part of an evolving academic discourse community. The use of CMSs, blogs, and wikis are those New Media that *reinforce social learning*, as well as the cognitive and creative aspects of the writing process. These digital media can help first-year writing students understand the influences of social learning and how they can correctly apply these collaborative media during each phase of the writing-as-process model. The discussion forums in CMSs can also be used to enhance students' efforts *during the invention phase of their writing*—a key benefit that I see working in the first-year writing and writing-based literature classes that I currently teach.

142

Writing in the early phase of the personal computer revolution in the U.S., Colette Daiute notes in her 1985 book, *Writing and Computers*, ". . .[w]riting on the computer is more interactive than writing with traditional methods" (66).

Writing some 25 years later, Donald Wolff echoes Daiute's views noted above in his article, "Asynchronous Online Teaching,". The author's polemic formulates that

> ". . . the Web can furnish teachers and students with innovative tools for supporting already existing educational goals such as involving students in the learning process, using collaboration as a teaching and learning strategy, and creating a space for active learning, exploration, and innovation" (455).

The Impact of Online Course Management Systems and Discussion Forums

Composition instructors, including me, are beginning to realize the benefits of using blogs, discussion forums, Blackboard, Google Docs, and even the globally pervasive *YouTube* (to assist in the invention phase) in college classrooms. In 2003, Evan Davis and Sarah Hardy published a very instructive article on how to use the pervasively popular Blackboard learning management system (LMS). In "Teaching Writing in the Space of Blackboard," they examine Blackboard based on how students assimilate its technologies and use them to expand their horizons gained through social learning and also improve their writing skills. Pedagogies informed by social constructivist theory decidedly benefit from the CMSs, LMSs, blogs, and discussion

forums now in use on college campuses, an assertion validated in my literature reviews in chapter two. Blackboard currently enjoys a presence in a majority of college writing programs. While other free and "open architecture" CMSs also abound (such as Desire2Learn, Sakai, and Drupal), Blackboard's routines exemplify the benefits that its discussion forums provide to students during each phase of the writing process.

Facilitating Student Collaboration with Blackboard

As shown in Figures 10 and 11 below, Blackboard's forums enable students to respond to weekly essay questions about their reading and writing assignments, as well as "thread" (respond) with comments to their peers' responses as well. This activity represents, in my viewpoint, the real value of Blackboard as an inducement to collaborative learning in composition and writing-intensive undergraduate literature classes. The examples shown below were captured from a recent reading assignment on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in one of my onsite World Literature classes. In responding to three weekly discussion forums, students were also engaging in important prewriting or inventional activities in preparation for a future critical essay on the play. The screen capture below in Figure 10 does not do justice to the vibrant exchange of ideas regarding the students' responses to the questions and their threading to one another's responses. However, this image does serve to completely highlight what I believe is the key benefit that Blackboard provides to the writing process—collaborative discourse and as a creative digital space to enhance invention.

144

Ⓐ Description (click to collapse)

In the famous "grave digger" scene in Act V,i, Shakespeare uses a type of common humor that is prevalent through many of his plays. This type of humor maintains the audience's attention and provides a sense of comic relief. In this scene, Shakespeare's humor certainly achieves these purposes; however, the interplay of dialogue and ideas seem to suggest deeper and more intrinsic meanings. Argue what you believe are several dimensions or layers of meaning that are suggested in this famous scene. Argue your answer in 300-350 words, and cite several lines from the scene to support your own arguments.

Topic Type: Threaded

Graded: Yes

Peer Review: No

Posting Restrictions: Allow post and reply

User Identification: User Name

Create Message   **View Drafts**

Expand All   Collapse All   Display: ⊣Threaded ⊥Unthreaded   ⊠All ⊠Unread

Subject	🖉 **Messages**	**Author**	**Date** ⊹
Life and Death ⋎			April 7, 2011 7:05 PM
Clowns ⋎			April 7, 2011 5:40 PM
Gravedigger Scene ⋎			April 7, 2011 5:29 PM
Gravediggers' scene ⋎			April 7, 2011 4:41 PM
The Fool's Wisdom ⋎			April 7, 2011 4:31 PM

Fig. 10. Screen capture of Blackboard's discussion forum module. Blackboard's discussion forum module provides the "collaborative electronic spaces" for students to write online responses to weekly reading questions and respond to their peers' responses as part of their prewriting activities for an assigned future critical essay.
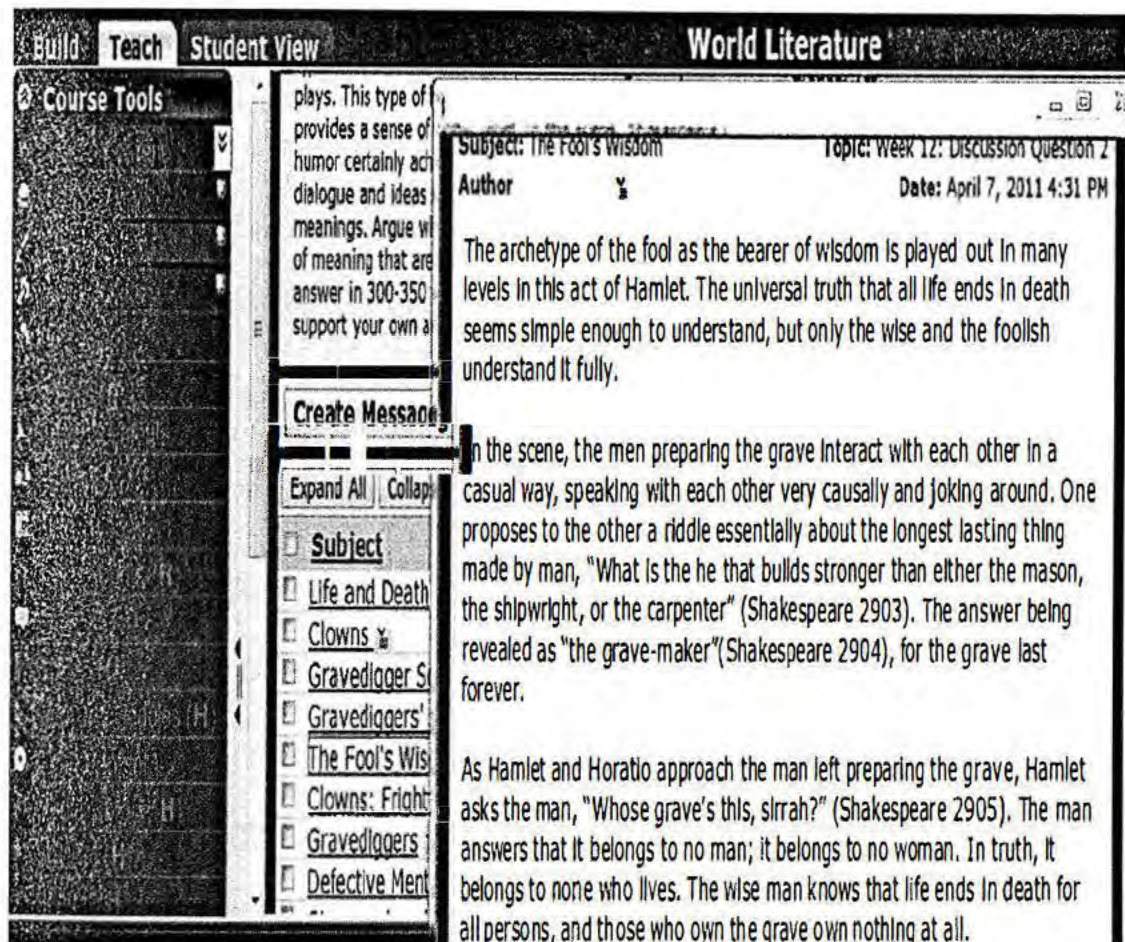
Fig. 11 . Screen capture of an expanded student's response in Blackboard's discussion forum. This screen capture enlarges one student's response to one of the discussion forum questions that will be used to help students focus their insights for a 1,500 word critical essay on the uses of comedy in *Hamlet*. As part of this discussion forum activity, students are also required to thread succinct comments to their peers' responses as part of the collaborative routine inherent in a social learning-based and student-centered writing-intensive literature class.

In this chapter's literature review of the influences of digital media on

composition pedagogy and the writing-as-process model, I intentionally chose to

comment on Blackboard*'s* asynchronous discussion forums as representative of similar

discussion forums in other CMSs currently used in composition programs today. While

Blackboard's other features provide for synchronous chats on writing and reading assignments, this CMS does not (yet) provide features for students to synchronously comment on the text of an essay posted in a common virtual space for everyone to view. This feature would significantly expand the scope of Blackboard's role in facilitating collaboration on students' composition. However, Google Docs, another CMS does provide this important feature. I came to this conclusion as result of weeks of research conducted as part of this literature review. I reviewed the features and benefits of five other major learning management systems or CMSs that rival Blackboard. As a result, I concluded Google Docs (developed and licensed by Google, Inc.) encompasses those additional aspects of real-time online collaborative commenting and revising features that best fulfill, at this point in time, the type of collaborative engagement strongly supportive to students working in peer groups and the writing-as-process pedagogy.[19] While blog sites and wikis clearly facilitate discussion forums and asynchronous students' commentaries on writing projects, their versatility is limited as compared to the inherent collaborative routines in Google Docs. In the following sections of this chapter, I explored some of the numerous online tutorials that Google™ (the parent company)

---

[19] Some scholars might consider that identifying and analyzing a specific CMS anchors my comments and "dates" them to a product's features that could be outmoded in a few years—thus mitigating the credibility of my analyses. Even though I considered these perspectives carefully, I decided to identify Google Docs by name and discuss an actual online digital courseware in *concrete terms*, rather than discuss desirable benefits and features of a CMS in more abstract or euphemistic terms. At the current rate of technological advancement in digital media, CMS "modifications" and new product "upgrades" are becoming almost annual occurrences.

disseminates about Google Docs so I could better understand its capabilities and how it

can support collaboration-centered and digitally-supported composition pedagogy.

Google Docs: Supporting Collaboration throughout the Writing Process

My examination of Google Docs reveals that this CMS incorporates several

innovative components to support collaborative and digital pedagogy in the first-year

writing classroom. First introduced by Google™ in its initial format in 2005, I have

witnessed Google Docs evolve so that it now enjoys a global following of educators,

business professionals, healthcare practitioners, and numerous other audience segments

that require online and real-time collaborative activities in generating documents,

presentations, and even spreadsheets. From my critical perspective, Google Docs' word

processing capabilities used for writing and revising are similar to those in Microsoft

Word™. However, Google Docs differs from stand-alone word-processing software

because it is accessed online. Although documents created in Google Docs are accessed

online via the Internet, the program itself is secured through user password protection that

inhibits any unwarranted external searches by "outsiders" of online text documents and

participants' comments or identities. As Nancy and Steve Holzner note in their 2009 book,

Google Docs *4 Everyone*, this innovative online collaborative platform ". . . has changed

the landscape of word processing: the ability to share a document with others,

collaborating on it simultaneously in real time" (91).

After carefully reviewing Google Docs, I discovered some important and enhanced features and benefits that clearly address the needs of collaborative pedagogy in first-year college writing.[20]

Considered as an inducement to online collaboration, Google Docs facilitates students' interactions and exchanges. For example, the student culture in first-year writing classes reflects growing numbers of students with differing views and ideologies. Sometimes, these students are reticent to join the "academic discourse" in FTF classes since they perceive situations as filtered through their own cultural mindsets and language idiosyncrasies. As observed in the classes in which I have used Google Docs , the vibrant real-time discussions and revision activities afforded by Google Docs enables students from diverse cultures to better visualize and appreciate how other students think and revise during an active writing process. I have also observed in my classes that Google Docs is an easy to use online platform that promotes collaborative exchanges during the prewriting phases of composing. Its on-screen displays of text and its key benefit to enable up to 10 participants at any one time to revise a shared draft in real-time—with on-screen display of all such occurrences—strongly validate its use during all phases of the writing process. Google™ provides access to this online CMS free of charge. It requires only that the user open a free Google email (Gmail) account to establish a password and pass code.

---

[20]My assessment of Google Docs reflects the program's benefits and features operative during the period August 2010 through February 2011.

As one writing instructor using Google Docs notes:

> Take, for instance, the dramatic impact it [has] had on the way I
> communicate as a teacher. No longer am I shuffling through copies of old
> papers with illegible comments on them to piece together a cohesive
> picture of a student's progress. Instead, I'm able to pull up multiple writing
> samples with just a few mouse clicks, and to review a student's revisions
> as well as the final product. *This has been an invaluable teaching tool*
> *because my discussions with students about their writing are more clear,*
> *timely, and content-driven.* ("Instructor Comments about Google Docs")

Before Google Docs came on the scene in 2005, Microsoft Office™ was the
software that most educators and students used to create documents, presentations, and
spreadsheets. When they wanted to have others "collaborate" on their drafts, they were
required to email these items to people who, in turn, had to open them and use the editing
and commenting functions available in either Microsoft Word™, PowerPoint, or Excel.
All collaboration is still performed asynchronously in these programs and is rather
tedious. The applications in Google Docs (known as Google Apps) perform most of the
same functions of the three programs in Microsoft Office™—Word, PowerPoint, or
Excel—with the added benefit of online collaboration. Such collaboration can occur
immediately, in a real-time scenario (synchronously), or later (asynchronously) as
required.

150

When a document is created in a word-processing program, it can be shared with other registered users simply by entering their email (Gmail) addresses, after which Google (the parent company) automatically emails to these other registered users instructions regarding access to the document to be shared. The originator of the document initiates the "invitation" to other registered users and also stipulates which invitees are deemed "collaborators" or "viewers." Only collaborators can revise or edit the shared documents.

For composition instructors and students alike, Google Docs' most innovative feature supporting collaboration in the classroom or distance learning modality is its ability to enable multiple users to work on a single composition draft *simultaneously*. This feature has developed over the last several years to become a beneficial writing process resource. Presently, instructors and students no longer have to engage in the tedious and time-consuming routines of using the Text Editor ("Comments" as they are often called) in Microsoft Word™ to comment on writing drafts, save the document, and then email it as an attachment to others. In using Google Docs and comparing its benefits to other CMSs, I have noticed that the delays associated with other software and courseware programs that incurred hours (for emailing attached texts to respondents) can now be accomplished in a matter of minutes or even seconds. Importantly, as the Google website and its linked tutorials demonstrate, Google Docs enables its users to share links that guide peer reviewers to documents that are currently being developed and revised

151

("Google Docs Web Page"). Students are empowered to view or revise these shared

written documents synchronously (in real-time) if they desire. Google Docs also

provides a chat modality, wherein students can communicate (make quick comments or

ask and answer questions) while they peer-review one another's compositions. What I

consider is a minor issue for this CMS is that Google Docs presently limits the number of

synchronous (real-time) collaborators to 10 people at one time working on written

documents. What this would mean is that an instructor would have to hold duplicate

online sessions for any remaining members in a composition class. However, when using

Google Docs for peer critiques in small groups (usually comprised of no more than four

students), this synchronous function is very efficient. When multiple students are

collaborating on a document at the same time, all changes that the collaborators make can

be viewed by other users. According to the tutorials at the Google Docs web site, these

revised pages "refresh" (update) every minute, an important benefit that allows others to

see the *revisions and comments* as they are being made ("Google Docs Web Page").

My examination of Google Docs' features reveals another important benefit to

users: it provides an archived record in its "Revision History" tool of all of the changes a

particular user has made, including the time and date of such changes. Progressive

enhancements to Google Docs now allows users to select two or more revisions to the

same document and then see the differences in these revisions by using the "Compare

Check" tool. Figure 12 below shows a generic screen capture from the Web that is

152

intended to show the comments of numerous collaborators who are revising and editing

the same document. Such comments can be viewed synchronously (in real-time) as they

are being made by other collaborators working on the same document, or they can be

viewed subsequently and users can enter their revisions later (asynchronously). These

features in Google Docs clearly address students' needs to access documents efficiently

and respond in real-time modes, similar to live collaborative peer work in a FTF

classroom, as shown in Figure 12 below.

Fig. 12. Multiple collaborative peer reviewers' comments on one document in Google Docs. The screen capture above shows how "Edit" mode in Google Docs provides the creative "digital space" facilitating synchronous collaborative comments and revisions made by users or "collaborators" working on a shared document.

Note: The responses in Figure 13 are intentionally displayed out-of-focus to conceal the identities of respondents and their responses. (For demonstration purpose only).

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Dissertation Demonstration

☐ Revision 2054 10 months ago by Me   count them and mark them release them and allow them to mix in with the rest of the popu Revisions 2052-2054

☐ Revision 2052 10 months ago by Me   BIOL4 The essential knowledge to prepare for the long answer question Instructions Write th Revisions 2042-2052

☐ Revision 2042 10 months ago by c. .   Energy taken up by a producer is fixed by photosynthesis, a portion of this energy is used up Revisions 2035-2042

☐ Revision 2035 10 months ago by Me   3 4 1 - Population Ecology Describe how you could estimate the number of non moving organ Revisions 1951-2035

☐ Revision 1951 10 months ago by ⁖   • 3 4 1 - Population Ecology Describe how you could estimate the number of non moving organ Revisions 1908-1951

☐ Revision 1908 11 months ago by Me   3 4 1 - Population Ecology Describe how you could estimate the number of non moving organ Revisions 1837-1908

☐ Revision 1837 11 months ago by S0?????@wyl 1414 we know that p+q=1 so 1 - 0 141=0 859 now we use 2pq 2 x 0 141 x 0 859 =0 242238 Revisions 1830-1837

☐ Revision 1830 11 months ago by ?.?@wyl   (NO2-) then into into nitrate ions (NO3-) How nitrates in soil are restored Nitrogen gas is conv Revisions 1828-1830

☐ Revision 1828 11 months ago by S???@wyl   Speciation Isolating Mechanisms - Geographical - A population gets physically seperated by Revisions 1826-1828

☐ Revision 1826 11 months ago by ' ⁖ ⁖   which increases the frequency of the advantagous alleles The Hardy-Weinberg Principle (p² Revisions 1824-1826

☐ Revision 1824 11 months ago by ????@wyl ions (then into into nitrate ions How nitrates in soil are restored Nitrogen gas is converted int Revisions 1822-1824

☐ Revision 1822 11 months ago by S0?????@wyl Speciation Isolating Mechanisms - Geographical - A population gets physically seperated by

☐ Revision 1821 11 months ago by ?.?@wyl   are passed on in the offspring The Hardy-Weinberg Principle (p² + 2pq + q² = 1) This is an ex

☐ Revision 1820 11 months ago by ?.?@wyl   a into nitrite then into into nitrate How nitrates in soil are restored Nitrogen gas is converted i Revisions 1818-1820

☐ Revision 1818 11 months ago by 0?????@wyl 49% of 1250 Speciation Isolating Mechanisms - Geographical - A population gets physically Revisions 1816-1818

☐ Revision 1816 11 months ago by c?.?@.) For example Revisions 1813-1816

☐ Revision 1813 11 months ago by ? ?@wyl therefore its 49% of the population Speciation Isolating Mechanisms - Geographical - A popul Revisions 1811-1813

☐ Revision 1811 11 months ago by S00?C72@wyl release their electrons which are then passed through a chain of electron carrier molecules at Revisions 1806-1811

☐ Revision 1806 11 months ago by S0?????@wyl Speciation Isolating Mechanisms - Geographical - A population gets physically seperated by Revisions 1804-1806

☐ Revision 1804 11 months ago by S00???2@wyl The essential knowledge to prepare for the long answer question Main areas Ecology Respr Revisions 0-1804

x Back to editing   Compare Checked

Fig. 13. Collaborative revision log in Google Docs. This screen capture shows a chronological "revision log" of all participants' revisions to a shared document. The revision log enables the document's author and "collaborators" to read the comments written in their entirety. Email addresses in this display are intentionally distorted to avoid disclosing users' identities. (For demonstration purposes only).

Digital Pedagogies in the Composition Classroom: Summary and Implications

My literature review in this chapter validates that students' writing skills can be enhanced through the collaborative processes provided through the innovative digital media of Web 2.0. These digital media include CMSs, online discussion forums, blogs and wikis. Specifically, online CMSs, such as Blackboard*'s* discussion forums, provide effective routines for students to engage in important revision commentaries during the prewriting (invention) and revising stages of their writing. Based on my findings in this chapter, I advocate that Google Docs takes collaboration in the first-year writing class to higher and more meaningful levels through its enhanced online features that provide effective collaborative activities. Daiute provides a suitable conclusory perspective that "[t]he computer's ability to copy and to incorporate the writer's changes automatically simplifies the logistics of collaborative writing. Since collaborative writing is easier on a computer than it is with pen or typewriter, the computer can be used as a catalyst for *shared writing*" (emphasis added) (28). Rebecca Lundin's perspectives are worthy of citing in this summary to focus how digital media provides the seamless synergies for meaningful collaboration in the first-year writing class. In her 2008 published article, "Teaching with Wikis: Toward a Networked Pedagogy," she comments that that digital pedagogy can ". . .challenge the practice of single authorship and help overcome the spatial and temporal hurdles of productive collaborative writing" (438).

Using CMSs like Google Docs in real-time (synchronous) online collaborative

activities provides students with a sense of "connectivity" in the writing classroom. As

Andrea Lunsford might argue, such connectivity is "dialogic" and generates, as Bruffee

and Trimbur might also argue, a sense of a "writing community." Hewett emphasizes in

her article, "Synchronous Online Conference-based Instruction: A Study of Whiteboard

Interactions and Student Writing," that ". . . [f]rom the theoretical perspective, online

dialogue, like its oral counterpart, presumably can foster collaboration, a concept

common to social constructivist epistemology, which holds all knowledge to be socially

developed and relative to the group to which it applies" (6). In a collaborative learning

environment, such as that supported by Google Docs, *instruction is oriented toward a*

learner-centered environment as students collaborate and learn, and their instructors

facilitate such social learning.

CMSs emphasize students' abilities to learn not in individual isolation, but in a

vibrant digital setting where students become less passive and more interactive. In such

environments, the studies in this literature review show that composition instructors

become less authoritarian and more learner-centered in their pedagogies. Google Docs,

as well as other CMSs, empower students by challenging them to participate in an

expanding discourse of learning *about how to write*—and then applying these skills to

improve their compositions. This approach to learning, I argue, will increasingly

become more institutionalized in academe and impart important changes in the ways

first-year writing is instructed and applied in the early decades of the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSES OF FIRST-YEAR WRITING PROGRAM DIRECTORS' INTERVIEWS

Interviewing Process Overview and Purpose

During the period May-August 2009, I conducted nine interviews with directors

of first-year writing at various colleges and universities. Additionally, I also interviewed

one director of instructional technology who trains college instructors in the use of digital

learning courseware. These interviews constitute the qualitative component of my

Institutional Review Board (IRB)-sanctioned doctoral research and complement the

online surveys of first-year writing faculty and students that are categorized and analyzed

in Chapter V of this study. These interviews consisted of 12 standard questions approved

by the IRB of Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas. These standard interview

question and answers are included with the transcribed notes of each interview in the

Appendix. This interview instrument was designed to facilitate responses from first-year

college and university writing program directors pertaining to the following specific

areas: instructional objectives for writing programs, pedagogical theories and strategies,

evaluation and assessment of students and faculty, instructor training, digitally-supported

pedagogy, and one open-ended question designed to facilitate responses that respondents

considered relevant to the topic.

Research scholars classify the type of interview questions and format I used as a

standardized open-ended interview. This type of interview reflects careful configuration

in the wording of its questions. All participants are always asked the identical questions, but the questions are worded so that responses facilitate open-ended responses (Johnson and Christensen 203-08). This attribute of open-endedness allows the interviewed participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire. Standardized open-ended interviews are currently the most accepted form of interviewing used in primary qualitative research because these open-ended questions allow the participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences (Creswell 113,180-81). As research studies scholar John Creswell further notes, the respondents in an interview will not always answer the immediate question being asked by the researcher and may provide comments more suitable to other questions posed later in the interview. In addition, the interviewer must be prepared with follow-up prompts in order to assure that they obtain optimal responses from participants (179).

The 12 interview questions were developed after discussing my research focus with two first-year writing program directors at regional institutions and the chair of my dissertation committee.[21] The first-year writing program directors with whom I consulted regarding this research project were purposely not subsequently selected to participate in these interviews so as not to bias findings. Two of the interviews were conducted through one-on-one meetings and eight were telephonic interviews. All respondents in these qualitative research interviews were chosen based on my objective, as the principal investigator, to generate responses from an effective cross-section of institutions of

---

[21] Dr. Renée Paulson, statistician in the University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, provided assistance in developing the interview questions and formats used in the PsychData® online survey instrument. Dr. Paulson also verified the results of the surveys and my statistical analyses of the surveys' responses.

varying sizes, as well as geographic locations. As the principal investigator, I contacted and invited the writing program directors to participate. All of the invited respondents consented to participate in the interviews that required an average of 38 minutes to complete and collectively generated over five hours of respondents' answers.

Except for the two interviews I convened in one-on-one meeting environments, I electronically recorded the telephonically-interviewed respondents' answers to the questions to supplement my own note-taking. These transcriptions of the telephonic interviews were erased to further maintain respondents' identities after I converted and edited them into the text formats shown in Appendices A-J.

In complying with the requirements of the IRB, the names of all respondents and their institutional affiliations are kept anonymous. Respondents were informed of these IRB non-disclosure provisions in an email message that I sent to each respondent before his or her interview was conducted, along with an attached copy of the IRB letter approving my doctoral research (Appendix K). When referenced or cited in this study, all respondents in this interview are referred to as "Writing Program Director (A through J)." All interview questions were posed continuously and consecutively once the interview began. For clarification purposes, I made two follow-up calls to two of the respondents. These follow-up calls are permissible in this type of interview as long as they are directly related to the original interview questions. All respondents indicated they were very interested in the focus of this primary research about composition studies because they felt more original research should be undertaken in this field. Some of the writing program directors indicated the reasons for the insufficiency of primary research

in the field of composition studies stem from the workload demands of instructors and what several of them believed was a general reticence among faculty to participate in qualitative and quantitative research activities.

Interpretative Analyses of Respondents' Answers: Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to undertake an interpretative analysis of the 12 interview questions that correlate to the numbered sequence of the interview questions that can be found in the appendices. Not every single respondent's answer to a particular question is analyzed since some of the answers to the questions closely parallel one another. If this is the case, then these respondents' similar answers are referenced collectively as providing comparable responses to the question. Aggregately, there are over 100 responses by the 10 respondents to the 12 standardized interview questions, comprising over 60 pages of edited transcribed text. All participating respondents provided answers to each of the 12 interview questions, except for the college director of instructional technology who does not administrate first-year writing and, therefore, did not answer questions specific to the first-year writing program. He did answer, however, those questions associated with digital instructional technology, instructor training programs in digital learning media, and the one open-ended question. His face-to-face interview also provided important perspectives on the relationship of pedagogy and technology. Due to the lengthy responses from some of the respondents, I have arranged and analyzed their answers in topical patterns below each of the enumerated interview questions. Although my analyses follow the sequence with which these answers appear in the transcribed and edited interviews, I endeavored to make sense of these responses

and to convey them in a meaningful and logical manner. This process requires that I engage in an interpretive relationship with the interview transcriptions and also with background notes that I took during the actual interviews to accurately convey the respondents' meanings, connotations, and denotations. I followed this approach assiduously in order to coherently structure the analysis through identifying and organizing themes and recurrent patterns in the respondents' answers.

As scholars in the field of qualitative research studies will validate, a qualitative analysis is inevitably an individual process, since the analysis itself is the interpretive work done by the principal investigator (Corbin and Strauss 49-51). It is noteworthy that some of the interview questions generated responses that were more substantive than others and, therefore, required more analysis and explanation. In the following analyses, some of my statements summarize, paraphrase, and directly quote the respondents' answers to the questions that are shown in their complete form in each of the appendices.

Analysis of Question 1: Which Specific Program Assessment Tools do You Believe Work Better than Others?

In nine of the writing program directors responses to this question, omitting only that of the instructional technology director whose professional position does not entail the evaluations of first-year writing, each respondent emphasized that the most effective tool or approach for assessing students' writing is the *student writing portfolio system*. In clarifying the context of the respondents' comments to this question, we should be aware of the varying approaches used to assess student learning outcomes with writing portfolios. For example, in one approach, a student recursively revises his or her writing

163

assignments and receives an end-grade on the final draft of each assignment. In another approach, a student receives a final course grade based on his or her own multiple revisions of what are deemed as the student's "best" essay drafts in the portfolio. Regardless of which writing portfolio assessment strategy the instructor uses, the overall consensus of the writing program directors was that this approach offered the most effective way to assess and facilitate students' ongoing revisions of their written assignments during this semester. Nine of the writing program directors' responses to this question indicated that the key benefits of the writing portfolio assessment tool are found in its inherent abilities to facilitate *recursive revision*, which, in turn, also enables students to engage more completely in the writing process model. These respondents stressed that the students' recursive revisions of their composition drafts, based on the instructor's comments on consecutive drafts and on their peers' feedback, were *the most effective means* to teach students and to enable them to improve their writing during the progression of the semester. These writing directors' responses closely correlate with a large-scale study conducted in which educational researchers examined how students responded to varied writing pedagogies ("NAEPFACTS").

All of the respondents to Question 1 additionally indicated that the *end-of-course surveys* were valuable in two dimensions: 1.) assessing instructors' classroom skills; and, 2.) the degree to which students believed they attained course learning objectives.

For purposes of clarifying several of these instructors' individual responses regarding their unique program descriptions, it is important to note that writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID) signify different writing program

approaches and program organization. WID emphasizes that the differences in the conventions of writing experienced in different academic disciplines require students to learn to write within the specific contexts of their chosen academic fields so they can progress as effective writers within those discourse communities. On the other hand, WAC stresses that the elements of writing for college courses are generically applicable across the variances of disciplinary practices. The theoretical underpinning of WAC conveys the notion that college students can understand and apply the conventions of writing in their own academic majors as a result of their adaptation of writing tasks across disciplinary contexts, discourse communities, and audiences (Bazerman et al. 48). Based on the explicit responses of Writing Program Directors B, C, D, F and J, who emphasized they are engaged in either WAC or WID programs, it appears that the key distinction that they were making between these two programs is that in WID environments first-year writing courses are offered in the varied academic major fields and instructed by a member of the respective academic department (Appendices C, D, F, and J). Their description of a WAC approach suggests one whereby all academic divisions and institutions privilege writing assignments in the instruction of each course, regardless of academic discipline, to foster students' basic writing skills. An important finding that surfaces through my analyses of the respondents' comments cited immediately above is that writing centers in WAC and WID environments appear to be expanding their range of services and resources provided to students *and* faculty, as punctuated in the comments by Writing Program Director C (Appendix C).

Writing Program Directors F and J noted that the freshman *writing placement examination* is an important component of assessing students' writing skills and facilitating the placement of the students in the correct first-year writing courses (Appendices F and J). Writing Program Director F stressed the importance of the freshman writing placement exam, particularly as it supported meeting the objectives of the University's WAC program. It is feasible that all of the colleges and universities represented in the 10 interviews used some form of a freshman writing sample or placement exam. However, only two of the respondents specifically referenced its importance in the freshman student writing assessment and placement process.

Writing Program Directors B, C, D, F, and J emphasized the relationship of their first-year writing programs to the curriculum-wide writing objectives of their respective universities and colleges (Appendices B, C, D, F, and J). These respondents also indicated their respective universities, throughout the academic curriculums, emphasized the importance of the first-year writing program. These factors were based on the degree to which the institutions placed on using WAC or WID environments as institutional strategies to enhance first-year writing students' academic writing.

Writing Program Director D commented that his university's stature as a leading research institution required all student writers to develop a strong proficiency in academic writing before entering their chosen fields of study or academic majors. This particular writing program director noted that the Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) assumed a key responsibility for supporting the institutional emphasis on

academic writing proficiency, although the institution's department of English offered basic writing courses in its curriculum as well (Appendix D).

Writing Program Director C elaborated how several academic departments provide a first-year writing course as part of its WID program (Appendix C). In this regard, the writing program director's role was to provide pedagogical direction and facilitate the resources for these instructors to teach first-year writing courses in their respective disciplines. In this university's WID organizational structure, the core first-year composition program was offered in several academic departments and also in the Department of English. For example, the Writing Programs Office (WPO) within the Department of English administers the department's undergraduate writing courses and supervises graduate assistants and lecturers teaching these courses (Appendix C). This writing program director noted that her role was challenging and dynamic since she was required to provide guidance to the WID program instructors' needs in terms of pedagogical strategies and training. She also indicated that she was required to help support the development of outcome assessments of the overall institutional first-year writing program objectives reported to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Her comments below provide constructive perspectives from an instructor and administrator who has acquired substantial experience in composition studies:

> The trend I am seeing [in first-year writing programs] is that assessments are really a function of the individual institution, rather than pursuing generic benchmarking and objectives that can be somewhat measured to show student improvement or progress. . . . It is really up to a group of

writing instructors to design assessment criteria that can be measured on a course basis. The portfolio method seems to be the best way to validate levels of students' writing. It is an ongoing process that involves instructors and students working on a common piece of writing with the objective to make it better. You can assign incremental grades to show progress or assign an overall final grade and then rank-order your students' grades to show collective levels of writing skills. A standard writing rubric that provides guidelines as to what constitutes various levels of writing performance is helpful in getting both instructors and students on the same page. (Appendix C)

Writing Program Director F mentioned that, while the key accountability for meeting institutional first-year writing program objectives at her university was levied on the Department of Languages and Literature, an interdisciplinary committee on developing and assessing first-year composition provides the main impetus for coordinating learning outcomes, improving curriculum, and reporting the outcomes of WAC objectives (Appendix F). Similarly, Writing Program Director J highlighted the positive synergy between the first-year writing program in her university's Department of English and other academic departments at her institution (Appendix J). This writing program director noted that the other academic fields of study relied substantially on the first-year composition program to prepare students so they would become competent writers in their academic majors. Due to the *continuing interdisciplinary support* that the first-year writing program receives as an institutionalized WAC program at her

institution, the English Department's first-year writing program has been successful in maintaining the size of all first-year writing course sections at *18 students per class* (Appendix J). Writing Program Director J argues that this class size is an optimal number for both semesters of her first-year writing program. She further noted in her remarks that her program's rationale for keeping this class size is referenced in a scholarly publication on composition studies (Horning 25, 32).

While all nine of the writing program directors indicated that classroom observations of first-year composition instructors were essential, only Writing Program Director H emphasized that classroom observations should be a continuing program assessment component in developing or modifying course learning outcomes and syllabi content (Appendix H).

Notably, all nine respondents "logically" categorized their responses into the areas of assessing students' writing skills and also that of assessing first-year writing program outcomes. In the former category, all nine writing program directors revealed that the student writing portfolio was *the most beneficial student writing assessment and evaluation tool.* The principal reasons given were that it enables instructors and students to successively engage in multiple evaluations and revisions of students' texts, while facilitating the basic aspects of the recursive writing process—prewriting, composing, revising, peer reviewing, and editing/proofreading. Although student writing portfolio pedagogical approaches vary in their applications, it is essential to mention that the writing program directors unanimously and consistently identified it as the dominant student writing assessment tool and overall program assessment tool. In other words, *the*

respondents viewed the strategies and processes inherent in the student writing portfolio as integral and organic to their writing programs' success. Any program measurements related to learning outcomes would derive from the interrelated processes and transactions intrinsic to the writing portfolio pedagogy. Only one of the writing program directors—Writing Program Director H—commented on the importance of the evaluative comments that writing instructors write on their students' drafts in their portfolios as an important assessment strategy (Appendix H). Such evaluative comments, he noted, need to be emphasized as critical instructional elements, particularly during instructor training workshops. Similar emphasis on the value of instructors' evaluative comments in establishing effective instructor-student "dialog" on writing assignments are supported by a growing focus on this topic among composition studies scholars. For example, Richard Straub has developed student feedback guidelines and assessment language that help instructors and students engage in the meta-discursive environment of thinking about and responding to the writing process (Straub 355-365).

Five of the writing program directors interviewed, Writing Program Directors B, C, D, F, and J, revealed in their responses to the first question that their assessments encompassed evaluating first-year composition courses taught in either their WAC or WID program settings (Appendices B, C, D, F, and J). While the terms WAC and WID are often conflated, it appears that first-year writing courses are offered and administrated through WID environments in the institutions of Writing Program Directors C and D (Appendices C and D). Responses from the writing program directors of the other seven institutions indicate that the first-year writing programs are positioned as core writing

course requirements provided in WAC settings per se, or settings that thematically emphasize the interdisciplinary importance of first-year writing. In these settings, the first-year writing program administration and overall instruction is the responsibility of the respective Departments of English (or first-year writing programs) that coordinate with the other academic divisions through interdisciplinary committees. Each of the nine writing program directors' responses to this question reveal that an interdisciplinary institutional or WAC approach is becoming increasingly important to foster and validate first-year students' writing skills. The nine writing program directors further indicated that documentation of students' writing skills and evaluation of first-year writing program outcomes are routinely required by their respective regional college accrediting agencies. Writing Program Directors A, D, E, and J specifically referenced in their comments that the higher education committees of their respective state legislatures are presently undertaking either the development of assessments of undergraduate learning skills or are actively evaluating undergraduates' writing skill levels at *state-supported institutions* (Appendices A, D, and E). When prompted to elaborate on these mandated requirements by the accrediting agencies, and state legislative committees, all nine writing program directors commented that first-year writing program assessment will continue to occupy a *central role* in the administration of first-year writing courses.

Writing Programs Director A, B, C, D, F believe that the growing institutional emphasis on undergraduate student writing skills, the reporting requirements of regional accrediting agencies and, in some cases, state governmental bodies, are those factors that

171

will continue to influence the enhancement and growth of WAC programs at state-funded institutions (Appendices A, B, C, D, and F).

Several important findings surfaced in the collective responses to Question 1. First, the references to the student writing portfolio as an assessment tool used not only to evaluate students' writing, but also to assess overall program learning outcomes by all the respondents signified its importance. All nine of the writing program directors referenced the growing importance of first-year writing within the curriculums of universities and colleges. Writing across the curriculum approaches seem to be interrelated with the objectives of the writing program directors' institutions to enhance the writing skills of their students. In the cases of the Writing Program Directors C, D, E, F, and J, their WAC or WID program approaches involve the development of interdisciplinary first-year writing program assessments of student writing, course learning outcomes, and instructor evaluations (Appendices C, D, E, F, and J). These interdisciplinary WAC or WID programs were tasked with the responsibility of developing learning outcomes and assessments of first-year writing courses that are reported to the institutions' academic divisions and to the regional college accrediting agencies. Because of these factors, the assessment activities of these writing program directors' programs encompass a well-organized and functioning *interdisciplinary approach to first-year writing*. Even though first-year writing courses in some of the institutions with WAC approaches are principally developed, instructed, and administered in the English departments' curriculums, the references to either WAC or WID by the respondents signify their potential growing importance as a strategy for

fulfilling writing program administration, instruction, and evaluating student writing proficiencies. The significance of these responses clearly surfaces the heightened attention that undergraduate writing now receives within and also outside the walls of academe. Based on the similarities in these responses, first-year writing is apparently acquiring more vitality within academe as a subject that is integral to undergraduate students' success in a variety of academic disciplines (Kuh et al. 183, 184, 324).

Five of the writing program directors—B, C, D, E, and J—mentioned the use of student learning objectives or outcomes that are formalized and published in their first-year writing programs as important ways to assess program effectiveness (Appendices B, C, D, E, and J). Writing Program Directors D and J referenced their respective learning outcomes that are published on their institutions' websites. In reviewing the first-year writing courses syllabi for these two specific institutions, I found that the learning outcomes were fundamentally written as *normative goal statements*, or what are often termed "student learning outcomes." These goal statements were focused on the writing skills that each institution sets as the acceptable or satisfactory student writing standards for their institutions. For example, the following goal statements excerpted from the website of Writing Program Director D reflect the typical language that are found in the desired student writing skills and aptitudes applicable to all of the institutions' WAC and WID programs included in this interview:

1. . . . define a manageable topic and a provable, original thesis within given limits of time, research materials, and the writer's own knowledge.

2. . . . shape an essay: to impose a clear, coherent form on a mass of facts, impressions, and ideas. In particular, ability to argue from, rather than toward, the thesis.

3. . . . understand what proofs a given thesis requires. In particular, [possess the] ability to discriminate between description and analysis, between repetition and development, and between relevant evidence and irrelevant detail. ("Outcomes Assessment")

I also reviewed the first-year writing learning outcome statements for all of the respondents' institutions. All of the institutions publish their desired learning outcomes or student learning outcomes for first-year composition on their respective websites. This information can be found in documents on departmental web pages, or in the course syllabi linked on the departmental web pages ("Institutional Web Pages"). In the case of all the state-supported institutions in one southwestern state, this information is linked to state governmental web pages where such information can be accessed by the general public according to state public law ("THECB").

After reviewing these first-year writing program goals and learning outcomes, several important collateral findings emerge First, each of the 10 institutions' first-year writing program learning outcome statements was focused on what the institutions wanted their first-year writers to achieve in terms of their students' abilities to focus, organize, and clearly express ideas in correctly formed sentences and organized paragraphs. None of the institutions' program learning outcomes that I examined based these outcomes with specific quantitative evaluative criteria.

174

There were no specific numbers or percentages levied regarding these goal statements for the purpose of satisfying any departmental or institutional goal attainment completion levels. In other words, the reporting of such goal attainments is achieved through *narrative commentaries* without any substantive quantifiers. Any statistical or numerical reporting regarding program measures would be based more on the consolidation of numbers (such as the number of students receiving certain grades in a course), rather than on arbitrary numerical indicators (such as trying to assign a number value to measure if students are writing at acceptable levels). All nine of the writing program directors responded that they were not aware, at the time of the interviews, of any institutional or outside agencies' interested in setting specific quantifiers to measure students' writing abilities or learning outcomes in the first-year writing program. As Writing Program Director D noted, any quantification of overall program measurements would fall within the purview of his university's office of research (Appendix D). As Writing Program H commented, any linking assessments of students' writing abilities to numerical quantifiers would be rather arbitrary in terms of truly communicating how students were learning and determining overall instructional effectiveness (Appendix H). Writing Program Director F commented that while the overall institution and regional accrediting agencies may apply numbers to assessment areas that can be quantified, such as students receiving various grades with a specific course, the program assessments provided by the Department of English would continue to be submitted in predominantly written narrative formats.

The writing program directors' responses pertaining to the submission of program learning outcomes to the regional accreditation agencies did not suggest any additional or unique requirements for the development of measurements or evaluations. From my own perspective, I believe this situation might change in the future if state legislatures adopt so-called student "exit tests" to validate learning outcomes of graduating seniors at state-supported institutions of higher learning. However, I believe the impetus for quantifying students' writing skills would be on the part of the higher education committees and not from the institutions themselves.

As Writing Program Director C observed, numerical or statistical reporting of first-year writing program assessments are generated by the end-of-semester course surveys that students complete (Appendix C). This survey data is then compiled in both numerical and written formats and submitted to the instructors and their writing program directors for subsequent review.

Unanimously, all nine of the writing program directors' responses revealed that the assessment tool or approach considered most effective in evaluating students' writing is the student writing portfolio. They considered this assessment tool to be the most effective because it enables students to successively revise their writing assignments and engage in the recursive writing process model of composition[22]. As Writing Program Director H emphasized in his response to the question, the end-of-course surveys could

---

[22] Recursion foregrounds a dynamic concept in the writing process that describes how students are enabled to begin, draft, revise, reflect, stop, and return to any phase of the writing process at any time. The concept of recursion has evolved in composition scholarship to signify not only the repetitive nature of the cognitive and creative actions in which students participate during any phase of the writing process, but also how cognitive and creative activities interrelate during students' thinking and creating (Flower and Hayes 365-87).

be useful tools in assessing the content and effectiveness of the instructors' classroom teaching skills (Appendix H). The student feedback regarding course learning objectives and content is useful for enhancing or modifying course syllabi and instructional objectives. I would also advocate that students' evaluations of their instructors' teaching abilities, and the annual classroom observations of writing instructors, are those two important areas that address quality of instruction issues in the first-year writing program assessments.

Analysis of Question 2: What Specific Aspects of Your Composition Program's Instruction Do You Believe Should Be Evaluated and Measured and then Subsequently Shared with Your Instructors and Students?

The inflection of this question is focused on the *sharing* of first-year writing program evaluations among students and faculty. This question was designed to closely parallel the first question regarding assessments in order to enable the respondents to expand on any aspects of the topic of assessments that they might want to clarify or to more specifically focus regarding the *sharing of program evaluations* among the two specific audiences mentioned. All nine of the writing program directors interviewed responded that the student writing portfolio approach to teaching is an invaluable tool for both assessing and sharing the evaluation of a student's first-year writing. I found their response to this question very revealing in terms of their principal focus. Their responses indicate that their prime focus is on assessing and sharing the outcomes of actual students' writing projects and not on evaluating the overall program *per se*. While the respondents also alluded to the requirement to report program learning outcomes to satisfy institutional and regional college accrediting agencies, these assessments were

177

conveyed through a tone that suggested such assessments were provided more to fulfill

more expansive institutional reporting requirements or requirements needed by the

regional accrediting agencies or other external sources. The key focus on sharing

assessments of students' writing was highlighted in their repeated mentioning of the

utility of the student writing portfolio. The sharing utility of the student writing portfolio

appears to be not just dyadic dialog—between the instructor and the student—but also

between other students in a peer collaborative context.

Each of the nine writing program directors mentioned, either in their responses to

Question 1 or to Question 2, the value of using findings from the students' end of

semester course surveys to assess the instructors' teaching skills and also the students'

perceptions regarding course content and the student learning outcomes. All of the

writing program directors referenced the value of sharing such information with

instructors, either in one-on-one meetings or during training workshops. All of the

respondents acknowledged in their responses to the first two questions that training

workshops were appropriate venues to share information about course requirements,

syllabi content, and pedagogical strategies. While it is feasible that any required changes

in learning outcomes or syllabi content are made by the writing program directors prior to

the instructor training sessions, this important point was not made by any of the

respondents to any of the questions. I believe it merits noting that while feedback from

instructors during training workshops regarding course and standardized syllabi content is

encouraged, such feedback should optimally occur several weeks prior to the training

178

workshops to allow sufficient time for any changes to be incorporated into the course content.

Writing Program Director H emphasized in his response to this question that the evaluative comments that instructors place on their students' essay drafts are very important in the assessment process (Appendix H). This writing program director also mentioned that he felt that the instructors' comments on students' essay drafts were under-emphasized as an assessment and learning tool, and should be given priority in training workshops. None of the other respondents noted the use of instructors' comments on their students' drafts as part of the overall student assessment process. I concur with his views that convey that the instructors' comments on students' compositions are vital to how students understand what changes need to occur in order for them to improve their writing.

As a conclusory perspective to the responses to Question 2, I have paraphrased remarks from Writing Program Director H:

> ... I guess the most important thing in terms of instructor evaluation is to
> assess how they [instructors] are instructing the learning outcomes for all
> each course. It is important to know that our instructors respect their
> students and their students respect them: this is the proper attitude that
> creates a strong learning environment for freshman composition. Before
> we become too immersed in various theories and pedagogies, we
> [instructors] need to be aware that most of our freshman writers are
> entering the college classroom for the first time since high school. Many

are teenagers and some are returning to college after years in the

workplace. We [writing program directors] need to be able to assess how

our instructors are accommodating and teaching changing freshman

writing class demographics. (Appendix H)

Analysis of Question 3: In What Ways Do You Use the Findings of Your Writing Program Assessments to Formulate Instructional Objectives for Your First-Year Writing Program?

The design of this question was intentionally prepared so that the writing program

directors could identify and discuss how they use the findings of their writing program

assessments. The question was also conceived in a non-restrictive way regarding the

terms "program assessments" and "instructional objectives" so that the respondents could

contextually define and elaborate regarding how they were using the findings of

assessments to develop learning outcomes and objectives in their first-year writing

courses.

The respondents' replies to this question reveal recurrent patterns. First, all nine

of the respondents indicated that the findings of the end-of-course student surveys were

important to assessing the quality of the instructors' teaching skills. Second, these very

same end-of-course surveys were considered valuable tools to assess students'

perceptions regarding the quality of the course content and if they learned what they

should have learned based on the learning outcomes documented in the course syllabus.

Eight of the writing program directors, excepting only Writing Program Director A, also

referenced the value of *classroom instructor observations* conducted by them, other

senior instructors, or even peer evaluations as ways to foster quality initiatives in the

180

classroom instructional environment of the first-year writing program. None of the

writing program directors provided sufficient detail, however, in responding to the use of

classroom observations as assessment tools. None of the writing program directors

mentioned if there were standardized evaluation forms used during the classroom

observation process or if there was an active *mentor program* among the teaching faculty

of first-year writing. Writing Program Director D does qualify his response to this

question with a specific viewpoint:

> . . . The point here may be perhaps obvious, but it is one that needs to be
>
> emphasized. Given a standardized syllabus or even a common assignment
>
> across a first-year writing course, the outcomes will differ in terms of
>
> students' writing performance and grades dependent upon the pedagogical
>
> process used. If some instructors facilitate more peer collaboration and
>
> more writing conferences during the span of the writing assignment than
>
> do other instructors, this difference in instructional approaches may
>
> produce differences in students' performances and grades or grading could
>
> very as a consequence. (Appendix D)

This writing program director's astute comments suggest that the variances in the

instructors' teaching methods and what *they actually teach* undoubtedly introduce

variables that will influence the measurement of course learning outcomes. This would

be the case even in first-year writing program courses [such as in the first-year writing

courses offered at this writing program director's university] where he comments in the

interview that standardized course syllabi are used. This writing program director's

<div align="center">181</div>

comments tangentially address the concept that learning outcomes should be written so that they can *accommodate flexibility* in teaching styles and not be too limiting in their purpose. For example, I argue that the use of restrictive language, such as "100 percent of all students will become proficient in writing focused thesis statements by the end-of-course," is unnecessarily arbitrary (as well as unrealistic!) in terms of its percentage goal. A more effective learning outcomes statement might be: "students will become proficient in focusing and organizing their essays with a specific thesis statement." This latter learning outcomes statement is written clearly and normatively—it indicates what the content and instruction of the course should achieve. The actual specific assessment of each student's attainment of this goal statement can be individually validated during the instructor-student encounters that occur successively throughout the semester as each student revises his or her compositions in completing the writing portfolio. When the student submits his or her final drafts in the writing portfolio for a final evaluation grade, the attainment of this normative learning outcome measurement pertaining to thesis statements can then be validated individually for each student.

From the perspective of formulating instructional objectives based on the varied program evaluations—end-of-semester course surveys, instructor classroom teaching evaluations, and the student writing portfolios—the consensus of the respondents was that each of these three key areas provide their own unique way of assessing overall first-year writing program effectiveness. The responses of all nine of the writing program directors substantiate that each of the three main assessment categories noted above provide their own unique findings that can be used to formulate or modify certain aspects

182

of the first-year writing program. Additionally, all nine respondents indicated that the end of semester course surveys were beneficial in identifying any issues or opportunities related to desired learning outcomes. While eight respondents referenced the instructor classroom teaching observations, they did not go into any detail as to their importance in the overall evaluation scheme or discuss their applications. The student writing portfolio assessment category seems to be the preferred method to provide optimal feedback on the first-year writing program effectiveness in terms of students' writing skills and as a means to determine if the course content and the instructors' pedagogical skills are facilitating the desired learning outcomes.

I found the writing program directors' recurring emphases on the student writing portfolio to be very encouraging to me as a first-year writing instructor. Their emphasis on the writing assessment portfolio approach signifies that the program writing directors are focused primarily on the lessons learned from the actual application of the recursive writing process. My own judgment about the primacy of the student writing portfolio is that it will inherently surface the problems and successes that occur as students and instructor work together in the writing process. These events will then proceed through varied communications by instructors to the writing program decision-makers for review and any action required. While this perspective may appear somewhat one-dimensional, it was validated in the respondents' answers to the first three questions in the interview. A content analysis of the respondents' answers to the first three interview questions reveals that their responses regarding assessment and pedagogy cluster predominantly around the utility of the student writing portfolio system. My analysis of the responses of

the nine writing program directors' responses to Question 3 indicated that, in terms of prioritization, they felt that the end-of-course surveys were secondarily contributive to providing the type of information that is beneficial in enhancing or modifying course learning objectives. My analysis of the respondents' answers reveal that the classroom teaching observations ranked third or behind the other assessment tools mentioned in terms of their efficacy in providing information relevant to modifying instructional objectives.

Of the areas that the writing program directors mentioned were sources for obtaining evaluative information regarding the teaching and learning of first-year writing learning outcomes—end-of-course surveys, student writing portfolios, classroom instruction observations, and instructor training workshops—the student writing portfolio method was identified with the most frequency due to its ability to provide program evaluation and feedback. Frankly, I presumed before conducting these interviews the writing portfolio system is more conducive to only facilitating the writing process and conducting individual evaluation of students' writings. In order to acquire some additional insights into these findings, I made a follow-up telephone call with Writing Program Director J to ask her opinions why the student portfolio was ranked by all the respondents as the key assessment source to evaluate not only individual student writings, but *overall program effectiveness*. The basic responses I received from her in answer to this question were that the writing portfolio was viewed as the foundation for facilitating the student writing process and also revealing the quality and influence of student-instructor interactions. From my perspective, I believe one can amplify what this writing

program director was suggesting in the following manner. The writing portfolio method reveals, continuously during the semester as well as at the end of the semester, the pedagogical effectiveness, the resources, and the attainment of the learning outcomes on an individual student basis. I argue it is accurate to assume that the reason or reasons for each writing program director's preference for the writing portfolio method as the foundational component for assessment is because each respondent differently perceives and articulates its functionalities. It is not over-reaching the point to argue that the writing portfolio method is the pedagogical strategy through which all of the desired learning outcomes and quality of instruction objectives are ultimately instructed and learned. A researcher on the varied applications of the student writing portfolio complements the respondents' views with her own findings:

> . . . Students cannot assemble a portfolio without using clearly defined
> targets (criteria) in a systematic way to paint a picture of their own efforts,
> growth, and achievement. This is the essence of assessment. Thus,
> portfolios used in this manner provide an example of how assessment can
> be used to improve achievement and not merely monitor achievement.
> . . . In fact, portfolios contain several features that might make them very
> attractive for large-scale assessment. For example, portfolios usually
> contain more than one sample student work, thus providing a more
> complete picture of a student's achievement than the typical one-shot
> essay or speech in an end-of-term performance assessment. Also, since
> portfolios are generated during the process of instruction, their content

might represent work used in a more realistic context. (Spandel, Arter,

and Culham 202)

This preference for the student writing portfolio does not only surface in the instructors' responses to Question 3, it also surfaces as a prime learning and assessment tool in the respondents' answers to the first three questions of the interview, as illustrated in the following figure.
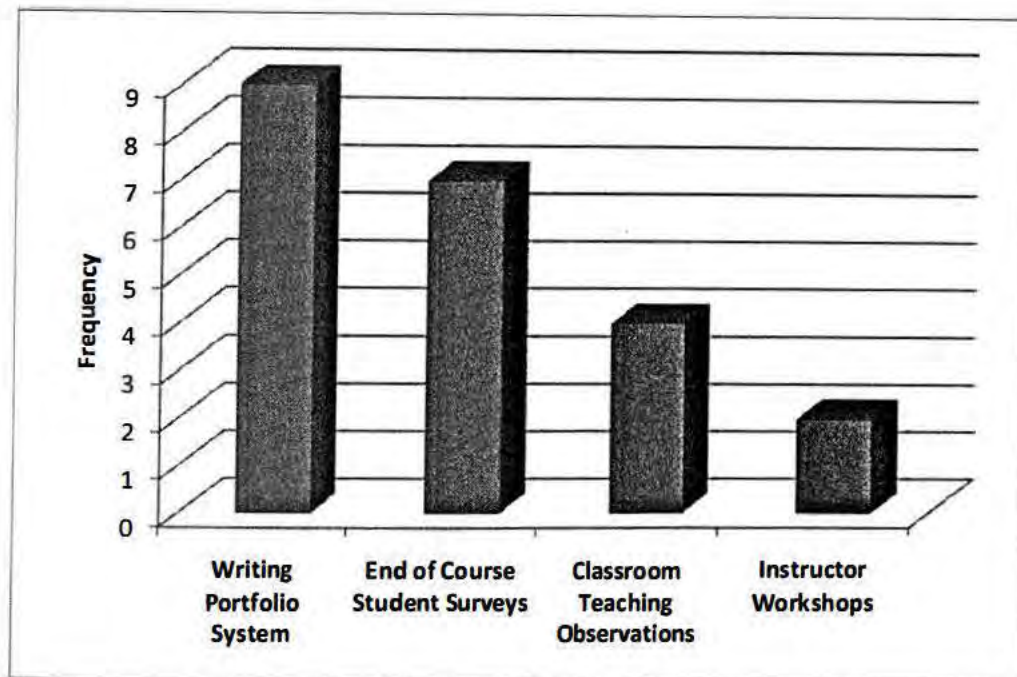
Fig. 14. Writing program directors' preferences for program assessment tools. This figure illustrates the writing program directors' perceptions of the most meaningful approaches for assessing first-year writing program instructional outcomes.

The noticeable clustering of these respondents' recurrent similarities in their answers prompts principal investigators, such as me, to classify these responses as a significant convergence of views, beliefs, and perceptions. In the type of qualitative research that is used in these interviews, I would be clearly over-stepping the parameters

186

of its findings if I argue that such similarities in the respondents' answers would closely correspond to the answers of other first-year writing program directors from other colleges and universities. However, the findings of such similarities in the answers from the writing program directors participating in this study suggest that a *quantitative survey* conducted with a greater number of institutions might corroborate or validate the hypothesis that a significant number of writing program directors could share the same views in their responses regarding the utility of the student writing portfolio's functions.

Analysis of Question 4: What Do You Believe Are the Most Effective Pedagogical Theories and Strategies to Use in Teaching Composition?

The succinct response provided by Writing Program Director E highlights the similarities in responses from all nine of the writing program directors:

I believe that teaching the writing process that encompasses invention and ongoing or recursive revision is a very meaningful approach that has revealed over time to be very effective in improving students' writing skills. I believe if we teach our students how to write rhetorically, and emphasize the strategies of the rhetorical canons and appeals, then we can prepare them to write in any rhetorical situation. I believe that peer collaboration is an important aspect of developing students' writing skills, so I would endorse this type of pedagogy as well. (Appendix E)

Consider the significance that all nine of the writing program directors used the terms *rhetoric* or *rhetorical process*, *repetitive revision* or the *recursive* writing process in their responses to this question. Again, these similarities in responses encompass what was

187

termed previously as a "convergence" of shared beliefs or perspectives. It appears that using a rhetorical approach as the basis for first-year writing pedagogy enables students to improve their writing skills for application in differing academic disciplines and writing occasions. Williamson, McDougall, and Brien's 2009 study demonstrates the merits of the adaptive application that rhetorical theory provides for student writers who must write in a variety of academic disciplines and contacts (Williamson, McDougall, and Brien 363).

All nine of the writing program directors mentioned the use of *peer collaboration* in their classroom pedagogies, either in responding to this question, or in referencing it in their responses to other questions. Writing Program Director J specifically mentioned the socio-collaborative aspects of composition pedagogy. This respondent noted how one evolving approach to collaboration in the writing classroom is generating positive results at her university:

> We have also had very positive experiences and feedback from students and instructors regarding what we term as *genre writing* . . . facilitating the unique ways that language frames experience or is used in certain cultural ideologies in cultural segments of contemporary American society. This approach would be somewhat similar to a writing studio environment whereby students explore and collaborate on themes that they consider relevant to their cultural and learning experiences. We are finding this approach to be very effective with certain cultural ethnicities, such as our Hispanic students. Students tend to value assignments whereby they feel

188

they have somewhat of an appreciation of the current issues that affect

their lives and their mindsets. (Appendix J).

This perspective on student collaboration in the writing classroom was emphasized

additionally by Writing Program Director C:

There is a growing emphasis on genre theory as it relates to facilitating

writing based on the student-writer's past cultural and learning

experiences. Genre theory associates closely with the canon of invention,

and it can be an important inducement to learning and applying writing

skills. However, I believe students should be challenge beyond their

comfort zones of what they have experienced or will continue to

experience in their cultural and social background or environments. One

of the enabling aspects of a college degree is to foster students'

perceptions of life and relating to others in ways that go beyond those

patterns that they have used or experienced previously. (Appendix C)

This writing program director also emphasized the growing importance and developing

role of the University's writing center in first-year writing.

Revealingly, the responses from the nine writing program directors each show

their awareness that the teaching of first-year writing from a rhetorical and writing-as-

process model approach accommodates important socio-collaborative strategies[23]. These

---

[23] Socio-collaborative pedagogies can be viewed as the teaching and learning of knowledge and writing skills through varied planned encounters with others (peers, mentors, and instructors) in face-to-face (onsite) classrooms, as well as through digital media accomplished in synchronous (real-time) interactions and asynchronous learning encounters (based on the time and frequencies students choose to access the learning system). Consequently, learning is not a single defined situation or time interval, with spaced

strategies were identified as peer collaboration and genre theory approaches. Genre theory posits the notion that empowering students to write about topics and issues relevant to their own ideological and cultural views facilitates their inventing and composing during the writing process. This pedagogical strategy acknowledges the presence and importance of cultural ideologies that are currently influencing the development of pedagogical strategies and first-year composition theories in U. S. colleges and universities (Herrington and Moran 1-18).

Writing Program Director A noted that the use of an *online electronic text* was proving to be a very useful strategy to focus students' writing activities and enhance collaboration. His university's proprietary online learning management system, known as Carmen, provides digital learning tools and courseware that enable first-year writing instructors to develop peer collaborative activities for each writing assignment. This digital learning system is presently used in traditional face-to-face classroom environments and effectively empowers students to maintain a virtual "network presence" outside the scheduled class meetings (Appendix A).

The following Figure 14 illustrates the writing program directors' answers that rank-order the pedagogical strategies they currently use in their first-year writing programs.

---

intervals, but also a flow of peer interactions involving the writing process. Social and collaborative writing pedagogies in either traditional classroom settings or online writing classes assimilate knowledge from individuals and written texts and make them available to a peer network so that all students can benefit and add their own contributions. In this regard, socio-collaborative pedagogies tend to be *student-centered*. The Internet, digital software, and digital learning courseware (such as *Blackboard*) create new tools for students to learn collaboratively. Socio-collaborative strategies also facilitate the incorporation of differing cultural ideologies into the writing process to foster invention and students' writing skills.
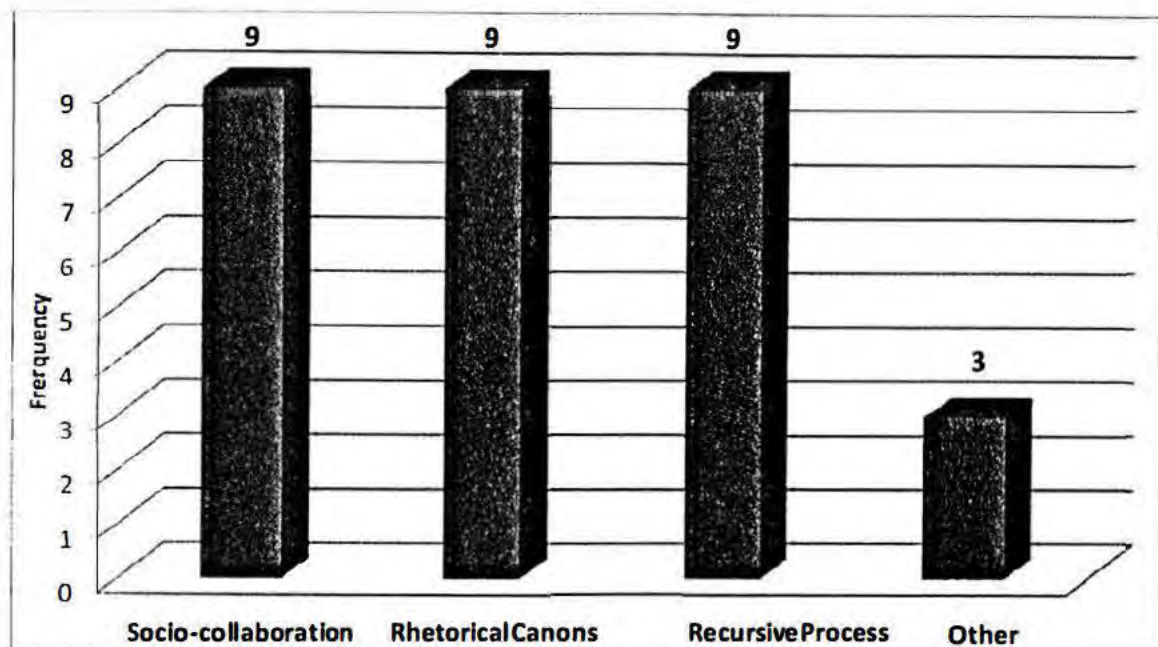
Fig. 15. Writing program directors' identification and ranking of pedagogical strategies.

Note: "Other" category includes the respondents' mentioning of genre theory, using the university's writing center more strategically, and using an electronic course text as pedagogical strategies. Respondents' answers do not imply that one strategy is used independently of others, but can be combined in varying ways for use in the writing classroom.

One of the key aspects that I derived from the first-year writing program directors' responses to this question about writing pedagogies is their shared perception that composition pedagogy is trending toward *student-centeredness*. Their specific references regarding peer collaboration and the genre approach to writing underscore this notion.

Their implicit answers also frame an important issue in the first-year writing classroom: the balance between instructor-centered and student-centered pedagogical strategies[24]. The application of social learning theories and collaborative strategies have

---

[24]*Instructor-centered* writing pedagogy suggests instructors' teaching styles are dominant or authoritarian in the assigning of compositions and during the teaching of the varied phases of the writing process. Student feedback is often secondary to the vertically-downward flow of information from instructors.

accelerated over the last decade due to the advent of the Web, social networking websites, and digital media used both in the traditional face-to-face classroom and in online environments (Alavi and Dufner 183-206). The important research question that surfaces here is, "How are pedagogical strategies shaped by the conscious choices of using certain theoretical approaches in composition?" Regardless of which theories or strategies are used to teach first-year composition, their orientation seems to depend on what the respective institutions believe are the *main purposes* of first-year writing and *how these purposes should be fulfilled*. Based on the respondents' answers to this question, one could argue that each of the colleges and universities' first-year writing programs represented in this interview employ pedagogical strategies that are trending more toward student-centeredness and are receptive to using students' cultural backgrounds and ideologies. In this context, all nine of the first-year writing programs accommodate a student-centered pedagogy that uses the canons of rhetoric implemented through the recursive writing process model. This finding should be considered important for future research.

Analysis of Question 5: To What Degree Does Your First-Year Writing Program Allow Your Instructors to Use Their Own Specific Pedagogical Approaches in Their Classes? Or, Does Your Program Require that Instructors Follow Specific Pedagogies?

The writing program directors' responses to this question point out that the standardized syllabi used by each respective first-year writing program identify specific

---

Student-centered instructional approaches suggest that students are empowered by their instructors to exert a stronger influence in their writing instruction, beginning even during the selection of writing topics. Student-centered pedagogies also accommodate a wide spectrum of socio-collaborative strategies and facilitate the inclusion of differing cultural ideologies into the writing process. While the descriptions of these two concepts tend toward polarization, a balance of these styles often presupposes the "ideal" in teaching and learning styles.

objectives and readings in prescribed texts. Due to the use of uniform syllabi in their first-year writing programs, instructors are requested to follow the prescribed assignments and learning routines outlined in their syllabi. All nine of the writing program directors noted that they follow the *recursive writing process strategy* as the fundamental pedagogy for teaching first-year composition. In identifying this approach, the respondents signify that they endorse a first-year writing process that encompasses prewriting, composing, revising, and editing/proofreading and also facilitates recursion throughout each recurring phase of the writing process. Either in their responses to this question, or to other questions, all nine of the writing program directors also endorsed using *a rhetorical approach to instruct first-year composition*. The following several responses from four of the writing program directors illustrate the other respondents' answers as well:

> My experience here at this university spans the English department writing program and the core writing programs in several other academic fields. . . . [W]e employ a rhetorical approach to writing. We also encourage what we would call as writing instructors a recursive writing process model in which students can overcome their deficiencies through revision. Another way of answering this question would be to say that the objectives outlined in the course syllabus would not always be achieved if instructors preferred their pedagogical theories over those that would help students understand the assignments and spend sufficient time in revising.

. . . That is also not to say that there are some theories that would not

conflict with the overall objectives of the program.

Generally, our instructors focus their teaching approaches in ways that

implement a writing process model that entails collaboration with

instructors and students, and also access to other resources, such as the

University's Writing Center . . . . (Appendix C)

Writing Program Director F amplifies in her response:

Our writing instructors, both full-time and part-time, are not rigidly

mandated to follow a specific pedagogical theory or approach. However,

the recursive writing process approach seems to be universally adopted,

with varying adaptations, within the department here and also at many

other universities with which I am familiar. I believe it is because this

writing model focuses on thinking about the writing process, then actually

writing, and then going back and reflecting and revising what you have

written several times. (Appendix F).

The writing program director at one of the largest community colleges (44,000

students) in the southwestern United States provides some practical guiding principles:

In our undergraduate composition program here at our community college,

we provide standardized syllabi with learning objectives that we expect

our full-time and adjunct instructors to follow. I suppose if some

instructors can achieve their learning objectives with some of their own

unique pedagogical theories that would be acceptable. As a baseline

194

requirement, however, our first-year composition instructors arc following

the process model of writing that emphasizes recursion and facilitates peer

critiquing. Although I am sure there might be some instructors who might

want to amend some areas . . . , I do not think there is any resistance to

teaching composition this way, since it is proving year after year to be an

effective pedagogy. (Appendix E)

As another writing program director notes, flexibility in first-year writing

instruction is accommodated as long as it does not impede learning program objectives or

student learning outcomes based on the pedagogical strategies she outlines below:

I do not want to inhibit any of our instructors from using instructional

approaches that they consider are effective in the context of our first-year

writing program objectives. Having said that, we would not want our

instructors to teach oppositional strategies that would conflict with our

rhetorical emphasis in the writing process model and our use of the writing

portfolio approach. We spend substantial time in our training workshops

clarifying our objectives and discussing how varied approaches will work

to achieve the desired instructional goals for each writing assignment.

I believe there should be some latitude in the instructional approaches that

our instructors use as long as they fulfill the requirements of our program

and help our students become more effective academic writers.

(Appendix J)

One of the key findings pertaining to this question is that all of the nine respondents indicated that *standardized syllabi* are used in their first-year composition courses. Developing common learning outcomes and common assignments that are basically evaluated using common writing rubrics makes it possible to assess student learning within and across sections of a first-year writing course. Based upon the respondents' answers to the first three questions on assessments and evaluations, wherein WAC and WID environments were highlighted, it follows that standardized syllabi would facilitate the instruction of courses in such environments. In such environments, there is a major emphasis placed on conformance to the desired learning outcomes for first-year writers. If the course is part of such a curriculum, as all nine respondents noted, it should be guided by the resources and guidelines inherent in a standardized syllabus approach. A department-wide syllabus is often very helpful for large programs in which graduate students and adjunct (part-time) faculty teach nearly all of the first-year writing courses. Common assignments and syllabi can help instructors understand the direction and levels of commitment that need to occur for effective student learning and writing to take place. Pragmatically, these tools can assure that appropriate course content is being followed (e.g., no instructor is allowing students to write in any manner that they choose). Lastly, the consistency of course content can also help students benefit from a similar experience across all course sections. This consistency can be particularly important, as Writing Program Director J noted, for those first-year students who will complete the initial first semester composition course and then take the second semester course at a future time period. Since in nearly all first-year composition programs the second semester course

builds upon the basics learned in the first semester, consistency afforded through standardized syllabi will help students continue to focus on those areas that will improve their writing skills.

An effective instructional support system for students is instrumental to the success of first-year writers and can be focused and implemented through a standardized syllabus approach. Due to the increasing levels of requirements and expectations placed on first-year writing programs by not only institutions, but by employers as well, the usage of standardized syllabi will undoubtedly persist and may increase among undergraduate courses due to the growing emphasis placed on improving students' writing skills. According to a 2009 Hart Research Associates survey of 302 national employers with over 25 employees, commissioned by The Association of American Colleges and Universities, employers indicated that four-year institutions should predominantly emphasize students' writing skills over any of the other 16 areas of emphasis ranked in the survey questions ("Raising The Bar" 9). While the topic of standardized syllabi often generates debate among faculty members, the respondents' answers indicate that standardized syllabi provide a valuable function in meeting the objectives of their first-year writing programs by focusing pedagogies to meet student learning outcomes and other program requirements.

Analysis of Question 6: In What Areas or on What Topics Do You Provide Training for Composition Instructors? How Often Is this Training Provided? Who Typically Provides Instructor Training?

All nine of the writing program directors' responses noted that training delivered through *instructor workshops* was provided to all first-year composition instructors. The

respondents mentioned that these workshops usually were held a week prior to the start of each semester. These workshops training sessions were set up so that the syllabi, course objectives, and student learning outcomes could be reviewed, in most cases, with a one-day period. Workshop presentations on varied topics were provided by both the full-time first-year writing program staff and also by graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who had taught in the program for several years. All of the respondents indicated that it was important to review topics and assignments on the standardized syllabi and review the scheduled reading and writing assignments. All of the nine writing program directors indicated that the composition textbooks (augmented by topical readings texts) for their classes were determined by a textbook committee (comprised of instructors and GTAs) for standardized program use.

Importantly, the respondents' answers reveal that their instructors' training was *episodic*. Their responses also indicated that they focused on preparing the instructors to teach those topics scheduled in the syllabus for the upcoming term. Only Writing Program Director B mentioned *informal training* in the context of its accessibility on an as-needed basis (Appendix B). Based on the pedagogical strategies and learning content requirements that I found in samples of their syllabi, linked at their respective websites, I argue that the respondents' answers regarding training were relatively one-dimensional— predominantly focusing only on subject content and not on pedagogy per se ("Institutional Web Pages").

Based on my appreciation of the writing program directors' responses, as well as my own experiences as an instructor attending these pre-semester workshops, I believe

198

that workshop-based training can help raise awareness of and enthusiasm for the subjects and instructional requirements encompassed in a first-year writing program. It can create what I term is a "shared vocabulary" or foundation of knowledge, as well as function as a catalyst for increasing instructional skills. Training workshops are particularly helpful to first-time instructors. However, when these episodic training sessions are finished, training support levels often wane if program resources cannot be accessed easily from other venues, or if program resources are limited and if instructors' availability to attend meetings becomes an obstacle. Only Writing Program Directors B and C specifically mentioned that instructors could access informational materials from links on the first-year writing website for incremental training and resources (Appendices B and C). This disappointing response prompted me to review the first-year program websites for all of the institutions interviewed to determine if electronic text-based training guidelines or scheduled activities were disseminated.

My online investigations pertaining to each of the institutions' first-year writing program departmental websites revealed that all of the 10 departmental websites provided direct links or referral links to syllabi and first-year writing program information. As might be expected, some of the departmental websites were more comprehensive than others and provided more training resources for instructors.

The training materials and resources linked on the first-year writing program websites of Writing Program Directors A, B, C, D, and H appeared to be very current and training-oriented ("Institutional Web Pages"). These websites also provided links that provided specific topics of interest to first-year writing instructors. Writing Program Director B

also specifically mentioned that information supportive to instructor training was available on some departmental Blackboard websites, and that he was aware that some first-year writing instructors also created blogs or Wiki sites that included topics of interest that could provide continuing informal training on a variety of topics (Appendix B). Writing Program Director E commented that more ongoing training in Blackboard at his campus would motivate him—and other instructors—to use Blackboard more effectively in his classes (Appendix E). One noteworthy aspect missing in the respondents' answers regarding instructor training areas was digital media. The development of digital technologies and courseware in the first-year writing curriculum now offer nearly all instructors in most private and public institutions an extensive menu of digital learning resources. As research shows, writing instructors are increasingly being challenged to modify their "traditional" roles and to function in varying ways as facilitators of knowledge, encouraging, at the same time, collaborative writing practices ("Writing Now" 6). Furthermore, they are expected to be conversant with digital media and become "media-literate" teachers who can manage a variety of contemporary learning scenarios. I contend that one universal goal shared by all first-year writing programs is that professional development should foster meaningful change in the writing classroom. The development of collaborative training venues, where instructors are provided the opportunities to enhance their proficiencies with digital media and pedagogical strategies in actual situations with *mentors*, have the potential to improve the quality of first-year writing programs. All of these programs can be developed with only minimal increases in dedicated staff-hours to achieve specific training objectives

established by a departmental oversight committee whose members can serve as a team

of dedicated mentors. Instructors, students, and institutional support staff will benefit

from the synergies that accrue in creating a collaborative and *mentor-centered training

model* within the first-year writing program. My brief comments above are offered as an

"antidote" to the wide-scale practices I have observed in several college English

departments and first-year writing programs that just "refer" instructors to online tutorials

for digital media or learning courseware. Even an ongoing dialog between instructors, or

between instructors and program directors regarding digital learning, was negligible.

Based on the responses to this specific question, it would appear that enhanced

and departmentally-integrated training of first-year writing instructors in digital media

can serve to improve instructors' use of digital media in first-year writing courses. My

experience over the last decade in teaching first-year writing courses motivates me to

mention that writing instructors feel most satisfied when they succeed in using digital

instruction for the first time and their students provide them with positive feedback. The

opportunity for instructors to share their needs in using technology with peers in a

mentor-based training scenario will serve to make them feel more positive about using

digital learning media.

Analysis of Question 7: What Percentage of Your First-Year Writing Courses is
offered in Face-to-Face Classrooms where Some Form of Computer-Mediated Instruction
or Digital Media is Used?

All (100 percent) of the respondents' answers to this question indicated that first-

year writing instruction at their respective institutions provide for the use of computer

workstations in almost all of their classroom settings. These workstations are linked to

the institutions' computer systems or file servers so that students can access learning management systems, such as Blackboard, proprietary course management systems, Wiki networks, blogging sites, and the Internet. Writing Program Director G indicated that several lecture-type classes in his first-year writing program did not provide computer workstations. His follow-on candid remarks, however, were forthcoming in that they acknowledged that a "lecture approach" in first-year writing was not conducive to teaching and learning in a first-year writing program. He also emphasized that he was trying to work with university administrators so that all first-year writing classes would be scheduled to have computer workstations for at least all first-semester courses (Appendix G). Writing Program Directors B and C indicated that Wi-Fi (wireless) Internet connectivity was available in many of the classrooms on campus—enhancements that contributed to increased use of digital learning media by students and instructors alike (Appendices B and C).

Writing Program Director E commented that the prevalence of digital technology on college campuses, and in society in general, does not suggest that all first-year writing program instructors perceive its usefulness as a pedagogical resource. This writing program director surfaced a key point in his response regarding the use of digital media in writing instruction. He noted that some of the first-year writing instructors—graduate teaching assistants, adjunct instructors, and full-time instructors—fall into the category known as "late adopters" of technology (Appendix E). This term suggests that, for a variety of reasons, instructors are hesitant to use digital media to augment their instructional strategies. While these assumptions may be reasonably accurate, it is more

important to note that the subject of instructor reticence in using digital media did not surface in any of the interviews. Writing Program Director A indicated that all first-year writing program instructors *must be proficient* in the use of digital media since the teaching environment required them to access and use it (Appendix A). Each of the writing program directors generally responded during their interviews that basic proficiency in computer skills was also a required prerequisite for students to successfully complete first-year composition. H*owever, my own review of the first-year writing course syllabi showed this requirement was not explicitly noted in most of the syllabi.*

In heeding Selfe's caveat proclaimed throughout one of her early books on digital pedagogy, *Creating a Computer-supported Writing Facility: A Blueprint for Action,* first-year writing instructors and course developers must be careful to balance the pedagogy versus technology "predicament" (Selfe). Selfe advocates in her 1989 publication that current writing process theory and writing pedagogy should inform every decision regarding the use of digital learning technology. Using digital media successfully in first-year writing courses results from disseminating sound pedagogical practices through digital media that support the learning objectives of the course. Taking this approach allows the instructor's pedagogy to direct the technology and not vice versa.

Analysis of Question 8: What Percentage of Your First-Year Writing Courses is offered through Your Institution's Distance Learning Program (i.e., Online Instruction)?

Eight of the writing program directors noted that their first-year composition courses were offered through their respective institutions' distance learning programs in online formats. Blackboard (or Blackboard/*Web CT*) was identified as the digital learning

203

management system by the eight respondents. Writing Program Director A indicated that the first-year writing program was not provided as a stand-alone online offering. Although the course uses the university's own proprietary learning management system, known as Carmen, to access an electronic text, the course is instructed in a workshop approach where there is substantial face-to-face instructional time and peer collaboration inside the class and online.

Collectively, the respondents' answers to this question seemed to be somewhat desultory. My preconceived notion was that the writing program directors would provide more details regarding their online first-year course offerings and those courses that they teach with digital media. Except for the response from Writing Program Director A, who briefly touched on the pedagogical aspects of the university's own online learning system (Appendix A), the other writing program directors provided very "sketchy" responses regarding the use of digital instructional media. These cursory responses may result from the construction of the question itself or other reasons not specified. In listening carefully to the writing program directors' responses to this question, I perceived that the online course offerings were more the function of their respective institutions' distance learning programs, rather than something they felt was central to their own writing programs or English departments. The feasibility of these reasons prompted me to investigate the websites of the institutions' writing programs regarding digital instruction. In doing so, I found that nine of the 10 institutions used Blackboard as the learning management system either for their online first-year writing program offerings or as a "digital aid" to complement their face-to-face teaching environments.

Briefly, I believe it is appropriate to correlate the respondents' comments with my own recent experiences using digital learning media. I have instructed writing and literature courses in distant learning programs for six years at two undergraduate institutions. In 2007, I was selected to teach the initial freshman composition course (English 1013) offered online in the English department's undergraduate curriculum where I was a GTA. The comments regarding why I was selected to instruct the class could basically be summarized in the following manner: "You instructed online classes previously in the English department," and "none of the other GTAs have experience in teaching writing online or have not expressed an interest in teaching online." I was certainly enthusiastic about teaching the first-year writing course online, using the Blackboard learning management system, since I had been mentored by a professor in using the creative synchronous and asynchronous collaborative writing routines that the courseware can support. However, I did not perceive at the time any first-year writing instructors' positive feelings toward using Blackboard to teach first-year composition. In 2005, I began teaching freshman composition and undergraduate literature classes at a large regional community college, using the Blackboard/WebCT learning management system. In my discussions with the English department faculty at this community college, I did not construe from their conversations on the topic that they were strongly motivated to teach courses online. The faculty members' responses regarding teaching online were basically that they disliked the routines or the characteristics of the Blackboard/WebCT courseware and any *follow-up training* after the initial training workshop was insufficient, available only through online tutorials. However, in the last

several years, I have observed a more positive orientation by instructors to teaching first-year writing online at both institutions because faculty members can now obtain *incremental hands-on training* from training staff at the instructional technology centers of both institutions. The instructors' positive acceptance and proficiency with digital media appears to be directly related to the quality and accessibility of instructor training. Also, as the instructors' comments reveal above regarding training, the availability of incremental training is tantamount to first-year writing instructors' *continued usage* of digital media in face-to-face and online environments.

Online digital instruction of first-year writing courses, using course management software, appears to be explicitly related to the user-friendly functionalities of the digital courseware and the quality of sustained training available to faculty. While my observations here are somewhat subjectively experiential, I will further examine these notions in my analyses of first-year writing faculty responses to questions dealing with digital pedagogy in this study's online surveys examined in Chapter 5.

Analysis of Question 9: What are the Key Needs in Your First-Year Composition Program?

The remarks of the writing program director from Writing Program Director E provided an appropriate overview that encompasses all of the responses to this question:

> . . . I believe that digital media will continue to offer new ways that we can
>
> instruct students both in traditional and in online settings. I began to
>
> realize that because of the utility of such programs like Blackboard, the
>
> distinctions between traditional in-class teaching environments and the

new virtual or digital teaching environments are beginning to blur and blend. *I also realize that for some instructors these changes and innovations in teaching environments will require the development of new skill sets* (emphasis added). (Appendix E)

The comments cited above also closely parallel the answer to the question from Writing Program Director J:

. . . [W]e feel our ability to keep our class sizes at 18 students in the first-year composition program is imperative to maintaining a high level of quality in our instruction. We hope that the current economic climate within the university permits us to maintain these optimal class sizes. We would like to continue our leadership role in supporting our curriculum-wide writing initiatives. We would like to use digital instruction technologies as they are proven to help improve our students' writing skills. We have a strong presence within the university setting here and we want to continue to facilitate through committee interaction our role in supporting institutional writing requirements. (Appendix J)

The following comments from Writing Program Director B complemented the responses from the two writing program directors above:

In a large state university setting, classrooms are always a premium. We do try to keep our class sizes in the first-year writing program at or below 25 students per section. And, we would always like to have digital instructional resources in each classroom to facilitate in-class writing. As

graduate students phase through the program as instructors, the training of

new instructors is a key program need. (Appendix B)

These three excerpts highlight the respondents' key needs in the areas of quality of

instruction that can be maintained through relatively small class sizes, the use of digital

media instruction, and instructor training. As the other responses from all of the nine

writing program directors revealed, the excerpted responses above summarize and closely

correspond to the key needs in all of the respondents' first-year writing programs.

Writing Program Directors D and F also noted that they wanted their programs to

continue to maintain a strong leadership role in their respective WAC programs at their

institutions (Appendices D and F).

Analysis of Question 10: What Instructional Approaches or Pedagogies currently Used in
Your First-Year Composition Program do You Believe Should be Changed or Modified?
Why Should these Approaches be Changed? Do you Believe that the Composition
Textbooks You Use Favor any One Instructional Approach or Pedagogical Theory?

Overall, none of the respondents to this question indicated there were any major

requirements to change their texts due to issues in content or pedagogical emphasis.

Except for Writing Program Director C, whose staff role does not include textbook

evaluation used in the University's WID programs, all of the other writing program

directors expressed that textbook selection or content was not a current predominant issue

(Appendix C). The following comments from Writing Program Director B correspond

closely to the other writing program directors' responses:

We are always open to modifying or changing our pedagogical practices

in order to better support our teaching faculty and also improve our

students' writing abilities. Our current texts emphasize a rhetorical

approach to composition pedagogy. We supplement these texts with other

readings that enable students to analyze topical issues and write on topics

of contemporary interest. (Appendix B)

The only exception to the response above is noted in the answer from Writing Program

Director A who indicated instructors currently use an electronic (digital) text that is

accessed online using the university's proprietary digital course learning management

system (Appendix A).

Analysis of Question 11: Do You Believe that Professional Organizations, such as the
Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National
Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Should Provide more Research Findings on
Writing Program Assessments?

The comments below from Writing Program Director A encompass the

sentiments of all nine writing program directors regarding the published findings that

each of these professional organizations provide to the academic community:

. . . Any research data and assessment tools that these organizations are

willing to provide would be beneficial. Since there are variances in the

curriculum of first-year writing programs, as well as other variables,

research findings would have to be viewed in a context-based environment

that would account for the variance in student demographics, learning

resources, and strategies that we presently use and some that we do not

use. Both organizations publish scholarly research papers about the

writing process and the teaching of writing, so this information would be

shared if it is considered beneficial or relevant. (Appendix A)

This question was posed to determine if any of the respondents would mention

any *specific* published findings or topics of interest from either of these two professional

organizations that have been used or were currently being used as references or as

guidelines in their first-year writing programs. While it is plausible that published

articles from these organizations have been used or are being used currently by these

respective writing program directors, none of the nine writing program directors indicated

that topical articles from these organizations were being used in their current

communications with instructors in their programs. A cursory review of both these

professional organizations' websites reveals that both organizations provide an extensive

electronic archive of published articles on a vast array of topics pertinent to the first-year

composition instructor ("Institution Web Pages"). Both the professional organizations

now provide links to current activities, blogging sites, networking sites, and ongoing

schedules of webcasts and online events of interest to the writing instructor. I noticed

that none of the writing program directors' departmental websites provided online links to

the home pages of these organizations. However, it is plausible that journal articles

covering topics pertinent to first-year writing are circulated among instructors on a

recurrent basis.

Analysis of Question 12: Do You have any Responses or Perspectives on the Subject of Composition Pedagogy not covered in the Questions above that You Would Like to Share?

The following comments from Writing Program Director E highlight the responses from most of the other writing program directors:

> I think we can continue to build upon and instruct the recursive writing
>
> process model from a rhetorical perspective for a long time to come. I
>
> concur that assessment seems to be an area that is receiving more and
>
> more attention, especially in light of how state-supported colleges and
>
> universities are being asked to validate their teaching and the levels of
>
> achievement of their graduating students. I think the state legislature's
>
> committees dealing with higher education are asking the fundamental
>
> questions along the lines of "what kind of product are our state colleges
>
> and universities generating based on the funding they receive?" This has
>
> been an enjoyable conversation, and one in which I have not engaged for
>
> some time. I think it will be interesting to see how digital media changes
>
> the complexion of how we teach our first-year writing courses . . . .
>
> (Appendix E)

Writing Program Director B also foregrounds the present and future role of digital media in the writing classroom:

> As you [the principle investigator] briefly mentioned in our conversation
>
> today, there seems to be a strong requirement at our university for students
>
> to be able to write persuasively and convincingly in most all other

academic disciplines. Online learning programs, such as Blackboard, provide meaningful extensions to one-on-one classroom instruction a factor that assures they will continue into the future. It also appears that online networking will continue to emphasize social collaboration in the writing classroom. I am sure over time collaborative routines in basic writing programs will change to accommodate new digital media and routines. Students helping students in the writing process is definitely something that digital media can generate effectively. (Appendix B).

Writing Program Directors C, D, and J also emphasized the evolving and important role that the universities' writing centers will assume in the overall first-year writing program (Appendices C, D, and J).

Summary and Conclusions: Putting It All into the Proper Perspective

In using a standardized open-ended interview technique with the nine writing program directors and one director of instructional technology, I was able to obtain a number of current unique perspectives regarding the key components of a first-year writing program. Participants were very generous with their time during the interviews and often expanded their answers to particular interview questions beyond the purview of the questions themselves to provide additional insights about the topics. The following conclusions are based on the analyses of the interview questions and constitute findings that will be correlated with the quantitative online surveys examined in Chapter 6 of this study.

212

The first three questions of the interview pertained to *program assessments*. The respondents' convergence of similar responses on the subject endorsed the student writing portfolio as both the preferred or primary source for evaluating students' writing skills, instructors' teaching skills, and also the source for providing valid information for program measurements. It is important to emphasize that these findings constitute a rather unique perspective on how the student writing portfolio comprises the source of information that accommodates, according to the respondents' answers, varied program assessments and learning outcomes. One of the limiting factors of these responses pertaining to the respondents' perceived adaptability of the student writing portfolio is the inadequacy of their answers to explain how each student's evaluated written assignments in the individual student writing portfolios should be aggregated or compiled to reveal learning outcomes measurements on a program-wide basis. Since the research methodology used in these interviews permits me, as the principal investigator, to use verbal prompts to facilitate amplified answers to provide enhanced clarity, my efforts in using these follow-on interviewing tactics did not effectively generate any additional explanatory details from the respondents regarding their expansive views of the student writing portfolio. I suggest that the principle reason for the writing program directors not discussing additional program activities or discussing them in further depth was that they believe their institutions' committee activities should be handled as proprietary information, and they were reticent in disclosing further details. Another reason may be that the writing program directors' appreciation of such assessment activities is rather unique to their own specific institutional setting. These processes are subject to changes

213

and modifications as they are fulfilled by the varied iterations of institutional committees dealing with writing program assessments. The respondents' time constraints during the interview itself could be a constraining factor as well. As I analyzed the responses in these first three questions dealing with assessment, I realized that fundamentally inherent in the respondents' answers was an unspoken notion that program assessments provided findings for three distinct areas: 1). the first-year writing program department or academic department; 2). varied institutional divisions; and, 3). outside accrediting agencies' and, in some cases, state legislatures' requirements to assess student learning outcomes at state-funded institutions.

Each of the three principal areas or audiences the respondents indicated that required assessment information also accrue findings from surveys, reports, and the actions of university and college committees that assimilate and report evaluation findings from other available sources. Significantly, all of the interviewed writing program directors, from the perspective of their key preferences, endorsed the student writing portfolio as a *primary source* that they believe is the most useful assessment tool. I contend that we have to recognize that these writing program directors responded from the viewpoint of their *preferences* regarding the utility of assessment tools used in the first-year writing program. From an objective perspective, the assessment sources (student writing portfolios, end-of-course student surveys, instructor workshops, and classroom teaching observations) provide varied findings that can be categorized as well as aggregated to meet the needs of the three program reporting areas enumerated above. I did not sense in the respondents' answers that they were suggesting that the student

214

writing portfolio was the exclusive or only source that should be used to evaluate the learning outcomes for their programs.

As a corroborating perspective to the findings of interview questions dealing with assessments, I can supplement my own experiences, as well as recount conversations with various faculty members over the last several years. These anecdotal experiences correlate that there is a substantial amount of departmental and institutional-wide committee work that is involved in assessing and generating program measurements in colleges and universities. These committees assimilate and review evaluative criteria and findings from all pertinent sources. A key point to emphasize is that the regional accrediting agencies request very specific program information and documentation to satisfy their program evaluation needs. All of the regional accrediting agencies now provide online assessment websites with online protocols whereby institutions can fulfill their reporting requirements on a proactive basis. In most all cases, providing such information to these accrediting agencies is a function of maintaining proper records and fulfilling all requirements with minimal interpretive actions required on the part of writing program directors or first-year writing committees. Statistical interpretation and reporting pertains more to end-of-course surveys that basically measure students' perceptions of instructors' teaching abilities and course learning outcomes. Typically, first-year writing program directors do not engage in generating statistical measurements for their institutional hierarchies. Such work falls within the purview of other administrative divisions at their respective institutions.

As I reflect on what the writing program directors noted in their preferences for the student writing portfolio as an assessment tool, I realize that they were implicitly viewing this tool as "organic" to writing pedagogy and to the ways students learn the recursive writing process. Apparently, the respondents perceive the student writing portfolio in two fundamental ways: to accurately assess if individual students are attaining necessary academic writing skills; and, also to assess the quality of instruction that is provided by each instructor. One might counter-argue this position by asserting that these writing program directors' views exceed the parameters of what the student writing portfolio can legitimately yield regarding overall program assessment. Again, I would posit that the respective writing program directors would interpret and apply their findings in ways appropriate to their own instructional environments and reporting needs. As one writing program director emphasized to me several years ago, the care and specificity exhibited in the instructors' comments on students' essay drafts in their writing portfolios disclose revealing insights about the quality of instruction. Perhaps, the central question to ask regarding the validity of using student portfolios in an expansive manner is, "How do the findings correctly and accurately address overall program objectives?" The answers to this question ostensibly fall within the respective purviews of each of the writing programs directors as to how they might decide to assign their staffs to aggregate findings of individual writing portfolios on a more encompassing course-wide basis.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the writing directors responses' regarding the utility of the student writing portfolios is the consideration of how they are being used presently and how they could be used even more astutely to provide additional useful

information about the quality of instruction and the writing skills of our students. Using simplified assessment criteria checklists that can be tabulated, instructors could easily annotate the presence, recurrence, and resolution of particular writing issues on an assignment basis as they evaluate each essay draft, and then assimilate and categorize such findings in ways that would be relevant to demonstrating writing skill improvements and attainment of desired learning objectives. These undertakings would result in generating more revealing and useful findings; however, they would also incur additional time burdens to instructors who are, for the most part, graduate teaching assistants trying to balance their teaching responsibilities with their own academic course loads. As one writing program director, whose identity is kept anonymous, mentioned to me during a conversation gleaned from memory:

> . . . Each year it seems we ask our composition program GTAs to take on more responsibilities and perform at higher levels in the classroom with only minimal levels of support and compensation. Considering all the intellectual creativity we share among our colleagues, I would like to think that we are smart enough to come up with better solutions than we have at this point. (Anonymous)

A teaching colleague, whose identity is also kept anonymous, expressed to me recently her concerns that sometimes the flow of program assessment information is "one-way" only. I have transcribed her statements as accurately as memory allows in the following summary:

. . . We [first-year writing instructors] provide copies of final exam essays and course grading information in first-year composition, as well as electronic copies of each student's portfolio to satisfy the needs of the regional accrediting agency. However, in the three years I have taught here, I have never received any real feedback regarding how this information is being received [by the accrediting agency] or being subsequently used within our department to improve our teaching of first-year composition. I understand the importance of meeting program standards established by the regional accrediting agency. Could there also be additional ways this information is communicated to us in our training workshops during the semester? (Graduate Teaching Assistant)

The respondents' answers to Question 4 (that asked their views on the most effective pedagogical theories and strategies) were all clustered around a rhetorical pedagogy implemented through a recursive writing process. All nine writing program directors' responses clearly converge on using a rhetorical approach (i.e., using the rhetorical canons) to facilitate their students' prewriting, composing, and recursive revising. In listening to their responses to this question during the interview, I determined that rhetoric constituted the basic theoretic framework for teaching composition that was implemented through the recursive writing process strategy. I was not surprised that their responses focused on using these approaches, since virtually all composition texts privilege these theories—but not all exclude teaching writing using a static linear end-stage process that is product-oriented. Some texts currently in use also

privilege as their writing pedagogy a "modes approach," wherein students are assigned to write essay types or modes (e.g., persuasive, illustrative, narrative, compare/contrast, or descriptive essays) based on predetermined or formulaic end-product criteria. In the following chapter of this study, I will point out how writing instructors' responses to the online survey questions correlate to using rhetorical approaches based on the recursive writing model.

The implications of the responses to Question 5 (preferences for pedagogical theories and the latitude afforded to instructors to use other than specified pedagogies) demonstrated that while writing program directors do not want their instructors to feel they are constrained by inflexible conventions, they also want their instructors to use pedagogies that attain student learning outcomes specified in the syllabi. The implicit theme that is woven into the respondents' answers is *unity of purpose*. The respondents' comments about the organization or structure of each of their respective first-year writing programs show that there is a desired unity of purpose. The critical student learning outcomes are achieved by instructors following the standardized syllabi and using the rhetorical theories implemented through the recursive writing process model. It is important to note that while several writing program directors commented that they condoned some pedagogical flexibility, their answers also clearly emphasized that their learning outcomes required using pedagogical strategies that were focused to helping students and instructors achieve overall learning objectives. I did not perceive any inclinations in their remarks toward inflexibility. However, their diplomatic tone also belies the recognition that the conformity they required was fundamental to satisfying

219

established program assessment criteria at departmental, institutional, and accrediting

agency levels. Pragmatically, the uniformity noted in the writing directors' responses is

required so that instructors and students can attain learning outcomes and thereby satisfy

the requirements levied by the institutions, the accrediting agencies, and state government

higher education assessments of state-funded institutions.

Notably, the respondents' paucity of comments regarding assessing the use of

digital media, used in traditional face-to-face classrooms and in online distance learning

environments, was a disconcerting aspect of these interviews. Only Writing Program

Director A noted that digital pedagogies would continue to play a strong role in first-year

writing programs through the continued use of the university's online learning system

and its online first-year writing textbook (Appendix A). Instructional Technology

Director I noted that institutional short-range and strategic plans called for continued

support and development of learning management systems, such as Blackboard and

Wimba Classroom.[25] These comments would apply to supporting all academic areas,

including first-year writing (Appendix I). Additionally, he suggested that the instructors'

proficiency in using digital media for classroom pedagogy will always be contingent on

the level and consistency of training that instructors receive. Instructor training is

---

[25] Blackboard is an online learning management system with synchronous ("live") and asynchronous (any
time when users access the online system and engage its modalities) online learning routines. Blackboard
currently enjoys an almost universal presence with colleges and universities worldwide. Wimba Classroom
(current version 6.1) is a widely-used digital learning management system that provides a live virtual
classroom environment with learning modalities that include audio, video, application sharing and content
display, and other learning resources for instructors and students linked by their computers in real-time
situations. Its pedagogical design enables college instructors and students to engage as if they were
meeting in face-to-face classrooms. Instructors and students may be engaged in Wimba's digital learning
process as long as they can connect via computers, audio, and video, if needed.

provided through his area of responsibility, as well as through an administrative dean who oversees online instruction at the college. Such training is provided in workshop environments and in a growing number of online venues offered for all fulltime and adjunct instructors (Appendix I).

Composition studies scholar Charles Moran argues that instructors need to make "informed decisions" about technology use in their classrooms (205). It is becoming more evident each year that computers are gradually changing the dynamics of teaching and learning environments in higher educational settings. Margaret Roblyer and Aaron Doering note in their text, *Integrating Educational Technology into Teaching,* that it is common to find statements in instructor-training textbooks that advise teachers to carefully consider the application of learning technologies in their own pedagogies (7). As Hawisher and Selfe also counsel us in their article entitled, "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class," writing instructors must continue to develop a better understanding of those influences that precipitate pedagogical change in the new teaching environments we now see increasing in the technology-driven millennium (56).

Due to the surge of digital media in the classroom, *instructor training* clearly presents a challenge for any writing program directors who do not emphasize its importance in the overall instructor preparation and teaching equation. Any oversights in training instructors could create situations in the future where instructors under-serve their students to learn in more relevant and dynamic contexts. For example, online digital learning enables students in China and the Pacific Rim nations to now enroll in a variety

of degree programs offered through the Web by several major U. S. universities ("USC's Plan"). The classes these students take are often the very same classes offered onsite and afford the students the opportunities to ask questions and participate in discussions via Internet TV camera connectivity, such as through *Wimba Classroom*. Given the growing research findings on the benefits of digital learning courseware aiding collaboration during the writing process, instructors need to be proficient in using such digital instructional resources as an inherent component in their pedagogies.

The fact that all of the respondents' indicated workstations were used in their first-year writing classes supports the argument that digital instruction in writing is not going away.

There is also another important aspect in instructor training that merits consideration. During my face-to-face interview with the director of instructional technology, he noted that instructional technologies must be closely aligned with pedagogy. Given the rapid pace at which digital technologies are proceeding, the degree to which these programs meet the needs of pedagogy is tantamount to their continued success. It is a "two-way" street, however, where digital instructional media designers and instructors must work closely in the design of such teaching modalities. If there is not a close and ongoing relationship between instructor and technology designers, as the respondent noted, then it is possible technologies and pedagogies could become dissociative (Appendix I). For this reason, I envisage that training mentors can serve as instructional resources in every first-year writing program to facilitate instructor awareness and a working knowledge of available digital pedagogies, as well as provide feedback to instructional technology staffs. As a first-year writing instructor who

presently teaches composition in face-to-face and online, I advocate that all instructors receive certified training in those digital learning management systems that they might use in their face-to-face and online first-year writing classes. This training, most likely provided by the institution's instructional technology division, should be a prerequisite to teaching in the first-year writing program. Although I have instructed composition and literature courses at a large community college for over 5 years, I undergo incremental training offered in workshops and through online venues to maintain a "certified online instructor" status. This training was very beneficial to me in revealing some of the newer learning platforms and courseware strategies available to instructors. However, this training in digital media should never become the exclusive domain of an instructional technology department. In addition to the training instructors would receive on the digital media from the institution's instructional technology resources, the first-year writing program should also provide pedagogy-specific training to instructors as a departmental priority, as well as providing training sessions demonstrating how the digital courseware can be adapted to their pedagogical requirements. I also advocate that first-year writing programs strongly consider the formation of a *digital pedagogy committee* that would function closely with instructors and administrators in the academic departments and also with the instructional technology staffs.

Particularly, Writing Program Directors A, C, and J highlighted how collaboration is being used effectively to facilitate and improve students' writing skills (Appendices A, C, and J). Each of these three writing program directors orient their approaches to collaboration uniquely. Writing Program Director A uses an eletronic or digitally-based

writing text that complements the collaborative writing routines provided through a proprietary digital learning management program. The socio-collaborative aspects of genre theory provided Writing Program Director J with a meaningful framework to empower students to interact and learn along cultural and ideological lines to facilitate their writing assignments (Appendix J). Creatively expanding the resources of the university's writing center, and specifically using the collaborative aspects of writing blogs, are those key activities that Writing Program Director C facilitates in her institutional setting (Appendix C). Collaborative learning represents a significant shift away from the time-worn instructor-centered or lecture-centered milieu in college composition classrooms. The application of social learning theories and collaborative routines have accelerated over the last decade due to the advent of the Internet, social networking sites, and digital media used both in the physical classroom and in online environments.

Responses from all of the writing program directors indicated that they acknowledged the pervasive influence of digital learning technologies. While the writing program directors expressed no negative sentiments regarding the use of digital technology in composition pedagogy, a comparative analysis of their responses revealed that there was a disparity between their recognition of the growing influence of digital technologies and the actual active use of them in their programs. A closer view of their first-year composition program or English departments' websites substantiated this notion. Importantly, only Writing Program Director A indicated that they were actively using digital technology in teaching first-year composition with an electronic text

(Appendix A). In analyzing the respective websites of each of the institutions represented in this interpretative study, I found that Writing Program Director H's program reflected a strong orientation to digital learning through its offering of several completely online and also hybrid first-year writing programs[26] ("Institutional Web Pages"). Based on the findings regarding instructional technology adoption and the present indication of the lack of a strong commitment to departmentalizing its training, these sampled findings may suggest similar situations at other institutions. This apparent "gap" between the growing role of technology and its tepid adoption, signaled by nominal training emphasis in all of these interviews except for the one with the director of instructional technology, could generate future issues for both instructional technology staffs and first-year writing faculty in the future. Both sides could become static in the ways they perceive the application and the benefits of the digital instructional media. This dynamic is, decidedly, a lose-lose situation.

I believe Cynthia Selfe's comments made during a Spring 2010 interview serve as suitable rejoinders to this chapter's findings since her comments underscore the real crux of the issue that tacitly surfaces in the writing program directors' responses. Unless otherwise indicated, the italicized words noted in the following transcribed interview are found in the cited source:

---

[26] Hybrid courses provide first-year writing instruction in both face-to-face and online environments. Such courses afford the flexibility of online distance learning and actual instructor-student encounters in a physical classroom. Ostensibly, these courses are beneficial for students. However, they can create time issues for some instructors who must prepare lessons for online and face-to-face instructional modalities.

CS [Cynthia Selfe][27]: . . . . There are still a lot of humanists, who use technology, but don't think about focusing on it in their classes—especially in terms of critically informed production. So while these folks *use* a cell phone and *use* scholarly databases and *use* a lot of websites, and *use* technology in their classes in terms of making multimodal texts available for consumption by students, teaching students to analyze and criticize mediated texts, I still know plenty of teachers who avoid teaching students how to *compose* or *produce* such texts because they personally don't feel it's their responsibility to compose, or to teach composition, in any modality except the alphabetic. And I also know teachers of English who continue to be dismissive of vernacular multimodal literacy practices in digital environments, considering these to be undeserving of [...] the serious attention that is so clearly paid to print texts. *I still see a lot of that in English departments; I see a lot of fear in English departments* (emphasis added). People think they're too old to take on the task of learning technologies, and *they are stymied by the realization that they will never master technology, that they'll never get to where they're comfortable with it* (emphasis added) because they recognize the pace of technological change is so fast that they don't have enough time in the day to become expert at it, and they don't see how they could teach it without

---

[27] The actual printed text of the interview indicates the initials of the interviewee, Cynthia Selfe, as **CS** (in bold font) and the interviewer, Brian Bailie, only as **BB** (in bold font).

becoming expert at it. So, that's the humanist camp: we are *more* sophisticated about technology than we were twenty years ago, but we're nonetheless resistant to seeing technological or digital texts as "serious" texts or even resistant to seeing multimodal composition as even "real" composition.

BB: I've run into that problem, too, where anything perceived as "technology" shuts down all discussion among humanists. I mention I'm reading up on network theory, and they just turn away. I have to explain network theory . . . . Then they come around, and say "Oh. That's what it means. It's not just about the Internet or computers. (Selfe and Bailie).

The emphasis that the first-year writing program directors place on the nexus between pedagogy, digital instructional media, collaboration, and instructor training appears to be the interdependent critical links that will, to some appreciable degree, strongly impact first-year writing programs in the future. These interdependent links are particularly important in light of the respondents' comments about WAC and WID programs assuming an important place in their own institutional settings. While these program directors' responses should only be considered a *sampled segment* of all first-year writing program directors, they do reveal the importance that institutional administrators outside the traditional English departments are placing on first-year writing. The development of first-year writing instructors, most of whom are GTAs, is an imperative need that helps assure the vitality and the viability of any first-year writing program. While training and professional development were subjects not amplified in the

227

respondents' answers to Question 6, they bring into play an institution's ability to successfully administrate the first-year writing programs that they validate as critical in supporting WAC and WID programs. It also brings into play an institution's *ethos*—its normative or ethical responsibility to strongly support and further empower its graduate students who provide nearly all of the instruction in the first-year writing program.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSES OF FACULTY AND STUDENT ONLINE
SURVEYS

Quantitative Research Purpose, Design, and Methodology

The second major component of my primary research encompassed the design

and implementation of two online surveys (questionnaires) to first-year writing

instructors and their students at private and public two and four-year institutions of higher

learning in the United States. One survey was targeted to faculty and the second survey

was targeted to the students of these instructors. The surveys' purpose was to obtain

responses from faculty and their students to these key research questions:

1. What approaches and theories do first-year composition instructors at colleges

   and universities follow to facilitate writing-as-process[28] instruction?

2. What are the most prevalent changes and trends occurring in first-year writing at

   these institutions?

3. What are the major or predominant contemporary computer-mediated instruction

   (CMI) and collaborative writing pedagogies used by college composition

   instructors?

4. What are the predominant CMI courseware and learning management systems

---

[28] The terms "writing-as-process" and "writing process" as defined in these surveys refer to a *recursive* writing process. As described in Chapter 1, recursion in the writing process signifies the dynamics of repetitive composing and creative actions engaged in by a writer between any number of or all phases of a writing process (prewriting, composing, revising/editing, and proofreading).

currently being used in face-to-face (FTF) and in distance learning online instructional environments?   As a corollary question, in what ways are these systems influencing and enhancing writing process pedagogy?

5. As validated by the instructors and students who responded to this study's online surveys, what instructional needs and training in CMI and collaborative writing strategies are necessary?

The surveys were implemented during the period from late April through August 2009. Both surveys were e-mailed with an explanatory note to the English department chairs or first-year writing program directors, in the case of stand-alone writing departments, outlining the purpose of the online surveys and requesting permission for their instructors' participation. If permission was granted, then these departmental chairs or program directors would then e-mail the surveys, with their accompanying instructions, to their first-year writing instructors. *Participation was totally voluntary*. Survey completion instructions contained in the explanatory e-mail solicited instructors to voluntarily answer the online survey questions and also forward the student survey via e-mail to their students. The explanatory email conveyed the non-disclosure protection of faculty, students, and institutions that voluntarily participated in the survey. Attached to this explanatory e-mail was also a copy of the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval letter for my doctoral research (Appendix K). The surveys used in my online surveys are classified as *quantitative*, since their responses can be statistically categorized and display the respondents' answers to questions that require selection and ranking of

230

multiple options. The surveys also included open-ended responses whereby respondents could express their own views in response to the questions.

The online surveys were developed using the PsychData® online proprietary survey system to which Texas Woman's University subscribes for use in its graduate research programs. PsychData® is professionally developed and maintained through its own website and uses it own centralized database comprised of strict security protocols and procedures for designing, sending, and maintaining survey documents online. Survey respondents are identified only by an anonymous I.D. number that the PsychData® program generates. Responses to the surveys, along with the respondents' I.D. numbers, are archived within the architecture of the online survey program and are not sent directly to the principal investigator. To assure an additional level of security, only the principal investigator can access the surveys through a password and pass code entry portal. Actual survey response data can be downloaded into a variety of spreadsheet formats for categorization and reporting. The online survey services to institutions of higher learning that PsychData® provides are designed to meet the IRB's policies for the protection of research participants. Texas Woman's University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) provided guidance in creating the survey instruments and also in verifying the statistical validity of all survey responses. All questions and implementation procedures used in the online surveys were initially reviewed by my committee chair and the OSRP statistician.

The *faculty online survey* (Appendix L) was designed to elicit responses from first-year writing instructors regarding their professional assessments of CMI learning

approaches, as well as writing pedagogies. The questionnaire was organized into three sections with 20 questions comprising the overall survey. The final seven questions in the survey were short-response questions. The survey was constructed so that, if respondents had not used CMI in their classes, they would be directed to complete those sections of the survey dealing with writing pedagogies and theories. This feature provided inherent flexibility and served to increase survey completion rates. Concurrently, the *student online survey* (Appendix M) was designed to generate responses from first-year writing students at the same institutions whose faculty members participated in the survey. For students to participate, their instructors were required to e-mail the surveys to them and then request their voluntary participation. Faculty members could opt to participate in the survey and choose to not have their own students participate in the survey. The student online survey consists of two sections: Section I involves multiple rating questions covering CMI/courseware and collaboration. Section II encompasses response questions covering teaching methods and digital learning technologies. For the surveys to be considered statistically valid, respondents must complete at least 80 percent of the survey's questions.

A sample of 115 accredited U.S. universities and colleges (two-year and four-year) was determined as being a sufficient *representative cross-section* of institutions with first-year writing programs. The survey's response rate from first-year writing program instructors (encompassing fulltime, part-time faculty and graduate students) was predicated on three linked actions. First, the writing program directors (or English department chairs) had to provide their consent to participate and e-mail the introductory

email with online links to their instructors. Second, the first-year writing program instructors had to willingly complete the online survey. And, third, these instructors had to be willing to e-mail the student version of the surveys to their students who also had to be willing to complete the survey. Given this chain of multiple decisions required to fulfill the full disclosure and informed consent provisions of the IRB, as well as to obtain survey participation among each survey segment, a hypothetical response rate of potential faculty and students, either from the individual institutions themselves or overall, proved to be practically indeterminable. Even a cursory projection of the numbers of first-year writing instructors and first-year students within the representative sample of institutions could not be determined, since to obtain such information would compromise the anonymity of the names of the institutions' names and programs. Since there are approximately 4,140 public and private two and four-year institutions of higher learning in the U.S. of varying sizes ("U.S. Colleges, Community Colleges, & Universities by State"), precise statistical randomization is not considered a key determinant of survey validity in this research.

The scope of my research is to assess the voluntary responses of faculty and students in first-year writing programs whose programs would be representative of such respondents in large, medium, and small public and private institutions, wherein geographic locale is not a key statistical influence. However, I did undertake some worksheet-based randomizing and sorting routines to assure, to the degree feasible, equitable geographic representation of large (15,000+ undergraduate students), medium (5,000-15,000 undergraduate students), and small (less than 5,000 undergraduate

students) public and private institutions ("College Data—Student Body Size"). I

manually categorized the institutions, segmented by the undergraduate student sizes

shown above, into the following geographic regions: Northeast, East, Southeast, South,

Southwest, Midwest, West, Northwest, as well as Alaska and Hawaii. If this resulting

sorting process generated more institutions than the desired sampling size, I then

randomly sorted again to eliminate institutions from the geographic locales and size

segments until the number fell within my desired sampling population of 115 institutions.

Based on my preliminary research regarding survey response rates, several studies

indicate that a 40% rate for *online surveys* is realistic if follow-up communications are

implemented to foster response rates ("Smart Survey Design"). In applying these general

guidelines to determine rudimentary response rates, I determined that the faculty survey

was estimated to generate approximately 46 instructor responses. Since there would be

no feasible way to communicate directly with potential student respondents, the student

response rate was adjusted to 30% or 30 valid responses. In response to the 115 e-mailed

requests for faculty participation in the online survey, the PsychData® survey system

documented that 66 faculty members anonymously responded to the online survey

(Appendix N). Since the email addresses of the institutional chairs or program directors

were used to e-mail the online survey requests, I sent "follow-up" e-mails to this

audience if I had received a reply from them after three weeks. After Dr. Renée Paulson,

the statistician in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) conducted a

close analysis on the responses, 43 of the faculty surveys were deemed statistically valid

since these respondents completed at least 80% of the survey's questions.

234

Thirty-nine students responded and attempted (or opened) the online surveys, but only 22 students completed 80% of the survey. The 80% survey completion threshold assures the survey meets high standards for data reliability.

Interpretative Analyses of Faculty Online Survey Responses

The following analyses interpret and clarify the numerical findings downloaded from the faculty survey in Microsoft Excel worksheet formats. The university's OSRP provided a categorized download of the survey's raw data, and, where appropriate to the survey findings, calculated the mean and standard deviation (Appendix P). As noted previously, *43 of the 66 instructors' online surveys were considered statistically valid,* and the results of these validated surveys could then be accurately reported in this study[29]. However, even in some instructors' surveys that were considered valid (80% question completion rates), there were responses to some questions that were incomplete or noted as "non-responses." In these cases, the number of respondents, illustrated in the following tables, reflects the accurate number of valid responses for each question. For clarification purposes, "N" represents the total number of respondents to a particular question. "Percent" in the following tables represents the *actual total of respondents* (*N*=43) participating in the survey divided into the total number of responses to a particular question. "Valid percent" is calculated by dividing the *actual valid number of responses* (reflecting those responses after any errors or incomplete answers are accounted) into the number of answers for a particular question.

---

[29] The location-specific IRB requirements of some institutions were found to be obstacles to their participation in my IRB-approved surveys. Ironically, some institutions could not participate unless I engaged in yet another filing process identical to my initial process. Due to time constraints, I was not able to accommodate these additional requirements that could have added months to complete.)

The first and foundational question in the faculty survey was "Within the last four years, have you used Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) and/or composition courseware to help support your classroom composition and writing pedagogy?" This baseline question was designed to determine the prevalence of CMI or digital courseware[30] usage among first-year writing instructors. According to the survey findings, within the valid 38 instructor responses, 88.4% of these respondents indicated "yes" and 11.6% indicated "no." The overwhelming percentage of instructors using CMI strategies in their classes is consistent with the predictive arguments of composition studies scholars, such as Eldred, who view the advent of digital pedagogy as not representing a series of technological hurdles for writing teachers to overcome, but as the evolving new landscape in which composition instruction will find new identities and new directions (Eldred 239-50). As other scholars have recently argued, the pervasiveness of digital media is changing or "remediating" the pedagogies and contexts of the composition classroom (Yancey 297-328). If the respondents indicated that they had used CMI in the last four years, then the survey's instructional prompt directed them to continue answering the questions regarding CMI/digital pedagogy. If they had not used CMI during this period, then the survey's instructions directed them to another section in which they could continue answering questions about collaboration in the

---

[30] The terms "Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI)" and "composition courseware" are often conflated and are used interchangeability by learning technologists and writing instructors with similar terms, such as "digital learning," "virtual learning," or "course management software." Such terms connote teaching and learning with some form of digital media (software or online learning management system) and word-processing software (e.g., Microsoft Word™) in either traditional face-to-face physical classrooms, totally online, or in "hybrid" class environments (hybrid classes combine online and face-to-face classroom learning encounters in varying ratios).

writing process, as well as pedagogical approaches and theories. My motive in designing the survey in this manner was to facilitate additional responses about key areas of composition pedagogy, even if the respondents had not used digital learning media in their writing classes.

The following questions and the respondents' answers in tabular formats visually highlight the specific pedagogies respondents' rate for adoption into their first-year writing class. Respondents are enabled to identify one, several, or all of the choices and rate them according to their perceived *frequency of use, levels of importance, or agreement*. As the survey progresses, the questions entail more specific focus on how and in what ways various pedagogical approaches could be applied in a variety of instructional settings. In response to this question—"Within the last four years, have you used CMI/composition courseware in a face-to-face (FTF) classroom environment, in-class student workstation environments, or in distance learning/online learning environments, or all three?—the following figures and accompanying analyses clarify the instructors' answers regarding their use in these varied settings. Figure 16 below displays the respondents' preferences for using CMI in the FTF writing classroom.

Instructors' Use of CMI in Face-to-Face Classrooms					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never Use	2	4.7	5.3	5.3
	Infrequently Use	2	4.7	5.3	10.5
	Sometimes Use	9	20.9	23.7	34.2
	Use almost every class	25	58.1	65.8	100.0
	Total	38	88.4	100.0	
Missing	Non-response	5	11.6		
Total		43	100.0		

Fig. 16. Instructors' use of CMI in face-to-face classrooms. Instructors' survey responses illustrated in this figure indicate their frequency (number of times) of using digital media in FTF (onsite) environments.

The responses to the choice "Use almost every class," clearly reveal a dominant preference (65.8%, N=38) by first-year writing instructors in this sample to use some form of CMI to teach in FTF classrooms. This strong preference, when combined with the finding that 23.7% of the instructors also "sometimes use" CMI in their FTF classes, demonstrates that 89.5% of instruction in FTF settings encompasses digital pedagogies. This finding correlates with the survey's findings in Question 1 and provides a means of understanding the importance of CMI on first-year writing pedagogy.

As shown in Figure 17 below, over 50% of the respondents answered that they *sometimes* use CMI/composition software in student workstation classrooms (51.4%, $N =$ 19) and 29.7% use the software in *almost every workstation class* ($N = 11$).

238

Instructors' Use of CMI in Student Workstation Settings					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never Use	4	9.3	10.8	10.8
	Infrequently Use	3	7.0	8.1	18.9
	Sometimes Use	19	44.2	51.4	70.3
	Use almost every class	11	25.6	29.7	100.0
	Total	37	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	6	14.0		
Total		43	100.0		

Fig. 17. Instructors' use of CMI in student workstation settings.

These responses aggregately reveal over 81% of the surveyed instructors indicate they are using CMI/composition software with varying frequencies in student workstation environments. This finding would also support the following assumptions:

1. Students in these surveyed instructors' classes were using workstation computers in some manner related to their assignments or the writing process a majority of the times they were in class.

2. The instructor was using some form of CMI to teach the class during 81% of the class sessions.

3. Only 10.8% (N 4) of the respondents *never* used CMI in their pedagogical practices and/or never enabled their students to use the workstations in some manner related to the class assignments. One might believe that this percentage would be much lower due to the workstation teaching environment. However, there are other unknown variables or issues that could impinge on the respondents' answers not directly revealed in their responses. Hypothetically, the

respondents' might either prefer to teach writing without digital media, or they may not be *adequately trained* to do so. It is also conceivable that these respondents who replied they never used CMI may have been scheduled to teach in a workstation class due to classroom scheduling availabilities.

A somewhat puzzling response occurs in the respondents' answers regarding their use of CMI in distance/online learning environments. Findings in the faculty survey reveal that a leading number of participants (43.2%) stated that they *never used* CMI/composition software in distance/online learning environments. It would seem feasible that this number should be appreciably less since CMI is predominantly used in distance/online learning settings. Considered from an objectively interpretative perspective, some of the answers in the "Never Use" category may reflect the respondents' *orientation* to the question. It is conceivable some of these instructors may have answered the question from the perspective that they *do not* teach first-year writing in distance/online courses, a factor that might account for skewing of these responses. Sound statistical inference compels us to consider this finding relative to the other respondents' answers. When comparing all category responses, the findings in the "Never Use" category, as shown in Figure 18 below, become less problematic. In varying frequencies, 56.7% (*N*=21) of the respondents actually use CMI.

Instructors' Use of CMI in Distance/Online Learning Environments					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never Use	16	37.2	43.2	43.2
	Infrequently Use	7	16.3	18.9	62.1
	Sometimes Use	7	16.3	18.9	81.1
	Use almost every class	7	16.3	18.9	100.0
	Total	37	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	6	14.0		
Total		43	100.0		

Fig. 18. Instructors' use of CMI in distance/online learning environments.

An important multiple rating scale question asked in the survey is, "Please rate how *helpful* CMI/composition courseware is to each of the following generally accepted *canons of rhetoric.*" Respondents were required to rate their answers to the above query based on the following rating segments: "Very Helpful," "Helpful," "Occasionally Helpful," "Not Helpful," and "No Opinion." In terms of assessing the findings from multiple rating scale questions, statistical practices suggest that the arithmetic mean is useful for summarizing findings. Even with narrative scales, as used in this multiple rating question, we can assign a number value to each category and thereby calculate the mean (or arithmetic average). For example, the categories of "Very Helpful," "Helpful," "Occasionally Helpful," "Not Helpful," and "No Opinion" can be assigned the numerical values 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0. The mean rating for each item is calculated by multiplying the number of answers in the category by its rating (0, 1, 2, 3, and 4), obtaining the sum and then dividing by the total number of answers for that item. Statisticians point out that the disadvantage of the mean is that it places undue importance to figures at one end or the

241

other of a distribution of numbers (Taylor-Powell 4). The statistical measure of standard deviation (SD) is considered a useful statistical measure to help correlate and validate responses to multiple rating questions. It measures the degree to which individual values *vary from the mean*. The standard deviation is the average distance the average score lies from the mean. A high standard deviation indicates that the responses vary greatly from the mean. Also, a high standard deviation of 1.0 or greater suggests there is some polarity or uncertainty regarding the respondents' answers to a specific survey question. Survey question responses that reflect high standard deviations are those responses that should be reviewed carefully as they can reveal uncertainty on the part of the respondents. A low standard deviation (e.g., .30 or lower) indicates that the responses are similar to the mean. When all the answers are identical, standard deviation would be "0."[31] Standard deviation from the mean is a useful statistical indicator to assess the variability between respondents' ratings to a specific question. Some survey questions in the online surveys that do not entail multiple ratings would not reflect standard deviation scores.

The respondents' rating of choices pertaining to the "helpfulness" of CMI/composition courseware in the teaching of composition and in the writer's usage of the rhetorical canons in the writing process assumes a level of prominence in this online

[31] To assure the accuracy of the survey's findings and facilitate the accuracy of my interpretative analyses of the survey respondents' answers, Dr. Renée Paulson, the statistician in the University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) provided statistical measures of this survey's data, such as calculating the mean and standard deviation for multiple rating questions. Additional empirical statistical measures were performed on the respondents' answers to assure that the reported findings fall within the acceptable standard of a 95% confidence rating. The ORSP's assistance is routinely provided to principal investigators engaged in doctoral research to assure the research meets the qualitative standards required by the university.

survey. Notably, teaching the writing process based on the canons of rhetoric is the key

pedagogical strategy validated by all the first-year writing program directors from the 10

colleges and universities who participated in the telephone interviews that comprised the

qualitative research component of this study analyzed in Chapter 5 (refer to page 36).

The findings pertaining to this question are illustrated below in Figure 19.

Instructors' Perceived Helpfulness of CMI/Composition Courseware in Teaching Rhetorical Canons					
Rhetorical Canons	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Invention	37	1.00	4.00	2.7568	.92512
Arrangement	36	1.00	4.00	2.8056	.95077
Style	35	1.00	4.00	2.4286	.94824
Memory	34	1.00	4.00	2.2059	1.09488
Delivery	33	1.00	4.00	3.1212	.78093
Valid N	31				

Fig. 19. Instructors' perceived helpfulness of CMI/Composition courseware in teaching rhetorical canons.

The average rating of the helpfulness of CMI/composition courseware for the

canon of invention is 2.76 (SD = .93), indicating that participants believe that CMI is

very helpful in discovering and inventing ideas during the prewriting phrase of writing.

Correspondingly, the average helpfulness mean rating of CMI/composition courseware

regarding the rhetorical canon of arrangement is 2.81 (SD = .95), indicating that

participants believe that the software is also *very helpful* in helping writers arrange and

organize ideas, sentences, and paragraphs in written compositions. Respondents to this

question also rated the helpfulness of CMI/composition courseware in learning and

applying the canon of style with an average rating of 2.43 (SD = .95).

243

This average rating indicates that participants believe the CMI/composition courseware is *occasionally helpful* as a resource influencing the quality and clarity of writing resulting from a writer's sentence structure. Similarly, the average rating of helpfulness of CMI/composition courseware for facilitating the canon of memory is 2.21 (SD = 1.09), indicating that participants believe that CMI is also *occasionally helpful* in the writing process as a mnemonic aid. Finally, the average rating of helpfulness of CMI/composition courseware for the canon of delivery is 3.12 (SD = .78), indicating that participants believe that CMI is *very helpful* in conveying how something is written and communicated to a writer's audience.

The high standard deviation rating for the category of "Memory" suggests some polarization in the respondents' answers away from the mean. This topic might be re-evaluated through a follow-on survey with the same or similar audiences at a future date to validate if there are some issues, uncertainties, or polarized viewpoints regarding this category.

Findings from Question 3 demonstrate the respondents' ratings of the *helpfulness* of CMI used in teaching the rhetorical canons. Based on my own review of the literature pertaining to findings involving CMI and the writing process, this question appears to be the first time that it is directly used in a survey used in an academic setting. The important findings that should be emphasized resulting from this question in the survey are the instructors' preferential ratings that prioritize CMI's highest rating associated with delivery, followed by arrangement, and then closely followed by invention. It is

important to note here that none of the respondents indicated that CMI was unhelpful to teaching the rhetorical canons in their writing classes.

In Question 4 of the faculty survey, I employ a series of multiple rating categories to acquire the instructors' perceptions of the *importance* of CMI/composition courseware to teach collaboration, individualistic learning, creative expression, as well as its use as writing tools and "electronic spaces" for students' composing, writing, and thinking. Respondents were asked to rate these multiple categories as "Very Important," "Important," "Neutral," "Not Important," or "No Opinion." The varied categorized terms used in this question were specifically defined to eliminate any confusion and enhance the accuracy of the question's findings. Figure 20 below illustrates the respondents' perceptions of the importance of CMI in teaching these learning approaches in first-year composition classes.

Instructors' Importance Ratings of CMI/ Courseware for Teaching Approaches					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Collaborative Interaction among Students	30	1.00	4.00	3.2333	.85836
Individualistic Thinking and Learning	30	1.00	4.00	2.6667	.88409
Creative Thinking	28	1.00	4.00	2.5357	.79266
Writing Aids and Tools	29	1.00	4.00	3.1724	.80485
Electronic Creative and Cognitive "Spaces"	28	1.00	4.00	3.1071	.87514
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Fig. 20. Instructors' importance ratings of CMI/Courseware for teaching approaches.

As noted in the table above, the average rating of importance given to CMI/composition software for facilitating collaborative interaction among students is

3.23 (*SD* = .86), indicating that participants believe that CMI approaches the level of *very important* to the question's definitional areas of collaborative interactions among students. The average rating of the importance of CMI to individualistic thinking and learning is 2.67 (*SD* = .88), signifying that participants believe that the software is *important* to fostering ways to engage in self-reflection and individually applying those skills to writing. The average rating of the importance of CMI on creative thinking is 2.54 (*SD* = .79), demonstrating that participants believe that the software is also *important* to developing new insights, ideas, and approaches in writing. The average rating of the importance of CMI on writing aids and tools is 3.17 (*SD* = .80), representing that participants consider that the software is *important* for enabling students and instructors in applying CMI resources to directly benefit their teaching and learning strategies. In the final rated category of the question, the mean rating of the importance rating of the software on electronic creative and cognitive "spaces" is 3.17 (*SD* = .80) shows that participants also believe that CMI is *important* to the facilitation of students' writing exercises and ongoing revisions. These findings validate that all respondents to this question believe CMI assumes a role that ranges from *important to very important* in facilitating collaboration in the writing class.

Note the similarities of somewhat high standard deviation scores for each categorical response. Such high scores suggest some volatility or uncertainty as they trend away from the mean. Such scores should prompt the investigator to pursue the category question with further follow-on surveys to ascertain any potential issues among the sample audience.

246

Question 5 logically follows Question 4 in that it asks respondents to write down the *specific names* (up to four) of the CMI courseware that they had used in the last four years. As shown in Figures 21-24 below, respondents were then asked to rate this software according to the following criteria: "User-Friendly Technology," "Moderately User-Friendly Technology," "Neutral," "Not" User-friendly Technology," "My college should provide more instructor training on courseware," and "My college should provide more student training on courseware."

	5a. CMI/Courseware Name #1 Rating by Instructors				
	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	*CMI Name Not Provided	10	23.3	23.3	23.3
	Blackboard	23	53.5	53.5	76.7
	Drupal	2	4.7	4.7	81.4
	eCollege	1	2.3	2.3	83.7
	ICON/TOPIC	1	2.3	2.3	86.0
	Moodle	1	2.3	2.3	88.4
	Turnitin.com	1	2.3	2.3	90.7
	WebBoard	1	2.3	2.3	93.0
	WebCT	3	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 21. CMI/Courseware name #1 rating by instructors.

Of the 43 respondents to this question rating CMI/Composition courseware used in the previous four years, a majority of participants initially list Blackboard (53.5%, $N =$ 23) whereas some participants initially list WebCT (7.0%, $N = 3$), and also Drupal (4.7%, $N = 2$). The remaining five participants (2.3%) each list one of the following:

eCollege, ICON/TOPIC, Moodle, Turnitin.com, and WebBoard. The product names specified by the respondents predominantly encompass those LMSs available as commercial Web-based applications. Moodle and Drupal are open-source (free to the using institutions) learning management systems (LMS) operating on the Web. Blackboard and WebCT (Blackboard acquired WebCT several years ago) are commercially-vended course management systems. Blackboard is currently used as a LMS for both face-to-face (onsite) and distance learning courses in a majority of U. S. institutions. Pearson Longman markets its proprietary eCollege learning courseware. ICON/TOPIC is actually a component program within Moodle's LMS. WebBoard is offered online by Akiva Corporation for use in academic and business settings. Turnitin.com is online software used primarily by faculty and students to detect and prevent plagiarism based on its extensive searchable database, with some enhancements in its program designed to help students research and validate their bibliographic citations. Ten of the respondents to this question failed to specify their CMI/courseware. The 53.5% respondents' rating of Blackboard as their *preferred courseware* correlates with its predominant presence whereby over 65% of U. S. institutions of higher learning using digital learning courseware are using some version of Blackboard or WebCT ("The Evolving LMS Market").

In the following question, respondents indicated and rated their next or second choice of CMI/courseware that they used in their first-year writing courses in the last four years, using the same rating criteria as in the prior question.

5b. CMI/Courseware Name #2 Rating by Instructors				
Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
*No CMI Name Specified	25	58.1	58.1	58.1
Blackboard	1	2.3	2.3	60.5
Desire2Learn	2	4.7	4.7	65.1
eCollege	1	2.3	2.3	67.4
E-mail	1	2.3	2.3	69.8
Encore MOO	1	2.3	2.3	72.1
Mambo	1	2.3	2.3	74.4
McGraw-Hill Guide Online	1	2.3	2.3	76.7
Mediawiki	1	2.3	2.3	79.1
Moodle	2	4.7	4.7	83.7
Morae Recorder	1	2.3	2.3	86.0
MyCompLab	2	4.7	4.7	90.7
Publisher's Software	1	2.3	2.3	93.0
Turnitin.com	1	2.3	2.3	95.3
WebCT	2	4.7	4.7	100.0
Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 22. CMI/Courseware name #2 rating by instructors.

The findings in Figure 22 above reveal that two people each (4.7%) list

Desire2Learn, Moodle, *MyCombLab, and* WebCT. One person (2.3%) each list

Blackboard, eCollege, e-mail, Encore MOO, Mambo, McGraw-Hill Guide Online,

Mediawiki, Morae Recorder, Publisher's Software, *and* Turnitin.com. Notably,

Desire2Learn is a rapidly growing digital learning courseware that holds a 30% market

share among private and public two and four-year institutions ("The Evolving LMS

Market"). Encore MOO, Mambo McGraw-Hill Guide Online--*The* McGraw-Hill Guide

Online, Morae Recorder, Publisher's Software, MyCompLab, *and* Turnitin.com,—are

digital courseware with varying degrees of applications for use in the first-year writing

class. Some are "open source" (free) courseware that colleges and institutions can use,

such as Encore MOO and Mambo; others, such as McGraw-Hill Guide Online, are

commercially vended and often are associated with first-year writing texts published by

several of the mainline publishers. As recent analyses of the LMS market of higher

education show, Blackboard still dominates, although other LMSs, such as Desire2Learn,

Sakai, and Moodle are growing ("The Evolving LMS Market"). To a significant degree,

the type of LMS used in first-year writing programs is often determined by two sources.

First, at a program level, the choice of CMI courseware is strongly influenced by the

first-year writing program's textbook publisher. Second, a principal factor that

determines which LMS is used is based on the institution's overall requirements to use

digital learning systems that can be adapted to all academic disciplines.

5c. CMI/Courseware Name #3 Rating by Instructors				
	Responses	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	***No CMI Name Specified**	37	86.0	86.0	86.0
	Blackboard	1	2.3	2.3	88.4
	Moodle	1	2.3	2.3	90.7
	Non-academic, public and private collaboration platforms (Wikis).	1	2.3	2.3	93.0
	Turnitin	1	2.3	2.3	95.3
	Turnitin.com	1	2.3	2.3	97.7
	Word Comment Function	1	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 23. CMI/Courseware name #3 rating by instructors.

In Figure 23 above, instructors specify a third CMI/composition courseware or Each of the six respondents provide a single response in rating this question: Moodle (2.3%), non-academic, Wikis (2.3%), *Turnitin* (2.3%), Turnitin.com (2.3%), and [Microsoft] Word Comment function (2.3%). Turnitin and Turnitin.com were reported by respondents as two separate categories, so these classifications were not combined to maintain reporting authenticity. The ratings to this question reveal that Turnitin.com (or Turnitin) is used at some point in the writing process. Microsoft Word's "Comment Function" is also potentially used by instructors (and students) during the evaluation and peer review phases of the writing process.

For those three respondents who listed and rated a fourth CMI courseware, their responses show in Figure 24 below that they use Facebook (2.3%, $N = 1$), Jing (2.3%, $N = 1$) and Sakai (2.3%, $N = 1$).

	5d. CMI/Courseware Name #4 Rating				
	Responses	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
	*No CMI Name Specified	40	93.0	93.0	93.0
	Facebook	1	2.3	2.3	95.3
Valid	**Jing**	1	2.3	2.3	97.7
	Sakai	1	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 24. CMI/Courseware name #4 rating.

While a dominant social networking site, Facebook has limited application in a first-year writing class. Jing is a free Web-based service for screen captures and screen casts and would also have limited use in a writing class. Sakai is an open-source courseware that

currently experiences an increasing usage rate among higher education institutions ("The Evolving LMS Market").

The findings pertaining to Question 5 clearly demonstrate the pervasiveness of Blackboard as a digital learning management system used by first-year writing instructors at the varied sampled colleges and universities. Noteworthy, however, are those findings related to the increasing usage of open-source (free) LMSs, such as Desire2Learn, Drupal, Moodle, *and* Sakai. As the IT departments at various institutions become more familiar with using these open-source learning management courseware, they may progress to phasing-out the more expensive commercially-vended courseware, such as Blackboard.

Additional important aspects of the faculty surveys are the *training* and *institutional support* provided to instructors using CMI courseware and learning management systems in their writing pedagogies. In Question 6, respondents are asked several questions related to the overall support of CMI courseware by their academic division. This question is predicated on the assumption that the respondents' perceptions of their academic division's support of CMI courseware is a contributing factor to their success and desire to continue using CMI in their writing classes. Respondents are asked to rate the questions shown under the topic heading of "Responses" in Figure 25 below, using the following rating criteria: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree."

Respondents' Ratings of Their Perceptions of their Academic Division's Support of CMI Courseware Use					
Responses Pertaining to the Academic Division	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Endorses and Supports CMI	26	3.00	5.00	4.5385	.58177
Offers Some Form of Training to Instructors	27	2.00	5.00	4.1481	.86397
Assesses the Effectiveness of CMI	25	1.00	5.00	3.6400	1.18603
CMI Topics Are Occasionally Discussed	21	2.00	5.00	3.9524	.86465
Valid N (listwise)	19				

Fig. 25. Respondents' ratings of their perceptions of their academic division's support of CMI courseware use.

The average rating of support by the academic division or faculty dean is 4.54 (*SD* = .58), indicating that participants *strongly agree* that CMI/composition coursework in face-to-face and/or online environments is supported by their academic division. I would quickly point out here that if this finding were less than the "Agree" rating, then the instructors teaching writing using CMI courseware would be engaged in a Sisyphean ordeal. The average rating of training offered to instructors is 4.15 (*SD* = .86), indicating that participants *agree* that their academic division does offer some form of training to instructors who teach with CMI courseware. The average rating for the assessment of CMI's effectiveness is 3.64 (*SD* = 1.19), indicating that participants *agree* that their academic department assesses the effectiveness of CMI/composition or writing coursework that they use in teaching first-year writing. Correspondingly, the average rating for the discussion of CMI/composition coursework is 3.95 (*SD* = .86), indicating that participants *agree* that CMI/composition courseware topics are occasionally discussed at academic divisional or dean of faculty meetings.

The high standard deviation score of 1.186 for the rating of the category "Assesses the Effectiveness of CMI" suggests this would be a topic that should be flagged for follow-up review with the same audience to assess if the high score suggests this there be latent "issues" involving the respondents regarding this topic.

Figure 26 below reveals the respondents' answers to survey Question 7 that rates the areas pertaining to the questions noted under the "Response Categories" column. The rating criteria pertain to the following choices: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and "No Opinion."

Respondents' Ratings of Their Perceptions of Their Academic Department's Training Provided to Instructors Using CMI Courseware					
Response Categories	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My department has at least one faculty member who functions as CMI support person	27	1.00	5.00	3.1852	1.17791
I received CMI training from a department member	29	1.00	5.00	2.6897	1.41682
*I am self-trained in CMI	29	1.00	5.00	3.8621	1.24568
Valid N (listwise)	27				

Fig. 26. Respondents' ratings of their perceptions of their academic department's training provided to instructors using CMI courseware.

The average or mean rating for having a faculty member serve as a support person or mentor for training is 3.19. This rating indicates that participants are basically *neutral* as it relates to their academic department having at least one faculty member who serves as a CMI/composition coursework support or training mentor. The average rating for receiving training from a departmental member is 2.69 (*SD* = 1.42), indicating that participants *disagreed* that they receive CMI/composition training from a department

member or designated training mentor. Lastly, the average rating for being self-trained in CMI/composition is 3.68 ($SD = 1.25$), indicating that participants *agree* that they are self-trained in CMI/composition for use in their composition classes. Based on the 27 valid responses to this question, the findings suggest that departmental training could be enhanced or become more proactive regarding CMI training. While one might assume that instructors receive their training through another division within the institution, such as their institution's department of instructional technology, I would argue that the use of an active *departmental mentor program* regarding CMI would be very supportive to first-year writing instructors' needs for training in CMI courseware.

The *relatively high standard deviation scores* to all rated categories regarding the respondents' academic department's position on instructor training would suggest that topic be reviewed for follow-on evaluations.

In the following Figure 27 illustrating the responses to survey Question 8, respondents are posed a series of choices that are topically summarized in the "Response Categories" column. The rating choices are "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and "No Opinion."

Instructors' Ratings of Agreement Levels Regarding the Requirement for Supporting CMI Use in Varied Instructional Settings					
Response Categories	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I support CMI usage in all courses	34	2.00	5.00	4.1176	.94595
It is necessary for me to use CMI in face-to-face environments	34	1.00	5.00	3.8529	1.13170
It is necessary for me to use CMI in online/distance learning	30	1.00	5.00	3.6333	1.29943
Valid N (list-wise)	30				

Fig. 27. Instructors' ratings of agreement levels regarding the requirement for supporting CMI use in varied instructional settings.

The average rating of their agreement toward the level of usage of CMI in all courses is 4.12, (*SD* = .94), indicating that participants *somewhat agree* [the higher end range of agreeing] in supporting the use of CMI/composition courseware for all of their classes and learning environments in first-year writing. The average rating for the necessity of CMI/composition courseware in face-to-face environments (instructors and students in physical classroom live encounters) is 3.85 (*SD* = 1.13), indicating that participants *agree* that CMI/composition courseware are necessary for them to achieve their instructional objectives. Likewise, the average rating for the necessity of using CMI/composition courseware in online and distance learning environments is 3.63 (*SD* = 1.30), indicating that participants also *agree* that CMI is necessary for them to achieve their instructional objectives. The high standard deviation scores for the two immediately prior ratings suggests that they should be re-evaluated as two potential problematic areas.

Instructors' Perceptions of the Significance of Collaboration in the Writing Process

In the findings to Question 4 in Figure 19 above, respondents indicate that CMI approaches a rating of *very important* in their application of CMI to facilitate collaboration. As an adjunct to this question, I also designed a series of rating questions that would enable the surveyed instructors to indicate their perceptions of the importance of collaboration and its impact on the writing process and the canons of rhetoric. My initial review of the published literature did not uncover any prior or concurrent surveys whereby first-year writing instructors were asked to assess the relationship of collaboration as a pedagogical strategy for instructing the rhetorical canons. Similarly, I could find no primary research studies wherein first-year writing instructors were asked to rate the significance they place on using collaboration during each phase of the recursive writing process. So, perhaps this survey will motivate others to pursue further inquiry on the topic. I argue that not only will first-year writing instructors need to teach students how to effectively collaborate, they will also have to do so within a *changing writing and teaching environment.* What is a principal contributor to such change, you may ask? Our twenty-first century digital technologies are undeniably influencing our college writing environments, and these technologies will also serve as one of several significant change agents that will facilitate collaboration.

In the "Definition of Key Terms" section of the faculty online survey, I define *collaboration in the writing process* as "an instructional and learning approach whereby students are empowered to interact and mutually implement writing improvement strategies during phases of the writing process." Increasingly, first-year writing students

are enabled to more skillfully collaborate. Such collaborative activity will not just encompass the "peer critiques" of their essay drafts, but also *each phase* of the writing process, including the construction of their writing assignments (Ede and Lunsford 133). Admittedly, my definition of collaboration is somewhat broad compared to Ede and Lunsford's more detailed accounts of the modes of collaboration. However, for purposes of this survey, this operant definition does provide an encompassing concept of the ways instructors are using collaboration in their writing classes.

The foundational question that I designed to elicit responses on collaboration is, "Do you involve your students in some form of interactive collaboration in completing their composition assignments?" Respondents could rate their answers with the following criteria: "Always," "Often," "Sometimes," "Infrequently," or "Never." Figure 28 below illustrates these respondents' answers.

Respondents' Ratings of Their Indicated Levels of Involving Students in Collaboration					
	Responses	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Rarely Involve Students	10	23.3	26.3	26.3
	Often Involve Students	13	34.2	34.2	60.5
	Always Involve Students	15	39.5	39.5	100.0
	Total	38	88.4	100.0	
Missing	System	5	11.6		
Total		43	100.0		

Fig. 28. Respondents' ratings of their indicated levels of involving students in collaboration.

In Question 2 of the survey's Section II on collaborative practices, respondents are asked to use the criteria of "Always," "Often," "Sometimes," "Infrequently," or "Never" to rate their frequency of applying collaborative strategies to facilitate various *phases of the writing process.* In Figure 29 below, the respondents' ratings reveal their frequency levels of applying collaboration in teaching the writing process.

Respondents' Ratings of their Usage of Collaboration in the Phases of the Writing Process					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Prewriting	38	1.00	5.00	3.5789	1.13021
Student composing/drafting	37	1.00	5.00	3.6757	1.10690
Researching	38	2.00	5.00	3.4737	.82975
Peer critiquing	37	1.00	5.00	4.6216	.86124
Revising/Editing	38	1.00	5.00	4.1316	1.06976
Proofreading	37	1.00	5.00	3.6486	1.22964
Valid N (listwise)	37				

Fig. 29. Respondents' ratings of their usage of collaboration in the phases of the writing process.

The average rating of using collaboration during the prewriting/invention phase of the writing process is 3.58 (SD = 1.13), a response that indicates that respondents *sometimes to often* use collaboration during prewriting. Likewise, the average rating during student composing and drafting is 3.68 (SD = 1.11), indicating that respondents *sometimes to often* use student collaboration student during composing and drafting. Similarly, the average rating of using collaboration during the research phase is 3.47 (SD = .83), indicating that participants also *sometimes to often* employ collaboration during this phase. The average usage of peer critiquing is 4.62 (SD = .86), indicating that the

surveyed instructors *often to frequently* apply collaboration during peer critiques. Similar to peer critiquing, the rating for using collaboration during revising and editing is 4.13 (SD 1.07), a response that reveals that participants *often use* collaboration during this phase of the writing process. Finally, the average usage of proofreading is 3.64 (SD 1.23), indicating that participants *sometimes to often* employ collaboration during this phase.

These responses to Question 2 signify the importance the respondents attribute to collaboration. The respondents' emphasis on collaboration during the research phase reveals their views that collaboration can be useful during the research phase—often considered to be a solitary activity during the writing process. The standard deviation scores for all rated category topics trend high, but because of the diverse nature of the questions, such trends away from the mean do not necessarily mean there are negative issues involving the respondents' views toward the rated categories.

In rating a series of questions regarding the importance of using collaboration to foster the teaching of the rhetorical canons in the writing process, the respondents rated their responses using the criteria of "Very Important," "Important," "Neutral," "Not Important," and "No Opinion." Their responses are categorized in Figure 30 below

Respondents' Ratings of the Importance of Using Collaboration to Facilitate the Instruction of the Rhetorical Canons					
Response Categories	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Importance of Invention	32	1.00	5.00	3.2813	0.68318
Importance of Arrangement	32	1.00	5.00	2.9063	0.81752
Importance of Style	32	1.00	5.00	2.8750	0.87067
Importance of Memory	32	1.00	5.00	2.5625	0.75935
Importance of Delivery	32	1.00	5.00	3.2813	0.68318
Valid	32				

Fig. 30. Respondents' ratings of the importance of using collaboration to facilitate the instruction of the rhetorical canons.

As shown in Figure 30 above, the average importance rating of invention is 3.28 (*SD* = .68), demonstrating that the respondents believe that collaboration is *important* to prewriting and discovering ideas. The average importance rating for the canon of arrangement is 2.90 (*SD* = .82), signifying that the respondents perceive that collaborative writing is *somewhat important* in its application to this rhetorical canon. Following, the table shows that the average importance rating for style is 2.87 (*SD* = .87), indicating that the respondents feel that collaboration is *somewhat important* as a strategy for instructing style. Similarly, the average importance rating of memory is 2.56 (*SD* = .76), indicating that the survey respondents believe that collaborative activity is *somewhat important* as an instructional strategy for this canon. Lastly, the average

importance rating of delivery is also 3.28 (*SD* = .68), indicating that respondents believe

using collaboration in teaching delivery is *important.*

The relatively low standard deviation scores associated with the ratings of the

importance of invention and the importance delivery help support the conclusion that

collaboration positively facilitates these two areas—a survey finding that instructors

might want to emphasize in their pedagogies.

The findings regarding the use of collaboration to facilitate the instruction of the

rhetorical canons all emphasize the respondents' perceptions of the *importance* that

collaboration assumes as a teaching strategy. My initial assumption was that

collaboration would be rated at least important (higher than shown in Figure 27) in

facilitating students' prewriting activities. It is noteworthy that the respondents also rated

collaboration as important in facilitating the canon of delivery. Arguably, as

collaboration increases in the first-year writing classroom, its impact may be increasingly

recognized through the ways that students collaborate in employing various digital media

to deliver their written assignments. While writing this survey question, my

preconceived notion was that collaborative activities, such as those in which students

undertake during the peer review process of their writing assignments, would receive a

higher rating of importance than shown in Figure 27.

Assessing Collaborative Writing Pedagogies

Question 6 of the survey, dealing with collaborative writing practices, solicits the

respondents to rate their views using the rating categories shown in Figure 30.

Respondents' Agreement Ratings Regarding Collaborative Practices in the First-Year Writing Program			
Rating Categories	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Composition instructors are adequately trained to teach collaborative writing approaches in their composition classes.	2.6364	.65795	22
Most composition/writing instructors favor more *non-collaborative* approaches to teach writing.	2.7273	.88273	22
Collaborative writing approaches improve students' writing skills better than other approaches used in teaching composition.	2.8636	.63960	22
Composition instructors possess the teaching skills necessary to facilitate effective collaborative writing practices in the classroom.	2.7727	.75162	22
First-year college writers are able to benefit from collaborative writing approaches used in face-to-face (FTF) and online environments.	3.2727	.63109	22
The approaches and ways students are taught composition in high school facilitate their adoption of collaborative writing approaches in their college composition classes.	2.3182	.89370	22

Fig. 31. Respondents' agreement ratings regarding collaborative practices in the first-year writing program.

As shown in Figure 31 above, the respondents' average agreement rating for the adequacy of collaborative training of composition instructors is 2.64 (SD = .66), indicating that participants neither *agree nor disagree* that composition instructors are adequately trained to teach collaborative writing approaches in their composition classes

The average agreement rating for favoring non-collaborative approaches is 2.73 (SD =.88), indicating that respondents *somewhat agree* that most composition and writing instructors favor more *non-collaborative* approaches when teaching their writing classes.

Furthermore, the average agreement rating for improvement of student writing is 2.86 (SD = .64), indicating that participants *somewhat agree* that collaborative writing

263

approaches improve their students' writing skills better than other pedagogical approaches used in teaching composition. Similarly, the average agreement rating for instructors possessing the necessary skills to teach collaboratively is 2.77 (*SD* = .75), indicating that participants *somewhat agree* that composition instructors possess the teaching skills necessary to facilitate effective collaborative writing practices in their classes. The average agreement rating for the benefits to first-year college writers is 3.27 (*SD* = .63), indicating that respondents *agree* that these writers are able to benefit from collaborative writing approaches used in face-to-face and online environments. The relatively low standard deviation score for this rated area reinforces the positive aspects of this response among instructors and signals there is effective polarity among respondents regarding their answers to this rating category. Finally, the agreement rating for the methods for teaching composition to high school students is 2.31 (*SD* = .89), indicating that respondents *somewhat disagree* that the approaches and ways students are taught composition in high school facilitate their adoption of collaborative writing approaches in college composition classes.

The responses to the questions illustrated in Figure 31 reveal that instructors' training in collaboration and their application of it in the first-year writing classes could be improved. There is a basic irony noticeable in the respondents' answers. On the one hand, the respondents *agreed* that the use of collaborative activities improve their students' writing in traditional face-to-face classroom and in online environments. On the other hand, the respondents *somewhat agreed* that most composition instructors prefer *non-collaborative* approaches. The crux of the irony may be found in the respondents'

"lukewarm" perceptions regarding the adequacy of their training in collaborative activities. I argue that this question surfaces a latent ambiguity regarding the respondents' belief in the positive aspects of collaborative instruction being somewhat compromised by their feelings of being under-trained in collaborative strategies that they might apply in their own classes. The respondents' ratings, which disclose they believe first-year writing students are not adequately prepared during high school to effectively engage in collaboration in the first-year writing course, empirically validate the anecdotal comments of many first-year writing instructors who express similar opinions.

In Section II of the faculty online survey, instructors are enabled to provide *short-responses* to a series of questions (Appendix L). Following are representative comments that I copied directly from the survey. In the case where some comments were similar, I eliminated any redundancy:

1. *Instructor's response to Question 2 in Section II (need to change instructional approaches)*: ". . . using more technologies in student assignments—asking students to construct visuals and fliers/pamphlets rather than just essays, as well as asking students to draft blogs and other digital texts using more draft-respond-revise methods to encourage a stronger sense of the writing process, particularly using electronic drafting and commenting programs.

2. *Instructor's response to Question 3 in Section II (what instructional approaches would make you a better instructor):* "I just need more time to work out what will or won't work in the classroom. That's hard in the age of accountability where we have our course completers and successful completers

265

tracked each semester and held over our heads. Innovation is not supported in that environment—it's too risky."

3. *Instructor's response to Question 1 in Section II (those departmental curriculum changes would improve the quality of instruction)*: "Sessions about effective collaborative assignments (every time I try, many students do not participate, show up, or review their classmates' drafts—I do not know what else to try)

4. *Instructor's response to Question 4 in Section II (CMI/digital media training needs)*: "At the beginning of the school year we have one or two hours of [B]lackboard training. I am largely self-trained, as the software has changed a few times in the time I have been teaching. Most of the training I've received from others involves asking other instructors how they use the software. In the one or two hours of training, we are taught in large groups. I've never received a group training of any software that was effective, so I think the self-training/peer-training was probably more effective anyway. There is an IT phone number we can call for technical support with blackboard, but I never used it, so I can't comment on its effectiveness.

5. *Instructor's response to Question 1 in Section II:* "I have seen enormous emphasis on using technology in the classroom, but to be honest, I use technology only because it is convenient. Pulling up worksheets on screen is more convenient than passing out handouts or drawing on overhead slides, which I have to remember to tote with me to class. I do not believe the technology allows us to

achieve much that was impossible to achieve before its advent. I think some

instructors emphasize technology to market themselves as innovative, creative

teachers. Many also employ technology to make writing more appealing. I think

such an approach neglects the true needs of our students: students long, I posit, to

express themselves and to hear their own words sing. Students want to be

respected for what they know and have discovered . . . "

Interpretative Analyses of Students' Online Survey Findings

Instructors who consented to participate in the faculty online surveys could also

enable their first-year writing students to participate anonymously in the online student

survey (Appendix N) by emailing the online survey link to them. These participating

instructors could opt to participate in the survey and also decide not to have their own

students participate in the survey. While this option could mitigate student survey

participation rates, it is considered essential to support the IRB's requirement for

voluntary survey participation. While there is no way to verify how many actual students

received the e-mail link to this online survey, the online survey response feature

documents that 38 students opened the survey instrument. However, the survey's results

indicate that only 22 students completed at least 80% of the survey, a requirement

necessary to assure its validity for statistical sampling purposes. The student online

survey entails two sections: Section I provides seven multiple rating questions pertaining

to digital learning resources and collaborative pedagogies used in the writing classroom.

The second section of the student survey consists of five short response questions

covering teaching methods in the first-year writing class.

The key multiple rating question regarding digital technology use by students poses the following query: "Do you believe the growing application of computer technologies and CMI in your composition classes are factors that make them important to you in developing effective writing/composition skills?" As noted in the frequency of the students' responses illustrated in Figure 32 below, nearly 24% of the respondents express indifference or *no importance* to the use of CMI in developing their writing skills. Four of the student respondents are *neutral* regarding CMI's use as a writing resource. Only 15% of the respondents believe CMI is *important* in developing their writing skills.

Students' Rating of the Importance of CMI in Developing their Writing Skills (*N*=17)					
	Rating Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Important	8	23.53	47.06	47.06
	Neutral	4	11.76	23.53	70.59
	Not Important	5	14.71	29.41	100.00
	Total	17	50.00	100.00	
Missing	System	17	50.00		
Total		34	100.00		

Fig. 32. Students' rating of the importance of CMI in developing their writing skills (*N*=17).

To fully appreciate the implications of the students' answers shown in Figure 29, I contend we must consider several interrelated aspects. One might argue that the tendency of the current generation to use technology, starting as early as the primary grades, would call into question the low rating given by students to this question.

268

First, I believe we need to foreground a caveat that emphasizes the sampling size is small. Second, the current generation's prolific use of portable digital devices does not translate to an overwhelming positive use of CMI in the writing classroom. We should consider that most of the first-year writing students have recently graduated from high school. While digital resources and computers are used in high school English classes—and students undoubtedly use their own computers to write compositions in high school— students do not necessarily equate these technological resources with the writing process. Third, respondents to this question may not have yet acquired a full appreciation of how CMI supports the writing process. Lastly, some students' nominal word-processing software skills may undermine their writing skills and impair their attitudes. Based on the findings shown in Figure 33 below, we can better appreciate how the students in this sample use their computers.

Students' Frequency Ratings of Specified Uses of Their Computers (N=19)					
Specified Usage Categories	Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Infrequently	Never
Emailing	15	3	0	0	1
Composing/Revising Essays	1	10	6	1	1
Other	7	1	1	0	5
Writing Reports and Text-based Assignments	5	9	4	0	1
Writing Class Notes	4	7	0	6	2

Fig. 33. Students' frequency ratings of specified uses of their computers (N=19).

Note: "Other" category includes the respondents' mentioning research, texting, blogging, Instant Messaging, Facebook, gaming, networking, and "surfing" the Internet. Four of the students chose not to respond to the "Other" category.

The key findings to this survey question are found in the two categories where students are either composing/revising their essays or they are writing reports and text-based assignments. Of the 19 responses to using the computer to write and revise their essays, 11 students indicated frequent use. The next level of usage shows there are six students using their computers several times a month to write their essays. As the primary investigator, I assume there are several probable conditions that affect the accuracy of responses to this particular question, such as incorrect ratings made by the respondents due to inattentiveness or misunderstanding regarding the questions, as well as the small sampling size of students responding to the question. Hypothetically, these findings may also point out that first-year writing students are embracing digital technologies that are more oriented to personal communications (e-mailing) and social

networking than CMI and software applications oriented to academic writing. As these first-year writing students, many of whom are college freshmen, progress through their academic coursework, their usage of CMI and software applications for writing tasks may rise due to the increased frequency of writing assignments in their upper division classes. While digital technologies impart considerable creative and innovative ways to teach and learn in the first-year writing class, our students' use of writing software applications (such as Microsoft Word™) must continue to be a skill set that is emphasized in all first-year writing programs.

An important requirement of this study is to assess how students perceive the helpfulness of CMI and related courseware to the *phases of the writing process*. This question was designed as a correlative question to the several questions pertaining to CMI posed to first-year writing instructors in the online faculty survey. While the findings shown in Figure 16 of this study reveals that 58% of first-year writing instructors use CMI/courseware in every class to teach, the following question is designed to assess students' perceptions of the helpfulness of CMI to the actual learning process. Students' answers to the question's prompt—"Respond to the following series of questions regarding how *helpful* you believe CMI and writing courseware are during each phase of the writing process described below"—are illustrated in the following Figure 34.

Students' Ratings of the Helpfulness of CMI/Courseware Used in the Phases of the Writing Process (*N*=17)					
Writing Process Phases	**Very Helpful**	**Helpful**	**Neutral**	**Not Helpful**	**No Opinion**
Prewriting	8	3	1	4	1
Composing/Drafting	6	8	1	1	1
Revising/Editing	12	3	0	0	2
Proofreading	9	4	1	1	2
Peer Collaboration	11	3	0	1	2

Fig. 34. Students' ratings of the helpfulness of CMI/Courseware used in the phases of the writing process (*N* 17).

The responses displayed in Figure 34 disclose that 12 ratings (71%) consider CMI *very helpful* in the revising and editing phase, followed by six ratings (35%) that indicate CMI is *very helpful* in composing essays, eight ratings (47%) demonstrate CMI is *helpful* during the composing phase, eight ratings (47%) note that CMI is *very helpful* in the proofreading phase, and 11 ratings (65%) demonstrate CMI is considered *very helpful* during peer collaborative activities. I do not consider that any of the findings to the survey question shown in Figure 34 would appear skewed toward the use of CMI either in a positive or negative direction regarding the phases of the writing process. My review of the literature for this study indicates that no studies on the effects of CMI/courseware on the phases *per se* of the writing process are currently published. For this reason, I cannot correlate these findings with any comparable scholarly findings to determine a more encompassing perspective. However, Kathleen Yancey's continuing research in

272

composition studies does provide a theoretical grounding regarding how the impact of digital media is "remediating" the rhetorical canons (Yancey 199-208).

Assessing Students' Views on Collaboration in the Writing Process

Survey respondents were requested to rate their levels of agreement or disagreement with six topical statements related to collaboration. The levels of agreement to disagreement (including "No Opinion") were numerically rated and are illustrated in Figure 35 below.

Students' Ratings of the Helpfulness of *Collaboration* Used in the Phases of the Writing Process (*N*=16)

Writing Process Phases	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1. Collaborative writing is very helpful in *all* phases of the writing process	5	5	3	2	1	0
2. Collaborative writing is helpful in several, but not all phases	2	5	5	2	2	0
3. Collaborative writing is helpful only in prewriting/invention	2	1	5	5	2	1
4. Collaborative writing is helpful only in revising/editing	3	1	3	8	1	0
5. Collaborative writing is helpful only in proofreading	2	1	4	8	1	0
6. Collaborative writing is helpful only in peer critiquing	3	2	4	5	2	0

Fig. 35. Students' ratings of the helpfulness of *collaboration* used in the phases of the writing process (*N*=16).

This question is designed to correspond with a similar question in the faculty survey, illustrated in Figure 31, in order to effectively correlate answers between students and faculty respondents. The design of the question involves asking students to respond to two general prompts, followed by prompts requesting their levels of agreement or

disagreement on the helpfulness of collaboration used in the specific phases of the writing process. Figure 35 above reveals that 10 responses (62.5%) indicate students *agree* to *strongly agree (50-50 split)* that collaboration is helpful in all phases of the writing process. Seven of the students' responses (44%) reveal that students agree to strongly agree that collaboration is helpful in several, but not all phases of the writing process. The remaining four prompts required students to rate their agreement to disagreement levels (including "No Opinion") to prompts stating that collaboration was helpful in only a specified phase of the writing process. If we compare the students' responses in these four specific prompts to the first two more generalized prompts concerning the overall writing process, we can see that there are corresponding correlations. Pragmatically, higher level agreement ratings for the six categories shown should also show a corresponding lower number of disagreement to strong disagreement ratings for the same rated categories in order for the responses to be considered convincing. The "Neutral" ratings shown in Figure 32 suggest that students possess no strong inclinations either toward or away from the helpfulness of collaboration for its usage in a specific category. I consider these ratings valid in this type of survey since the "Neutral" rating category does not unduly "force" students to agree or disagree on the helpfulness of certain prompts. The "Neutral" rating option is valid in a multiple rating question survey since it can accurately be applied to those respondents who may not have significant exposure to collaboration, at the time of the survey, in their first-year writing classes.

The responses regarding collaboration, illustrated in Figure 35, indicate overall that students are undergoing some type of collaborative activity in their writing classes. This assertion is supported by the almost unanimous lack of responses in the "No Opinion" category. Substantial ratings in the "No Opinion" category would suggest that students are not experiencing sufficient levels of collaborative enterprise in their classes to substantiate their responses in the range of agreement to disagreement. The number of predominant positive responses *affirming the helpfulness* of using collaboration in this student survey suggests that collaboration is an activity that enables students to learn from one another, much in the way that stronger or more competent writers will "model" successful writing practices for less competent student writers (Webb et al. 607).

In Section II of the *online student survey*, students are enabled to respond to *short response* questions. In response to the question, "What aspects of collaborative writing (enabling you to interact with others at each phase of the writing process) do you like the best?", the following answers were provided and can be found in Appendix P:

1. "[P]eer reviews. It was nice to send out our papers and have them read by the class so we could have better advice on what to do for the paper."

2. "The best was the suggestions for revision (at the revising stage/process). Also good was pre-writing collaboration; when all we had was basically an idea. I think we were able to help point each other in the [right] direction. I think outline review would have also helped, had we done it more."

3. "Most helpful is any opportunity to read what others are writing. This helps me to fit in, to know whether I am ahead or behind the curve, in a topic that is

misunderstood, etc. Feedback is the most important part of any collaborative program. Feedback can be from the computer programming or another individual."

4. "I like the fact that you can bounce ideas off of one another in collaborative writing."

5. "My peers think differently than I do, thus enabling me to share ideas with them. Mistakes that I am unable to find in my writing could be seen by my peers. Collaborat[ion] broadens the writing abilities of myself and my peers, and it provides a comfortable setting amongst friends."

6. "I like that we peer review and have different parts to build up to a complete product."

7. "Getting a different perspective from my peers, finding things I've overlooked."

8. "I could learn about the writing form[a]t."

The eight short responses documented above represent all the responses from the 16 students who responded to the multiple rating questions regarding the use of collaboration in the writing processes, as indicated above in Figure 35. These positive statements complement the instructors' responses toward using collaboration. Figure 28 reveals that nearly 74% (*N*=28) of the instructors rated they *often to always* involve their students in collaboration in their classes. This is a very strong validation by the survey's respondents of the significance they ascribe to collaboration as a pedagogical strategy and a learning resource.

Summary and Conclusions: What the Online Surveys Reveal

The 43 valid instructor respondents and the 22 valid student respondents statistically yield a microcosm of these key audiences' views on the writing process, teaching with digital media, and using collaborative strategies in the first-year writing class. These three areas are clearly those that are *primary* in a growing national focus on first-year writing pedagogy. Both surveys base their survey questions on the three key areas that the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) consider essential to contemporary first-year writing: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading, and writing; and, the processes of writing that include collaboration and digital technologies ("NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing."; "Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing").

As valid statistical samples, the survey findings reveal several significant trends and implications regarding the pedagogy of first-year writing. First, instructors strongly validate the use of CMI in FTF classroom environments. 81% of the surveyed instructors indicate they are consistently using CMI/composition to teach writing. Reinforcing these findings are the responses shown in Figure 27, wherein instructors' responses indicate a very positive agreement level of 4.11 toward using CMI in all of their first-year writing courses.

The problematic areas of the faculty surveys responses concern the respondents' *perceptions of the training support* provided by their academic departments. The faculty responses to the category topic, "Respondents' Ratings of Their Perceptions of Their Academic Department's Training Provided to Instructors Using CMI Courseware," also

reveal some relatively high standard deviation scores. These high standard deviation scores suggest that there is at least some perceived polarization regarding the levels of support regarding their department's leadership regarding instructor training. A writing program director assessing the survey's findings in this rating area, *should be concerned about their instructors' perceptions and needs regarding training.* As shown in Figure 26, a writing program director or department chair should be concerned about the instructors' responses to the rating category, "I am self-trained in CMI." The mean rating of 3.86, correlated with the high standard deviation score of 1.24, reveals that a high number of instructors believe they are self-trained in CMI (which is not a positive situation). The standard deviation score implies they are strongly polarized on this issue. WPDs should consider annually surveying their first-year writing instructors to assess any issues or problems that may need attention in order that such issues not compromise the quality of instructions.

The prevalence of digital technology, particularly word-processing software and learning management courseware, such as MS Word™ and Blackboard, respectively, continue to be the key technological elements influencing CMI use in writing pedagogy. The instructors' responses to the multiple rating options of Question 5 (refer to the findings shown in Figures 21-23) strongly endorse the use of Blackboard as the learning management system or courseware of choice. Concomitantly, secondary school administrators and teachers play vital roles in driving the use of technology to teach writing in both secondary and post-secondary settings, according to a recent report by the National Writing Project (NWP) and the College Board ("Writing, Learning, and Leading

in the Digital Age"). As the respondents' survey answers validate, technology is becoming an intrinsic part of the pedagogical environment. Composition studies scholars, such as Kathleen Yancey, Cynthia Selfe, Gail Hawisher, John Barber, and Dene Grigar, assert that the presence of digital media in writing pedagogy is becoming so widespread that its innovations will remediate how first-year composition is conceived and instructed in the near future (Yancey 198-208; Grigar 214-17). Consider these several significant questions that Yancey and Grigar surface in their research. Is first-year composition to be considered just exclusively text? Will composition evolve to connote both text and digital images? Will digital technologies transform the rhetorical canon of delivery so that it encompasses a variety of digital media, which in turn, will directly impact the writing process? The implications of the evolving answers to these questions will affect the pedagogy of first-year writing in ways that composition instructors and scholars are only now beginning to realize.

While the survey's findings noted above reveal the respondents' predominant orientations to use CMI in first-year writing pedagogy, I would argue that the key to CMI's long-term usage is found not so much in its widespread availability, rather in how and what ways first-year writing *instructors perceive its usefulness in teaching the rhetorical canons and the writing process*. As noted in both the CWPA and the NCTE's published manifestos, as cited above, first-year writing instruction should be instructed from a rhetorical perspective, as well as with a recursive process that also facilitates collaborative interaction with peers. The online survey findings, as noted in Figure 16, reveal the surveyed instructors' overall positive orientations toward using CMI to teach

280

the canons of rhetoric. This finding is noteworthy since teaching the canons of rhetoric

focuses writing pedagogy on teaching writing fundamentals. *Triangulating*[32] these

findings are the students' survey responses shown in Figure 33 that correlate positive

responses for using CMI to support their application in the writing process (O'Donoghue

and Punch 78). The survey's findings displayed in Figures 27-29 clearly show that

instructors embrace not only the use of CMI technologies, but also validate the

importance of such technologies to teach writing and foster collaboration during the

writing process. These findings acquire greater legitimacy when they are triangulated

with the students' survey findings in Figure 35 that convey the students' positive

perceptions toward the helpfulness of collaboration in developing their knowledge and

skills pertaining to the writing process.

Using collaboration in the first-year writing class is a pedagogical strategy that is

increasingly emphasized for its growing impetus in creating learning modalities where

students share their abilities to foster enhanced writing skills. What is pertinent to note in

this chapter's conclusion is *the growing importance of the interdependent relationship or*

synergy between technology and collaborative pedagogy. Scholarship continues to

generate ongoing findings where technology creates supportive bridges for students to

connect and actively learn from one another in applying their writing skills. Often, these

---

[32] The term *triangulation* in research studies means that multiple perspectives are obtained when
researching the same subject under study. Triangulation provides additional sources of valuable insight
that cannot be acquired from only directly sampling the responses of one source on a subject.
Triangulation minimizes the inadequacies of single-source research by using additional audiences or
sources to complement and verify one another (O'Donoghue and Punch 78). Triangulation reduces bias and
helps minimize overstating or generalizing the conclusions of a research study. Corroborating similar
findings from the instructors' surveys with those of the student surveys, and with specific findings in the
qualitative research, are prime examples of triangulation.

socio-collaborative activities involve students working with their peers on writing assignments that tap into their culturally-rooted ideologies. The basic theoretical precept functioning here is that students are disposed to write effectively on topics that they can appreciate more fully through their own experiences and ways of viewing the world. These collaborative theories privilege the notion that activities that empower students to better relate their critical thinking processes to certain topics provide students with a greater measure of *agency*—the ability to do something. According to this theoretical premise, students develop more fluency and improve their writing skills because they can engage the topic in more relevant and immediate ways. Functioning in this theoretical construct is also the idea that students who become more engaged and develop greater agency also become more active learners, thinkers, and writers. Active learning, as part of a collaborative setting, involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully collaborate on the full spectrum of ideas, issues, and requirements of the writing process. (Meyers and Jones 6).

The student survey's findings reveal that students perceive they acquire *enhanced agency* as it relates to the writing process through their use of digital courseware and collaboration. The responses categorized in Figure 32 reveal the positive ratings students attribute to CMI in helping them learn the phases of the writing process. Likewise, the students' overall ratings in Figure 35 provide overall positive indications for the role that collaboration assumes in helping them implement the writing process. Considered together, these two categorized ratings specifically validate how and in what ways these students believe they are empowered or acquire agency in their writing classes. This

282

finding also reinforces the instructors' positive responses, revealed in Figure 30, toward using collaboration in first-year writing pedagogy. Additionally, Figure 31 shows that instructors believe first-year college writers are able to benefit from collaborative writing approaches used in face-to-face (FTF) and online environments, verified through the highest average rating of 3.27 among the multiple rating options provided. This rating is closely followed by the second highest rating of 2.86 wherein first-year writing instructors rated they believe *collaborative writing approaches improve students' writing skills better than other approaches used in teaching composition.*

The categorized responses in Figures 30, 34, and 35 clearly disclose that instructors and students alike strongly affirm the use of collaboration in teaching the writing process and the canons of rhetoric. These findings are supported by the findings in Figure 30 that indicate the surveyed first-year writing instructors believe they possess the teaching skills necessary to facilitate effective collaborative writing practices (2.78 average rating), and they are adequately trained to do so (2.63 average rating). The survey used in this study demonstrates the importance of using CMI/courseware and collaborative pedagogies in the first-year writing class to provide students with *an enhanced agency to learn and apply their writing skills.*

In Section II of the online student survey, students' short response comments strongly validate collaborative practices in their writing (Appendix P). The responses from instructors and students dealing with questions about collaboration support the argument that collaboration is acquiring a strong presence in first-writing pedagogy as it provides enhanced agency for students in the writing process. As one student noted: "My

283

peers think differently than I do, thus enabling me to share ideas with them. Mistakes that I am unable to find in my writing could be seen by my peers. Collaborat[ion] broadens the writing abilities of myself and my peers, and it provides a comfortable setting amongst friends" (Appendix P). Based on this response, it would not be over-reaching to argue that collaboration is expanding beyond its once limited purview of peer reviews that student performed during the proofreading phase of writing. The social activity of constructing knowledge, currently prevalent in the project-based teams of many professions, is growing in its adoption in the first-year writing program (Bruffee 3-20). Decidedly, collaborative instruction in the composition class requires some reorientation on the part of instructors that involves changing from an instructor-authoritarian paradigm of teaching to that of active student-based learning.

The findings in both surveys, as noted in the previous analyses of collaborative questions rated by instructors and students, *strongly affirm collaboration is viewed as a major teaching and learning strategy in first-year writing.*

284

CHAPTER VI

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BECKONS: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

Summary and Conclusions: Ongoing Change is "the Constant" in Composition Studies

The rhetorical schema of Aristotle and Quintilian provide important insights for

contemporary scholars and composition instructors into the early aspects of the writing

process and its instruction. Quintilian argues in his *Institutes of Oratory* for students to

do more than just "complete stages" based on the rhetorical canons as part of their

progymnasmata exercises (X.5.1). Students were also required to read their texts aloud to

the class   similar to the peer group activity in which students now engage in first-year

writing. Revision and peer critiquing were two key components highlighted in a "writing

process" that Quintilian's believed were requirements for successful written discourse.

While Quintilian's discursive (writing) pedagogy inherent in the progymnasmata follows

a linear end-stage product approach, his emphasis in the *Institutes of Oratory* on revising

or "vying" (contending) with the original text fundamentally facilitates a recursive

writing process. I found this seeming "dichotomy" both revealing and ironic, since it

appears to be overlooked or ignored completely by those leading nineteenth-century

American scholars who advocated that end-stage product pedagogy was validated by

classical rhetorical theory.

In this regard, my research uncovers a fundamental irony: the schema of classical rhetoric upon which key scholars in the late 1800s based the instruction of college composition in America was clearly "rhetorical in name only."

My examination of Harvard Professor Adams Sherman Hill's 1892 text, *The Foundations of Rhetoric*, reveals his text is clearly *not* sufficiently founded on the principles of rhetoric, but on the prescriptive rules and style-based theories developed by the popular British writers, Bain and Spencer, during the so-called "British Enlightenment" period. These popular rules-centered composition pedagogies emphasized style and grammatical correctness and required students to "follow the rules" and emulate model essays printed in handbooks as they composed. This pedagogical approach required students to essentially be their own instructors, since they were required to fathom an extensive list of usage rules and then apply them correctly in their writing.

Composition studies scholars Kitzhaber, Connors, and Berlin note in their respective studies tracing the history of composition pedagogy in American colleges that little or no attention was paid by college composition instructors to the intrinsic precepts of rhetoric due to the prevailing pedagogical norms of that period. Instead of emphasizing a rhetorical approach centered on Aristotle's persuasive proofs or considerations of *kairos* and audience, composition instructors taught the primacy of the explication of "canonical" texts (major literary works). The pedagogy of that period could be characterized as instructor-centered with no little or no provisions for peer collaboration. First-year college writing students composed with a singular focus in

mind— make their compositions stylistically and grammatically follow the models they studied in their handbooks. This focus constituted what was the writing process of that era in American academe.

The "Winds of Change" Bring New Change to Composition Pedagogy

The rules-based pedagogy that focused on the end-stage product model of writing was instructed through the late 1800s, with only slight modifications, into the middle of the twentieth century. Maxine Hairston's metaphor used to describe the change from the product to the process model—the "winds of change"—aptly describes how scholarship generated the winds that re-oriented the way scholars view the writing process (Hairston 76-88). Starting in the 1960s, one could draw an unbroken line that linked Shaugnessy and Emig's studies of what students do when they *actually compose* to Flower and Hays' *groundbreaking studies of the cognitive processes involved in writing as reflective of how the mind works in thinking and creating* (Shaugnessy; Emig). Particularly, Flower and Hays' studies in the 1970s helped dispel the enduring notion that the writing process should be a series of linearly sequenced stages (prewriting, composing, revising/editing proofreading) that writers must complete in a progressive order so that they could produce a finished composition. This continuing line of investigation about the cognitive processes writers undergo in composing served to change the theoretical views about the writing process from an end-product paradigm to a process paradigm. In the new writing-as-process model, the prior "stages" of the end-product model became recursive

287

(cyclical and repeatable) "phases" in which the writer could engage at any point and with whatever desired frequency during the composing process.

In the 1980s, Hairston used Kuhn's hypothesis of paradigm shifts to describe how the writing-as-process model had evolved (76-88). In 1980, Sommers and Perl threw down the gauntlet and openly challenged the continued legitimacy of the linear end-stage model of writing. In "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," Sommers applies analytical studies to validate that experienced writers continually "invent" new ideas as they revise (378-88). This writing-as-process model conceptually mirrors the free-flowing ways writers engage in the cognitive act of putting words on a screen at their workstations. This "turn" from the end-stage product model to a writing-as-process model represents a major milestone in American scholarship and epistemology. Yet, its impact was of such consequence that it fostered growing respect within academe for the emerging field of composition studies.

Scholarship Links Composing to Cognitive Recursion and Revives Writing's Rhetorical Roots

In the composition classroom of the future, the writing-as-process model will continue to be the pedagogical model that can optimally accommodate the instruction of first-year college writing. Despite some post-process critics' viewpoints to the contrary, the writing-as-process model has not outlived its usefulness. I contend that it can accommodate the directions and changes made upon it in the last 50 years, as well as into the foreseeable future. How? A key reason that supports its longevity in the composition

classroom is because its main theoretical construct—*recursion*—approximates the cognitive and creative workings of the mind.

As part of the growing trend of scholarly focus on the composing actions found in the writing process, the line of inquiry can also be drawn through the 1970s to James Kinneavy's scholarship that carefully reconnects composition to its rhetorical roots. He explored and validated writing's rhetorical roots; they served to help re-establish the writing process on a provable rhetorical foundation. Kinneavy's scholarship served to light the way for other scholars to re-examine the rhetorical roots of writing that were overlooked in the prior 100 years of American composition instruction.

The Turn toward Social Learning and Collaboration

At the same time that scholars, such as Kinneavy, examined rhetorical principles inherent to composition, Kenneth Bruffee explored how collaborative peer interaction could facilitate learning and help students develop their writing skills. Throughout his writings, Bruffee argues for collaborative learning and a pedagogical model of composition that is *based on students working in small groups* who can converse effectively about their writing assignments as a community of writers. His works written during the 1970s argue for social learning or constructivism as pedagogies to enhance the teaching of the writing process model. Bruffee's scholarship sparked a series of successive studies by scholars that explored how collaboration could correctly facilitate all phases of a writing-as-process pedagogy. Several of these key studies reflect an analytical orientation to test the actual application of collaborative theory——how and in

what ways collaboration be applied in the writing classroom to improve students' writing skills.

Recommendation: Survey First-Year Writers in Each Class to Assess Collaborative Pedagogy Effectiveness

Critiques of collaborative learning in the college writing classroom during the last two decades surface important issues about the implications of collaborative theory as it is instructed or practiced (praxis). The critiques of the aforementioned writers contributed to this growing trend beginning in the 1970s regarding their *critical focus on praxis*. Their key research question is "how and in what manner does collaborative theory foster or inhibit writing pedagogy in the writing process?" Examinations of collaborative theory within the last 20 years probe more deeply into the pedagogical application of collaborative theory, rather than addressing or augmenting the theoretical notions of collaboration. These investigative inquiries into the practice of writing (what students are doing when they write) signals a rigorous scholarly attitude toward validating how collaborative theory is applied in the first-year writing class. Specifically, Newkirk, Grimm, Holt and Bizzell's studies assessed the *praxis of collaboration*. Each scholar *carefully observes* those aspects of collaborative learning that generate real or practical issues in composition classes and then proposes *workable and testable pedagogical solutions*.

Recommendation: Implement More Analytical Studies of Collaborative Pedagogy

The continuing scholarly interest in collaborative theories initiated a far-reaching transformation of the traditional teacher-centered writing class *toward a more student-*

290

centered class. Increasingly, composition classes are being organized around small peer groups (usually comprised of no more than four students) in which students function as supportive audiences for each other in a learning environment facilitated by an instructor using a workshop approach.

The study's research surfaces a continuing need for instructors and first-year writing program directors to *use systematic inquiry* to better assess collaborative pedagogies by proposing a series of evaluative pre-and post student writing assessments, such as in-class student surveys, to validate the effectiveness of their pedagogies. As this evaluative process continues, I believe that instructors and students will begin to reap its benefits. These ongoing assessments will serve a very important function. They will provide validated findings that enable instructors and first-year writing program directors to make the necessary modifications that improve collaborative pedagogies in the first-year writing class. The continuing credibility of composition studies in the college curriculum may well hinge on how its adherents and practitioners assess and validate theoretical approaches, such as collaboration, in the writing classroom. The findings in this study prompt me to emphasize that ongoing assessments of first-year writing should encompass systematic inquiry of composition pedagogies that are characterized as analytical and replicable in its design so the data can be compared and challenged by similar assessments.

A key conclusion in this study is found in the responses to faculty and students' online survey questions dealing with collaboration, as illustrated in Tables 26-28 in chapter five. These responses support the strong acceptance of collaborative peer work in

291

the first-year writing class as it relates to teaching the phases of the writing process and also the rhetorical canons. The responses to the question illustrated in Figure 28 also reveal that *instructors' training in collaboration and their application of it in the first-year writing classes requires more analytical study.* On the one hand, the respondents *agreed* that the use of collaborative activities improve their students' writing in traditional face-to-face classroom and in online environments. On the other hand, the respondents *somewhat agreed* that most composition instructors prefer *non-collaborative* approaches. The crux of the irony is found in the respondents' "lukewarm" perceptions regarding *the adequacy of their training* in collaborative pedagogies. These survey responses highlight a latent ambiguity regarding the respondents' beliefs in the positive aspects of collaborative instruction as compromised by their feelings of being *under-trained* in collaborative practices.

<div align="center">Post-Process Theories' Ramifications on Writing-as-Process</div>

Contemporary scholarship reveals how diversity in the writing class will invigorate collaborative pedagogies for first-year writing. The new dynamics of multiculturalism require writing instructors to design collaborative strategies that can use the ideological and cultural orientations of students to support their strong potential for vitalizing peer group discourse. The key point is that both multiculturalism and genre theory will continue to *serve as effective heuristics* for first-year writers so that they feel they have an "entry point" into academic writing.

Writing-as-process theory has emerged over the last 50 years to currently encompass a theoretical paradigm that is decidedly more guided by digital media, social

<div align="center">292</div>

learning, and the influences of cultural diversity. Continuing contemporary studies continue to highlight that these aspects and influences do not diminish the efficacy of the writing-as-process model, but can be used during each recursive of the writing process to enhance students' writing skills.

Digital Media will Continue to Shape Student Collaboration

In the last decade of the 1990s, and into the new millennium, new investigations of collaborative theory began, energized by the technological advancements of digital media in the composition classroom. Digital media now empower students to become *co-constructors of knowledge* rather than passive receivers of preconstructed ideas.

Online discussion forums, wikis, and blogs are expanding the discourse about writing over digital networks and make the class more student-centered. The written response or commenting features of online digital media are more widely accepted by students perhaps because students use many of these collaborative digital technologies as ways to communicate socially. This positive acceptance of digital media by students facilitates its adoption in academic settings and enables the tools of digital media to be used effectively in the composition classroom.

Recommendation: Use Course Management Systems to Enhance Students' Writing Skills and Develop Effective Writing Communities

Students' writing skills can be enhanced through the collaborative processes provided through the innovative digital media of Web 2.0. These digital media include CMSs, online discussion forums, blogs and wikis. Specifically, online CMSs, such as Blackboard's discussion forums, provide effective routines for students to engage in

293

important revision commentaries during the prewriting and revising stages of their writing. Google Docs takes collaboration to higher and more meaningful levels through its enhanced online features that provide synchronous online collaborative writing and revising capabilities throughout all phases of the writing process.

Using CMSs like Google Docs for real-time online collaborative activities provides students with a *sense of connectivity* in the writing classroom. Such connectivity builds a sense of "writing community" in the composition class. In a collaborative learning environment, such as that facilitated by Google Docs, instruction is oriented toward learner-based environment as students collaborate, discover, compose, and revise while their instructors facilitate social learning through online media.

CMSs emphasize students' abilities to learn not in individual isolation, but in a vibrant digital setting where active involvement contribute to peer group learning. The implications of this learner-focused and digitally-supported social learning are that students become less passive and more interactive. Composition instructors become less authoritarian and more learner-centered in their pedagogies. CMSs, like Google Docs, can empower students by challenging them to participate in an expanding discourse of learning through seeing others students' written texts and then participating in revising these texts through their own written commentaries. This approach to learning will increasingly become more institutionalized in academe and impart important changes in

the ways first-year writing is instructed since it *encourages active student writing at each phase in the writing-as-process model.*

Implications of Writing Program Directors' Interviews

The first three questions of the interview pertained to *program assessments.* The respondents' convergence of similar responses on the subject endorsed the student writing portfolio as both the *preferred or primary source* for evaluating students' writing skills, instructors' teaching skills, and also the source for providing valid information for program measurements. Inherent in the respondents' answers was a tacit notion that program assessments provided findings for the first-year writing program department or academic department, varied institutional divisions; outside accrediting agencies and, in some cases, state legislative committees on higher education. All of the interviewed writing program directors endorsed the student writing portfolio as a *primary source* that they believe is the most useful assessment tool.

The most intriguing aspect of the writing directors responses' regarding the student writing portfolios is the implication of how they are being used presently and how they could be used even more adaptively to provide additional useful information about the quality of instruction and the writing skills of students. Using simplified assessment criteria checklists that can be tabulated, instructors could easily annotate the presence, recurrence, and resolution of particular writing issues on an assignment basis as they evaluate each essay draft.

The respondents' answers to Question 4 (that asked their views on the most effective pedagogical theories and strategies) were all *clustered around a rhetorical*

pedagogy implemented through a recursive writing process. In listening to their responses during the actual interviews, I realized that rhetoric constituted the basic theoretical framework for teaching composition that was implemented through the recursive writing process strategy.

The implications of the responses to Question 5 (preferences for pedagogical theories and the latitude afforded to instructors to use other than specified pedagogies) demonstrated that while writing program directors do not want their instructors to feel they are constrained by inflexible conventions, they want their instructors to use pedagogies that attain student learning outcomes specified in the syllabi. The implicit theme that is woven into the respondents' answers is *unity of purpose*. The critical student learning outcomes are achieved by instructors following the standardized syllabi and using the rhetorical theories implemented through the recursive writing process model. Uniformity is required so that instructors and students can attain learning outcomes and thereby satisfy the requirements required by the institutions, the accrediting agencies, and state governments.

Recommendation: Enhance Instructors' Training in Digital Pedagogy

Instructor training clearly presents a challenge due to its importance in the overall instructor preparation and teaching equation. I strongly recommend that any gaps or oversights in the area of training instructors to use digital media could create situations in the future where instructors under-serve their students' needs to learn in more relevant and dynamic environments. Digital learning is globally ubiquitous in academe. Continuing research on the benefits of digital learning courseware aiding

collaboration during the writing process suggests that instructors need to be proficient users to use digital pedagogies.

If there is not a close and ongoing relationship between composition instructors and instructional technologists, then it is possible technologies and pedagogies could become misaligned. For this reason, I recommend that *training mentors can serve as instructional resources* in every first-year writing program. Training in digital media should never become the exclusive domain of an instructional technology department. First-year writing program directors should strongly consider the formation of a *digital pedagogy committee* works closely with instructors and administrators in the academic departments and also with the instructional technology staffs.

Collaboration has a Future in the Composition Classroom

Three writing program directors interviewed in this study highlighted how collaboration is being used to improve students' writing skills (Appendices A, C, and J). Each of these three writing program directors orients their approaches to collaboration uniquely and meaningfully. Writing Program Director A uses a digitally-based writing textbook that complements the collaborative writing routines provided through the university's proprietary digital LMS. The socio-collaborative aspects of genre theory provided Writing Program Director J with a meaningful framework to empower students to interact and learn along cultural and ideological lines (Appendix J). Expanding the tutoring resources of the university's writing center as well as using the collaborative aspects of writing blogs, are those key activities that Writing Program Director C facilitates in her institutional setting (Appendix C)

Collaborative learning represents a significant shift for many institutions away from the time-worn instructor-centered environment in college composition classrooms. The application of social learning theories and collaborative routines have accelerated, however, over the last decade due to the growth of the Internet, social networking sites, and digital media used both in the physical classroom and in online environments.

Digital Learning Technologies are Here to Stay

Responses from all of the writing program directors interviewed in this study affirm presence and influence of digital learning technologies in their writing programs. However, a comparative analysis of their responses revealed that there was a disparity between their recognition of the growing influence of digital technologies and the actual uses of them. Only Writing Program Director A indicated that her department was actively using digital technology in teaching first-year composition with an electronic textbook (Appendix A). Writing Program Director H's program reflected a strong orientation to digital learning through its offering of several completely online and also hybrid first-year writing programs ("Institutional Web Pages"). Based on the other WPD's responses regarding instructional technology adoption and lack of a strong commitment to departmentalize its training, these situations suggest similar situations could occur at other institutions. This apparent "gap" between the growing role of technology and its tepid adoption, validated by only nominal training emphasis in all of these interviews, except for the one with the director of instructional technology, could raise future issues for both instructional technology staffs and first-year writing faculty. Both sides could become "disconnected" in the ways they perceive the application of

298

digital instructional media. Should it occur, this dynamic would pose a "lose-lose" situation for academe and first-year writing programs.

The emphases that all of the interviewed first-year writing program directors place on the nexus between pedagogy, digital instructional media, collaboration, and instructor training appear to be the interdependent linkage that will strongly influence first-year writing programs. These interdependent links acquire greater importance when they are viewed in the light of the respondents' comments about WAC and WID programs assuming increasing presences in their respective institutions. While these program directors' responses can legitimately only be considered a *sampled segment* of all first-year writing program directors, they provide a revealing microcosm of the emphasis that institutional administrators outside traditional English departments are placing on first-year writing.

Recommendation: Prepare GTAs to Meet Future Challenges and Opportunities

The development of first-year writing instructors, most of whom are GTAs, is an imperative need that also assures the viability of any first-year writing program. While training and professional development were subjects not amplified in the respondents' answers to Question 6, they bring into play an institution's ability to successfully administrate the first-year writing programs that they validate as critical in supporting WAC and WID programs. They also bring into sharp focus an institution's ethos—its ethical values and responsibility to strongly support and further empower its graduate students who provide nearly all of the instruction in the first-year writing program.

Faculty and Students' Survey Responses Positively Validate Digital and Collaborative
Pedagogies

The 43 valid instructor respondents and the 22 valid student respondents yield

meaningful insights into these key audiences' views on the writing process, teaching with

digital media, and using collaborative strategies. These three areas are clearly those that

are *primary* in a growing national focus on first-year writing pedagogy. The surveys

reveal several significant trends and implications regarding the pedagogy of first-year

writing. First, instructors strongly validate the use of CMI in FTF classroom

environments. As Figure 18 discloses, 81% of the surveyed instructors indicate they are

consistently using CMI/composition to teach writing. Reinforcing these findings are the

responses shown in Figure 26, wherein instructors' responses indicate a very positive

agreement level of 4.11 toward using CMI in all of their first-year writing courses. These

findings, correlated with the strong levels of endorsement instructors believe their

academic division and academic departments offer to the usage of CMI in their classes

,corroborate CMI/courseware as important pedagogical tools in this study.

The instructors' responses to the multiple rating options of Question 5 (refer to

the findings shown in Figures 20, 21, and 22) strongly endorse the use of Blackboard as

the learning management system or courseware of choice. While other CMSs, such as

Google Docs, would provide synchronous revision routines for writers, therespondents'

survey answers underscore that digital media are becoming an intrinsic part of their

pedagogies. Composition studies scholars, such as Yancey and Grigar, assert that the

presence of digital media in writing pedagogy is becoming so widespread that its

300

innovations will remediate how first-year composition is conceived and instructed in the near future (Yancey 198-208; Grigar 214-17).

The key to CMI's long-term usage in the writing classroom is found not so much in its widespread availability, rather in how and what ways first-year writing *instructors perceive its usefulness in teaching the rhetorical canons and the writing process*. As noted in Figure 16, the surveyed instructors' overall give positive ratings for using CMI to teach the rhetorical canons. These responses are noteworthy since *teaching the canons of rhetoric focuses writing pedagogy on teaching writing fundamentals*. Figures 27-29 clearly show that instructors endorse not only the use of CMI technologies, but also the importance of the role of technology for instructing writing and fostering collaboration. These responses acquire even more credibility when they are triangulated with the students' survey findings in Figure 34 that convey the students' positive perceptions toward the helpfulness of collaboration in developing their knowledge and skills pertaining to the writing process.

Assessing Composition Pedagogy from the Students' Perspective

Students' responses to the online survey reveal they believe they acquire enhanced agency (a stronger ability to do something) as it relates to the writing process through *their use of digital courseware and collaboration*. The responses categorized in Figure 31 reveal the positive ratings students attribute to CMI in helping them learn the phases of the writing process. Likewise, the students' overall ratings in Figure 32 provide overall positive indications for the role that collaboration assumes in helping them implement the writing process. Considered together, these two categorized ratings

specifically validate how these students believe they are empowered in their writing classes. This correlation also reinforces the instructors' positive responses, revealed in Figure 30, toward using collaboration in first-year writing pedagogy. Figure 30 shows that instructors believe first-year writers are able to benefit from collaborative writing approaches used in face-to-face (FTF) and online environments, verified through the highest average rating of 3.27 among the multiple rating options provided. This rating is closely followed by the second highest rating of 2.86 wherein first-year writing instructors rated they believe *collaborative writing approaches improve students' writing skills better than other approaches used in teaching composition.*

The categorized responses in Figures 29, 33, and 34 clearly disclose that instructors and students alike strongly affirm the use of collaboration in teaching the writing process and the canons of rhetoric. These responses are supported by similar responses in Figure 30 that indicate the surveyed first-year writing instructors believe they possess the teaching skills necessary to facilitate effective collaborative writing practices (2.78 average rating), and they are adequately trained to do so (2.63 average rating). The online survey used in this study demonstrates the importance of using CMI/courseware and collaborative pedagogies in the first-year writing class to provide students with *the enhanced agency to learn and apply their writing skills.*

In Section II of the online student survey, students' short-response comments strongly validate collaborative practices in their writing (Appendix P). The responses from instructors and students dealing with questions about collaboration support the argument that collaboration is acquiring a strong presence in first-writing pedagogy as it

302

provides enhanced agency for students in the writing process. Based on this response, it would not be over-reaching to argue that collaboration is expanding beyond its once limited purview of peer reviews that student traditionally performed during the proofreading phase of writing. Decidedly, collaborative instruction in the composition class requires some reorientation on the part of instructors. It can often involve changing from an instructor-authoritarian paradigm of teaching to that of active student-based learning. Responses in both the online faculty and student surveys, as noted in the previous analyses of collaborative questions rated by instructors and students, strongly affirm collaboration as a major teaching and learning strategy in first-year writing.

Overall Recommendation: Develop Relevant Composition Pedagogies

The literature review, the qualitative interview responses, as well as the online faculty and student surveys corroborate some important "needs" in first-year writing. In assessing the needs that this research study surfaces, I have also discovered some key implications and trends of these findings that affect current and future composition pedagogies. These key implications and trends are identified and discussed in the following enumerated sections.

Implication and Trend #1: Digital Media and Instructor Training Challenges

This study has surfaced two key aspects that are interdependent and which will determine the successful application of digital media in the composition classroom into the foreseeable future. These two dynamically-linked aspects—digital media and instructor training—are two critical areas that WPDs should carefully consider as they design and implement their first-year writing programs. While innovations in digital

303

media will continue unabated on a progressive timeline, such innovation must be supported by effective instructor training in the digital media that is actually used in the first-year writing program for such digital pedagogy to be effective. The responses to the rating categories displayed in Figure 26, validated by the relatively high standard deviation scores and the average mean rating scores, suggest that instructor training in digital media and collaboration are key areas that could compromise the quality of instruction if they are not addressed proactively through instructor training. If instructor training lags or is deficient in any way, this deficiency will continue to impair instructor acceptance and usage of digital pedagogy. Short-response comments in the online faculty surveys and comments made by WPDs in the telephonic interviews demonstrate that this situation is problematic for some institutions and may continue. If this situation is not actively addressed by the WPDs in their respective institutional programs, its continuance will affect the overall quality of instruction in first-year writing programs.

Implication and Trend #2: Collaborative Pedagogy and Instructor Training Issues

Responses to the online faculty and student surveys, as well as the interview responses of the WPDs used in this study, highlight that collaboration is practiced in some form and to some degree in all first-year writing programs. However, my examination of approximately 500 syllabi of undergraduate composition and writing-intensive literature courses posted online and representing one full academic year of two semester and four abbreviated sessions showed that "boiler-plate" theme statements regarding collaboration were used in the syllabi. Revealingly, there was also no evidence I could determine over the last several years substantiating that collaboration was a topic

on the training agenda for faculty at the large regional community college where I instruct writing and writing-intensive literature courses. While optional training in digital media (such as Blackboard/WebCT), which incorporates the collaborative benefits of digital media, is provided by the college's Teaching and Learning Center, there is no direct training in collaboration provided to fulltime and adjunct faculty. This situation, if not rectified through *compulsory workshop training* in collaborative pedagogy, will compromise the quality of instruction in the composition and writing-based literature courses offered at the college.

Implication and Trend #3: Analytical Studies of First-Year Student Writing

While the literature undertaken in this study acknowledges that scholars and instructors in the field value the need for more analytical studies of the composition process and composition pedagogy in first-year writing, such analytical studies must generate findings that are analytically-based, rather than only theoretically-centered findings. Expressed another way, these studies must involve analyses that are provable by the data they generate, and they must also be capable of replication.

While the trend advocated here does not suggest that qualitative studies are not effective in assessing the composing process, such studies will be strengthened if they are complemented by the findings of quantitative studies (and vice versa). If quantitative studies using student surveys are deemed to be truly effected, they should be administered by WPDs in adequately administered situations where instructors and students fully understand the importance of such studies and actively participate in their implementation. Online student and faculty surveys of first-year writing may experience

305

minimal to low participation response rates if these surveys are disseminated too broadly using the Internet or e-mail. *More localized use of online surveys* of instructors and students in first-year writing programs, affording more administrative support and even incentives to participants, are recommended to assure effective responses and response rates.

Coordinating with their local institution's research and statistician staffs, WPDs can develop effective online surveys that are cost effective. Such local institutional research staffs will help WPDs design surveys that will generate valid samples that can be further assessed over time. In following this approach, WPDs can assess what changes or improvements are needed in their programs, such as instructor training, course content, and pedagogies.

Implication and Trend #4: Multiculturalism will Strongly Impact First-Year Writing

Over the last two decades in the U.S., the growing impact of multiculturalism in the first-year writing course is an undeniable fact. While L2 student-writers must satisfactorily pass writing placement tests to enroll in composition classes with SAE writers, these L2 writers still struggle with issues that affect their composing in a variety of ways. My review of over 500 syllabi, prepared by instructors teaching writing and writing-intensive literature classes during the 2010 academic year at a large regional community college where I instruct, revealed no written guidelines or content that suggest that convey guidelines regarding multicultural pedagogies. This trend clearly identifies an issue for instructors and WPDs in first-year composition. The challenges that multicultural L2 writers face in composing in Standard American English

306

composition classes will not be effectively resolved until instructors are trained in this area and institutional support resources for L2 writers are expanded.

Implication and Trend #5: Course Management Systems will Continue to Facilitate Collaboration in the Composition Classroom

Course Management Systems (CMS), notably Blackboard and Google Docs, are currently designed to continue to provide collaborative processes that facilitate students' collaboration in the writing process. While such digitally-based collaboration will enhance instruction in first-year writing classes, both instructors and students must be effectively trained to benefit from the use of such digital media. WPDs should clearly realize that collaboration and digital courseware supporting such collaboration are strongly intertwined. Any instructor and student training in CMSs must clearly account for this strong synergy occurring between these two elements.

Implication and Trend #6: Digital Technology will Continue to Re-define and Remediate the Rhetorical Canons

As Kathleen Yancey emphasizes in her writings, the field of composition is being changed as the rhetorical canons are being "remediated" by digital media. Already, as Yancey notes, digital media is transforming the canons of memory and delivery in very impacting ways ("Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key"; *Delivering College Composition: The Fifth Canon*). Burns, Selfe, Hawisher, Barber, Grigar, and others examining the nexus between digital media and writing, advocate that digital media have changed, are changing, and will change the writing process and composition pedagogy. The handwriting on the wall that composition scholars must correctly decipher is how to evaluate the changes and remediation wrought by digital technology.

307

The important question to answer is: "Are we ready to accommodate these changes in our pedagogies so our instruction is relevant?

Implication and Trend #7: Institutional Endorsement of Course Management Systems: Will "One Size Fit All?"

When institutions make decisions regarding which CMS they will use to support institutional-wide needs, these decisions consider how such digital courseware will support most of the needs of academic disciplines that will use such media. Other factors come into play, such as fiscal budgets and instructional technology staff members needed to manage such resources. The realities of such factors cannot be denied. However, such digital media may not effectively meet the needs of first-year writing programs that would like to use other CMSs, such as Google Docs, that facilitate effective collaboration during each phase of the writing process. In light of this situation, I contend it is in the best interests of institutions to allow first-year writing programs to use free writing courseware that will not impair an institution's instructional technology (IT) administration. Since Google Docs is accessible free via the Internet, this option should not pose a problem. There are also several free open architecture CMSs, such as Drupal and Desire2Learn, that are available to college composition programs. Such programs, however, do require allocation of information technology staff to oversee their operation on an institution's file server. Such allocations of internal administration may be reconciled in the future if the contractual costs of commercially-licensed CMSs become budget-prohibitive.

Implication and Trend #8: Digital Pedagogy Mitigates Instructor Authoritarianism and Enhances Student-Centeredness

Several scholars identified in this study, notably Selfe, Hawisher, Bizzell, Yancey, Faigley, and Boyd emphasize that the influence of digital media and collaboration will progressively transform college composition instruction from an instructor-centered to a student-centered pedagogy. Admittedly, this transformation will occur at varying rates at varied institutional setting. However, the reality of its occurrence is felt by all the WPDs who were interviewed in this study. The key issue here is how WPDs are training and preparing their first-year writing instructors for the eventualities of this change.

Pedagogical Strategy #1: Pre-and Post-Writing Assignments Surveys

One key implication of the research findings is *the need to design effective course-specific survey processes*. These surveys can be designed by the writing program directors, with input from firs-year writing instructors, so instructors can use them locally at their respective institutions to assess if their students are effectively learning objectives pre-identified for each composition. One of the key lessons that the online surveys revealed to me in this study is that the type of electronic surveys transmitted to varied institutions generate tepid responses. I contend that unless these surveys are either incorporated as mandatory aspects of *local writing programs*, and also incentivized in some manner, their completion rates will continue to be minimal. My conversations with approximately 20 writing program directors, as well as with several departmental chairs, at varied institutions over the last two years, surfaced a common thread of reasons

309

mitigating the strong acceptance by faculty and students to online surveys. First, I discovered in this study from my conversations with writing program directors (WPDs) that there is the generally-held view that because online surveys are pervasive on the Web encompassing both academic and commercial areas, this "over-familiarity" diminishes their panache of academic credibility. Second, a major issue conveyed to me in my telephone conversations with faculty members is the perceived institutional sensitivities regarding survey participation due to the stringent guidelines and "gate-keeping" functions of the local Institutional Review Boards (IRB). While these gatekeeping functions are ostensibly required to protect the privacy of research respondents, a majority of the faculty and staff at approximately 20 colleges and universities I spoke with concerning my online surveys perceive the IRB as sometimes overly bureaucratic and time-consuming. While I do not share these pejorative opinions, I was informed by at least five WPDs or departmental chairs that in order for their faculty and students to voluntarily participate in any online surveys, I would have to file an additional IRB research application and meet the requirements of their own respective IRBs' policies, much in the same manner I underwent in obtaining approval by the IRB at my university. For me to do this would be very time-consuming and non-productive, so I was not able to accommodate the local IRB requirements at these institutions. However, I did not encounter such localized IRB mandates from other institutions.

My learning process in this study reveals that the most effective surveys will be conducted at my own "local" university where there is more control over the administration of electronic or online surveys. The confidentiality provisions would still

be required, but departmental administrators could make these surveys about faculty and students' involvement in their local writing programs more relevant to the syllabi. For this reason alone, I believe local surveys would achieve higher response rates and would generate statistical sampling sizes that would be sufficient to better validate and describe discuss trends. These surveys should be conducted online and would entail no more that five or six questions that would require multiple choice or multiple rating responses. Participation in the surveys would be mandatory for students in the class (as noted in the course syllabus), although only their student ID number would be used so the instructor could assess the responses and also maintain confidentiality.

These surveys would require students to respond to a series of questions that will identify their *pre-writing assignment levels* of comfort, knowledge, or proficiency regarding the learning objectives specified in a particular assignment's instructions for a writing assignment. For example, the student learning objectives (SLOs) would be specified in the assignment directions and on the pre-writing assignment survey. In this survey, students would be ask to respond to questions validating their current views on their writing abilities as it relates to the writing assignment upon which they will embark. If the instructor's objective is to emphasize rhetorical *invention* on an assignment, then the pre assignment survey questions would address the various aspects of invention or prewriting, how to implement them, and how to transform them into the writing-as-process. The objective of this brief survey is to establish initial benchmark comments for each student, based on a student's responses in the pre-assignment survey, so that the

instructor and the student can work on any issues or developmental areas identified in the survey while the student engages in the writing process.

I recommend that the post-writing assignment survey be designed to acquire "lessons learned" by students. Did they successively address their writing issues? Or, are they starting to deal with their writing issues? Undoubtedly, some students will be more candid in their responses than others, but once students realize how these surveys are being used to help improve their writing skills, their "writing aptitudes" should improve. While the actual number of writing assignments in any semester will determine, to a large degree, how many areas or categories you can assess on each of these pre-and post-writing assignment surveys, I would also recommend that first-year writing instructors do not assess more than two such categories on each assignment, so as not to complicate the learning process. Following this line of reasoning, an instructor can design an assignment and its pre-assignment survey to focus on writing an effective thesis statement. The rationale for those attributes constituting an effective thesis statement would be exemplified in reading assignments and class discussions. A brief mnemonic devise, such as an "acronym" definition could be highlighted in the introduction of the pre-writing assignment survey, conveying the important characteristics of thesis statements, such as: *F-A-C-T*—focus, appeal, clarity, and target-audience directedness. Students would indicate on the pre-writing assignment survey if they had any issues with the concept of thesis statements, or if they have experienced issues previously in writing effective thesis statements. These survey responses would help students and the instructor engage in writing conferences to develop proactive remedies, such as extra

312

credit exercises dealing with writing thesis statements, or scheduling appointments with the staff at the university's writing center to address issues identified in the surveys.

After the writing assignment is submitted for its last instructor review and evaluation, using the student portfolio approach, then the instructor can require that students complete a brief post-assignment survey, the answers from which can be used to assess any lingering issues or perceptions from students pertaining to the level of skill or learning they have acquired relative to the assignment's objectives. The findings on this survey can also be used by instructors as a means to focus their student writing conferences and also as a means to evaluate their pedagogies and teaching skills. Findings from the post-assignment survey can also be used to further focus follow-up appointments with writing consultants at their institution's writing center. The overall rationale for using pre-writing assignment and post-writing assignment surveys is to provide an effective means to determine each individual student's grasp of the SLOs and to enable instructors to determine if any adjustments or follow-up instruction are required regarding the SLOs.

This pedagogical model specifically addresses the implications in this study's findings regarding strategies to improve the use of assessment tools. This recommend assessment through surveying approach provides course-specific survey instruments that generate virtually 100 percent response rates and that can be immediately assessed by the instructor and used to facilitate ongoing instructor-student communications and also used as part of the writing portfolio evaluation process.

Pedagogical Strategy #2: Implement Resources to Support L2 Writers

The implications of the findings in this dissertation surface the requirement for instructors to assure their pedagogies address the identified needs of L2 writers (student who are writing in English even though it is their second language). My research demonstrates that the demographic makeup of first-year writing classes *continues to reflect cultural diversity*. The need to prepare workable instructional models that address L2 writers' needs is tantamount to assuring that instructors' pedagogies are relevant and effective. In light of these implications affecting composition pedagogy, I propose that first-year writing program directors develop online surveys with their instructors that will identify any special issues that these students are encountering at the start of the semester so that instructors and students can work more astutely in dealing with identified issues.

Since the objective of this pedagogical model is to assist only those students who are L2 writers, this information can be obtained by simply asking students to respond when the question, "how many of you are L2 writers?", is asked during the first week of classes. These students will complete a mandatory online survey during the first week of the semester that requires them to identify any special needs or continuing issues in their writing skills. I recommend that these online surveys only encompass five questions that can serve as "prompts" to solicit multiple choice and open-ended responses to questions involving the writing process and related areas. For example, one question could ask the student to rate those areas that they in which they believe they are "stronger" or more capable in fulfilling, as well as those areas that constitute their "weaknesses." These

surveys are designed to be confidential and to help focus topics for instructor-student conferences.

During my telephonic interviews with a writing program director who administrates a writing center at a large state university, she briefly mentioned the evolving changes that the future may impart to writing centers that are created by the growing needs of L2 writers (Appendix F). She highlighted a prevailing need for writing centers will be to include on their staff writing consultants who can address the needs of L2 writers' language and ideological issues. In most cases, hiring writing consultants who speak a language that is prevalent in an institution's demographics seems like a sensible solution. Other special resources that would be included in this pedagogical model require that first-year writing program directors provide a list of tutors who are also university students and whose native language skills and academic writing proficiencies would be helpful to various L2 writers. While most students access tutors from associates and friends, the key need here is for students to access tutors who are from their own student population and who have completed first-year writing with high levels of competency.

This pedagogical strategy conveys implementation tactics that are designed to help L2 writers—a growing population of students who must contend with the Standard American English (SAE) academic discourse community in first-year writing. Anecdotally, I have heard numerous instructors over the last several years discuss their desires to improve their instructional approaches to better support L2 writers. This

pedagogical model proposes a fundamental step toward addressing these instructors' expressed needs.

Pedagogical Strategy #3: Implement Instructor Mentoring and Training in Digital Media

While the online first-year writing instructor survey findings in Appendix L reveal strong support in using digital media in writing instruction, these findings also surface the instructors' desire to receive more training. As noted in Figures 21-24 of chapter five, the instructors' responses demonstrate that they strongly endorse digital media and would benefit from institutional training provided from an instructional technology setting. However, in response to a specific question concerning department-level training and mentoring, the findings reveal that instructors are somewhat diffident on its efficacy in their own department, as noted in Figure 23. This study, and my own experiences as a first-year writing instructor, have taught me that *the most inhibiting factor precluding strong faculty endorsement of digital media is the lack of incremental hands-on training in media that faculty members believe are relevant to their pedagogical practices.*

In considering the positive implications of mentor-centered training at the department level, I recommend that the writing program directors develop a workable mentor training approach to address the instructors' requirements to improve their proficiencies in using LMS's and other online media to facilitate their pedagogy. This recommendation does not obviate the instructional technology (IT) training available to them from an IT staff. A departmental level mentor training program is often in a better position to help instructors' unique digital media needs since these mentors are teaching

the same courses using either the prescribed digital media or the digital media that instructors can elect to use to augment their classroom or online instruction. Based on my experience, I have found that mentors who are adept in designing and using LMSs, wikis, and blogs are better able to help instructors since they understand how to use the digital media to meet their SLOs in first-year writing.

Pedagogical Strategy #4: Improve Student Collaboration with Google Docs

This study has validated through its literature reviews, writing program directors' interviews, and the online faculty and student surveys that collaborative learning and digital media that support collaboration are the key attributes of first-year writing now and into the foreseeable future. In consideration of these validated findings, I propose that all first-year writing program directors design their syllabi so that their instructors and students can use Google Docs as the principal online collaborative courseware *for both FTF and online writing classes*. I recommend this courseware as a result of evaluating practically all of the commercially-vended and open-source courseware being used at various institutions. I am aware that many institutions have selected or endorsed a particular LMS or digital media for use in their respective settings. Such decisions are made on the basis of which system best meets *the generalized needs of most academic departments* in a particular college or university. I also realize that the institutional leaders and IT directors have instituted their policies regarding the use of such online digital learning platforms. However, the findings of my study prove that notwithstanding any such localized institutional prerogatives, the use of Google Docs as a collaborative digital learning platform will accommodate the collaborative practices, peer group

317

interactions, and the *simultaneous synchronous review and revision routines* essential to FTF and online environments. As I mentioned in my examination of Google Docs in chapter three, this online courseware combines the best features and benefits of other courseware, blogs, and wikis for use at every phase of the writing process. Google Docs is free of charge. It requires only that the users (students and instructors) open a free Google Gmail account. The program is surprisingly easy to use, and there are numerous online tutorials to facilitate user proficiency.

The key reason that I endorse Google Docs is its capabilities to enable instructors and students to simultaneously review a specific document and make synchronous as well as asynchronous comments on the documents that are immediately visible for small-group collaboration and or can be archived for subsequent review. After using Google Docs in a "pre-test mode" with several of my students in a writing class I instruct, I am convinced its benefits and features will provide continuing levels of online support during each phase of the writing process. In using Google Docs, students and instructors can engage in peer discussions, submit their papers for peer critiques, as well as view if the comments submitted were "accepted" or modified.

Based on my examination, Google Docs provides, at this point in time, the most effective digital pedagogical routines for collaborative practices in the contemporary composition classroom. While I do not suggest that it should be used as a complete replacement for the important dynamics of FTF instruction, it will provide instructors with a strong supportive platform for their collaborative pedagogies. I recommend that Google Docs be used as the "digital centerpiece" for online instruction as well. It would

strongly rival the collaborative routines provided by any number of LMSs that I have examined, including Blackboard.

Final Perspectives: What the Future Holds

As I noted in Figure 1 of chapter one, the triangular axes of the writing-as-process —model, collaborative pedagogies, and digital media—represent those aspects of my study that will change, and any change in one, theoretically, can change any of the other axes. I conceived this theoretical premise since I believe that the interdependence and interrelationships of each of these axes will individually and collectively continue to influence the course of process pedagogy for the future. Imagine the possibilities that can occur in this theoretical construct. Writing instructors will be challenged and amazed by the innovations that digital technology will generate to support the instruction of first-year writing. In reiterating one writing program director's statement in her interview:

> . . . the various needs of the university's academic departments with
> designated "writing intensive" courses will require that we [composition
> instructors] teach basic composition in ways to satisfy their varied and
> changing requirements . . . . From my perspective, I sense composition
> program directors in many colleges and universities will need to become
> increasingly sensitive to the interdisciplinary needs of their faculties, the
> cultural diversities of their students, and also to those [needs] in the
> outside workforce community. (Appendix A)

First-year writing instructors who are fluent users of digital technology, as well as those who are reticent or "late adopters," will incorporate digital media into their pedagogies to enhance collaborative learning if these media are relevant and are user-friendly. *Training and mentoring of faculty—and students—in the uses of digital media for use in the composition classroom is tantamount to their continued acceptance and use.* As online digital learning media continues to evolve, they must be clearly supportive to each phase of the writing process. Institutional administrators (such as IT leaders or IT committees) that select a particular CMS for across the curriculum usage must be aware survey their own academic departments to understand that "one size may not fit all" the needs for digital learning. The use of Google Docs—or any future digital media that *facilitates peer groups comprised of three to four students writing and revising documents synchronously*—should be the digital media that writing program directors actively endorse and effectively train their instructors to use.

The advances in laser technologies and optical storage devices portend that within the next 15 years, students will write their compositions and engage in *small peer-group online collaboration* using holographic projections of a keyboard, monitor, and online text and audio-visual media. The control unit that enables such digital wizardry can fit in the palm of one's hand. It requires only to be connected to the Web to function. While such holographic or laser technology appears to be too "futuristic" by our contemporary standards, composition scholars and instructors should take note that several American, European, and Asian companies have already filed for patents to design and mass produce such innovations in the foreseeable future.

320

At the website entitled *Invention Spot*, the predictive aspects of digital technology

prompts the article's author to muse in 2011 on the digital world of the future:

> In the movie "Minority Report" starring Tom Cruise, we get our first
>
> glimpse of what holograms will look like as computers. No mouse, no
>
> keyboard, just virtual screens and your hands at the controls. When this
>
> movie was released in 2002, this futuristic technology was thought of as
>
> pure Hollywood fantasy. Less than 7 years later, however, engineers have
>
> developed a similar computer. By sensing hand movements, Microsoft's
>
> TouchLight devices allow users to physically grab hold of files displayed
>
> on a holographic screen. The software giant, together with its partner firm
>
> Eon Reality is aiming to have desktop versions of the computer available
>
> to PC users within the next 2 years. ("Holographic Computers")

Imagine that by the year 2025, first-year college writers will use laser-driven

holographic projections to "write" (virtually create) their compositions. Students seated

next to them, or miles away connected via the Internet, will be able to engage students in

the process of writing, suggest changes, and instantly download audio and text from the

Web that pertain to the writing assignment or text under development. When students

have completed their online virtual texts, optical storage devices will enable other

students and their instructors to "download" these virtual simulations of words,

intermixed with sound and images via a holographic projection, in their own work

spaces. Instructors can comment in real-time through voice or simulated text comments.

Students can project "live" images of their classmates and instructors provided by digital

cameras so they can see and hear whomever they are working with in their peer groups.

During the U.S. presidential election in 2007, America's *CNN* used holographic technology to beam an image of news correspondent Jessica Yellin from Chicago into CNN's Atlanta newsroom. The effect was quite startling for many viewers who witnessed the CNN anchor-person in Atlanta conversing with a holographic image projected on the Atlanta-based CNN sound stage ("Holographic Computers").

Digital technology will continue to bring innovative, relevant, and exciting dimensions to first-year writing pedagogy. So, my advice to the overworked graduate teaching assistant contending today with drafts of student essays is "stay the course." *The best is yet to come.*

WORKS CITED

"A Brief History of Computers and Composition." 7 Dec. 2008. Web. 21 April 2009.

    <http://computersandcomposition.osu.edu/>.

"A Brief History of the Internet." n.d. Web. 11 Nov. 2010.

    <http://www.walthowe.com/navnet/history>.

Abercrombie, M. L. *The Anatomy of Judgement: An Investigation into the Processes of*

    Perception and Reasoning. London: Hutchinson P, 1960. Print.

Anson, Chris M. "Closed Systems and Standardized Writing Tests." *College*

    Composition and Communication 60. 1 (2008): 113-28. Web. 14 Jan. 2010.

    <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt

    Lute Books, 1987. Print.

Aristotle. *Rhetoric.* Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. n.d. Web. 27 Nov. 2009.

    <http://www.theologywebsite. com/etext/aristotle/>.

Applebee, Arthur N. *Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas.*

    Urbana: NCTE, 1981. Print.

Bain, Alexander. *English Composition and Rhetoric: A Manual.* New York: American

    Book Co., 1866. Hathi Trust Digital Library. Digitized by Google. Original from

    Princeton University Library. n.d. Web. 19 Aug 2010.

    <http://babel.hathitrust.org/>.

Barber, John F. and Dene Grigar. "Introduction Or Philosophizing About the Art and

Techne of Writing in this Book." *New Worlds, New Words: Exploring Pathways

for Writing about and in Electronic Environments.* Ed. John F. Barber and Dene

Grigar. New Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2001. 7-19. Print.

Barker, Thomas T. and Fred O. Kemp. "Network Theory: A Postmodern Pedagogy for

the Writing Classroom." *Computers and Community: Teaching Composition in

the Twenty First Century.* Ed. Carolyn Handa. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook ,

1990. Print.

Bawarshi, Anis. *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of

Invention in Composition.* Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2003. Print.

Bazerman, Charles. "The Case for Writing Studies as a Major Discipline. "Rhetoric and

Composition as Intellectual Work. Ed. Gary A. Olson. Carbondale: Southern

Illinois UP, 2002. 32-38. Print.

Bernhardt, Stephen, Penny Edwards, and Patti Wojahn. "Teaching College Composition

with Computers: A Timed Observation Study." Written Communication. 6 (July

1990): 342-374. Web. 22 April 2010. <http://wcx.sagepub.com>.

Berlin, James A. *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges.*

Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1984. Print.

---. "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories. " *College English* 44

(1982): 765-77. Web. 27 Dec. 2009. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

---. *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985.*

Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987. Print.

---. *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies.* Anderson, SC: Parlor P, 2003. Print.

---. "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." *College English* 50 (1988): 477-94. Web. 3 Nov. 2010. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

Best, John W., and James V. Kahn. *Research in Education.* 10th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2006. Print.

Bizzell, Patricia. "Beyond Antifoundationalism to Rhetorical Authority: Problems Defining 'Cultural Literacy'." *Rhetoric in an Antifoundational World: Language, Culture, and Pedagogy.* Ed. Michael Bernard-Donals. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998. 371-88. Print.

---. "What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?" *College Composition and Communication.* Vol. 37 (3) (1986): 294-301. Urbana: NCTE, 1986. Print.

Blair, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.* (1783) Ed. Harold F. Harding. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965. Print.

Bleich, David. *Know and Tell: A Pedagogy of Disclosure, Genre, and Membership,* Boynton/Cook, 1998. Print.

Bohen, Shawn Jacqueline, and James Stiles. "Experimenting with Models of Faculty Collaboration: Factors that Promote Their Success." *New Direction for Institutional Research* 100 (Winter 1998): San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1998. 39-55. Print.

Bowden, Darsie. "Voice." Ed. Irene Clark et al. *Concepts in Composition: Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Writing.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2003. 285-312. Print.

Boyd, Patricia W. "Analyzing Students' Perceptions of Their Learning in Online and Hybrid First-Year Composition Courses." *Computers and Composition* 25 (2008): 224-43. Web. 22 Nov. 2010. <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/>.

Braddock, Richard, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer. *Research in Written Composition.* Champaign, IL: NCTE, 1963. Print.

Brereton, John C. Ed. *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History.* Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995. Print.

Britton, James. *Language and Learning.* London, UK: Penguin Books, 1970. Print.

Breuch Kastman, Lee-Ann. "Post-Process 'Pedagogy': A Philosophical Exercise. " Ed. Victor Villanueva. *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader.* 2nd ed. Urbana: NCTE, 2003. 97- 126. Print.

Brooks, Kevin, Cindy Nichols, and Sybil Priebe. "Remediation, Genre, and Motivation: Key Concepts for Teaching with Weblogs." Into the Blogosphere. Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs. Ed. Laura Gurak, Smil J. Antonijevic, Laure Johnson, Clancy Ratliff, and Jessica Reyman. n.d. Web. 27 June 2010. <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/>.

Bruffee, Kenneth A. "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation of Mankind" *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader.* 2nd ed. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: NCTE, 2003. 415-436. Print.

---. *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and The Authority of Knowledge*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. Print.

---. "Liberal Education, Scholarly Community, and the Authority of Knowledge." *Liberal Education* 71.3 (Fall 1985): 231-39. Web. 4 Mar. 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Bruffee, Kenneth A., and Harvey Kail. *Short Course In Writing: Composition, Collaborative Learning, and Constructive Reading* . 4th ed. Reading, MA: Longman, 2006. Print.

Bruffee, Kenneth A., Donald C. Stewart, Samuel Booth, and Maxine C. Hairston. "Comments on John Trimbur's 'Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning.'" *College English* 52.6 (1990): 689-96. Web. 11 Dec. 2010. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969. Print.

Burns, Hugh L., Jr. "Stimulating Rhetorical Invention in English Composition through Computer-assisted Instruction." Diss. The University of Texas, 1979. Print.

Burnett, Rebecca E. "Conflict in Collaborative Decision Making." *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective*. Ed. Nancy Roundy Blyler and Charlotte Thralls. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993. 144-62. Print.

"CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Feb. 2004 . Web. 19 Oct. 2010. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

327

"CollegeData - College 411 - Student Body Size: Small, Medium or Large?"

    CollegeData: College Search, Financial Aid, College Application, College

    Scholarship, Student Loan, FAFSA Info, Common Application. Web. 28 Jan.

    2009. <http://www.collegedata.com/>.

Colombo, Gary, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. *Rereading America: Cultural*

    Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing, 5th ed. New York: Bedford/St.

    Martin's, 2001. Print.

Connors, Robert J. "Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction."

    CCC 36 (Feb. 1985): 61-72. Web. 24 March 2010.

    http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

---."Grammar in American College Composition: A Historical Overview." *The Territory*

    of Language: Linguistics, Stylistics, and the Teaching of Composition. Ed. Donald

    A. McQuade. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1986. 3-22. Print.

---. *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Pittsburgh, PA: U of

    Pittsburgh P, 1997. 171-209. Print.

---. "Static Abstractions and Composition." *Freshman English News* 12 (1983): 1-12.

    Print.

--. "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse." *College Composition and*

    Communication 32.4 (December 1981): 444-55. Web. 22 Feb. 2010.

    <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

Cooper, Marilyn and Michael Holzman. *Writing as Social Action*. Portsmouth, NH:

    Heinemann, 1989. Print.

Cooper, Marilyn M. "The Ecology of Writing." *College English,* Vol. 48 (4). (Apr.

1986): 364-75. Web. 4 Dec. 2010. <http://links.jstor.org/>.

Corbett, Edward P, J. "A Look at the Old Rhetoric." *Rhetoric: Theories for Application.*

Ed. Robert M. Gorrell. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1967. 16-22. Print.

Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods*

Approaches. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008. Print.

Crowley, Sharon. *Methodological Memory: Invention in Current Traditional Rhetoric.*

Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1990. Print.

Daiute, Colette. *Writing and Computers.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.,

1985. Print.

Darrell, Bob. "A Faculty Survey of Undergraduate Reading and Writing Needs."

Peabody Journal of Education. Vol. 57 (2). Issues and Trends in American

Education (Jan. 1980):85-93. Print.

Davis, Evan, and Sarah Hardy. "Teaching in the Space of Blackboard." *Computers and*

Composition On-line. Spring 2003. Web. 22 Jun. 2010. <http://www.bgsu.edu/.

Dias, Patrick. "Social Constructionism." *Theorizing Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*

of Theory and Scholarship in Contemporary Composition Studies. Ed. Mary

Lynch Kennedy. Westport, CN: Greenwood P, 1998. 285-293. Print.

Dixon, John. "Conference Report: The Dartmouth Seminar." *Harvard Educational*

Review 39 (1969): 366-72. Print.

Dommeyer, Curt, Paul Baum, Robert Hanna, and Kenneth Chapman. "Gathering Faculty

Teaching Evaluations by In-class and Online Surveys: Their Effects on Response

Rates and Evaluations." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 29.5

(2004): 611-23. Web. 12 May 2010. <http://www.jstor.org>.

Downs, Stephen. "E-learning 2.0." *eLearn Magazine. Education and Technology in*

Perspective. 17 Oct. 2005. Web. 9 Jan. 2011. <http://www.elearnmag.org>.

Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. Introduction to Janet Emig's "Writing as a Mode of

Learning." *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons.* Ed. Christina Russell

McDonald and Robert L. McDonald. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.

Print.

---. *Singular Text/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing.* Carbondale,

IL: Southern Illinois U P, 1992. Print.

Elbow, Peter. Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic: A Conflict in Goals." *College*

Composition and Communication. Vol. 46 (1) (Feb. 1995): 72-83. Web. 11 Dec.

2010. <http://www.jstor.org/.>

Eldred, Janet M. "Pedagogy in the Computer-Networked Classroom."Sidler, Michelle,

Richard Morris, and Elizabeth Overman Smith, eds. *Computers in the*

Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's,

2008. 239-250. Print.

Emig, Janet. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1971.

English 64:1 (2001 Sept.): 63-87. Print.

Evans, Ellen, and Jeanne Po. "A Break in the Transaction: Examining Students' Responses

    to Digital Texts." *Computers and Composition* 24 (2007): 56-73. Web. 3 Feb.

    2011. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

Evans, Karin. "Audience and Discourse Community Theory." *Theorizing Composition:*

    A Critical Sourcebook of Theory and Scholarship in Contemporary Composition

    Studies. Ed. Mary Lynch Kennedy. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998. 1-5.

    Print.

Faigley, Lester. "Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal." *College*

    English 48.6 (1986): 527-542. Print.

Farrell, Thomas B. "Practicing the Arts of Rhetoric: Tradition and Invention."

    Philosophy & Rhetoric. Vol. 24 (3): 183-212. Web. 22 Jan. 2010

    <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Fearn, Leif, and Farnan, Nancy. "When is a Verb? Using Functional Grammar to Teach

    Writing." *Journal of Basic Writing, 26* (1) (Spring 2007): 63-87. Web. 11 Dec.

    2009. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Fife, Jane. "Enhancing Face-To-Face Class Discussion through Electronic Discussion

    Forums." Ed. Terry, Carter, Maria A. Clyaton, Allison D. Smith, and Trixie G.

    Smith. *Writing and the iGeneration: Composition in the Computer-mediated*

    Classroom. Southlake, TX: Fountainhead P, 2008. Print.

"First-year Writing Syllabi." *Academics. Collin College Website*. Web. 17 Jan. 2011.

    < http://hb2504.collin.edu/.>

Fitzgerald, Jill. *Towards Knowledge in Writing: Illustrations from Revision Studies.*

New York: Springer Vertag, 1991. Print.

Flower, Linda, and John R. Hayes. "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." *Cross Talk*

in Comp Theory: A Reader. Ed. Victor Villanueva, Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 2003.

273-97.

Foster, David. "Rescuing Community: Sociality and Cohesion in Writing Groups."

Conference on College Composition and Communication. Washington, DC.

23-25 March 1995. ERIC, 1995. ED384890. Print.

Foster, Helen. *Networked Process: Dissolving Boundaries of Process and Post-Process.*

West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2007. Print.

"Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing." *Council of Writing Program*

Administrators. Web. 22 July 2010. < http://wpacouncil.org/files/>.

Fulkerson, Richard. "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. " *CCC* 56.

4 (2005): 654-87. Web. 14 Jan. 2011. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.

Gaillet, Lynee. "A Socially Constructed View of Reading and Writing: Historical

Alternatives to 'Bridging the Gap'." *Transforming English Studies: New Voices*

in an Emerging Genre. Ed. Lori Ostergaard, Jeff Ludwig, and Jim Nugent. Parlor

Press 2009: 163-178. Print.

Galin, Jeffrey, Carol Peterson Haviland, and J. Paul Johnson. "Afterword: Composition's

Emergent Disciplinary Identity: Aims, Patterns, Problems, and Possibilities. "

Teaching/Writing in the Late Age of Print. Ed. Jeffrey Galin, Carol Peterson

Haviland, and J Paul Johnson. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 2003. 379-407. Print.

"Google Docs Web Page" Google Web Page. n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2010.

> <https://www.google.com/ >.

"Graduate Teaching Assistant." Fall First-year Composition Training Workshop. Texas

> Woman's University. Denton, Texas. 23 August 2010.

Grigar, Dene. "What New Media Offers." *Computers and Composition* 24.2 (2007): 214-

> 17. Web. 28 Nov. 2010. <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/>.

Graddin, Sherrie L. *Romancing Rhetorics: Social Expressivist Perspectives on the*

> *Teaching of Writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1995. Print.

Parker, Richard Green. *Aids to English Composition.* 20th ed. New York: Harper and

> Brothers, 1863. Hathi Digital Library Trust. Digitized by Google. n.d. Original

> from the University of Michigan. Mar. 2010. Web. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/>.

Grimm, Nancy. "Improving Students' Responses to their Peers' Essays." *College*

> *Composition and Communication.* Feb. 1986: 91-94. Web. 20 Oct. 2010.

> <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Hagaman, John. "Modern Use of the Progymnasmata in Teaching Rhetorical

> Invention."*Rhetoric Review* 5. 1 (1986): 22-29. Web. 19 Nov. 2009.

> <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Hairston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the

> Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 33 (1982): 76-

> 88. Print.

Harris, Joseph. "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing." *College Composition*

> *and Communication* 40 (Feb. 1989): 11-22. Print.

Hawisher, Gail E. "Electronic Meetings of the Minds: Research, Electronic Conferences, and Composition Studies." *Re-Imagining Computers and Composition: Teaching and Research in the Virtual Age.* Ed. Gail E. Hawisher and Paul LeBlanc. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1992. 81-101. Print.

Hawisher, Gail E., and Cynthia L. Selfe. "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class." *College Composition and Communication* 42 (1991): 55-65. Print.

Hawisher, Gail E., et al. "Becoming Literate in the Information Age: Cultural Ecologies and the Literacies of Technology." *College Composition and Communication* Vol. 55.4 (Jun. 2004): 642-692 . Web. 17 Nov. 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Hawisher, Gail, et al. *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education 1979-1994: A History.* Stamford: Ablex, 1996. Print.

Hayes, John R., and Linda S. Flower. "Uncovering Cognitive Processes in Writing: An Introduction to Protocol Analysis." *Research On Writing: Principles and Methods.* Ed. Peter Mosenthal, Lynne Tamor, and Sean A. Walmsley. New York: Longman, 1983. 207-220. Print.

Herrington, Anne, and Charles Moran. "The Idea of Genre in Theory and Practice: An Overview of the Work in Genre in the Fields of Composition and Rhetoric and New Genre Studies." *Genre Across the Curriculum.* Eds. Anne Herrington and Charles Moran. Logan: U of Utah P, 2005. 1-18. Print.

Hewett, Beth L. "Asynchronous Online Instructional Commentary: A Study of Student Revision." *Readerly/Writerly Texts: Essays in Literary, Composition, and Pedagogical Theory.* (Double Issue) 11 & 12.1 & 2 (2004-2005), 47-67. Print.

---. "Synchronous Online Conference-based Instruction: A Study of Whiteboard Interactions and Student Writing." *Computers and Composition* 23.1 (2006): 4-31. Web. 30 Oct. 2010. <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/>.

Hicks, Jennifer. "What Effects, if any, does Collaborative Writing Have on an Individual's Writing Ability." *Educational Forum* 2 (Fall 1991). 72-84. Print.

Hill, Adams Sherman. *The Foundations of Rhetoric.* New York, Harper & Brothers, 1892. Hathi Trust Digital Library. n.d. Digitized by Google. Original from the University of Michigan. Web. 29 Dec. 2009. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/>.

Hillocks, George, Jr. , and Michael W. Smith, "Grammar and Usage. " *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts.* Ed. Flood, J. M. Jensen, D. Lapp, and J. R. Squire . New York: Macmillan, 1991. 591- 603. Print.

"Holographic Computers." 'The Inventor's Spot' Web Site. n.d. Web. 5 Dec. 2010. <http://inventorspot.com/articles/>.

Holquist, Michael. *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World.* New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Horning, Alice. "The Definitive Article on Class Size." WPA 31.1/2 (Fall/Winter 2007). 2007. Web. 11 Apr 2010. <http://wpacouncil.org/>.

Holzner Steve, and Nancy Holzner. *Google Docs 4 Everyone.* Indianapolis, Que, 2009. Print.

Holt, Mara. "The Value of Written Peer Criticism." *College Composition and Communication.* Oct. 1992: 384-392. 17 April 2010. Print.

Horning, Alice. "The Definitive Article on Class Size." *Council of Writing Program Administrators*, Fall/Winter 2007. Web. 31 Aug. 2009. <http://wpacouncil.org/>.

Howard, Rebecca Moore. "Collaborative Pedagogy." *Composition Pedagogies: A Bibliographic Guide.* Ed. Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. 54-70. Print.

"Institutional Web Pages." Department of Rhetoric and Writing. n.d. *University of Texas*. Web. 25 Aug. 2009. <http://www.drw.utexas.edu/>.

"Index to U.S. Colleges". n.d. Web. 3 May. 2009. <http://www.univsource.com/>.

"Instructor's Comments about Google Docs." Google Library Central. n.d. Web. 21 Oct. 2011. <www.google.com/>.

Johnson, Burke, and Larry Christensen. *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*. Boston: Alyn & Bacon, 2007. Print.

Kay, Alan C. "Computers, Networks and Education." Literacy, Technology, and Society: Confronting the Issues. Ed. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997. 150-59. Print.

Kaplan, Robert B. "Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education." *Language Learning* 16 (1): 1966. 1-20. Print.

---. "Cultural Thought Patterns Revisited." Ed. Ulla Connor and Robert B. Kaplan. *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987. Print.

336

Kennedy, George A. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric. Writings from the Greco-Roman World.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003. Print.

Kent, Thomas. Ed. *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. Print.

Kinneavy, James L. *A Theory of Discourse.* New York: Norton, 1971. Print.

Kirsch, Gesa, and Patricia L. Sullivan. Eds. *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. Print.

Kitzhaber, Albert R. *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1990.* Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1990. Print.

Klem, Elizabeth, and Charles Moran. "Computers and Instructional Strategies in the Teaching of Writing." *The Allyn and Bacon Sourcebook for College Writing Teachers.* Ed. James C. McDonald. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996. 89-100. Print.

Kolln, Martha. *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects.* 4th ed. New York: Longman Press, 2003. Print.

Kutz, Eleanor; Suzy Groden; and Vivian Zamel, eds. *The Discovery of Competence: Teaching and Learning with Diverse Student Writers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 1993. P rint.

Leki, Ilona. *Undergraduates in a Second Language: Challenges and Complexities of Academic Literacy Development.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2007. Print.

Lisle, Bonnie, and Sandra Mano. "Embracing a Multicultural Rhetoric." *Writing in Multicultural Settings*. Ed. Carol Severino, Juan C. Guerra, and Johnnella E. Butler. New York: MLA, 1997. Print.

"LMS Market Share Trends 2011-2014, Part I." *E-Literate*. Web. 10 Dec. 2010. <http://mfeldstein.com/>.

Lucaites, John et al. Ed. *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*. Revisioning Rhetoric. New York: Guilford Press, 1999. Print.

Lundin, Rebecca Wilson. "Teaching with Wikis: Toward a Networked Pedagogy." *Computers and Composition* 25 (2008): 432-48. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea. "Writing, Technologies, and the Fifth Canon." *Computers and Composition*. Vol. 23 (2): 2006. 169-177. Web. 22 Nov. 2009. <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/>.

---. "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal* 12 (1991): 4-10. Print.

Lundin, Rebecca W. "Teaching with Wikis: Toward a Networked Pedagogy." *Computers and Composition* 25 (2008): 432-48. Web. 14 Oct. 2010. <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/>.

Lunsford, Andrea. "Key Questions for a New Rhetoric." *What is the New Rhetoric?*, Susan E. Thomas, ed. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

---. "Writing, Technologies, and the Fifth Canon." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing*. Vol. 23 (2): 169-177. New York: Ablex P, 2006. Print.

---. "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal* 12 (1991): 4-10. Print.

McComiskey, Bruce. *Teaching Composition as a Social Process.* Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2000. Print.

McComisky, Bruce. *Teaching Composition as a Social Process.* Logan: Utah State UP, 2000. Print.

McQuade, Donald. "Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies." *Composition and Literary Studies.* Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn. 482 —519. Print.

Mitchell, W. J. T. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1994. Print.

Moffett, James . *Teaching the Universe of Discourse.* Boston: Houghton, 1968. Print.

Moran, Charles. "Technology and the Teaching of Writing." *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies.* Ed. Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. 203-223. Print.

Murray, Donald. "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory.* Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2003. 3-6. Print.

Myers-Breslin, Linda. "Technology, Distance, and Collaboration: Where are These Pedagogies Taking Composition?" *Reforming College Composition: Writing the Wrongs.* Ed. Ray Wallace, Alan Jackson, and Susan Lewis Wallace. Westport: Greenwood P, 2000. 161-77. Print.

"NAEPFACTS: Can Students Benefit From Process Writing? (April 1996)." *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education.* Web. 24 Sep. 2010. <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

Nelms, Gerald, and Maureen Goggin. "The Revival of Classical Rhetoric for Modern Composition Studies: A Survey." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 23 (1993): 11-26. Print.

"NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing." *National Council of Teachers of English - Homepage.* Web. 9 July 2010. <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs>.

"NCTE Guidelines on Multimodal Literacies: A Summary Statement Developed by the Multimodal Literacies Issue Management Team of the NCTE Executive Committee." NCTE Executive Committee, November 2005. 23 Dec. Web. 29 Aug. 2010. <http://www.ncte.org/>.

Newkirk, Thomas. "Direction and Misdirection in Peer Response." *College Composition and Communication.* Oct. 1984: 301-311. Web. 2 Apr. 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

North, Stephen. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field.* Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1987. Print.

Nystrand, Martin, Stuart Greene, and Jeffrey Wiemelt. "Where Did Composition Come From?: An Intellectual History." *Written Communication* 10 (1993): 267-333. Print.

O'Donoghue, Thomas, and Keith Punch. *Qualitative Educational Research in Action:*

    Doing and Reflecting. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

"Outcomes Assessment of the University Writing Program." n.d. *University of Colorado*

    at Boulder. Web. 11 Sept. 2010. <http://www.colorado.edu/>.

Parker, Kevin. R., and. Joseph T. Chao."Wiki as a Teaching Tool." *Interdisciplinary*

    Journal of Knowledge and Learning Objects, 3. 57-72. Web. 17 Nov. 2010.

    <http://ijklo.org/>.

Perl, Sonja. "Understanding Composing." *College Composition and Communication* 31

    (1980): 363-69. Print.

---. "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers. "*Research in Teaching*

    English. 13:4 (December 1979): 317-36. Print.

Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. *Composition as a Human Science.* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP,

    1988. Print.

Pike, Kenneth L. *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human*

    Behavior. Vol. 1. Glendale, CA: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1954. Print.

Prince, Michael B. "A Rescue Plan for College Composition and High-School English."

    The Chronicle of Higher Education. 7 May 2011. Web 19 March 2010.

    <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Rescue-Plan-for-College/47452/>

Quintilian, Marcus Fabius. *Institutio Oratoria.* 5 vols. Trans. Donald A. Russell.

    Cambridge: Harvard U P, 2001. Print.

Rafoth, Bennett A. "Discourse Community: Where Writers, Readers, and Texts Come

Together." *The Social Construction of Written Comunication.* Ed. Bennett A.

Rafoth and Donald L. Rubin. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988. 131-46. Print.

"Raising the Bar: Employers' Views On College Learning In The Wake Of The

Economic Downturn." *Hart Research Associates.* The Association of American

Colleges and Universities, 20 Jan. 2010. Web. 12 July 2010.

<http://www.usc.edu/>.

Reid, Alexander. *The Two Virtuals: New Media and Composition.* Anderson, SC: Parlor

P, 2007. Print.

Rice, Jeff. "Symposium: What should College English be? Networks and New Media."

College English 69.2 (2006): 127-33. Web. 14 Aug. 2010.

<http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/>.

Roblyer, M.D., and Aaron Herbert Doering. *Integrating Educational Technology into

Teaching.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2010. Print.

Rohman, Gordan "Pre-Writing the Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process." *College

Composition and Communication* 16.2 (1965): 106-12. Print.

Rohman, D. Gordon, and Albert O. Wlecke. *Pre-Writing: The Construction and

Applications of Models for Concept Formation in Writing.* USOE: Cooperative

Research Project No. 2174. Print.

Sanchez, Raul. *The Function of Theory in Composition Studies.* New York. SUNY P,

2001. Print.

Sanoff, Alvin P. A Perception Gap over Students' Preparation. *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 52(27): 2006. Print.

Sapp, Edwin. "Taming the Byte: Computers in the Classroom." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College,* Vol. 23 (2):137-40. May 1996. Print.

Selfe, Cynthia L. *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-first Century: The Importance of Paying Attention.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois U P, 1999. Print.

---. *Creating a Computer-supported Writing Facility: a Blueprint for Action.* Houghton, MI: Computers and Composition, 1989. Print.

Selfe, Cynthia L., and Gail E. Hawisher. *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy From the United States.* Mahwah, N. J: Erlbaum, 2004. Print.

Selfe, Cynthia L., and Brian Bailie. ""If You Don't Believe That You're Doing Some Good with the Work That You Do, Then You Shouldn't Be Doing It": An Interview with Cindy Selfe." *Composition Forum 21.* Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition, Spring 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2010. <http://compositionforum.com/>.

Shaughnessy, Mina P. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing.* New York: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.

Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992). Print.

"Smart Survey Design." *Survey Monkey.* (Tutorials). n.d. Web. 12 Feb. 2009. <http://s3.amazonaws.com/>.

Sommers, Elizabeth, and James Collins. "Microcomputers and Writing." *Computers and Composition* 2.4 (1985): 27 —35. Print.

Sommers, Nancy. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." Ed. Victor Villanueva. *Cross Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. 2nd ed. Urbana: NCTE, 2003. 43-54. Print.

Spandel, Vicki, Judy Arter, and Ruth Culham. *Student Portfolio: Exploring the Possibilities*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1993. Print

Spencer, Herbert. *The Philosophy of Style*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1892. Digitized by Google. Original from the University of Michigan. n.d. Web. 29 Dec. 2009. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/>.

Spitzer, Michael. "Local and Global Networking: Implications for the Future." *Computers and Writing: Theory, Research, Practice*. Ed. Deborah H. Holdstein, and Cynthia L. Selfe. New York: MLA, 1990. 58-70. Print.

Stevens, Scott. "Serious Work: Students Learning from Students." *JAC Online* 16.2 (1996): Web. 2 Feb. 2010. <http://www.cas.usf.edu/>.

Straub, Richard. "Students' Reactions to Teacher Comments: An Exploratory Study." *Research in the Teaching of English*. 31.1 (1997): 97-119. Print.

Strauss, Anselm C., and Juliet M. Corbin. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage, 1990. Print.

Sullivan, Patrick. "What Is 'College-Level' Writing?" *Teaching English in the Two-Year College. (*2003): 374 -90. Web. 14 June 2010. <http://www.ncte.org/journals/>.
344

Taylor-Powell, Ellen. "Analyzing Quantitative Data." *Program Development.*
University of Wisconsin Cooperative. Web. 28 Feb. 2010. Web.
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/>.

"THECB-Online Institutional Resumes." *THECB - Home.* State of Texas. n.d. Web. 11
July 2010. <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/>.

Trimbur, John. "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." *Cross-Talk in*
Comp Theory: A Reader. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2003. 461-
78. Print.

"U.S. Colleges, Community Colleges, & Universities by State (by Region) American
Universities by State." *U.S. Colleges U.S. Universities Higher Education in the*
U.S. of America & Canada Canadian Universities. n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2009.
http://www.univsource.com/>..

"USC's Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence." *Office of the Provost.* University of
Southern California, 2008. Web. 12 Nov. 2010. <http://welcomestaff.usc.edu/>.

Vie, S. "Blogs: Where the World Wide Web and the Writer's Journal Meet." Ed. Terry
Carter , and Maria A. Clayton. *Writing and the iGeneration: Composition in the*
Computer-mediated Classroom. 69-83 . Southlake, TX: Fountainhead P, 2008.
Print.

Vygotsky, Lev. *Thought and Language.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962. Print.

Warnock, Scott. *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2009.
Print.

Whipple, Bob. "Notes on a New Writing Process: Multimediation as Personal Change

    Agent." *Computers and Composition Online* (Spring 2008). Web. 2 Apr. 2010.

    <http://www.bgsu.edu/>.

Williamson, Dugald, Russell McDougall, and Donna Lee Brien. "An 'Odd Couple' for

    Teaching Writing: The Tutorial Takes in the Committee Meeting." *International*

    Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 20.3 (2009): 362-72.

    Print.

Windschitl, Mark. "Framing Constructivism in Practice as the Negotiation of Dilemmas:

    An Analysis of the Conceptual, Pedagogical, Cultural, and Political Changes

    Facing Teachers." *Review of Educational Research* 72.2 (2002):

    131-175. Web. 11 Feb. 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

Wolff, Donald. "Asynchronous Online teaching." *Strategies for Teaching First-year*

    Composition. Ed. Roen, Duane, Veronica Pantoja, Lauren Yena, Susan K. Miller,

    and Eric Waggoner. Urbana, IL, NCTE, 2002. 440-52. Print.

Wolley, Edwin C. *Handbook of Composition of Composition: A Compendium of Rules*

    Regarding Good English, Grammar, Sentence Structure, Paragraphing,

    Manuscript, Arrangement, Punctuation, Spelling, Essay Writing, and Letter

    Writing. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1907. OnRead.com. A Digital Book by

    Google Books. n.d. Web. 21 Feb. 2010. <http://www.onread.com/>.

Woods, William F. "Nineteenth-Century Psychology and the Teaching of Writing."

    College Composition and Communication. Vol. 36. No. 1. Feb. 1985. Print.

Woodson, Linda. "Imaginative Literature: Creating Multicultural Conversations in the
Composition Classroom." 184-192. 2002. Ed. Christina Russell McDonald, and
Robert L. McDonald. *Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons.* Carbondale:
Southern Illinois UP, 2002. Print.

"WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." *Council of Writing Program
Administrators* July 2008. 17 Apr. 2010. Web. <http://www.wpacouncil.org/>.

Wysocki, Ann, et al. *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the
Teaching of Composition.* Logan, UT: Utah State U P, 2004. Print.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake. Keynote Address. Federated Rhetoric Symposium:
"Delivering the Story: The Canons of Rhetoric." Texas A&M University-
Commerce. Memorial Student Center, Commerce, TX. 23 Feb. 2007.

--- . "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key." *CCC* 56.2 (2004): 297-
328. 2004. Web. 18 Apr. 2009. <http://www.ncte.org/>.

---. "The Plural Commons: Meeting the Future of English Studies." 382-401. *The
Relevance of English : Teaching that Matters in Students' Lives.* Ed. Robert P.
Yagelski, and Scott A. Leonard. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2002. Print.

---. *Delivering College Composition: The Fifth Canon* Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.,
Portsmouth, 2006. Print.

Young, Richard E. "Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical
Invention." *Research on Composing: Points of Departure.* Ed. Charles R.
Cooper, and Lee Odell. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1978), 29- 47. Print.

---. "Concepts of Art and the Teaching of Writing." *The Rhetorical Tradition and Modern Writing.* Ed. James J. Murphy. New York, MLA, 1982. 131-42. Print.

---. "Invention: A Topographical Survey." *Teaching Composition*: *10 Bibliographic Essays*. Ed. Gary Tate. Fort Worth: Texas Christian UP, 1976. Print.

Ziv, Nina D. "The Ecology of Writing." *College English*, 48 (1986): 364-375. Print.

APPENDIX A

Writing Program Director "A" Interview

Interview Questions and Responses for
First-Year Writing Program Directors

Writing Program Director "A"

Institution: State University (62,807 students)

Regional Location: Midwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: First-Year Writing Program

Date: August 13, 2009

Duration: 36 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

Currently, the first-year writing program director and instructors are refining diagnostic and assessment strategies presently in place to evaluate first-year college writers. Students maintain their writing portfolios that contain their diagnostic writing sample, as well as their submitted assigned essays that are initially commented upon by instructors and then are revised multiple times by students before receiving a final grade for the assignment. This progressive revision of essay drafts facilitates the students to recursively revise their compositions with the objective to overcome any writing deficiencies during individualistic and peer-reviewed revising activities. We feel that the recursive revising process, initiated by instructor feedback on initial drafts, and progressing through multiple iterations, enables students and instructors to assess performance and progress on the assigned essays. Comparing the initial evaluations with a final evaluation and grade is considered an effective way to measure each student's writing progress on an assignment during a defined period of instruction and learning.

In the first-year writing program, students submit their essay drafts online for instructor and peer evaluations. The first-year writing program uses its own university-developed proprietary online learning program. The key features and benefits of this online learning platform include students' access to a digital composition text, as well as routines for obtaining their instructors' feedback on drafts and online peer reviews. Using this online learning platform, students can also maintain their writing portfolios in electronic as well as in printed formats. within our state legislature have been active in working with University administrators to develop program assessment benchmarking for the varied academic disciplines. As these legislature-driven assessment programs are further refined and developed, their application will probably, to some degree, apply more

extensively to the evaluation of first-year writing within our own English department. Such assessment initiatives may also change over time as the political realities of the state's economy dictate budgeting priorities.

Presently, the writing portfolio approach facilitates the recursive model of revising and composing and also enables instructors and students to view and assess writing performance.

Since you mentioned evaluation tools, there are some writing rubrics used that are used to help guide students in terms of explaining what are the key attributes assigned to various levels of writing. In their own way, rubrics are effective. However, rubrics function more as descriptive tools of what certain aspects of writing need to be. The real key to assessment is found in the writing portfolio process which encourages ongoing instructor-student interaction, peer reviewing, and focuses revision.

The university also uses semester evaluations of its instructors by students. This type of surveys would be used to identify negative and positive teaching abilities in our instructors. However, these types of evaluations are more oriented to the overall teaching or pedagogical aspects, and they do not really delve into content and the assessment of how effective the teaching is in terms of improving students' writing levels or, for that matter, their improvement over the course of the semester or over the year.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be measured and subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

As I mentioned previously, the writing portfolio approach, wherein students are empowered to revise their instructor-evaluated and peer-reviewed composition drafts, strongly reveals student writing progress through successive iterations of revising and facilitates instructor and student interaction throughout the writing process on assignments.

The concept of measuring or assessing student writing progress is situated in the writing portfolio approaches that are ultimately tracked and measured by instructors within their own classroom environments. During instructor training and workshops, evaluation techniques are shared, but there is no emphasis to formalize program-wide benchmarks and quantitative measures. It would probably be difficult and unnecessary to do so since the current writing portfolio strategy appears to be working and conducive to helping students improve their writing.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

Working closely with students during the prewriting and revising phases of their writing projects is one important way to assess their progress and enables the students to assess how they are progressing.

The writing portfolio approach, supported by digital instructor comments and student peer reviews, provides a strong assessment routine throughout each student's writing process.

Our objectives are to provide learning and teaching environment that supports students at their individual points of need throughout the writing process. This is really what drives our instructional objectives throughout the program.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

Overall, the first-year writing program is focused on teaching students how to write *rhetorically*. This approach would entail teaching students how to focus their writing so that it meets the needs of a defined audience. Teaching the precepts of the five classical rhetorical canons, and how they are used in the writing process based on recursive revision, is the basic overall pedagogical strategy.

The digital composition textbook used in the program provides online resources and links so that students can enhance their knowledge of the rhetorical canons and apply them to their writing process. The first-year writing program also emphasizes the value of collaborative peer involvement throughout the writing process as a means to help students identify and overcome writing issues. Students are given writing topics and projects that they collaboratively develop and refine through instructor interaction. Students also engage in a research project throughout the semester, using digital media, accessed through our own Carmen learning management system, to network and peer review their ideas during the invention and composing phases of the writing process. This is a digitally enhanced and supported environment that encourages and facilitates intelligent commentary on a range of research topics, as well as online links for students to use to improve their writing skills.

Effective ongoing instructor commentaries on each student's composition drafts are essential for students to understand any deficiencies in any aspect of their writing. Our current digital text with its online links and resources is considered an important strategy in our teaching methodologies. The key principle here is early instructor and student involvement in the writing process.

Social collaboration during the writing process is important in improving writing. For this reason, we believe that collaborative peer reviews are important as a pedagogical approach.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* **and** *approaches*? **If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?**

As previously outlined, the digital text focuses instruction on a rhetorical approach wherein the writing process of invention, drafting, and recursive revision are emphasized. Over time, this basic pedagogical approach has supported our goals to improve students' writing. Instructors can use some of their own strategies and techniques as long as these approaches support the overall pedagogical framework of a writing portfolio-based writing process.

In our first-year writing program, its structure does not accommodate any teaching approaches that would create time-consuming departures from program objectives since instructors and students would be unable to keep up with the course syllabus.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* **for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?**

The first-year writing program conducts new and returning instructor workshops each semester in order to familiarize instructors with the digital text and how it is used with the University's online learning program. A lot of information about teaching, department and university policies, and about techniques that work and do not work, are shared during this time.

Currently, I function as the director of the first-year writing program, and I am also presently assisted by a full-time associate professor who is the assistant director. There are also several doctoral graduate students in composition/rhetoric who are on staff in the first-year writing program to help facilitate instructor training.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* **(FTF) classrooms where some form of** *computer-mediated instruction* **(CMI) or digital media is used?**

All of the classrooms provide some form of digital media whereby instructors use it directly with students, such as workstations or digital projection devices. Our instructors need to be proficient in using learning technologies, as well as our students in first-year composition.

Presently, all of the instruction in the first-year writing program is conducted in a live classroom setting with the instructor. We have developed a very rich digital learning

353

environment that complements and enhances first-year writing activities. Because of these resources, the two courses offered during the first year in the basic writing program are not offered in a completely online format.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

As noted above, we are not currently offering our basic writing program (English 110) as an online course offering. The use of the online Carmen learning system provides a complete digital learning context.

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

Overall, we would like to be able to plan and budget our resources so that they can continue to meet the needs of students with advancements in our digital-based instructional approaches that augment our classroom instruction and facilitate close instructor-student collaboration. The resources available online at various websites and through various web-based programs, such as Carmen will continue to be important drivers in our first-year writing program. Of course, we would like to continue to explore new learning modalities so that our program offers our first-year writers with innovative and meaningful ways to write, learn, and research issues and topics of interest.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

We are always seeking to improve and update our teaching methods. As the instructional resources continue to improve and provide new and different pathways, we would like our first-year writing program to be in "sync" with any digital strategies that would improve our students' writing and research skills.

As mentioned previously, we are using a digital composition textbook in our first-year writing classes that we will continue to enhance with digital instruction resources as we feel are necessary to improve the quality of our learning and teaching. Our digital textbook focuses a rhetorical approach to composition.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings that you think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

We are strong supporters of the CCCC and the NCTE. Several years ago, the NCTE recognized our first-year writing program for its achievements and innovations in teaching.

Any research data and assessment tools that these organizations are willing to provide would be beneficial. Since there are variances in the curriculum of first-year writing programs, as well as other variables, research findings would have to be viewed in a context-based environment that would account for the variance in student demographics, learning resources, and strategies that we presently use and some that we do not use.

Both organizations publish scholarly research papers about the writing process and the teaching of writing, so this information would be shared if it is considered beneficial are relevant.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I think we have covered the program's broader aspects and what we are trying to achieve here through our approaches. We will continue to solicit student and instructor feedback on our current teaching approaches. I am sure that the innovations in instructional resources brought about by digital technologies will continue to influence how we teach writing. I agree with many educators' perspectives that digital technologies, when applied appropriately in the first-year writing environment, will help improve students' writing. Technology is so pervasive; it is not limited to any one subject, teaching style, or even if instructors are so-called "early" or "late" adopters of technology in the classroom.

Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX B

Writing Program Director "B" Interview

**Interview Questions for
First-Year Writing Directors**

Writing Program Director "B"

Institution: State University (51,006 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: First-Year Writing Program—Department of Writing and Rhetoric

Date: August 21, 2009

Duration: 39 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

We would use several strategies to assess our instructors' abilities. The department uses written student evaluations with their teachers and some focus on course content. Once the responses are aggregated, they are then made available via e-mail to instructors. Beyond just assigning letter grades to our student essays, we use a modified writing portfolio—with some variations. Incremental assessments and helpful instructor comments on initial drafts are the two key items that the writing portfolio approach seems to provide.

We believe that writing portfolios facilitate multiple encounters between students and their instructors, as well as among peers. As a tool, the writing portfolio usually demonstrates a reveals how students is proceeding in the course. We do not have any specific standardized department assessment tools for instructors or students—the generic semester instructor evaluations are provided by the University.

We try to observe our instructors actually teaching at least once during the academic year. Generally, the feedback on these instructors' teaching observations is helpful for both teachers and writing program directors.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

We try to share ideas about improving our classroom teaching and also the assignments on the syllabus during our periodic workshops. We have a general orientation in a retreat format before the school year begins in the fall. If we facilitate these workshops correctly, we can break down into small groups of five or six instructors and share ideas and issues. This sharing of ideas among 30-40 instructors and graduate teaching assistants is very useful experience.

The Department of English and the Department of Writing and Rhetoric do not maintain formalized benchmarking criteria per se to quantitatively evaluate instructors or to track students' performance on writing assignments or similar facets of the program. Instructors and administrators in the first-year writing program meet regarding textbook use and acceptability, as well as teaching practices.

In our departmental setting, we have found that an ongoing exchange of ideas can be a very productive process for assessment. We believe that teachers learn best from seeing how other teachers teach and interrelate with their students in the classroom, during writing conferences, and in student evaluations. Working together in workshops where we evaluate student essays, and share ideas about what works effectively in terms of instructor comments and grades tend to be the best ways to internally assess quality of our teaching and what type of results are we seeing from this teaching.

Of course, we archive writing samples and instructor-graded writing assignments for review by the regional accrediting agencies. These type of assessments tend to be one-way in their review by the accrediting committee.

Our writing program assessments are also provided to the state governmental unit that requires program information and can be found under the state government Web address for our school.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

Basically, instructor feedback will identify what works and does not work during our workshop training activities. We develop learning objectives for our first-year writers that are written in the syllabi. We track these closely to see how they are demonstrated by our students in their writing assignments.

Fundamentally, we want our students to be able to organize their essays with an effective thesis statement, support paragraphs, and effective conclusions. In order to do this, we

must teach our students how to engage effectively in the writing process—prewriting, composing, revising, and editing/proofreading.

We also want our students to be able to construct sentences that are expressive, clear, and free of usage errors.

These should be the basic areas that we would assess in terms of our overall writing program. During the progress of the semester, both instructors and students would be able to see if these key areas are being successfully achieved as they work on their writing assignments and submit their writing portfolios for comments and peer reviews.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

Our overall objective is to teach students so they can express their ideas clearly and organize them so that their ideas come across logically. We want our students in the basic writing program to be able to write rhetorically and understand the fundamentals of rhetoric as these fundamentals relate to the recursive writing process that emphasizes revising.

We did not mandate that instructors adhere to any specific theory or theories of composition pedagogy. I guess you could say that we value those theories that enable students to apply the phases of a rhetorical writing process to their writing. We would endorse pedagogical approaches that enable students to revise their drafts and learn, as well as focus on the fundamentals of revising for clarity and organization.

We do value the role that peer collaboration assumes during the writing process.

I guess you could say we take a very practical approach to teaching the basics of rhetorical composition, leaning toward applying the canons of rhetoric and emphasizing the importance of peer collaboration throughout the writing process.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

The writing program does produce standardized syllabi for its first-year writing instructors and students. Instructors are permitted to make some modifications to the standardized syllabi. Standardized syllabi encompass some program learning objectives designed for all instructors and students. Instructors can use various instructional theories and approaches, as long as these pedagogies help students meet these desired

learning objectives. The approach here is to have some balance in the instructional approaches and avoid being too rigid and applying any one approach or technique.

In the first-year writing program of writing and rhetoric, the department standardizes the use of a basic text and a text with readings. Instructors can also use the Blackboard learning management program to post assignments and provide online routines for students to hear critique one another's essay drafts. Blackboard also provides online links to numerous websites that can help students acquire basic usage and writing skills.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

As I mentioned previously, we conduct a retreat before the beginning of the fall semester to provide workshops and training for both returning and new program instructors. These workshops are offered for full-time instructors, affiliated instructors, and graduate teaching assistants. A training workshop is also offered for current and new instructors at the beginning of the spring semester. Program policies and training guidelines are also available, as well as informal training. We try to provide resources online that will support some of the instructors' training needs on an as-needed basis. Some of our GTAs support our efforts to do this through Blackboard, Wiki, and blogging sites.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

While not all of the classrooms have workstations for each student, most all the classrooms now have some form of digital media whereby the instructor can use computer-based media, such as computer projectors. Probably less than 10% of all classrooms are without some form of digital media. Most students bring their laptops to classes. A growing number of classes are now in zones that have Wi-Fi connection to the Internet.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

Several sections of the basic writing core courses are offered through the University's distance learning program.

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

In a large state University setting, classrooms are always a premium. We do try to keep our class sizes in the first-year writing program at or below 25 students per section. And,

we would always like to have digital instructional resources in each classroom to facilitate in-class writing.

As graduate students phase through the program as instructors, the training of new instructors is a key program need.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

We are always open to modifying or changing our pedagogical practices in order to better support our teaching faculty and also improve our students' writing abilities.

Our current texts emphasize a rhetorical approach to composition pedagogy. We supplement these texts with other readings that enable students to analyze topical issues and respond.

We also teach basic research skills in our basic writing program so that students will be able to translate this knowledge to their researching and writing requirements in their other courses.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings that you think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

I believe these two organizations provide instructional materials and scholarly research that we can use and adapt in our own writing program. It would be nonproductive to generate generic tools for research or pedagogy that would apply for all college instructional curriculums.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

As you briefly mentioned in our conversation today, there seems to be a strong requirement at our university for students to be able to write persuasively and convincingly in most all other academic disciplines.

The widespread use of digital media will continue to be a strong inducement for its growing use in teaching writing. Online learning programs, such as Blackboard, provide

meaningful extensions to one-on-one classroom instruction—a factor that assures they will continue into the future.

It also appears that online networking will continue to emphasize social collaboration in the writing classroom. I am sure over time collaborative routines in basic writing programs will change to accommodate new digital media and routines. Students helping students in the writing process is definitely something that digital media can generate effectively.

Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX C

Writing Program Director "C" Interview

Interview Questions for
First-Year Writing Directors

Writing Program Director "C"

Institution: State University (49,110 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Professor and Executive Director of the University Writing Center; primary evaluator of curriculum-wide writing programs

Date: July 31, 2009

Duration: 49 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

I am a tenured Professor of English who is presently a faculty member whose staff position is Executive Director of the University's Writing Center. I have published extensively in the areas of composition studies. I am also occupying a rather unique role in facilitating and evaluating the curriculum-wide writing programs that are nested in many of the academic departments at the University. At this university, undergraduate students take first-year core writing classes from instructors in their major fields of study and also from the English Department's Writing Programs Office (WPO) that administers the department's undergraduate writing courses (English 104, 203, 241 and 301). These classes satisfy the university's requirement for a year-long or two semester course in what we would call first-year composition or freshman writing. Instructors in these academic major fields of study teach writing obviously with a focus on their academic area. I function in an ombudsperson's role to help in curriculum and pedagogy for these instructors. In this way, I span several academic areas within the university system: I report to an administrative Dean as Executive Director of the University's Writing Center and also maintain a strong dotted-line relationship with the curriculum director of the first-year writing program and the chair of the department of English here at the University.

I mentioned this in order to give you some insights as to what I evaluate that might be somewhat unique and different from what instructors in the basic writing program in the

department of English would be assessing. For example, why work with an instructor is teaching the core writing course in the area of agriculture, I am directly helping this person apply some of the rhetorical writing approaches. As you can probably realize, these core courses in writing taught by instructors in the varied academic programs prepare students for future writing and research projects. In some situations, the use of a portfolio or modified portfolio approach to assessing student writing may have application or may not depending on the departmental requirements.

As an ombudsperson in this curriculum-wide core writing program at the university, I realize how this curriculum-wide program functions as a model for varied curricular initiatives. It can apply to other key learning outcomes such as information literacy, interdisciplinary learning, basic research activities, and critical thinking. I believe there is a lot of promise for University to interact with its curriculum-wide writing programs in fruitful ways and support the transformation of undergraduate learning to innovative interdisciplinary approaches.

In this context, there are a variety of ways in which I can support other instructors in designing evaluation techniques for their students writing. The key of course is how instructors in any academic discipline who teach basic writing design their assignments. Assignments should be developed with an objective that promotes intellectual curiosity about the topic, encourages directed research at some level, and also enables students to interact and interrelate on a range of topics with their peers or in public forums. When students' writings take on a more visible and public dimension, they are easier to assess. I would argue also that when students know their writing is to be peer reviewed and evaluated in a more open and public, as opposed to private, context, they tend to put more effort and are more conscientious about what they write.

This type of writing is more collaborative and perhaps less expressive. It is focused more on student's responses to relevant issues that impact their lives. In terms of assessing the critical thinking and invention aspects of students' writing, this approach enables us to both teach critical thinking and how it is applied in the writing process.

I designed and am designing a variety of assessment tools that instructors can use to evaluate their students' writings on an assignment or project basis. It is easier to assess writing on a specific assignment basis, since the overall objective and focus on the type of writing and writing tools seems more self-contained and reliable.

Yes: the university does provide examples of students' written assignments to the evaluative committees of the statewide programs, particularly the accrediting groups, such as SACS [Southern Association of College and Schools]. These assessments are provided to satisfy the accrediting aspects of the program in the University. In terms of how these assessments can be used to help evaluate instructors and students' writing performances, they tend to be used when a "negative" evaluation or rating occurs.

Based on my years of experience in teaching undergraduate writing hand in working with students in my capacity In the University's Writing Center, I emphasize that effectively assessing students' writing must be based on effective writing projects that are assigned with clear objectives and enable students to creatively and critically think about topics they are writing about.

I believe that a portfolio system or modified portfolio system enables or facilitates the most effective way to teach writing and assess students' writing progress. In response to your prompt about quantifying goals or setting measurable objectives for students' writing assignments, I believe this would be somewhat too generic and global to be an accurate way to assess outcomes.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

What is relevant here is to establish some guidelines as to what really constitutes assessment. As you briefly mentioned in your remarks before we started the questions, college English and rhetoric departments may be looking at several things to assess, overall the universities in a corporate sense might be wanting to assess how well students write in their senior year before they graduate, committees and state legislatures may be looking at certain things to assess state-supported higher education institutions, and even the business world expresses interest in hiring college graduates who can think critically and in write clearly.

I believe that our first-year writing program goals and other relevant information can be found at links on the university's main webpage that will then provide links to the state government link for each state-funded college or university.

The trend I am seeing is that assessments are really a function of the individual settings of each institution, rather than pursuing generic benchmarking and objectives that can be somewhat measured to show student improvement or progress. We can write an objective measurement that says "improve student's ability to write persuasively" or "improve students' abilities to essays that are free of usage issues," or "write essays that are focused and well-organized." It is really up to a group of writing instructors to design assessment criteria that can be measured on a course basis. The portfolio method seems to be the best way to validate the levels of students' writing. It is an ongoing process that involves instructors and students working on a common piece of writing with the objective to make it better. You can assign incremental grades to show progress or assign an overall final grade and then rank-order your students' grades to show collective levels of writing skills. A standard writing rubric that provides guidelines as to what constitutes

various levels of writing performance is helpful in getting both instructors and students on the same page.

Some writing programs set forth desired learning outcomes as goal statements. For example, one goal statement might read: "students will be able to focus their essays with a clear and specific thesis statement." The degree to which an individual student meets these criteria would be reflected in his or her letter grade for the assignment and the attempt remarks that the instructor places on a graded essay that would pertain to you thesis statements. It would appear to be impractical to share information to others in a quantifiable way about specific aspects of students' writing, such as thesis statement skills, usage levels, and essay organization.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

Overall, I would think that we can assess how students perform on a class by class basis based on some standardized assignments. These assignments might be to write about topics of interest and to argue a position. Argumentation skills are very important in teaching students to think logically and express their thoughts in a convincing manner, using either their own native ideas or using a combination of their own ideas and research. Based on the percentage of A's, B's, C's, etc., we could determine what might be some areas to focus on or modify in either the syllabus or in the classroom instructional approach.

I think there is an important point to make here when it comes to assessments and the sharing of these assessments. The point here may be perhaps obvious, but it is one that needs to be emphasized. Given a standardized syllabus or even a common assignment across a first-year writing course, the outcomes will differ in terms of students' writing performance and grades depend upon the pedagogical process used. If some instructors facilitate more peer collaboration and more writing conferences during the span of the writing assignment then do other instructors, this difference in instructional approach may produce differences in students' performances and grades could very as a consequence.

So, if the central question is to validate student improvement in writing skills, it must be viewed in a very multidimensional manner that accounts for the dynamics of the instructional process. Developing assessments for college writing programs is a very challenging task. Instructors who undertake these types of activities usually appreciate very quickly the many variables involved. They also usually come to appreciate that it would be very difficult and perhaps not very worthwhile to quantify student performance in attaining certain writing objectives. I believe that answers your question about quantifying measurements as it pertains to assessing students' writing skills.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

Using a recursive writing process approach is fundamental. The canons of rhetoric are the stepping stones to assure that the student engages his or her mind and participates in an ongoing process of revising.

I like the focus that the collaborative or social learning theory brings to the writing classroom—as it relates to peer or group collaboration. Facilitated correctly, peer collaboration is a very significant in helping students identify their writing issues and overcome them.

There is a growing emphasis on genre theory as it relates to facilitating writing based on the student-writer's past cultural and learning experiences. Genre theory falls under invention and it can be an important inducement to learning and applying writing skills. However, I believe student should be challenge beyond their comfort sons of what they have experienced or will continue to experience in their cultural and social background or environments. One of the enabling aspects of a college degree is to foster students' perceptions of life and relating to others in ways that go beyond those patterns that they have used or experienced previously.

We take an approach In the university's Writing Center that encourages writers to respond on a community blog or topic of interest. It seems that issue-oriented topics motivate many students to take stand and write about topics of which they have some interest. The vitality of the University's Writing Center is that it promotes this type of writing on community-based issues.

I guess you could say that an effective pedagogical strategy is one that empowers students to think critically about topics and to employ the canons of rhetoric in writing academic papers using the writing process approach.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

My experience here at this university spans the English department writing program and the core writing programs in several other academic fields. My range of responsibilities prompts me to note that the texts we employ focus a rhetorical approach to writing. We also encourage what we would call as writing instructors a recursive writing process model in which students can overcome their deficiencies through revision.

Another way of answering this question would be to say that the objectives outlined in the course syllabus would not always be achieved if instructors preferred their pedagogical theories over those that would help students understand the assignments and spend sufficient time in revising their essays after they received some initial instructor comments and peer critiques. That is also not to say that there are some theories that would not conflict with the overall objectives of the program.

Generally, our instructors focus their teaching approaches in ways that implement a writing process model that entails collaboration with instructors and students, and also access to other resources, such as the University's Writing Center for tutorial sessions or accessing online resources as well. Writing instructors learn very quickly the value of referring students to the Writing Center for help when certain students demonstrate they are experiencing deficiencies in some aspect of their writing that need to be addressed and corrected in order for them to be successful in the course.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

The University's Department of English (Writing Programs Office) trains its freshman composition or first-year writing instructors prior to the fall and spring semesters. This training is usually conducted in a pre-semester workshop format and focuses on syllabi development, teaching approaches using the standardized texts, as well as expectations and policies of the department.

The director of first-year writing or freshman composition in the department supervises the training and presents several topics, as well as other instructors and graduate teaching assistants.

In terms of the curriculum-wide core writing courses in the varied academic disciplines, usually a handful of instructors and graduate students in each academic area will teach these classes. I work with these instructors to facilitate their development of teaching objectives and syllabi.

One aspect of training which I try to emphasize is the role of the University's Writing Center. When my staff and I make presentations to instructors during their training workshops, we always emphasize that the Writing Center should be considered an adjunct to the classroom instruction—and not just a place where students are referred or occasionally go for tutorial assistance in their writing projects. We try to provide links to online resources that instructors can use to improve their teaching skills. Some academic disciplines and instructors are carefully linking the Writing Center as an ongoing resource in the writing process. Over time, I believe we will start seeing more and more assignments linked to the resources provided by the Writing Center, especially as these

assignments relate to writing and research activities required in many of the academic disciplines.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

Most all the classroom settings have some type of digital instructional resources—such as workstations and digital projection from an instructor's podium. Some are also in campus wireless (Wi-fi) zones.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

There are several distance learning courses offered in first-year writing core courses. These courses are offered through the department of English on a semester by semester basis.

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

Since I do not teach first-year composition programs per se, but function more in an ombudsman's role, I really do not have accurate views on what might be the key needs in the program. Based on the knowledge I have in my role in evaluating and facilitating curriculum wide core writing courses in the varied academic disciplines, it is accurate to state that students benefit from tax that challenge them to write a range of subjects that are contemporary to their interests and enable them to share their ideas during the writing process with their peers.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

(This question was not addressed during the telephonic interview since the responded indicated that she was not actively teaching first-year composition in the classroom in her staff position as Executive Director of the University's writing Center.)

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings that you think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

The websites of these organizations do have links on the topic of assessments. There are published refereed articles and scholarly findings which might be of interest to those involved in instructor and student assessments.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

As you have gathered from my responses, I currently occupy a unique position at the University in terms of its core writing programs. I facilitate and evaluate curriculum-wide core writing programs in the academic majors offered at the University. I also have an abiding interest in the role that the Writing Center assumes presently and will assume in the future.

Digital technology will certainly continue to exert a major influence on how we teach first-year writing. Certainly, digital media supports invention and the other rhetorical canons. Since recursive revision within the writing process model is proving to be effective, technology enables students to have the digital routines to compose, revise, and share their writing and collaborative peer review strategies.

I envision that the Writing Center will continue to provide a growing range of resources and services for the college writer. In addition to its expanded role in writing and research activities across the curriculum, writing centers can and will take on added services to help students network their academic projects, benefit that can only help to improve their critical and analytical perspectives on the subjects they study. In some settings and universities, writing centers will become clearinghouses for the networking of ideas and the development of writing skills necessary to produce quality and timely critical research writings on a wide range of subjects.

This is been an enjoyable conversation about topics that we do not often get to talk about given our priorities and focus.

Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the

interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX D

Writing Program Director "D" Interview

Writing Program Director "D"

Institution: State University (51,000 students)

Regional Location: West

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Associate Professor and Director of The Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR)

Date: August 14, 2009

Duration: 33 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

Let me give you a quick overview of my situation here at the University, since it is somewhat different than in traditional English department courses that offer freshman writing.

Presently, I reported to an assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. Organizationally, The Program for Writing and Rhetoric is under the Department of Communications at the University. So, I closely coordinate the first-year core writing courses for several academic disciplines. While I do not report organizationally to the Department of English, I do closely coordinate with the chair and professors in the English department to develop working committee lines of contact and coordination regarding the direction of the program that I oversee.

The Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) is presently a freestanding program in the College of Arts and Sciences responsible for campus-wide instruction in first-year undergraduate writing. The program coordinates and oversees all writing curricula and instruction intended to meet college and campus requirements, including efforts in specific disciplines (e.g., Ecology and Biology and Physiology) and in targeted campus programs (e.g., Residential Academic Programs). The university is strongly oriented to research and receives many grants for its research programs from numerous public and private sources. To be truly successful at this institution, undergraduates must acquire strong writing and research skills early in their academic careers. This situation helps direct and emphasize the importance of the PWR in the University's overall curriculum.

Presently, the University is required to evaluate the effectiveness of many of its programs. *The motivation for such evaluations come from the state government, federal government, and from other organizations that actively find the University's research programs.* So, as you can appreciate, we are working through various committees to assure that we have a common plan and common objectives for evaluation. This approach is to basically assure uniformity and avoid any conflicts of overlapping evaluation or measurement activities.

Since the PWR is truly a curriculum-wide basic writing course for undergraduates here, I coordinate carefully with individual instructors and committees in the various academic disciplines. Each academic discipline may have slightly varying requirements for assessing the effectiveness of student writing and how such writing is applied to the scholarship in their areas. The evaluation strategy that I develop is one that can measure our program's effectiveness to meet the needs of the hierarchy of the deans and institutional leaders, as well as meeting the objectives of the individual academic departments and divisions here.

I am in the beginning stages of doing this and it becomes a challenge both in terms of my administration and my ongoing communication with all the academic areas and professors with whom I have regular contact. As with most institutional-wide programs, the plans are put together in successive stages, starting with setting some basic objectives or goals. There is a lot of give-and-take in committee work as you can imagine in this effort. It is very time-consuming, and it is a requirement that is added to the busy workloads of our ongoing teaching and research responsibilities. It is important that I keep things going and also report progress and review the status of objectives and goals with the appropriate divisional deans so that we obtain incremental approval. It is really important for me and the overall program that I obtain ongoing suggestions and approvals from various divisional leaders, rather than presenting committee work to them that suggests or reflects completed work status. Knowing how to work within the checks and balances of the academic environment is the key to addressing this important area of measurements and program evaluations. From the divisional deans and department chairs to the course instructors, everyone wants program evaluations—that measure both student and instructor proficiencies—to be appropriate, correct, and meaningful. In a large state University that generates significant research, program evaluations receive careful attention as they are being developed, during the period that these evaluations are applied and assimilated, and also as they are published for the varied audiences.

Given the background I have outlined for our program assessments, I would like to mention that we are in the early phases of planning and updating the evaluation of our PWR program. The data that we obtain from the students' evaluations of their instructors on a semester basis is one component or assessment tool. This assessment tool provides an effective way to assess if our instructors are meeting basic are necessary instructional objectives. This assessment is part of the overall aspect of program evaluations.

While we always are looking at ways to update the basic student assessment tool, we also must develop measurements that address program content and learning outcomes that address the various academic disciplines' needs.

Optimally, the areas evaluated in the student assessments of their instructors should encompass those areas that are also considered as learning objectives and outcomes that are meaningful in the various academic disciplines. Given a set of measurable learning objectives regarding first-year writing proficiency, various academic areas may analyze and categorize the data along those lines that are relevant to their own needs and reporting. Therefore, flexibility is required in order that the assessment effort meet a variety of needs and expectations.

My challenge is to continually work with the committee members and deans involved in this evaluation process of the PWR to modify any objectives or measurements. Modification and refinement of the assessment process on an incremental or ongoing basis ensures that we can continue to assess and measure those areas that are important to be assessment and reporting needs on a university-wide basis and also the individual needs and requirements of specific academic divisions or departments.

The assessment tools that feed into the overall program evaluation from these various sources constitute surveys by students, peer evaluations of instructors, and assessments that groups and organizations in the private and public sectors require for their reporting needs. If the state legislatures or some other assessment body, such as the one you mentioned as part of the accrediting agency for higher education, require certain program aspects to be measured and evaluated, then these requirements provide additional layers of data gathering and reporting that the PWR program and the university must meet. I work closely also with the University's office for statistical research, since this area also overlaps some of the requirements for providing data on the assessments of PWR.

So, program assessment is more than just a survey of instruction that is conducted by PWR: it is a series of assessments that can involve direction and coordination from various interdisciplinary committees and deans that are coordinated in terms of their development, application, and reporting.

Multidisciplinary assessment tools in a university setting are always challenging to develop. However, once they are correctly focused by appropriate goals and measurement tools, their usage over time is a function of identifying and implementing ongoing modifications to reflect new or changing requirements in the various academic disciplines.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

I believe I touched on this in my previous responses. As is the case in any effective instructional program measurements, we want to be sure to measure the instructional methods and abilities of our instructors and also measure certain threshold points that indicate how our students are progressing and how they are developing their writing skills. In order to obtain assessments in these areas, we use student evaluations of their instructors and course as one dimension. Another important dimension is to evaluate the development of our students' skills over the course of their writing assignments. Using a writing portfolio approach is one important way that we can judge our students' writing skills over the period of assignment—from its prewriting to its final draft phase. Instructors can give initial grades or incremental grades during the progress of the assignment. I think this is one of the more important and relevant ways that student writing can be assessed and appreciated by both the instructor and student. We assimilate and assess how our students' achieve on some standardized assignments in the curriculum and correlate the overall grade patterns with the objectives of the assignment and how the assignment was individually instructed by the instructor. There is some standardization in our syllabi for purposes of achieving program goals and enabling us to better support our instructors with text in tools that will produce improvements in our students writing. Standardization to some degree is a necessary component in assessment programs. We are not about trying to impair our instructors' teaching with too much standardization; however, standardization is needed to the degree that it can be useful in supporting program objectives and ensuring that our students achieve a level of writing skills that is expected of them as they progress through their academic majors.

We currently have over 70 faculty members in the PWR, which includes two tenured or tenure-track professors, approximately 55 full-time contract instructors, and approximately eight part-time lecturers appointed each semester. We only have nine graduate part-time instructors and teaching assistants. The PWR is structured somewhat differently than other writing programs of universities of comparable size and statute. Most other programs at other universities rely exclusively or primarily on graduate teaching assistants and adjunct instructors. This is one of our distinctives in the program. We also presently maintain our undergraduate class sizes at 20 students or less. We feel these teaching arrangements provide an optimal environment for learning and teaching in the core curriculum for PWR, and we also believe it will produce a better product— something that we will certainly measure and track carefully.

From the standpoint of our syllabi, we set specific learning outcomes as it applies to our students' writing. From a macro perspective, we want to be able to assess and share our students' proficiencies in focusing and organizing a topic, using a variety of rhetorical techniques to argue this topic, and also developing their written assignments in sentences that are free of grammar or usage problems. The published desired writing skills outcomes for undergraduate students are published on the website of the University s Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis.

377

Skills: In addition, students participating in the program are expected to acquire the following skills:

1. Ability to define a manageable topic and a provable, original thesis within given limits of time, research materials, and the writer's own knowledge.
2. Ability to shape an essay: to impose a clear, coherent form on a mass of facts, impressions, and ideas. In particular, ability to argue from, rather than toward, the thesis.
3. Ability to understand what proofs a given thesis requires. In particular, ability to discriminate between description and analysis, between repetition and development, and between relevant evidence and irrelevant detail.
4. Ability to arrange proofs in a logical sequence with clear transitions.
5. Ability to shape a clear, justifiable, and provocative conclusion.
6. For students in junior-level courses, ability to tailor written materials for oral presentation, and ability to speak clearly and convincingly before an audience.
7. For students working towards an "emphasis in writing," ability to vary tone and vocabulary to suit different audiences, and to use emotional as well as rational persuasion.
8. Ability to accept and profit from criticism, of substance and logic as well as style and mechanics, in revising preliminary drafts into finished work.
9. Ability to offer useful criticisms to other writers.
   (http://www.colorado.edu/pba/outcomes/units/uwrp.htm)

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

I touched on the response to this question in my prior response. We continually assess a variety of key areas that touch on our instructors' teaching abilities, as well as how our students are performing on certain writing assignments. Overall, everyone is looking for achievement and improvement as two key cornerstones of the writing program. Practically speaking, when we identify those areas that are proving effective for instructors and for students, we continued to write those into our overall program objectives or learning outcomes. In the same manner, when we find out that some structural approaches or areas in the syllabi are not as productive as we would like them to be, we work to modify these approaches so they will be more beneficial to instructors and students.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

As the Program for Writing and Rhetoric, we certainly embrace a rhetorical approach to writing. This approach would include of course the classical precepts of rhetoric and using the rhetorical canons. The rhetorical canons clearly address the writing process,

wherein prewriting, composing, and revision are keys to developing effective writing skills.

In an undergraduate writing curriculum, we are not addressing every single writing or rhetorical theorist or theory. While our instructors may prefer or lean toward certain theories of the writing process, the basic aspects of the program really just require that students understand how to focus and organize their writing assignments so that whatever rhetorical pattern or appeal they choose helps them achieve their writing goals.

Without going into a lot of instructional details, I believe this response addresses or speaks to your question from the aspect of what we are trying to achieve as critical goals in our first-year writing curriculum.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

This question appears to overlap the prior question somewhat. Suffice it to say that we are not mandating that our instructors —all of whom are very knowledgeable in teaching a rhetorical-based writing style in the writing process—teach anyone method or pedagogical theory. Instructors have their unique teaching styles that they used to help students achieve effective writing skills. The University has access to Blackboard and other digital learning formats that can be used to augment learning process and also provide formats where students can use these digital programs to improve their writing skills and more efficiently collaborate and communicate with their instructors and other students. I think it would be appropriate to say that are instructors understand what the learning objectives are for the course and they apply their own individual teaching techniques to their individual classes to help students become better writers.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

Since there are over 70 full-time and part-time instructors in the department, training in an workshop format is provided during the semesters and also on an informal basis as necessary to accommodate communication and training for instructors in the program.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

Presently, there are six writing courses offered in the program's lower-division category. The courses are offered in a workshop environment and students are instructed in classes with workstations and with computer media.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

Presently, we offer a workshop environment for our lower and upper-division category first-year writing classes. They are taught in a normal classroom setting with the digital instructional aids.

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

I am challenged because of the size of the program and the fact that it touches on a lot of different academic disciplines. There are always varying needs and these needs can change over time. I want our program to be able to accommodate these varying needs and changes. At the same time, I want our program to be more proactive role as a central resource at the University that can offer courses that can identify and meet the needs of the future aspects of research and writing. I think we are well-equipped to be current and future needs through the experience of our instructors and the resources we offer through the Writing Center.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

I really do not have any issues in the area of our instructional approaches. We hire and motivate our instructors to teach at consistently professional levels. I like to think our instructors are very student-oriented, and their overall teaching objective is to improve their students' writing skills so they can be successful in their academic programs.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings that you think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

These organizations have a long history of being beneficial to writing teachers at all levels. Their publications and their published journal articles are often employed by many instructors to increase their knowledge and skill levels as composition instructors.

Certainly, we would use any of their published findings or evaluation tools if we decided they were appropriate for our own instructional settings.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I think we have had a thorough discussion on the topic. I hope you can appreciate the opportunities and challenges that my program encounters in providing basic instruction in college composition. I think you also gathered that the instruction of college composition does not always necessarily fall within the scope and English department. Certainly there are core writing courses offered in English department here, but the abiding requirement is so specific and so important that the University segmented this requirement into what we often call a "free-standing" area of instruction. I am also aware through my own personal research that in other universities, some first-year writing or core composition classes are provided within the various academic departments themselves—and taught by their own instructors.

I believe that the curriculum-wide approach to writing does make sense in terms of how important developing writing skills for college students is to the students and universities' overall success. I am aware that universities, particularly large universities such as ours, approach the first-year writing program in varying ways. I also believe that, regardless of the divisional or departmental strategies that these universities implement, the role of the Writing Center will continue to be an important one in terms of providing important tutoring and resources for academic writers.

Good luck in your doctoral research. I would be interested in reading your findings.

Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX E

Writing Program Director "E" Interview

Interview Questions for
First-Year Writing Program Directors

Writing Program Director "E"

Institution: Regional Community College (44,100 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Professor of English, Department of English (former department chair of a community college)

Date: August 17, 2009

Duration: 42 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

After earning my doctorate in English, I have instructed in the current community college environment for over two decades. I instructed almost every course in the current curriculum that spans both literature and writing courses. I have served in varied administrative capacities, such as chair of the department and on various curriculum committees during my tenure here. Presently, I am teaching a full-load of courses and working on various committees and projects within the institutional setting.

Based on these experiences in an undergraduate setting, I believe the overall success of any measuring or evaluating the writing abilities of our students—and also judging the teaching abilities of our instructors—should start with identifying effective objectives. Also, I believe to a certain degree some of these objectives can be measured, although not all of them can be easily quantified so that they can be numerically reported in various formats. I believe that the trends in and students' grades is a very important indicator of how they are doing in the course and how they are writing.

I believe the initial consideration for assessment is what kind of platform or vehicle are we providing to the students so instructors can teach and students learn in situations where both are doing the most good and are most effective. For example, there should be some inconsistencies in the use of effective writing rubrics that show students what is expected of them at different grade levels. Consistent evaluation of students' writing assignments by instructors is imperative to overall program success. Said another way, instructors should grade fairly and consistently throughout the course and not be "demanding" on some assignments and "easier" than others.

I pay a lot of attention to how I grade and evaluate students' written assignments. Also, I believe that students can learn a lot from the written comments that instructors write on their drafts and also on their final products they submit for grades. There is a real need for consistency in the way we as instructors write evaluative comments on our students' papers. Not only should these comments be consistent and clearly written so that the student knows what they mean, but they also should be used to direct students in ways that will help them improve their writing or access resources to help them.

I am sure that, like most other state-supported schools in the state, we respond to requirements from college accrediting agencies. *I am also aware that in the current state legislature, there is a committee that is implementing initiatives to evaluate outcomes and students skills in their academic areas.* So, there may be several requirements to work with these committees to develop effective goals and measurable strategies for their reporting requirements.

Like most colleges and universities, we also conduct evaluations of our instructors and course content through end-of-course course student surveys. I think these end-of-course surveys are beneficial, although some students who do not do as well in the course as they wanted to will often downgrade and instructor's skills, which is an issue that may be a bias in such surveys that can never be reconciled.

Overall, I believe that teaching faculty can develop program goals for first-year composition that identify some important outcomes that are necessary for students to achieve if they are to be successful in their academic careers. I do not think that all these outcomes will necessarily entail strong quantitative measurement attributes. But, I do not think instructors or college administrators should a necessarily fret over any non-quantifiable goals or objectives. As long as we can show how a student is performing (through a writing portfolio are modified writing portfolio that contain instructor comments on drafts and the overall evaluation and grade) and can apply consistent essay guidelines in the form of a standardized rubric, then I believe we have accomplished to a large degree some important instructional objectives as writing teachers. I know that there will always be ongoing programs to set standards and outcomes that are measurable for various reporting requirements. I believe the most effective way that administrators of college writing programs can spend their time and resources is to implement the approach I just outlined.

If legislative or accrediting organizations impose varying metrics for measuring writing performance, then I guess we will have to accommodate those measurement standards. I think most educators and those who evaluate English writing programs understand that this is an area that does not lend itself easily to quantification. I believe that as long as we are accurate and consistent in our evaluations and in our teaching methods, our students will benefit from our efforts, and we will be satisfying the requirements of our our position descriptions as instructors.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and then subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

Any evaluations and measurements should be based on realistic and useful instructional objectives. In other words, we assess learning outcomes that are those key areas we want our students to achieve to help their writing in all areas of the college curriculum. I believe we should always be measuring those learning outcomes that reveal our students' abilities to organize their compositions, focus them with an effective thesis statement, select the right rhetorical pattern, and express their ideas in sentences that are grammatically sound. I believe these are the basic areas that we need to instruct and measure in our writing program. I believe we should use writing standards or rubrics to guide our students regarding expectations of what constitutes varied levels of writing skills   superior, very good, good, efficient, and failing.

From the standpoint of instruction, instructors should use evaluative comments in ways that students will be able to learn from those comments apply them on future drafts are new assignments. I support the strategy of using the writing portfolio method, or modifications of this approach, as the most effective ways to help students improve their skills by ongoing revision of several drafts before the assignment is submitted for a final grade.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

I have always used the end-of-semester student evaluations of their instructors and courses to identify any problems in an instructor's teaching. A disproportionate or high number of negative rankings and comments about any one instructor should be pursued for follow-up encounters with the instructor to determine if there are any causes or issues that should be resolved.

In evaluating the skill levels of our students, I believe that any such measurements should be directly related to a student's compositions. I also think that assessment should begin with the evaluative comments that instructors write on their students' initial drafts. These are some of the useful approaches in our instruction and evaluation of our students' writing assignments that we can share during instructor workshops. They are very applicable to the immediate environments in which our instructors teach.

The regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges (SAC), sets forth somewhat more general or generic goals that are used to assess first-year writing programs in our state-funded institutions of higher learning. These goals are beneficial for evaluating overall program effectiveness in a departmental or institutional dimension.

Beneath this broader dimension, there are important writing program goals and objectives that can be used to both direct and measure what and how our instructors are teaching and also how effective is this teaching as it is revealed in our students' progress during the semester and their final course grades. Our specific course learning outcomes for our students are required to be noted on our syllabi for each course. These desired learning outcomes are coordinated and approved by a committee within the English department. Such standardized learning objectives are coordinated with the State Department of Education, and I believe are published online.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

I believe that teaching the writing process that encompasses invention and ongoing or recursive revision is a very meaningful approach that has revealed over time to be very effective in improving students' writing skills.

I believe if we teach our students how to write rhetorically, and emphasize the strategies of the rhetorical canons and appeals, then we can prepare them to write in any rhetorical situation.

I believe that peer collaboration is an important aspect of developing students' writing skills, so I would endorse this type of pedagogy as well.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

In our undergraduate composition program here at our community college, we provide standardized syllabi with learning objectives that we expect our full-time and adjunct instructors to follow. I suppose if some instructors can achieve these desired learning objectives with some of their own unique pedagogical theories that would be acceptable. As a baseline requirement, however, our first-year composition instructors are following the process model of writing that emphasizes recursion and facilitates peer critiquing. Although I am sure there might be some instructors who might want to amend some of the areas inherent in the recursive process model of writing designed to facilitate a rhetorical approach, I do not think there is any resistance to teaching composition this way, since it is proving year after year to be an effective pedagogy.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

386

Each semester, the department offers training workshops for its full-time and part-time instructors. I believe these workshops are important in sharing their information and policies about the overall writing program at the college. Faculty in the department share their ideas during the sessions about their own teaching philosophies and classroom experiences.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

I am not aware of the exact number or percentage of courses where instructors emphasize the digital media available to them. We have had now for several years the opportunity to use Blackboard in our courses. I see the merits of using Blackboard in my face-to-face courses since it enables me to post many important course documents, course assignments, and also provides the opportunity for students to enter act online in the discussion forums. I would like to see more training provided on Blackboard, and I intend to use it more creative in my classes. We still seem to have fulltime and adjunct faculty who fall into the category of "late adopters" of technology in the classroom. A stronger training program would help this situation.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

The college does offer several sections of composition courses online using the Blackboard learning program. I would estimate that out of the total sections of first-year writing there are probably four or five sections that are offered exclusively online as part of the college's distance learning program.

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

As I mentioned previously, since I am not presently involved in the first-year composition program administration as I have been in the past, I am not aware of any key needs. From my own viewpoint based on nearly 30 years teaching writing and literature in the undergraduate environment, I believe that digital media will continue to offer new ways that we can instructor students both in traditional and in online settings. I began to realize that because of the utility of such programs like Blackboard, the distinctions between traditional in-class teaching environments and the new virtual or digital teaching environments are beginning to blur and blend. I also realize that for some instructors these changes and innovations in teaching environments will require the development of new skill sets.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

I am not aware of any program changes that should be made in our first-year writing instruction. I know that ongoing modifications are made to focus programs to meet our curriculum requirements and any other requirements that might required by the College or by the State Department of Education.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings that you think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

I have been a member of these organizations and value their scholarly research activities and there are peer-reviewed articles that they print in their own respective journals. I believe that any assessment tools that might be adaptable for our College's use and would be considered beneficial would be appropriate. Again such assessment tools would have to comply with the current core learning outcomes that are department reports to the accrediting agencies and also to the State.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I think we can continue to build upon and instruct the recursive writing process model from a rhetorical perspective for a long time to come. I concur that assessment seems to be an area that is receiving more and more attention, especially in light of how state-supported colleges and universities are being asked to validate their teaching and the levels of achievement of their graduating students. I think the state legislature's committees dealing with higher education are asking the fundamental questions along the lines of "what kind of product is our state colleges and universities generating based on the funding they receive?"

This has been an enjoyable conversation, and one in which I have not engaged for some time. I think it will be interesting to see how digital media changes the complexion of how we teach our first-year writing courses.

Best wishes in writing your dissertation.

Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX F

Writing Program Director "F" Interview

**Interview Questions for
First-Year Writing Program Directors**

Writing Program Director "F"

Institution: State University (14,000 students)

Regional Location: North Central

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Professor of English, Department of Languages and Literature

Date: August 29, 2009

Duration: 34 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

As a professor in the apartment languages and literature here, I have also been the chair for an interdisciplinary committee that oversees our core writing programs offered through the department. I am not currently serving on the committee, but will probably do so again in future years since committee members rotate through the varied disciplines under the college of liberal arts.

We offer a bachelor of arts degree in English, as well as several specific concentrations that are writing-intensive. These concentrations are professional writing, technical writing, media writing, and even industrial writing, with a specific sub-specialization in the automotive industry.

As a former member of the interdisciplinary committee that assesses our core writing programs here at the university, I have seen the growth of our goal setting and the development of program objectives that we measure within the department and also which the university measures in terms of the outcomes of our students. I do not wish to convey that we have an elaborate strategy of quantitative measurements that can satisfy the data reporting requirements of any institutional office or outside accrediting group. What we do have is a very thorough set of program objectives that we are able to communicate to our instructors and to our students so that they fully understand their expectations in the courses they take. The Department of Languages and Literature offer the basic first-year composition courses. Students who take one of these core courses are initially screened based on their writing sample. Based on this initial essay writing sample, our students are enrolled in either a basic two-semester composition course or a

developmental writing course. The department has a somewhat unique approach to the basic two-semester course in that it enables students whose performance shows accelerated progress to merge into the second semester course and receive for both semesters of the class.

University has a very proactive self-study relationship with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and submits samples of student writing and documentation showing compliance with core assessment objectives for the composition program.

The interdisciplinary committee that I have worked on for a number of years not only facilitates the assessment of student writing within the department of languages and literature, but also provides resources and assessment criteria for curriculum-wide writing at the University. The efforts that we have produced in assessing our overall program effectiveness contribute to the ongoing development and modifications of curriculum as it relates specifically to the writing-intensive programs within the department and also to the English minor in writing/rhetoric that is offered.

We facilitate the development of writing rubrics and analytical ranking scales for students' writing. These standardized assessment tools can be used within the department for writing-intensive courses. We also facilitated the development of an analytical ranking scale that ranks and provides numerical scoring for writing organization, usage, and content of the composition.

We emphasize the writing portfolio approach in our instruction, since we believe it provides a strong means to support students' progress in their writing and grade them on final product or products that have undergone extensive revision.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and then subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

University provides in the course evaluations so that students can assess both the quality of instruction and the content of instruction provided in their specific writing course. The data from these surveys or subsequently communicated online to both students and faculty. What we are essentially measuring is the abilities of our instructors to fulfill their core teaching requirements. These core teaching requirements are also linked to the objective measurements that are reported to be accrediting agency. Instructors are aware of their teaching objectives and requirements for each course that they teach. These teaching and course learning outcomes are noted in the syllabi as well.

Instructors are also evaluated in their actual classroom environments annually by a ranking professor in the department.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

One of the key responsibilities of this interdisciplinary curriculum review committee is to assimilate and interpret the survey findings so that they can be provided to the directors of the various writing-based programs within the Department of Languages and Literature. This becomes an ongoing process and is particularly useful for those who have responsibility for developing standardized syllabi or curriculum development and submitting it for approvals.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

I believe the writing process model which emphasizes repetitive or recursive revision is the most effective model to use to support our students in improving their academic writing.

In response to your prompt about varying pedagogical theories, I believe that a rhetorical approach that focuses on the canons of rhetoric is very supportive in teaching the writing process. The rhetorical approach also blends in very well with the writing process model, wherein the student is always revising his or her essay so that it achieves its objective to persuade or inform a specific audience by using specific support that is relevant to the audience and to the writing occasion.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

Our writing instructors, both full-time and part-time, are not rigidly mandated to follow a specific pedagogical theory or approach. However, the recursive writing process approach seems to be universally adopted, with varying adaptations, within the department here and also many other universities with which I am familiar. I believe it is because this writing model focuses on thinking about the writing process, then actually writing, and then going back and reflecting and revising what you have written several times.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

Instructor training is provided before each semester for our full-time and part-time instructors and graduate teaching assistants. The training is provided by the program director and other graduate students. The focus is usually on those things which are relevant to the composition program syllabus and the texts that we use.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

All of our classroom environments provide some sort of computer-based instruction, either delivered through our workstations or through digital media that the instructor uses at the podium.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

The Dept. of Language and Literature provides a monthly online newsletter for faculty members and graduate teaching assistants who are interested in improving their online teaching skills. This online newsletter is a function of the committee for online teaching within the department. It provides excellent training for faculty members and graduate teaching assistants and also provides a quality assessment tool that online teachers use during the preparation of their courses.

Several sections of our first-year writing courses are offered online.

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

I think it is fair to say that we are always trying to improve quality of our teaching in an effort to improve the quality of our students writing. There is also an ongoing effort with the department and within varied committees to review texts, syllabi, and online courseware. We want to keep the faculty-to-student teaching ratio in our first-year writing courses around 20 students, although the economics of classroom use and expenditures may impact this objective negatively.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

From a somewhat generalized and subjected perspective, I believe that any instructional or learning processes which do not produce results in terms of increasing our students abilities to improve their writing should be modified or discontinue were replaced with approaches that are effective. I understand that this is a trial and error experience and it

does take time to carefully identify where improvement should be made and what modifications to the teaching and learning process should be made to obtain those improvements. I believe our committee work regarding call it our instruction in first-year writing is proving to be effective and will continue to provide guidance and resources as time goes on.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings that you think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

As our professional organizations for the academic teaching of writing community, these two organizations continue to provide ideas and resources for their publications and journal articles. I am not sure if any specific writing assessment criteria could be completely adaptable for every university or college that instructs first-year writing, but some of it certainly could be localized to provide guidance and resources as required. So, there is value in maintaining current contact with the writing and teaching articles that these two organizations provide on a regular basis.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I think our writing programs here at the University and in many other universities will continue to improve since there are so many excellent resources available. Some of these resources are the result of the digital media software that can be used in a variety of instructional environments. I also think that as writing teachers we are coming to realize that writing is a function of revising and improving over a period of time. I think we will see more ongoing collaboration between instructors and students, and also between students and students.

I also think that the role of the University's Writing Center will become more central to supporting our classroom instruction, as well as curriculum-wide writing programs. I think that writing centers are almost at a point where they are very much an adjunct or an extension of the writing classroom. I know that we cannot mandate our students to go to the writing centers, but the role of the writing center and its offering of additional instruction in a variety of areas makes it increasingly more valuable to the college as a whole in terms of academic writing and research. So, I believe we will see some ongoing developments that will have positive benefits to our students in terms of how they use the resources provided in writing centers.

Best wishes in completing your doctoral studies. Please fill free to call me to discuss any further items that might clarify or expand what I mentioned in our conversation today.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX G

Writing Program Director "G" Interview

**Interview Questions for
First-Year Writing Program Directors**

Writing Program Director "G"

Institution: State University feeling (34,600 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Director of Freshman Writing Program
Department of English

Date: May 11, 2009 (In-person interview)

Duration: 31 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

I currently oversee approximately 70 instructors in the first year or freshman writing program here at the university. Most of the instructors in the first-year freshman writing program are graduate students, adjunct faculty, and a few full-time professors.

We use a writing portfolio approach and/or a modified writing portfolio approach in our teaching since we feel that it provides the most effective way for our students to receive evaluations and improve their writing skills over the course of the semester.

From the standpoint of evaluating our overall program here at the University, we use the end of semester student evaluations of our instructors. We also provide actual course writing projects and essay exam samples for the southern association regional accrediting committee (SACS).

In addition, we try to evaluate our instructors on annual basis so that they can continue to improve their pedagogy's and their classroom presence.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and then subsequently shared with your instructors and students? Fundamentally, I believe we should evaluate our classroom teaching skills and use these evaluations as benchmarks so that we can improve each semester.

398

Also, the rankings and that comments that students make on the end of semester surveys can be very helpful in terms of assessing how we teach and if the students are understanding what we teach.

We emphasize sharing our instructional ideas as to what works and what does not work during our training and orientation workshops conducted in the summer before the fall semester begins.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

As the director of the freshman writing program, I review all such assessments carefully with my co-director and present these findings to our freshman writing program committee for follow-on action.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

We instruct a rhetorical approach to writing. Our instructors present the basic concepts of the rhetorical canons. We also emphasize the writing process model that encompasses recursive revision.

We value collaboration among our students as they peer critique their writing assignments and support one another in class exercises.

We do not emphasize anyone pedagogical theory or strategy, except that we follow the principles of rhetorical writing and use the concepts of the writing process model—prewriting, composing, recursive revision in all stages of the writing process, and editing or proofreading.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

We do provide standardized syllabi for our instructors, rubrics for essays, and desired learning objectives for each course. We expect our instructors to follow these guidelines and use them and their courses so there is some commonality of teaching and learning.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

We provide instructor orientation and training workshops before the semester begins for our freshman writing instructors. We spent a lot of time reviewing standardized syllabi, discussing beneficial instructional techniques and approaches, and also expectations that we have for our instructors.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is **offered in** *face-to-face* **(FTF) classrooms where some form of** *computer-mediated instruction* **(CMI) or digital media is used?**

Most all of our classes have some form of computer-based instruction capability. Some of the smaller classes have workstations and most all of the classes have digital media at the instructor podiums. The large lecture-type classes in freshman composition do not have student workstations and the large class sizes are not conducive to effective teaching and learning. I am working on this issue with administration to rectify it.

Our instructors can also use Blackboard to augment their instruction and use it as a means for students to collaborate in peer reviewing and also to engage in online writing exercises.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* **(i.e., online instruction)?**

Presently, we provide several online first-year writing courses (English 1320) each semester through our University's distance learning program.

The University uses Blackboard as its learning delivery program for all of its courses offered online here.

9. Identify any *key needs* **in your first-year composition program.**

I would like to see us be able to aggressively reduce some of our class sizes in freshman English that we currently encounter here at the University. Optimally, writing classes should be held in a workshop setting with no more than 20 to 22 students. However, we do have some rather large lecture classes in the first-year writing program with over 60 students enrolled. This makes it very difficult to engage in a lot of the collaborative activities and also answer student questions and help students with their writing issues.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* **you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?**

We are always looking to improve our selection of instructional texts and the quality of our instruction. I am always exploring ways to reduce our class sizes and support our instructors so that there is more time to spend on writing exercises and revising exercises during the actual classes.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

I am a member of these organizations, as are most of the instructors in the first-year writing program. We carefully review and share pertinent research findings in the areas of composition pedagogy.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I will be glad to discuss any aspects of the program with you at a later time, if you would like. I will also post your online survey about first-year writing on our freshman composition program website.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX H

Writing Program Director "H" Interview

First-Year Writing Program Directors

Writing Program Director "H"

Institution: State University (23,000 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Professor (Emeritus) and Director of the Freshman Writing Program, Department of English

Date: July 28, 2009

Duration: 41 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

I strongly believe that the writing portfolio strategy or approach is the best way to evaluate our students writing and also involve instructors in the stages of the writing process from prewriting through the final.

I also strongly believe that there should be at least one classroom evaluation of each instructor held during academic year.

I also think the findings of student assessments of their instructors and their course content are very useful in determining if our current teaching strategies are effective and if our instructors are teaching the course content in ways that help students improve their writing skills.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and then subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

Experience has shown that we should always evaluate what our students are actually being taught regarding their composition skills. We need to know if they truly understand the steps of the writing process model, the value of invention, and why revision is so valuable in improving their writing.

We should evaluate our instructors to determine if they are teaching a course content as specified in the syllabus and if their classroom techniques and teaching styles are conducive to their students' learning. I guess the most important thing in terms of instructor evaluation is to assess how they are instructing the learning outcomes for each course. It is important to know that our instructors respect their students and their students respect them: this is the proper attitude that creates a strong learning environment for freshman composition. Before we become too immersed in various theories and pedagogies, we need to be aware that most of our freshman writers are entering the college classroom for the first time since high school. Many are teenagers and some are returning to college after years in the workplace. I believe that the evaluative comments that instructors place on students' drafts should be emphasized in training workshops. These comments are critical for students to understand how to improve their writing and overcome any writing issues in their drafts. It is an area that I believe is currently under-emphasized. We need to be able to assess how our instructors are accommodating and teaching to a changing freshman writing class demographic group.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

I guess the best way to answer this question is to emphasize the requirement that negative trends should be identified so that corrective strategies can be applied, either in the content of the syllabus or in the instructional abilities of the writing instructor.

Again, I strongly advocate use of the in-class evaluation. This evaluation should be performed by a full-time instructor at least once each year for all writing instructors, regardless if they are tenured professors or graduate teaching assistants. I also believe that peer evaluations—particularly conducted among graduate students—are very beneficial in improving the overall effectiveness of the first-year writing program.

One of the key aspects of any type of assessment of our students writing abilities is to identify if there are adequate time segments during class when the instructor can interact with students concerning their actual composition drafts. It is during these times that I feel instructors can get a good sense of the progress that their students are making. Hands-on evaluations of our students are sometimes minimized or considered less effective than the other types of evaluations made in the classroom.

My 34 years of instructing undergraduate college writers prompt me to appreciate that the basic one on-one teaching approach between instructor and student is the most effective. Current writing instructors and those that design writing program curriculums should not lose sight of the fact that all the resources that we have in the computer technologies will only be beneficial to the degree that they support this one-on-one learning environment in the writing class.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

I believe I provided answers to this question in responding to the prior question.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

I always wanted to make sure that we provided sufficient leeway for our instructors to use various strategies in teaching writing. I always made sure that we provided our instructors with the models that enable them to teach composition through a writing process, using the canons of rhetoric as basic guidelines to help students and then ideas, organize their ideas, and spend sufficient time in revising and editing their drafts so that their sentences were clear and were not impaired by grammar errors.

As you know being one of my former doctoral students in my graduate composition theory class, I developed the inventional approach known as S-O-A-P (subject, occasion, audience, and purpose). This approach was designed to help students during every phase of their writing, but particularly during the invention or prewriting phase. It was designed to help students limit their subject, to think about the occasion for their writing, to clearly delineate and understand their audience or audiences, and decide what is the major purpose of their essay or paper.

I have found over the years that this approach proves to be effective in the prewriting through the final editing phase of students' compositions. Based on some of the journal articles that occasionally make reference to S-O-A-P, I see that it is still considered to be an effective teaching strategy for first-year writers. I think one of the major reasons for this is that this approach parallels or tracks closely with the rhetorical canons, teaching and composing strategies that have proven themselves since the time of Aristotle.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

We took a very basic approach in our training workshops for our first-year writing program instructors. We provided them with the basic syllabi and course objectives. We then focus our discussions and our presentations on ways that each instructor could meet these specified instructional objectives and present the course content in ways that would be understandable by students.

My experience reveals that most instructors are looking for proven ways to teach various aspects of basic writing courses. In addition to syllabi that instructors can use and modify, hand-outs, and other resources should be made available for instructors to use.

I think most instructors want to know basically what works and what they can expect from their students regarding various aspects of teaching writing, assigning written assignments, and evaluating student papers. These are all important topics for orientation and training of all writing instructors.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

During my tenure as a full-time instructor of basic writing, I instructed all my classes in traditional classroom environments. During the last few years of my teaching experience, I did observe how computers and certain types of software can enhance the quality of our instruction and also provide meaningful ways that students can engage in writing and revising.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

(The respondent was not asked this question since he indicated earlier in the discussion that he was not aware of some of the course offerings in the last several years in the University's distance learning or online programs.)

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

I always was careful in making sure that our instructors understood their course learning objectives and that they possess the teaching knowledge to impart this information in meaningful ways in the writing classroom.

I always used to emphasize that possessing a knowledge of theory is a very good thing; however, it is how the writing instructor puts this theory into practice and makes it relevant to actual writing assignments and exercises is the key to that instructors success and also for his or her students.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

I can answer part of this question. I do not think composition textbooks should concentrate on any one specific theory, since there are several theories that will accommodate the writing process that emphasizes all the important steps a student must undertake in writing an essay.

What I always looked for in evaluating college texts was their emphasis on the writing process and that they view writing from a rhetorical framework. By this I mean that considerations of audience, the rhetorical occasion, and the means of support all have to be considered as the student proceeds through the steps of the writing process. I always value writing texts that provide practical examples and exercises so that students can learn through his or her own revising.

I think grammar handbooks are useful, although I can see that their popularity is not what it once was. I have mixed feelings about grammar handbooks. I believe that grammar should be instructed in a rhetorical context. There are ways that writing instructors can teach grammar without hitting students over the head with the proverbial grammar hammer. One way is to use sentence combining as a technique to reinforce sentence expression and clarity. I am not concerned if my students make a few comma errors here and there in an essay. What does concern me from a grammatical standpoint is if there are numerous grammar and punctuation errors and that these errors are repetitive. At the point where grammar becomes a real block for student writers, there are tutorial sessions in the writing center that will help. It is difficult to teach grammar by itself or overly emphasize grammar while teaching basic writing skills. Students tend to inwardly rebel when they see or hear the word grammar. I think it is a reaction to some of the instruction they underwent while in middle school or high school. So, in a roundabout way, textbooks that enable students to compose sentences through sentence-building routines are very useful. Such routines are very useful even for more accomplished writers.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

I have always thought highly of these organizations and the people who have served in them in various capacities over the years. I actively read their publications and know that they carefully peer-review all their journal articles so they are very scholarly and very well-researched. I would recommend any assessments of writing at these organizations publish or make available to writing teachers.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I will be glad to discuss any aspects of the program with you at a later time, if you would like.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX I

Writing Program Director "I" Interview

Writing Program Director "I"

Institution: Community College (36,000 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: The Teaching and Learning Center, Director (Ph.d.) of the Teaching and Learning Center (Instructional Technologies)

Date: May 29, 2009

Duration: 35 minutes (Interview was conducted in a face-to-face meeting format)

*Note: *This respondent does not teach college writing.* As the director of instructional technologies in the teaching and learning Center of a large regional community college, this professor occupies a staff position. However, he is thoroughly involved with the development of digital media and online learning platforms that can accommodate traditional face-to-face classroom settings and online instruction of undergraduate writing courses. Selecting a respondent who is involved in the technological delivery of writing programs is a preconceived strategy that facilitates acquiring insights about how the influences of digital technologies are providing beneficial learning pathways for student writers. Due to the respondent's role, some of the answers to the following questions will be modified or addressed from an instructional technology perspective.

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

Since I do not teach writing as a faculty member in the English department, I am not aware of the assessment requirements for each specific course. To the degree that writing courses specify learning outcomes requiring digital or computer-based instructional resources, I would be aware of these requirements and strongly involved in the development of such instructional resources.

I think it is accurate to say that the College provides a very supportive and robust technological learning platform for all of its faculty members. We currently use Blackboard (Version 9) as the principal online learning platform. Some faculty members also require in their composition classes the use of WIMBA, an online real-time "live" classroom that enables video and audio connectivity between instructor and students, as well as digital text editing of common documents.

My role is to support faculty members' requirements for instructional technologies that enhance the learning process inside and outside the traditional class settings.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and then subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

I am not aware in my role of any specific evaluative criteria for a writing program. However, I am available to provide accurate learning objectives that would accommodate any criteria for digital media and related instructional technologies. In this capacity, I function as an ombudsman for all instructional technological enterprises for the faculty. I am able in my present role to help design, develop, coordinate, and implement our instructional technologies using the varied college-wide resources that we have.

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

Again, I would be responsive to any faculty member in addressing the evaluation of any instructional technologies used in support of their instructional goals and strategies.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

(No response is required for this specific question for the reasons stated previously.)

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

(No response is required for this specific question for the reasons stated previously.)

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

I consider training a very important component of our overall instructional technology program. We provide hands-on training other faculty members as requested, either individually or in group settings.

Through *Wimba or Wimba Classroom*®, we can provide online instruction with live video and audio so that instructors do not have to leave their immediate environments as long as they have access to the workstation and a video camera and microphone.

Because the college subscribes to several organizations or groups that provide online training in programs, such as WIMBA and Blackboard, we announce all such training via e-mail. All of the training provided in this manner is open to all instructors at the College and is free of charge.

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

I would estimate that 95% of all classroom settings on the four college's campuses have either workstation and/or digital instructional media on the instructors' podiums.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

(The respondent was not asked this question since he indicated earlier in the discussion that he was not aware of some of the course offerings in the last several years in the University's distance learning or online programs.)

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

(No response is required for this specific question for the reasons stated previously.)

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

(No response is required for this specific question for the reasons stated previously.)

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

(No response is required for this specific question for the reasons stated previously.)

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

Briefly, I would like to share a few perspectives on how digital technologies are continuing to provide platforms that improve the delivery of course content. Based on my experience and associations with the teaching faculty in English and other disciplines as well, I see how adaptable and how effective the writing routines are becoming in the use of Blackboard and also in *Wimba Classroom.*

Blackboard easily accommodates online writing routines and affords the instructor the facility to respond asynchronously (at a later time) or synchronously (in actual or real-time as the writing project is occur) in the discussion menu and also in the online live chat function. I know that you have mentioned that live chat support students in immediately recognizing and correcting their writing mistakes in their essays. Wimba provides the added dimension of live audio and video interaction that is sometimes a modality that helps certain types of student learners hear, see, and texts-type their corrections or responses to a shared text displayed on the monitor.

I realize that there are both early adopters and late adopters in the teaching faculty regarding digital instructional technologies. However, because of their growing ease of use and flexibility, I am beginning to see faculty who were initially resistant or reticent to use digital technology began to use it to accommodate their teaching more effectively.

I think the faculty members here at the college are beginning to see that there are numerous practical solutions that can be provided through our digital and online teaching platforms. Several faculty members have mentioned to me that they are discovering some very practical time-saving features of posting assignments and guidelines using the routines in Blackboard. These time-saving features and benefits help free up their overall time requirements so they can have more time to research or evaluate their students.

The College has made some significant investments in the use of learning management platforms, starting with our own Cougar Web portal that facilitates numerous teaching and learning resources and links, from e-mail to online grading. While it may seem trite to say that we are just scratching the surface of our instructional technologies, I believe this is a provable statement. Learning technologists at several professional venues share their perspectives that over the next 10 years the classroom will truly become "three-dimensional." Technology will become the third dimension that will occupy the same status or position as the two dimensionality of instructors teaching students and students interacting with their instructors. For this to occur effectively, instructional technologies must be closely aligned with classroom pedagogies so they will not become disconnected whereby instructional technology would not effectively support instructors' pedagogies.

413

I am certain that the next 5 to 10 years will be a rewarding time for both instructors and students. Based on our preliminary conversations about your interest in using technologies to teach writing and literature, I think you will find new and emerging digital learning platforms to satisfy both your teaching and scholarly interests.

I would be very much interested in reading your research findings, particularly as they relate to the application of digital instructional technologies.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX J

Writing Program Director "J" Interview

Writing Program Director "J"

Institution: State University (30,816 students)

Regional Location: Southwest

Academic Department or Divisional Name: Department of English, Director of Lower Division Studies

Date: July 21, 2009

Duration: 45 minutes

1. In terms of assessing or evaluating your first-year writing/composition program, what specific program *assessment tools or approaches* do you believe work better than others?

I believe that using the writing portfolio approach in some form is the best way to assess our students' written assignments. Instructors and students both work on common documents through the progress of the semester. In doing so, students can see the progress they are making based on the instructor's comments, pulmonary grades evaluations, and a final grade given for the overall completed writing portfolio at the end of the semester.

*We maintain our class sizes at **18 students** or less in our first-year writing courses (English 1310 and English 1320).* We feel that this size best accommodates first-year writing instruction in a truly hands-on workshop format. Currently, we have the support of the deans and many academic disciplines here at the College, since, as you can imagine, there are economic pressures both inside and outside the institution to increase class sizes and consolidate sections to reduce operating expense.

We also specify learning outcomes for each course that we teach in our first-year composition program. We make sure that our syllabi are standardized to the point so that our instructors can achieve these objectives and use the course texts successfully.

We also evaluate, through classroom observations, our program instructors on an annual basis.

2. What *specific aspects* of your composition program's instruction do you believe should be evaluated and measured and then subsequently shared with your instructors and students?

As I mentioned previously in responding to the other question, we feel the best assessment tool for improving our students' writing is the writing portfolio instructional approach.

During training and orientation workshops, we share insights in how to evaluate our students' writing during its various drafts. We also discuss how to improve the evaluative comments that we make on our students drafts to better focus their revisions and help them improve.

We share and publish our departmental learning objectives, as well is our specific learning objectives for each course in and the lower studies division of the English department. For the year 2009, the Department of English has adopted student learning outcomes for all general education courses in writing and literature and for all degree programs in English.

Our first-year and sophomore English courses address several important general education outcomes. These general education outcomes are developed through inner disciplinary committee work and reflect the desires of the institution regarding curriculum-wide writing skill levels for our undergraduate students. In the first-year writing program, that encompasses English 1310 and English 1320, there are two basic learning outcomes for these courses that the Department of English measures and reports through the University hierarchy. The first goal is that English 1310 students will demonstrate an ability to formulate a thesis and to develop that thesis in an orderly way in an academic paper. The second fundamental goal we measure it is that after our students complete second semester course, which is English 1320, these students will be evaluated to demonstrate their proficiency to use standard procedures of citation and documentation in their written assignments.

There are additional goals, outcomes, and policies regarding our writing programs. These are listed in the Department's first-year and sophomore syllabi, which are both available online at the department's website link http://www.english.txstate.edu under the "Student Resources" menu.

We maintain a very proactive position in coordinating our first-year writing programs with the evaluation objectives of the regional higher education accrediting agency (SACS).

3. In what ways do you *use the findings of your writing program assessments* to formulate instructional objectives for your first-year writing program?

I believe your question here requires considering two basic areas: formulating course learning objectives based on the performance levels of our students, and also formulating instructional objectives based on the teaching skills of our first-year writing program instructors.

The writing portfolio provides an excellent assessment tool to reveal areas requiring improvement in our students' writing. In our first-year program, we evaluate how are students are doing on each writing project, as noted in our standardized department syllabi. This provides one avenue of important evaluation regarding both our students writing abilities in the way our instructors are instructing the course content. You can obtain a copy of our standardized course syllabi for the first-year writing programs that is published on our departmental website.

We also want to know what our students think about the teaching approaches, the instructional texts that we use, and also their assessments of the teaching abilities of their instructors. All of this information is reviewed and is considered by our first-year writing program committee.

4. What do you believe are the most effective *pedagogical theories* and *strategies* to use in teaching composition?

We instruct the writing process model, in which all of the steps of writing from prewriting to final editing are emphasized. Because we used the writing portfolio method, we also strongly emphasize multiple revisions by students of their drafts for each assigned writing project.

We also instruct writing in the lower division as a rhetorical process. While we do not have significant time to teach all the detailed precepts of rhetoric, we do cover the basic canons of rhetoric as they apply to the writing process model. We want our students to be able to write effectively for the required occasion. We want our students to be mindful of the requirements for thinking about their writing during the prewriting phase and consider the requirements of their audience, as well as the writing occasion and purpose. Such considerations are important to validate since they influence the organization, style, and rhetorical approaches that are required, such as writing to persuade, writing to inform, and basic research writing.

We have also had very positive experiences and feedback from students and instructors regarding what we term as genre writing, based on the cultural experiences of our students. This approach would be somewhat similar to a writing studio approach whereby students explore and collaborate on themes that they consider relevant to their

cultural and learning experiences. We are finding this approach to be very effective with certain cultural ethnicities, such as our Hispanic students. Students tend to value assignments whereby they feel they have somewhat of an appreciation of the current issues that affect their lives and their mindsets.

5. To what degree does your first-year composition/writing program allow your instructors to develop and apply their own specific pedagogical theories and approaches in their classes? Or, does your program require that instructors follow *specified pedagogical theories* and *approaches*? If specific composition teaching theories are emphasized, would you briefly describe these?

I do not want to inhibit any of our instructors from using certain instructional approaches that they consider are effective in the context of our first-year writing program objectives. Having said that, we would not want our instructors to teach oppositional strategies that would conflict with our rhetorical emphasis in the writing process model in our use of the writing portfolio approach. We spent some time in our training workshops clarifying our objectives and discussing how varied approaches will work to achieve the desired instructional goals for each writing assignment. I believe there should be some latitude in the instructional approaches that are instructors use as long as they fill the requirements of our program and help our students become more effective academic writers.

6. In what areas or on what topics do you provide *training* for composition instructors? How often is this training provided? Who typically provides instructor training?

During our orientation and training meetings convened between semesters here at the College, we try to focus our instructional and learning objectives clearly so that there are no questions or issues regarding the overall direction and requirements of our first-year writing program.

We provide standardized syllabi for instructors, which they can use and modify to meet the specific needs of their individual classes. They also share information regarding instructional approaches that support our students to succeed in their writing projects. I am involved in these presentations, as well as other instructors and graduate teaching assistants. We encourage active discussion on a variety of topics that are relevant to our curriculum, and we want our instructors to appreciate the resources that are available for them to use. We have a very excellent Writing Center that provides tutoring and writing resources for our first-year writers, as well as curriculum-wide writing requirements of all academic disciplines here.

I guess you would say that we want to empower our instructors by providing them with ongoing support and direction so they can provide their best instruction to their students.

419

7. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered in *face-to-face* (FTF) classrooms where some form of *computer-mediated instruction* (CMI) or digital media is used?

Most all of the classrooms here at the College provide digital technologies in the classroom setting. We enable our instructors to use Blackboard as a teaching resource as well.

8. What percentage of your first-year writing courses is offered through your institution's *distance learning program* (i.e., online instruction)?

We do provide a few online courses in our first-year writing curriculum. These courses are offered in hybrid format and are part of our online education program named "Ed2Go."

9. Identify any *key needs* in your first-year composition program.

As I mentioned before, we feel our ability to keep our class sizes at 18 students in the first-year composition program is imperative to maintaining a high level of quality instruction. We hope that the current economic climate within the University permits us to maintain these optimal class sizes.

We would like to continue our leadership role in supporting our curriculum-wide writing initiatives.

We would like to utilize digital instruction technologies as they are validated to be supportive to improving our students writing.

We have a strong posture within the University setting here and we want to continue to facilitate through committee interaction are role in supporting institutional writing requirements.

10. What instructional approaches or pedagogies currently used in your first-year composition program do you believe should be changed or modified? Why should these approaches be changed? Do you believe that the *composition textbooks* you use favor any one instructional approach or pedagogical theory over others?

While we are always assessing the effectiveness of our learning outcomes as they apply to our students and our teaching faculty, we do not foresee any major requirements for modifying our curriculum or our instructional approaches.

We use text in our first-year writing program that focus a rhetorical approach to writing based on the incremental steps of the writing process.

We also use texts which have readings that are on current topics that motivate students to write on areas or topics of interest. You can see how we use the texts, and the assignments in those texts, by visiting our departmental website and linking to the English 1310/1320 syllabi.

11. Do you believe that professional organizations, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), should provide more *research findings* on writing program assessments? If so, what might be some of the research findings think would be useful? Or, should these organizations even provide tools and resources for conducting such assessments?

Most all of our instructors are members of a one or both of these mainline professional organizations for instructors of English. We review published articles regarding writing pedagogy and share this information with our instructors.

We feel that any information regarding assessments that would be beneficial for local adoption would be very worthwhile pursuing.

12. Do you have any responses or perspectives on the subject of composition pedagogy not covered in the questions above that you would like to share?

I think we have covered some very important areas. I would like to bring to your attention that a well-known published study on writing program assessment references the emphasis that our department places on the 18 students or less class size for first-year writing. The article mentions an internal study that I directed that correlates class size with higher student retention and fewer D's and F's.

The web link for this published article is **http://www.wpacouncil.org/archives/31n1-2/31n1-2horning.pdf.**

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and professional insights in support of my doctoral research.

Note: Respondents may not answer all the questions or respond to the questions in the sequence indicated above. Additionally, responses to one question may incorporate a complete or partial response to one or more other questions since some of the questions are closely interrelated by topics areas, a feature inherently designed as part of the interviewing strategy to foster adequate responses to key questions. Some respondents may also address the topic area of other questions before they are asked or correlate their response to one or more questions previously asked. The primary investigator did not edit redundant or overlapping responses in order to preserve the authenticity of the

interview and also acknowledge that, during an interview, respondents may wish to modify or amplify their previous responses.

APPENDIX K

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Doctoral
Research Approval Letter

TWU
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON   DALLAS   HOUSTON

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378   Fax 940-898-3416
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

December 3, 2008

Mr. Gary H. Wilson

████████████████

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Re: *Assessing the Rhetorics of Computer-Mediated and Collaborative Composition Pedagogies*

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was determined to be exempt from further review.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. Because a signed consent form is not required for exempt studies, the filing of signatures of participants with the TWU IRB is not necessary.

Another review by the IRB is required if your project changes in any way, and the IRB must be notified immediately regarding any adverse events. If you have any questions, feel free to call the TWU Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Nichols, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

cc.   Dr. Bruce Krajewski, Department of English, Speech & Foreign Languages
Dr. Hugh L. Burns, Department of English, Speech & Foreign Languages
Graduate School

424

APPENDIX L

Faculty Online Survey

My Surveys   Create Survey   My Account   Purchase   Support

Manage Surveys | My Image Collection | Upload New Images

Edit Survey | Preview Survey | View or Print Entire Survey | Remove All Question Logic

ID	Survey Title	Status
125992	College Composition Faculty Survey: Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) and Collaborative Writing Pedagogies	ON

Edit Survey Title

College Composition Faculty Survey: Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) and Collaborative Writing Pedagogies

Add Question or Text

Edit Delete Move

COMPOS_____WRITING FACULTY SURVEY

COMPUTER-MEDIATED INSTRUCTION AND
COLLABORATIVE COMPOSITION PEDAGOGIES

Spring 2009

Target Respondents: Instructors/Faculty Members Presently Teaching Composition/First-Year Writing,
including developmental writing, at
Universities and Community Colleges

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated

Definitions of Key Terms Used:

Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) is defined as the use of any computer software and related digital resources in work station and online environments used by composition instructors and students. *Examples: learning management courseware, email, instructor websites, and a variety of computer-based off-the-shelf and instructor-developed programs used to teach composition.*

Courseware is defined as any menu-driven software adapted for teaching, learning, and applying composition skills in face-to-face (FTF) and distance learning online environments. *Examples: Blackboard and WebCT.*
Face-to-face (FTF) classroom environments encompass teaching environments where only the instructors use a computer and perhaps some form of computer projection display media to instruct students in a class. *Examples: classrooms in which overhead digital projection systems are used.*

In-class workstation environments denote those composition classrooms where teachers and students have computer workstations and software. *Examples: classrooms in which students use individual computer workstations connected to their institution's computer system.*

Distance learning/online environments describe those web-based environments in which instructors teach composition using online technologies and courseware. *Examples: instruction using the Internet to deliver composition courses taught through computer courseware.*

Collaborative writing is an instructional and learning approach whereby students are empowered to interact and mutually implement writing improvement strategies during phases of the writing process.

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and Internet transactions.

427

<u>SECTION I: Multiple Choice Questions</u>

1. Within the last four years, have you used Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) and/or composition courseware to help support your classroom composition and writing pedagogy?

◉ Yes   ◉ No

---------------------------------------Page Break---------------------------------------

2. *Within the last four years*, have you used CMI/composition courseware in a face-to-face (FTF) classroom environment, in-class student workstation environments, or in distance learning/online learning environments--or all three? *Indicate your choice or choices by selecting one or more of the options below.*

	Use almost each class meeting	Sometimes use (at least twice monthly)	Infrequently use (less than once per month)	Never use
FACE-TO-FACE Instructor and Students Setting—No in-class student computer workstations used	◉	◉	◉	◉
Student Workstation Settings	◉	◉	◉	◉
Distance/Online Learning Environments	◉	◉	◉	◉

3. Please rate how *helpful* CMI/composition courseware is to <u>each</u> of the following generally accepted *canons of rhetoric.*

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Occasionally Helpful	Not Helpful	No Opinion
INVENTION: Discovering and inventing ideas during the prewriting phase	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
ARRANGEMENT: Arranging/organizing ideas, sentences, and paragraphs in the introduction, support, and conclusion sections of a composition	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
STYLE: The quality and clarity of writing that results from a writer's word choice, figures of speech, tone, and syntax (sentence structure)	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
MEMORY: Memory enables the remembering of ideas, concepts, and mnemonic schemes whose recall assists a writer in all phases of the writing process	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
DELIVERY: Delivery concerns itself with how something is written and communicated to its audience—often its form and format—rather than what is written or communicated (i.e., content)	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉

---------------------------------------Page Break---------------------------------------

4. Please rate how *important* CMI/composition courseware is to facilitating each of the following elements or aspects of Instruction.

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

		Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	No Opinion
10)	4a. Collaborative interaction among students at each phase of the writing process (sharing ideas and peer critiquing)	○	○	○	○	○
11)	4b. Individualistic thinking and learning (fostering ways to engage self-reflection and individually apply these skills in writing)	○	○	○	○	○
12)	4c. Creative thinking (developing new insights, ideas, and approaches in writing)	○	○	○	○	○
13)	4d. Writing aids and tools (enabling students and instructors to apply CMI resources to directly benefit their teaching and learning routines)	○	○	○	○	○
14)	4e. Electronic creative and cognitive "spaces" of any menu-driven software which facilitates student writing exercises and enables ongoing revising (such as Blackboard or WebCT)	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

15j 4f. If required, type in the space provided any aspect which you believe needs to be added and rate it according to the response criteria indicated below.

429

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	No Opinion
16) 4f.	C	C	C	C	C

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

17) 4g. If required, type any aspect which you believe needs to be added and rate it according to the response criteria indicated below.

[   ]

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	No Opinion
18) 4g. Additional comments you typed above should be rated according to the responses shown here.	C	C	C	C	C

Add Question or Text

------ Delete | Move

————————————————Page Break————————————————

Add Question or Text

430

5. TYPE in the name of any CMI/composition courseware or learning management system (e.g., *Blackboard, WebCT or other*) which you have used *within the last four years* in teaching composition in any classroom or online environments. Then, *rate the following attributes* of the CMI/composition courseware you named by selecting one of the responses below each item you designate.

<div align="center">Add Question or Text!</div>

Edit | Delete | Move

19) 5a. TYPE IN THIS SPACE CMI/COURSEWARE NAME 1.

[   ]

<div align="center">Add Question or Text!</div>

Edit | Delete | Move

	"User-Friendly" Technology	MODERATELY "User-Friendly" Technology	NEUTRAL	NOT "user-friendly" Technology	My college should provide more instructor training on courseware	My college should provide more student training on courseware
20) NAME 1 indicated above.	○	○	○	○	○	○

<div align="center">Add Question or Text</div>

Edit | Delete | Move

21) 5b. TYPE IN THIS SPACE CMI/COURSEWARE NAME 2 (IF NEEDED).

[Add Question or Text]

[Edit] [Delete] [Move]

	"User-Friendly" Technology	MODERATELY "User-Friendly" Technology	Neutral	NOT "user-friendly" Technology	My college should provide more instructor training on courseware	My college should provide more student training on courseware
22) Name 2 indicated above.	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Add Question or Text]

[Edit] [Delete] [Move]

[Add Question or Text]

[Edit] [Delete] [Move]

23) 5c. TYPE IN THIS SPACE CMI/COURSEWARE NAME 3 (IF NEEDED).

[Add Question or Text]

[Edit] [Delete] [Move]

	"User-Friendly" Technology	MODERATELY "User-Friendly" Technology	Neutral	NOT "user-friendly" Technology	My college should provide more instructor training on courseware	My college should provide more student training on courseware
24) Name 3 indicated above.	○	○	○	○	○	○

432

Edit | Delete | Move

25) 5d. TYPE IN THIS SPACE CMI/COURSEWARE NAME 4 (IF NEEDED)

[   ]

[Add Question or Text]

Edit | Delete | Move

	"User-Friendly" Technology	MODERATELY "User-Friendly" Technology	NOT "user-friendly" Technology	My college should provide more instructor training on courseware	My college should provide more student training on courseware
26) Name 4 indicated above.	C	C	C	C	C

[Add Question or Text]

Edit | Delete | Move

[Add Question or Text]

------ | Delete | Move

———————————Page Break————————————

[Add Question or Text]

433

6. Rate *each* of the following statements by selecting only *one* of the rating criteria provided. *The following items A through D pertain to your institution's academic and instructional support divisions (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences, Instructional Technology Division, etc.)*

Add Question or Text

Ecit | Delete | Move

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
27) A. To the best of my knowledge, my academic division or divisional faculty dean endorses and supports the use of CMI/composition courseware in composition/English courses in face-to-face and/or online environments.	○	○	○	○	○	○
28) B. My academic division (or division of instructional technology) offers some form of training to instructors who teach with CMI/composition courseware.	○	○	○	○	○	○
29) C. To the best of my knowledge, my academic division (or department of instructional technology) assesses the effectiveness of CMI/composition or writing courseware used.	○	○	○	○	○	○
30) D. To the best of my knowledge, CMI/composition courseware topics are occasionally discussed at my academic division or dean of faculty meetings.	○	○	○	○	○	○

434

7. Respond to the statements A through C below by selecting one response for each statement.

These statements pertain only to your academic department (e.g., Department of English, etc.)

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
31) A. My academic department has designated at least one faculty member who functions as a CMI/composition courseware support person or training mentor.	○	○	○	○	○	○
32) B. I received my CMI/composition courseware training from a department member or a designated training mentor.	○	○	○	○	○	○
33) C. I am self-trained in CMI/composition courseware for use in my composition classes.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
34) 8. I actively support CMI/composition courseware usage in all courses and learning environments offered through my academic discipline.	○	○	○	○	○	○
35) Using CMI/composition courseware in face-to-face (FTF) environments is necessary for me to achieve my instructional objectives.	○	○	○	○	○	○
36) Using CMI/composition courseware in online/distance learning environments is necessary for me to achieve my instructional objectives.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

_____

Add Question or Text

------ Delete | Move

————————Page Break————————

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

37) 9. In the last four years, have you used blogging in the composition courses you teach? (Select one of the following):

○ I regularly use blogging in my courses
○ I occasionally use blogging in my courses
○ I rarely use blogging in my courses
○ I never use blogging in my courses
○ No Opinion

38) 10. As part of your overall teaching evaluation(s) at your college, one of the following applies:

      ○ There is a specific area in my evaluation which assesses my abilities in using CMI/composition courseware.

      ○ I am NOT specifically evaluated regarding my teaching abilities in using CMI or writing courseware.

      ○ N/A

Add Question or Text

------ **Delete** **Move**

————————————————————Page Break————————————————————

Add Question or Text

Edit **Delete** **Move**

SECTION II: Collaborative Writing Practices in Composition

Add Question or Text

Edit **Delete** **Move**

	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	INFREQUENTLY	NEVER
39) 1. Do you involve your students in some form of interactive collaboration in completing their composition assignments?	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

Edit **Delete** **Move**

2a. The following questions involve the approaches you use to foster *student collaboration* in all phases of the student composition process.

Add Question or Text

	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	INFREQUENT LY	NEVER
40) Prewriting	○	○	○	○	○
41) Student composing/drafting	○	○	○	○	○
42) Researching	○	○	○	○	○
43) Peer critiquing	○	○	○	○	○
44) Revising/Editing	○	○	○	○	○
45) Proofreading	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

Edit Delete Move

46) 2b. If required, please indicate any other aspects of the writing process which you would like to specify and rate according to the responses shown (please describe in a few words before responding to the options below):

Add Question or Text

Edit Delete Move

	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	INFREQUENT LY	NEVER
47) 2b.	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

Edit Delete Move

48) 2c. If required, please indicate any other aspects of the writing process which you would like to specify and rate according to the responses shown (please describe in a few words before responding to the options below):

49) 2c. ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

<div style="text-align:center">Add Question or Text</div>

------ | Delete | Move |

———————————Page Break———————————

<div style="text-align:center">Add Question or Text</div>

| Edit | Delete | Move | Add Logic |

50) 3. The approach I use in facilitating student collaboration in my composition instruction could be described as (select from one of the options offered):

○ Very Structured   ○ Moderately Structured   ○ Loosely Structured   ○ No Structure at all   ○ No Opinion

<div style="text-align:center">Add Question or Text</div>

| Edit | Delete | Move | Add Logic |

51)

4. I enable students to collaboratively construct their writing assignments rather than assign them specific topics or writing prompts which they must follow.

○ Always   ○ Frequently   ○ Sometimes   ○ Never   ○ No Opinion

<div style="text-align:center">Add Question or Text</div>

| Edit | Delete | Move |

<div style="text-align:center">Add Question or Text</div>

------ | Delete | Move |

———————————Page Break———————————

<div style="text-align:center">Add Question or Text</div>

5. Please rate in the following series of questions what you consider is the *importance* of collaborative writing in its application to the generally accepted *rhetorical canons*.

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	No Opinion
52) Invention (prewriting; discovering ideas)	○	○	○	○	○
53) Arrangement (organization of ideas; essay structure)	○	○	○	○	○
54) Style (clarity, impact, figures of speech, and appropriateness of usage)	○	○	○	○	○
55) Memory (methods, structures, and means which foster cognitive practices to facilitate creative recall in composition)	○	○	○	○	○
56) Delivery (refinement and final preparation of a composition)	○	○	○	○	○

Add Question or Text

6. Please respond to the following series of questions regarding *collaborative writing practices.*

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
57) Composition instructors are, for the most part, adequately trained to teach collaborative writing approaches in their composition classes.	○	○	○	○	○
58) In general, most composition/writing instructors favor more non-collaborative approaches to teach writing.	○	○	○	○	○
59) Collaborative writing approaches improve students' writing skills better than other approaches used in teaching composition.	○	○	○	○	○
60) In general, composition instructors possess the teaching skills necessary to facilitate effective collaborative writing practices in the classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
61) First-year college writers are able to benefit from collaborative writing approaches used in face-to-face (FTF) and online environments.	○	○	○	○	○
62) In general, the approaches and ways students are taught composition in high school facilitate their adoption of collaborative writing approaches in their college composition classes.	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION III: Short Answer Questions

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

63) 1. Briefly describe several teaching and learning aspects which you believe would improve the quality of composition instruction in your college's or academic department's curriculum.

(1000 characters remaining)

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

64) 2. What aspects of your instructional approaches would you like to change or see changed?

(1000 characters remaining)

Add Question or Text

Delete | Move

————————————————Page Break————————————————

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

65) 3. What instructional approaches or resources do you believe are needed to help you become a more effective college composition instructor?

66) 4. Briefly describe the type of training in CMI/courseware which your university provides through its departmental, divisional, or institution-wide resources.

(1000 characters remaining)

Add Question or Text

------- Delete Move

———————————————————————Page Break———————————————————————

Add Question or Text

Edit Delete Move

67) 5. Do you follow or practice any particular collaborative writing theories or theorists? If "yes," please briefly list them here.

(1000 characters remaining)

Add Question or Text

Edit Delete Move

68) 6. What teaching philosophies does your academic department follow or prescribe for teaching composition?

(1000 characters remaining)

69) 7. What objectives, strategies, and performance benchmarks (measurements) does your academic department use to assess composition program effectiveness?

(1000 characters remaining)

Rapidly Add New Questions to End of Survey

Edit Survey Conclusion

Inquiries regarding these confidential findings may be made to the following email address:

███████████████

Thank you for your participation in this important research. Your time and insights are gratefully appreciated.

You may now close your browser.

APPENDIX M

Student Online Survey

College Students Enrolled in Composition/First-Year Writing Courses Survey

---

COMPOSITION/FIRST-YEAR WRITING STUDENT SURVEY:
COMPUTER-MEDIATED INSTRUCTION AND COLLABORATIVE COMPOSITION
PEDAGOGIES

Spring 2009

Target Respondents: College Students Presently Enrolled in Composition/First-Year Writing Courses, including developmental writing, at Universities and Community Colleges

---

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated

Definitions of Key Terms Used

Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) is defined as the use of any computer software and related digital resources in work station and online environments used by composition instructors and students. Examples: learning management courseware, email, instructor websites, and a variety of computer-based off-the-shelf and instructor-developed programs used to teach composition.

Courseware is defined as any menu-driven software adapted for teaching, learning, and applying composition skills in face-to-face (FTF) and distance learning online environments. Examples: Blackboard and WebCT.

Face-to-face (FTF) classroom environments encompass teaching environments where only the instructors use a computer and perhaps some form of computer projection display media to instruct students in a class. Examples: classrooms in which overhead digital projection/digital media systems are used.

In-class workstation environments denote those composition classrooms where teachers and students have computer workstations and software. Examples: classrooms in which students use individual computer workstations connected to their institution's computer system.

446

Distance learning/online environments describe those off-campus web-based environments in which instructors teach composition using online technologies and courseware. Examples: instruction using the Internet to deliver composition courses taught through computer courseware.

Collaborative writing is an instructional and learning approach whereby students are empowered to interact and mutually implement writing improvement strategies during phases of the writing process.

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and Internet transactions

Add Question or Text

Delete | o M

—————————— Page Break ——————————

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete | Move

SECTION I: Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) Multiple Choice Questions

Add Question or Text

Edit | Delete

1. Respond to the following statements by indicating how often you use a computer (workstation, personal computer or laptop) to generate some form of text in communicating.

Edit | Delete | Move

	Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Infrequently	Never
1) Emailing	○	○	○	○	○
2) Writing Class Notes	○	○	○	○	○
3) Composing/Revising Essays	○	○	○	○	○
4) Writing Reports and text-based assignments	○	○	○	○	○
5) Other	○	○	○	○	○

447

Briefly describe "Other" if answered above.

[ ]

---------------------------------Page Break---------------------------------

2. Does your instructor currently use CMI/composition courseware in face-to-face (FTF) classroom environments, in-class student workstation environments, or in distance learning/online learning environments--or all three? *Indicate your response to this question by selecting one of the options from the series of statements that follow.*

	Use almost each class meeting	Sometimes use (at least twice per month)	Infrequently use (less than once per month)	Never use
FTF Setting--Instructor uses Computer/Digital Media in Classroom Only	○	○	○	○
Students use Workstation in Classroom Settings	○	○	○	○
Distance/Online Learning Environments	○	○	○	○

Add in the space below any additional comments you feel would be helpful or amplify your responses above:

[ ]

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	No Opinion
3. Do you believe the growing application of computer technologies and CMI in your composition classes are factors which make it important for you in developing effective writing/composition skills?	○	○	○	○	○

Add any comments you believe would be helpful or amplify your response above:

[ ]

448

4. Respond to the following series of questions regarding how *helpful* your believe CMI and writing courseware are during each of the phases of the writing process described below.

	VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	NOT HELPFUL	NO OPINION
PREWRITING (Inventing and discovering your ideas, free writing, and outlining)	○	○	○	○	○
COMPOSING/DRAFTING (Composing or writing your compositions)	○	○	○	○	○
REVISING/EDITING (Changing, modifying, and enhancing your composition drafts)	○	○	○	○	○
PROOFREADING (The final stage after editing/revising in which a writer identifies usage, organization, and stylistic issues to change or enhance the composition's final draft)	○	○	○	○	○
PEER COLLABORATION (Interaction with your peers during any phase of the writ ingprocess)	○	○	○	○	○

Add any comments you believe should be noted or will amplify any of your responses above.

```
[                                    ]
```

---------------------------------Page Break--------------------------------

5. Overall, CMI and courseware have helped improved my writing skills in my college first-year composition classes.

○ Strongly Agree   ○ Agree   ○ Neutral   ○ Disagree   ○ No Opinion   ○ Other (Please specify)

Other: `[                                    ]`

6. Agree or disagree with the following statement: Computer technology/CMI facilitates more efficient word processing, but not necessarily better writing.

○ Strongly Agree   ○ Agree   ○ Neutral   ○ Disagree   ○ No Opinion

OTHER: Add any comments you believe would be helpful or amplify your response above.

```
[                                    ]
```

449

7a. Please respond to one of the options below regarding your use of *blogging* in association with your writing assignments.

	Weekly	Several times a month	Several times during the semester	Infrequently	NEVER
I use blogging as a means for discovering ideas during the prewriting phase of my writing assignments.	C	C	C	C	C
I use blogging as a means to share ideas and find out what others are experiencing in their writing assignments.	C	C	C	C	C
I use blogging as a means for peer collaboration and critiquing of my writing assignments.	C	C	C	C	C
Other (please briefly describe below)	C	C	C	C	C

7b. Please briefly describe your response to "Other" in Question 7a above:

| |

————————————Page Break————————————

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Collaborative writing is very helpful in ALL phases of the writing process.	C	C	C	C	C	C
Collaborative writing is helpful in several, but not all phases of the writing process.	C	C	C	C	C	C
Collaborative writing is helpful only in prewriting/invention.	C	C	C	C	C	C
Collaborative writing is helpful only in revising/editing.	C	C	C	C	C	C
Collaborative writing is helpful only in proofreading.	C	C	C	C	C	C
Collaborative writing is helpful only in peer critiquing.	C	C	C	C	C	C

450

SECTION II: Short Answer Questions

1. What aspects of CMI/composition courseware or CMI approaches used in teaching composition do you like best? Also, please list several that you like.

```


```

(1000 characters remaining)

2. What aspects of CMI/composition courseware or CMI approaches used to teach composition do you like the least. Also, please list several that you dislike.

```


```

(1000 characters remaining)

3. (Answer this question only if your instructor uses collaborative writing as an instructional approach in your composition class). What aspects of collaborative writing (enabling you to interact with others at each phase of the writing process) do you like the best. Please list several that you like.

```


```

(1000 characters remaining)

————————————————————Page Break————————————————————

4. Briefly mention several approaches which you believe would improve the quality of writing instruction in your course.

```


```

(1000 characters remaining)

5. What teaching strategies and methods used in your composition course(s) should be changed or enhanced to improve the quality of teaching and learning?

```


```

(1000 characters remaining)

College Students Enrolled in Composition/First-Year Writing Courses Survey

Survey findings are used for doctoral research purposes. Please direct your questions regarding this research survey to ███████████

Your participation in this survey is gratefully acknowledged.

You may now close your browser.

For maximum confidentiality, please close this window.

APPENDIX N

PsychData® Validation of Total Survey Participants in Faculty
and Student Online Surveys

Validation of Total Faculty Members Participating in Online Survey

View Survey Data

ID	Survey Title	Responses	Status
125992	College Composition Faculty Survey: Computer-Mediated Instruction (CMI) and Collaborative Writing Pedagogies	66	ON

Participant Information

Participants	66	Participants who have started the survey and submitted data.

454

Validation of Total Students Participating in Online Survey\

PsychData®
CONFIDENCE IN RESEARCH

Welcome, gwilson1@twu.edu   Sign Out

Departmental Contract
Office of Research and
Sponsored Programs
Your support contact is: Rene

Hosting   Account Balance
Start: 09/08/2008   Questions: Unlimited
End: 09/05/2011   Responses: Unlimited

My Surveys   Create Survey   My Account   Purchase   Support

Manage Surveys | My Image Collection | Upload New Images

View Survey Data

ID	Survey Title	Responses	Status
127855	College Students Enrolled in Composition/First-Year Writing Courses Survey	39	ON

Participant Information

Participants	39	Participants who have started the survey and submitted data.

APPENDIX O

Representative Faculty Responses to Short-Response Survey Questions

Representative Faculty Answers to Short-response Questions, Section II of Faculty Online Survey

1. Briefly describe several teaching and learning aspects which you believe would improve the quality of composition instruction in your college's or academic department's curriculum.	2. What aspects of your instructional approaches would you like to change or see changed?	3. What instructional approaches or resources do you believe are needed to help you become a more effective college composition instructor?	4. Briefly describe the type of training in CMI/courseware which your university provides through its departmental, divisional, or institution-wide resources.	5. Do you follow or practice any particular collaborative writing theories or theorists? If "yes," please briefly list them here.
using more technologies in student assignments-- asking students to construct visuals and fliers/pamphlets rather than just essays, as well as asking students to draft blogs and other digital texts using more draft-respond-revise methods to encourage a stronger sense of the writing process, particularly using electronic drafting and commenting programs	I think I personally need to get more comfortable assigning texts that are not strictly essays. I use electronic submission, and maybe that's part of what keeps me glued to the essay. Students are more comfortable creating those kinds of documents when they are in groups and the work is considered "class work" rather than a major assignment, though.	I just need more time to work out what will or won't work in the classroom. That's hard in the age of accountability where we have our course completers and successful completers tracked each semester and held over our heads. Innovation is not supported in that environment-- it's too risky.	We have college-wide Instructional Design folks who hold workshops and offer one-on-one sessions to discuss technology use.	Not really. I have read quite a bit, but most of it is pretty obvious so I don't really follow any particular theorist's work that closely.

APPENDIX P

Representative Student Responses to Short-Response Survey Questions

Representative Student Answers to Short-response Questions, Section II
Student Online Survey

1. What aspects of CMI/composition courseware or CMI approaches used in teaching composition do you like best? Also, please list several that you like.	2. What aspects of CMI/composition courseware or CMI approaches used to teach composition do you like the least. Also, please list several that you dislike.	3. (Answer this question only if your instructor uses collaborative writing as an instructional approach in your composition class). What aspects of collaborative writing (enabling you to interact with others at each phase of the writing process) do you like the best. Please list several that you like.	4. Briefly mention several approaches which you believe would improve the quality of writing instruction in your course.	5. What teaching strategies and methods used in your composition course(s) should be changed or enhanced to improve the quality of teaching and learning?
I liked the use of comments in microsoft word, emailed to each other by instructor and students. It was simple and quick to do, and also easy to understand	I disliked the online tutorials that we were force-fed as homework. For me, working together as a class in a workstation area is the best way for me to learn how to use new web/computer features.	The best was the suggestions for revision (at the revising stage/process). Also good was pre-writing collaboration; when all we had was basically an idea. I think we were able to help point each other in the "write" direction. I think outline review would have also helped, had we done it more.	An occasional timed essay helps to force me to get my ideas out on paper quickly - some students work well under pressure, you know. More focus and guidance on the revision process would have been helpful.	I think that having a public speaking opportunity (having students read aloud one or more of the essays that they write for the class) would round out the goals of the course, because learning to speak well is related to learning to write well. More importantly, speedreading should be taught in this course because it is a valuable skill, and, in the long run, nothing contributes to writing ability faster or more than reading of quality books. Nothing

459