12-2021

Mapping the Pathways to Campus Writing Sites: Implications for Writing Program Administrators

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Mapping the Pathways to Campus Writing Sites:
Implications for Writing Program Administrators

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the extent to which the writing program administrator and their affiliated writing program are structurally, organizationally, and rhetorically visibly connected to other campus sites of writing. To complete this project data was collected across five benchmarked institutions from publicly accessible online texts. Rhetorical analysis, informed by rhetorical genre studies and institutional ethnography, was conducted to conclude how writing programs are rhetorically situated in their home campus and how the role of the writing program administrator is rhetorically shaped within institutional structures and texts. The analysis concludes with four recommended authorial interventions for the writing program administrator to adapt to their local institutional setting.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A colleague walks into my office in the college's advising center and asks me how we should respond to a course exemption request for English composition due to unevaluated transfer credits. Requests like these, ones that pertain to state mandated general education requirements, raise questions about department-level, college-level, and institutional-level decision making. After hearing the details, I reply, 'We need to first ask the WPA what they think about this course and its likelihood to be a transfer equivalency.' My colleague looks up and asks, 'Who is the WPA? Are they different than the English Department Chair?' Their response is unsurprising because it is based on an understanding of familiar faculty and department structures that the WPA's existence can disrupt.

People like to organize and classify things. The ability to assemble ideas into recognizable and organizable patterns helps us make meaning of relationships, hierarchies, and texts. As helpful and productive as this tendency proves to be, it becomes problematic when people and the roles they fill occupy vague, hybrid spaces that are hard to recognize, classify, and understand. Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) know this all too well as they occupy a role that does not have a recognizable counterpart in other traditional academic departments. The faculty expectations for the WPA's teaching and scholarship are familiar; the administrative functions of their role, however, become worthy of further examination as to how the WPA navigates the broader administrative network of writing activities on their campus. Institutional size, administrative spread, student preparedness, and collaboration can contribute to the ambiguity of the WPA's role and reach. This dissertation seeks to understand and ameliorate the WPA's role in the complex campus writing ecology.

Large universities rely on hierarchies for decision-making and navigability given the magnitude of diverse stakeholders who enter, interact, and imprint on the institution. When the WPA's administrative functions break recognizable patterns across their home institution, valuable questions are raised about the ways the WPA's role is situated within their local campus, the visibility of the WPA's work in other writing sites across their local campus, and the ways writing is understood by students, faculty, staff, and administrators. As the steward of the writing programs, the WPA is likely the person on campus most closely affiliated with the writing curriculum and institutionally measured writing development of the students. First year composition (FYC) is commonly the sole required general education course across most universities and the WPA is institutionally situated to shape the curricular understanding and expectations of formal writing instruction. Writing instruction and advising about writing occur in many institutional spaces, or sites, outside of the composition classroom, such as in writing centers, student success centers, libraries, and athletic academic centers. Aside from writing centers, which have mixed leadership structures, the other sites of writing are typically directed by those in staff roles which follow different job structures, decision-making practices, and policies at the university.

The WPA, in a faculty appointment, finds themselves working in familiar faculty patterns, taking on administrative duties that are bound programmatically, and doing daily work that is heavily networked through the staff side of an institution. WPAs can easily find themselves in a room with others who assume familiarity with the work of the WPA while rarely having the access to fully understand what the WPA *does* at their institution. This is not to say the value of the WPA is in question, but rather that the WPA's role is highly susceptible to others projecting their own understanding of the WPA's role based on their own position at the

university. The complex nature of the position allows for robust connections between faculty, staff, and administrators which can ultimately lead to a muddled or obfuscated understanding of the WPA. Understanding who the WPA is and what they do is critical to knowing what it is that FYC does within the university's curriculum and student writing development.

The institutionally most visible aspect of the WPA's work is the FYC curriculum development, staffing, and enrollment. Because FYC is the most visible writing course for all students in a university, the WPA is imbued with the power to shape the campus's formal writing standards, practices, and curriculum at the fundamental level. The FYC classroom is not the only place that students engage in writing instruction and support. Almost all institutions offer a writing center, studio, or lab component that provides tutoring or coaching to students. Many institutions offer population specific writing support, such as business communication labs or athletic academic centers. Academic departments may offer specialized writing courses within their major curriculum and university libraries commonly build research guides or course guides as part of their services. These other organized spaces and activities are visibly sanctioned by the institution as viable sites of writing instruction, development, or support. They are also aligned with personal identifiers and choice because of how they are situated in the university. What they lack, though, is the same foothold in the required curriculum as the FYC course.

Students do not have the same freedom of choice to opt in or opt out of FYC as they do in other campus sites of writing. Students are either required to take the composition courses to graduate or are excused from taking them if they are exempt or have transferred in the equivalent hours. While there is no definitive entity preventing a student from duplicating credit out of personal choice, social and policy structures strongly discourage the practice to the degree it is omitted from conversations. With this distinction in mind, the WPA and FYC become the

representations of campus writing practices in the official pages of the catalog of studies, general education requirements, and enrollment conversations. Upon a deeper examination, though, the campus writing ecology is robust and complex. A variety of people, roles, audiences, and purposes emerge to reproduce beliefs of what constitutes good writing, how student writers are supported, and who is welcomed into those conversations.

The ways these sites of writing are positioned within the university are not arbitrary and signal more than the budgetary unit funding the service. Further, university organizational structures have the power to determine outcomes, work visibility, and value systems. The modern research university is replete with dichotomous relationships: academic and student affairs; faculty and staff; and managers (though often called directors or department chairs) and subordinated employees. While the individuals in these roles may understand the nuance of their positions, the roles themselves are interpreted through dichotomous lenses via funding, assessment, language, and leadership (LaFrance 2012). For example, the way a staff member in student affairs may describe and measure student development will differ greatly from a faculty member in academic affairs, though they may point to similar behaviors in the student. Over time, relationships and behaviors become reinforced which can reshape networks, activities, and outcomes. When these dichotomies are recreated and reenacted over time and regardless of the individuals who occupy executive administrative roles, they create systems resistant to change and difficult for those within the system to recognize as observable, changeable phenomena.

The administrative function of the WPA role allows for the shaping of the FYC curriculum and positions the WPA in a potential network of other campus professionals invested in the writing development and support of shared students. These potential networks can be formalized and sanctioned by the institution or informal, ad hoc networks developed out of

organic situations and shared needs. A significant factor in establishing and maintaining these networks is the dichotomous structure of the university – particularly the faculty and staff divide. The majority of writing sites outside of FYC are classified and led by staff positions – even when common credentialling includes a terminal degree – and an exploration of how these writing sites are proximate to the WPA and FYC program can illuminate the way campus writing networks are supported, challenged, and visible.

Because this research project is interested in the WPA's position within the campus writing systems, their role within the university will be the primary consideration and point of orientation within this dissertation project. Ultimately, this project seeks to understand to what extent is the WPA formally and informally connected to the writing activities on their campus and how an online writing network shapes the ways students engage with sites of writing on their campus.

Local Institutional Contexts and Campus Partnerships

In the field of composition studies and in writing program administration there is a call to recognize, understand, and adapt programs to the local institutional context. The student profiles, organizational structures, funding, personnel resources, department alignment, and university mission are forces that shape the demands on a writing program. In the WPA Outcomes Statement is designed to leave local articulation and standards to the WPA based on institutional needs while providing standards for the field based on shared research. In their collaborative work, Paretti et al, examine the challenges that WPAs face when establishing interdisciplinary teaching partnerships in efforts to achieve writing program outcomes. One of the challenges WPAs will face is the understanding of the field of writing as its own discipline and the teaching of writing as doing more than teaching a transferable skill. They explain "if collaborators do not

recognize writing studies as a discipline with its own epistemological framework, it is difficult to value that framework and use it to build new knowledge" (81). Going a bit further, they explain how "our own interdisciplinary approach to methods can in turn make it difficult for us to represent our expertise as a discipline in a uniform, consistent way" which when "coupled with other political factors, the onus lies on WPAs to explain our disciplinary expertise to colleagues" (81). When the authors surveyed writing program administrators from 50 different colleges and universities they found that two of the top three barriers to collaborative partnerships were "lack of understanding about what program can offer faculty" and "lack of understanding of about what writing program can offer students" (91). In their research project Paretti et al. were seeking to understand way to bolster interdisciplinary partnerships between faculty across disciplines and identified barriers that I hypothesize exist in the potential partnerships between writing programs and other sites of writing of the institutions examined in this dissertation project.

The online visibility of the WPA's role and labor is worthy of deep investigation because of the value placed on faculty intellectual work and the ways managerial labor of administration can become obscured. In her 2001 article "Taking Dictation: The Emergence of Writing Programs and the Cultural Contradictions of Composition Teaching," Donna Strickland argues that "writing programs are made possible by the division of labor which are ideologically coded and maintained through the circulation of dominant cultural values" (460). Her work focuses on the ways writing programs emerged as "analogous to the configurations of the corporate workplace" and the ways some levels of writing work "came to be associated with white women" (460). Her examination of how the general education writing requirement rose in popularity and impacted writing program development is pertinent to this project's discussion of

WPA role and labor. As writing requirements became more robust, a division occurred in the English department in who taught composition and what distinguished composition courses from literature courses. Deborah H. Holdstein addresses the position of the WPA in negotiating the values of the field of writing studies and the local institutional constraints. She writes that WPAs "attempt to navigate and thereby enact on campus the near-universal truths of the discipline and profession in contrast to what campus administrators will allow and what they will promote, most often than not, for economic reasons" (19). WPAs grapple with the expectations of the institutions as scholars and as administrators.

The intellectual work of WPAs is addressed in the "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration" statement from the Council of Writing Program Administrators. In the document, the authors acknowledge that administration duties of the WPA are not always "generally regarded as intellectual, professional activities worthy of tenure and promotion" as teaching and service (para. 1). In the statement, the authors provide categories and criteria to aid in the evaluative framing of WPA intellectual work. WPAs may find themselves struggling to make their work understood across their own department faculty, up to administration at times of promotion, and between other academic departments to build interdisciplinary partnerships. In this project, I examine the ways online texts can help increase intersubjectivity and coordination between program sites that define writing in different capacities, align with the university in various roles, and are organized under various professional affiliations and values.

Answering the Research Question

To answer this research question, I turned to the robust data provided several institution's online texts. The global pandemic and the surge of remote work in 2020 increased awareness in the value of online information and data. Professionals found themselves isolated from the

people they relied on daily to accomplish basic work tasks. Questions that may have been answered by someone in the hallway were now vetted by an online search for the answer before interrupting colleagues in unpredictable home working conditions. Would they be online? Were they teaching their own children? Did I have a question I could answer on my own? Universities already had established, reliable online texts, but now users were reliant on them in new ways and to a greater extent in understanding what constitutes the University.

Universities have always been rife with online, publicly accessible data that requires the reader to know what they are looking for and have a basic understanding of university organization to predict which office may provide it. Due to the large size of the research institutions included in this study, it is reasonable to expect many texts will be written to audiences with varying degrees of familiarity with the institution at-large and the local pages specifically. To navigate the robust data source that is the modern university's online presence, a reader must be able to navigate the organizational functions, recognize the generic forms, and trace the networks that emerge in the online plane.

This project seeks to delve into these online texts in hopes of better understanding the writing networks that emerge and the ways the WPA can participate in them. The genres that ground this study are ones that have become stable and predictable across public institutions which is important because they speak to recurring exigencies to which the texts are responding. While the specific texts listed in figure 1.2 are examined from various lenses with implications for the WPA in mind, their deep research value in this project arises from their stable presence across institutions, the social actions that are organized around the texts, and the ways they shape institutional beliefs and cultures via the way users encounter these texts and the ways texts coordinate activity across sites (Bawarshi; Bazerman; Devitt; Miller). Rhetorically engaging with

these texts as genres, first, allows for a consideration of the ways higher education broadly –

across the five institutions – responds to the exigences prompting the creation of these texts,

reflects institutional values in these texts, and organizes activity through expected types of texts.

Via critical engagement through rhetorical analysis these texts are considered within their local

institutional network to map the sites of writing as they are presented to the institutional

audience: prospective students, current students, parent, advisors, faculty, and administrators as

well as the general public.

The texts examined are all authored by people embedded in various positions across the

same institution whose own standpoints, values, and roles shape the content they create. Their

authorship is important, but more than the identity of the individual author is the way they

reproduce ideas, policies, or beliefs in their texts and the ways those texts institutionalize ideas,

policies, and beliefs that is important to this study. Specifically, the way college writing is co-

constituted within and across these sites of writing, writing instruction, and writing support

significantly relies on the stability and power of online texts. Users may access these sites with

specific questions, and the interaction with these sites can leave lasting impressions.

Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography (I.E.) is a way of uncovering "how things happen" and "what

practices constitute the institution as we think of it" (Lafrance 2012). Sociologist Dorothy E.

Smith established the methodology as a way to explain the ways activities are coordinated across

time and place via interactions between people and texts carrying out the tasks that compromise

their daily work. Of particular interest to this project is the value placed on deep exploration of

the mundane to understand the ways people enter into and interact with work processes and the

texts associated with them (Turner 143). In this approach, texts must be interpreted as part of

social action that occurs between a person with their own personally held beliefs, identity, and experiences, other people in the work process, and texts that are created by people in the midst of their own work processes (Lafrance; Smith; Turner). Within the I.E. framework, institutions are not places – such as a university – but rather social constructs reenacted via daily work activities. As Smith describes, "institutional ethnography attends to those phenomena of consciousness, thought, culture, and the like as they have become objectified in the translocal organization of people's work and as a product of that work" (*A Sociology* 69). Texts, then, become observable materials – alongside the work processes that produce them – to investigate and begin to uncover what values and beliefs are made visible through various types of work and to what consequence (Smith, *A Sociology*).

The research conducted in this dissertation project is a rhetorical analysis shaped by the research values of institutional ethnography. An I.E. framework is well suited for this research project because it allows for the research to begin with a text and open up into an exploration of the exigence and consequences of that text in its local environment. I.E. provides a framework of understanding textual relationships outside of organizational hierarchy, considers texts as occurring in a function of time, and allows for the inclusion of auto-ethnographical data (Smith, *A Sociology*).

Standpoint and Autoethnography

Michele LaFrance describes standpoint as the ways "individuals are unique and knowing but also act from places of shared identity, professional alignment, and investment" which allows them to "look up" in the words of Dorothy Smith from where they are to begin to understand the ways work happens (LaFrance, *Institutional Ethnography*, 5; Smith 68). As a researcher, I hold a unique standpoint to look up and question the work within my institution of higher education as

well as the way my work is framed institutionally by the values of those related to my shared identities. For example, while I remain the same embodied person throughout the day, the expectations, values, and texts I engage with change socially and institutionally as advisor, supervisor, instructor, and graduate student. My unique professional position that includes fifteen years at my home institution, nine years of professional employment, and five and a half years in my doctoral studies has afforded me the acuity needed to recognize the shifting social environments, adapt behaviors, translate texts, and articulate the phenomena I see occurring.

Acknowledging that my auto-ethnographical experience is just one among the many who do work in our institutions of higher education, I have included short excerpts in the form of brief narratives throughout this dissertation project. The purpose of these composite narratives is to incorporate context that prompted research curiosity in the texts, programs, and relationships examined within. They are designed to share lived experiences and potential exigence for rhetorical situations investigated.

Academic Advising Standpoint

During New Student Orientation summer advising, a faculty member sends me an instant message during a virtual advising appointment, "My student would like to CLEP out of English remediation. What do I do?" To answer this question, an advisor must synthesize information from the placement policies, testing center, Registrar's enrollment calendar, admissions, and scholarship requirements. At our institution, time parameters are set by admissions and scholarships for when remediation must be completed, term enrollment deadlines for the upcoming semester are posted on the Registrar's enrollment calendar, testing information for CLEP is housed in the Testing Center, and required scores are posted in Placement Policies.

Either the advisor or the student will need to invest time and effort – work - for the complex task of reading, synthesizing, and decision-making that occurs around an enrollment decision that is often summarized as "Yes, but they will need to take the Accuplacer or CLEP exams during their first term." One phrase that is designed to meet the immediate needs of its audience yet obscures the deep synthesis behind it.

Due to the material conditions of the registration process, a student who may choose to delay FYC while waiting to test out of remediation now understands the composition course as something rooted in tests and deadlines instead of a developmental, educational experience.

I utilized my unique standpoint as an academic advisor who also coordinates new student orientation and teaches composition courses to answer the question 'which of our students find themselves in FYC?'. This simple question requires a deep investigation into the admissions standards, placement policies, general education requirements, and test credit and transfer credit equivalencies. While the black and white text of the general education curriculum may read as though every student will enroll into FYC courses, there are conditions that may change the ways students fulfill these requirements based on remediation requirement, test credit exemptions, and transfer credit policies.

As an academic advisor, I engage with FYC through policy interpretation and enactment via student enrollment. As an advising administrator in the college that houses the English Department and the FYC courses, I engage with FYC through course availability, enrollment trends, updated co-requisites, and forecasting which of our new students will need a seat in the Fall. My professional advising experiences with FYC erases a need to consider the learning outcomes of the course or how the course will complement their other studies. Instead, it

becomes a transactional conversation established on the paradox that writing development is fundamentally important while also being something rather easily exempted.

Determining which students in a university funnel through to the English composition courses also requires an understanding of the intersection of enrollment services, the writing program, and undergraduate advising that shape student understanding of their first-year writing requirements. Because my job in advising relies on frequent policy interpretation, referrals, and citations, I am well situated to observe the value of online texts in shaping our institutional behaviors, attitudes, and collective values. As an instructor for the composition program, I also know that decisions made by WPAs are deliberate and based in both the values of their field and their local institutional context. As familiar as I am with my own composition program and advising practices, I struggle to share that insight with my peers outside of those interpersonal moments where somebody approaches me because they see my name listed as an instructor on the course schedule.

Influenced by my graduate education in the field of Higher Education, my professional experiences in advising, and my studies in Rhetoric and Composition, I began to explore the online texts that construct the ways we classify, describe, and interpret our institutional contexts. Then, I inventoried the ones that specifically speak to writing requirements and writing support. I categorized these into genre types and rhetorical situations as outlined in figure 1.1.

Rhetorical Situation	**Rhetorical Genre Response**
Stakeholder questions about an institution's background, size, and general profile.	Institution's About Website
Stakeholder questions about scores required for placement into courses.	Institutional Placement Chart

Stakeholder questions about overall enrollment, demographic data, and general student enrollment profile.	Institutional Enrollment Report
Stakeholder questions about a college's scope, programs, departments, and personnel.	College Website
Stakeholder questions about the required courses for a bachelor's degree.	General Education Requirement Website, Catalog Page, or Diagram
Stakeholder questions about a program's scope, purposes, services, and personnel.	Program or Departmental Website
Stakeholder questions about library services and personnel.	Library Research Guide

Figure 1.1

Each department or program within an institution is likely to adapt these genres to fit their specific needs and purposes for specific audiences. The sites in figure 1.2 are the ones I use to explore the institutional profile, writing courses, writing support, research support, enrollment patterns, and writing culture for this project. In figure 1.2 they are organized into columns labeled by the interpreted function of these specific sites. Specific data collection methods and analysis are located in the subsequent chapters. The data sources are included here to provide scope of the project and to establish validity in the profiles I present. Multiple sites and data sources within the institution are used in each subsequent chapter to present a university as described in official texts and the ways it is constructed through descriptive sites, services, and linked networks.

Rules	**Descriptions**	**Facts**	**Connections**
Catalog of Studies	Carnegie Classification	Office of Institutional Research (OIR) Website	University Directory
Placement Policies	University "About" Website	Enrollment Reports	Departmental Directory
Course descriptions: pre/co-requisites	Course Descriptions	Class Search Archives	Embedded Links to Related Departments

Admissions Policies	Admissions Website	Class Search Results
Organizational Charts	FYC Website	
Transfer Equivalencies	ENGL Department Website	
Test Credit Policies	College (Arts and Sciences) Website	
Test Credit Equivalencies	Student Success Center Website	
	Athletic Department Academic Center Website	
	University Library Website	

Figure 1.2

Perspectives on writing within a local institution requires insight from departments directly and directly connected. Figure 1.3 provides a list of the departments, programs, or units that were connected via the writing requirements, enrollment, or supplemental support within each of the universities studied. To fully contextualize and understand the writing networks that emerge across these sites, it is critical to acknowledge that many mundane activities within a university setting are at some point coordinated across multiple departments with specialized skills, mindsets, and goals.

Offices Represented or Connected to Campus Writing Sites via the Online Texts Examined

- Admissions
- Registrar's Office
- College of the Arts and Sciences
- Academic Advising
- Office of Institutional Research
- Provost's office
- Student Success Center
- Athletic Center
- Writing Center
- English Department
- University Libraries

Figure 1.3

Research Questions

To answer my primary question of the extent to which the WPA is formally and informally connected to the writing activities on their campus and how does their involvement shape the ways students engage with sites of writing on their campus I posed the following supplementary questions:

- Which of our students enter institutional writing sites through First Year Composition courses?

- To what extent is FYC a part of the required curriculum?

- How many students are likely to enroll into FYC courses?

- What other instructional or developmental sites of writing are available and who has access to them?

- How does the institution organize and classify available sites of writing?

- What is the proximity of these sites of writing to the FYC program?

- What networks become visible through online signaling in policies and in online texts?

- What types of institutional partnerships or networks emerge across sites of writing?

- What institutional signaling should the WPA be aware of and what are the implications for the FYC courses they oversee?

Data Collection

Background

   In the Spring semester of 2020, I was teaching our remedial writing course called Basic Writing. At the time, it was not a paired course with the FYC class and all of the students were enrolled in different composition sections with different instructors. This became a more significant factor in March of that year as we moved to remote learning during mid-terms. The course already had an online support component that was predominately used to house pertinent texts for the course: syllabus and class policies, assignment details and submissions, and a screen to post announcements to the students. The hierarchy of the class was echoed through this online component in that communication flowed uni-directionally from instructor to students and their participation was limited to a few basic functions: reading the content, submitting assignments, posting discussions, and emailing users.

   The abrupt change in the learning environment mid-semester raised questions for me that transformed my pedagogy and advising praxis. I was in a position to observe my students' adjustment to remote participation with the university. Within a week all university services apart from housing and dining moved to remote mediation. I had a small group of approximately 19 students in my writing course and 375 freshman advisees. I developed an advising course in the same learning management system and delivered advising materials in similar patterns as I did my teaching materials. The forced experiment in remote learning and advising raised questions for me about the ways I interacted with the same students in different roles, the ways

students were socialized to work with me in these capacities, and ways online texts shaped our relationships through shared materials, information exchanges, and access.

The move to remote instruction and advising transformed my advising practice as it shifted to resemble my teaching and through that process, I uncovered new ways to recognize the moments when some of my advisees struggled to understand advising curriculum, enrollment processes, and navigating various forms that regulate many of the actions within the university. Because of the historical reliance on print forms and physical signatures, the move to remote processes illuminated many of the barriers to basic navigation on our campus.

My students in basic writing, though, seemed to struggle more than my group of advisees which stood out to me because they were all new freshman in their first year and experiencing the same abrupt change in their learning environment. During the first two weeks of online learning there was not much time for investigation or reflection as policies were changing frequently, licenses for online platforms were being acquired, and all units were trying to keep up while also communicating these updates to faculty and staff. When I was able to take a step back and examine my course, I realized the sudden change to online learning had flattened my pedagogical approach to almost entirely text based during the transition. My pedagogy evolved along with my technical skills to include class meetings, videos, and interactive discussions. In those first weeks, though, my students who were already identified as underprepared for FYC were suddenly put into a situation where they had to navigate our class and basic university functions almost entirely through digital and virtual texts. This experience raised questions for me about the ways students interact with the textually constructed university and enter into spaces of support.

Prior to the shift to remote learning, I began working on a project in a research methods course to study the ways students developed and expressed learning expectations in the writing classroom. The study was limited in capacity due to the uncertainty that surrounded our course offerings, mode of instruction, and enrollment yet I was able to send an IRB exempt survey to a small group of students enrolled into the Summer 2020 sessions of composition. The survey was not part of this dissertation project yet provided some data that sparked the future inquiry discussed here. Students reported that their academic advisor and their course syllabus were the most significant factors in shaping their expectations for a course. Typically, there is a significant delay between advising conversations, course enrollment, and receiving a syllabus. For Fall courses, it can be up to 4 months between April registration and the August term commencement. For Spring and Summer, it can be up to a two-month delay between registration and the term commencement, with advising conversations occurring one to two months prior to registration. Advisors, too, are external to the composition program and are typically using university requirement guidelines to inform their conversations. When an advisor recommends a course, their advice is sound yet informed by a different set of values and expectations than those who create the writing curriculum. Advisor recommendations are also the result of synthesized university texts, student feedback, and professional training. At my local institution, while advisors may individually reach out to the English Department or WPA with specific situational questions, they are not directly connected or networked with the program. Advising conversations, therefore, are highly shaped by university placement policies, general education requirements, and graduation progress. Conversations are not positioned to discuss learning outcomes, assignment expectations, or writing development.

The syllabus is an expected response as it serves as the course contract and is recognizable across course experiences, yet as an advisor and instructor in the English Department I had first-hand knowledge of how the syllabi were created and distributed. The course syllabi shell with the course description, learning outcomes, and major assignments are standardized across all introductory composition courses. The instructor may tailor submission guidelines, late policies, and reading schedules yet the rest is standardized. Students often do not receive their syllabus until the week prior to the start date or during the first course meeting.

The pilot study, while not statistically significant, suggested that further investigation into the external messaging students received about writing courses was warranted. It also suggested that further examination of the ways texts shape experiences and expectations may provide valuable insight for the WPA.

Establishing Benchmark Universities

To investigate the relationships between writing program, online texts, and writing support networks I first sought out benchmark institutions with similar institutional profiles. While institutional profiles are not central to writing program assessment, assessment literature acknowledges the need for institutional awareness. Using similar institutional profiles also allows for the data collected to be contextualized, extrapolated, and applied to local institutional factors for WPAs.

My local institution is a large, public research university that provides an official benchmark list, an athletic conference benchmark list, and land-grant benchmark list. I began my process by looking at the institutions' Carnegie Classification data from 2017 to establish:

- Institution Type (public or private)
- Carnegie Classification

- Student Population

- Undergraduate proportions

- Selectivity

- Transfer in rates

Next, using institutional websites including admissions websites, catalog of studies general education requirements and course descriptions, and FYC websites I created snapshots of FYC placement, requirements, and exemptions. This process involved taking raw, disparate data and synthesizing sources. If one policy was unclear, it was cross checked across other institutional sources for clarity and application. I narrowed the list of benchmark institutions to four that shared the following characteristics:

- Public Institution

- Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity

- Student populations ranging 24,300-36,200

- High Undergraduate Population

- More Selective

- High Transfer In

- Test based placement and exemption policies for FYC

- These institutional profiles are provided in Chapter 2.

Building Writing Profiles

After identifying the five institutions for my study, I compiled institutional writing profiles to determine which students enroll into FYC courses, which institutional writing sites are available, and which services are directly associated with the writing program by accessing publicly accessible information from the following sources:

- Office of Institutional Research enrollment reports

- Class search archives

- Current class search

- Admission's websites for communication about placement, enrollment, and advising

- Writing Center websites

- Student Success Center websites

- Library research guides

- FYC writing program websites

- English Department websites

- College of Arts and Sciences (name varies) websites

- Catalog of Studies general education requirements

- Placement policies

- Test credit policies

- Transfer credit equivalencies

These sources were synthesized into robust profiles in Chapter 2.

Mapping Institutional Networks

After examining similarities in the writing programs, themselves, my research turned to understanding the local institutional structures that might shape the lived experiences of those entering into the sites of writing. To begin this process, I started with official organizational charts of the five institutions to establish which institutional structures were already enacted at each university. Access and transparency to institutional charts was problematic in some institutions, and in those situations, information was cross referenced with departmental directory pages, title investigation, and synthesis between department, college, and university

websites. Implications of obscured institutional relationships is discussed in Chapter 3 of this project.

Significance and Limitations

This research project is poised to help WPAs reconsider the ways they are represented on their campus, share their jobs roles, and build positive writing networks at their local institution. An examination of the local writing climate also has positive impacts on the ways WPAs assess their own writing programs and student writing development, build graduate teacher training, and advertise writing courses. The project culminates in specific suggestions for the WPA in how they author their program's website text in meaningful ways that resonates with the needs of their readers.

This research project is impacted by real word limitations. The questions at the heart of the study are influenced by the research values of institutional ethnography, yet key methodology of ethnography is not used. The project could be enhanced and deepened at the local application by pairing the textual analysis presented in the subsequent chapters with local ethnographic inquiry to understand the expressed attitudes, beliefs, and values of the people at the institution itself. This research would enhance the work presented here and allow another perspective to deepen the analysis.

Dissertation Structure

In this introductory chapter, I establish context and scope of my overall dissertation project. I introduce the rationale for my data sources, data collection, and the ways it will be used in the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 2 the research question of which of students enter institutional writing sites through First Year Composition courses is explored through a rhetorical analysis of placement

policies, FYC requirements, and institutional writing sites. I establish a baseline profile for each of the five institutions studied to ascertain where FYC fits within the university curriculum, which students are likely to be enrolled into the FYC courses, and what other institutional writing sites exist across these institutions. These profiles demonstrate a trend across the 5 universities that FYC holds a unique position within the general education core, due to testing or transfer credit exemptions it is unlikely that all students will enroll into a writing course overseen by a WPA, and that there are multiple sites of writing with varying degrees of association with the FYC writing program that include: library services, writing labs or centers, and athletic academic centers. Ultimately, this chapter interrogates the relationship of the WPA as the steward of formal writing instruction and the ways students enter these other sites of writing.

In Chapter three the research question of what types of institutional partnerships or networks emerge across sites of writing is addressed through an investigation of formal organization structures and signaled networks for the WPA. After establishing the ways students may enter various sites of writing, I examine institutional organizational charts to uncover how these formal sites of instruction or support were organized within their home campus. Organizational charts are a robust data source as they adhere to genre conventions and are expected for transparency in public universities. Next, I use website content beginning with the FYC program pages to map a linked writing network for each institution. By comparing the formal organizational charts with the networked maps, I am able to identify signals as to how formal and informal relationships emerge, the depth of these relationships, and where work might be replicated in places without strong connection. This chapter begins by looking at the ways offices are connected and ends by examining how job roles intersect which raises questions of labor on behalf of the faculty and staff as well as student interpretations of writing on campus.

In chapter four the research question of what institutional signaling should the WPA be aware of and what are the implications for the FYC courses they oversee is examined in light of the research from chapters two and three and previously published scholarship on the role of the WPA. This chapter identifies contradictions, collaboration opportunities, and ways deeper local ethnographic studies can enhance the WPA's understanding of the work being done to advance writing development at their home institution.

In the final discussion chapter I revisit the limitations and implications of this research project for the modern WPA.

Chapter 2: Institutional Profiles "Who is taking our FYC courses?"

Our Arts and Sciences admissions counselor is out unexpectedly, and I am asked to step in to visit with a prospective student and their family. I walk up to our conference room and, in lieu of the expected admissions' presentation that I do not possess, I ask the student what they are planning to study in college. We talk for a moment about their major plans and then their parent chimes in with questions about which courses the student should be taking while still in high school to be ahead when they begin at the university.

I reply with a comment about how the curriculum is designed for students to begin college with no college credit and graduate in four years. That is not the answer the parents were hoping to hear. They begin to list the AP courses the student has completed and the dual enrollment credit options available in their high school. I nod and explain our transfer credit processes mentioning that English Composition and Mathematics – two hallmarks of the general education requirements – are some of the most common courses student transfer in from high school.

While we politely chat and I answer their questions about the university, I am conflicted about the exchange. I understand the benefits of students adding flexibility into their college enrollment by taking advantage of dual enrollment opportunities and Advanced Placement programs, but I also know that students who enroll into our composition program have the opportunity to develop writing skills reflective of the demands of our local institution, take a small class with their freshman cohort which is hard to guarantee outside of composition, and increase their likelihood to use resources like our library sooner than later.

The dangerous narrative that lurks below the exchange is that by somehow taking college composition in college is to be behind in some way.

Standpoint as Advisor, Instructor, and Scholar

The professional lens through which I view my home institution is multifaceted. It has been shaped by many identities overtime that have varied in personal resonance: undergraduate student, graduate student, writing tutor, graduate intern for institutional reaccreditation, academic advisor, writing instructor, and new student orientation program organizer. In my professional role I do a lot of hat-switching, just as many professionals who find themselves in higher education, broadly, and writing program administration, specifically, often do between administrator, scholar, teacher, and practitioner. While these roles may keep schedules crowded and create blind spots out of necessity - I can't yet attend to *that* issue until I attend *this* one - it has been my experience that the professional intersectionality often prompts the most robust of research questions. This professional intersectionality also brings with it varying power structures, language practices, work visibility, and cultural expectations as I move through institutional spaces with varying purpose and resources. My journey to institutional mapping and reflection upon writing services arose out of years of occupying different spaces, places, and purposes across fifteen years in one institution. Our institutionalized roles shape our interpretive lenses for specific situations, and those roles are reinforced by our physical spaces, priorities, and relationships – but when we walk into a room that cues us to occupy one role we do not necessarily shirk our others. Our brains do not turn off the things we know outside of that space, and we are able to attend to ideas that spark others.

While advising undergraduate students across a broad swath of programs in the arts and sciences, a common exchange occurred in almost all of my conversations: have you completed your freshman writing courses? For my local institution, a two-semester writing course sequence is the only requirement that is universal across all colleges, programs, and majors. That ubiquity

across programs creates a peculiar phenomenon of reducing the critical conversations between advisors and students to a check-the-box conversation instead of a decision-making conversation. The institutional requirements have already predetermined that students will complete the course sequencing in some capacity prior to graduation and it has become diminished in its need for in-depth advising conversations around the course selection. Yet, there are many institutional conversations that must coordinate and occur each year that span state-level general education requirements, enrollment service management, writing program planning, and academic advising.

The initial enrollment conversation for first-year composition (FYC) courses at my home institution involves in-depth conversations about placement and credit in place of conversations about the purpose of the course. Our specific program allows for test exemption, test credit, and had a high transfer rate of concurrent high school course work for FYC courses. The tone of efficiency that has dominated admissions conversations for years combined with the broad applicability to programs and the accessibility of test or concurrent credits means that many of our traditional freshman students enter our programs without the need of our FYC course. With a large freshmen class, FYC courses are still highly populated with our new freshmen, but the descriptive elements of this group could be distinguished and characterized in relation to the exemption and credit options. The advising conversation around enrollment implicitly shifts to *students are in this course if they did not have X, Y, or Z conditions* instead of *all students* will take this course. This phenomenon and its conditions will be discussed in more detail at the end of the chapter.

Student Expectations

In the introduction I discussed how a preliminary study helped shape my confidence in this project's scope and direction. While originally designed to gain insight on how instructors and students developed and manifested learning expectations in the classroom, the response to 'which resources helped shape your classroom expectations?' revealed that students cited their class syllabus, then their academic advisor, and then the course instructor. While the response rate was not high enough to establish significance, it did prompt me to shift my attention to two elements of that response:

- The role a text plays in shaping expectations and the timing of interacting with that text following the decision to enroll into the course. That is a student enrolls in June orientation and receives the syllabus in August when the course begins.

- The relational role of an advisor and the impact those outside of the English department may have on student's course expectations. If the advisor is not directly connected to the English department and the curricular decisions around the course, then all advice they provide has been filtered through an interpretive lens and interaction with a text such as the catalog of studies, the course description, the program website, etc.

Both the development of a course syllabus and the conditions under which an advisor would recommend a general education course are products of the local academic institution's organization, policies, and texts. While people do things with and because of texts, texts occur in predictable places and are delivered in predictable ways because behaviors around those texts are both institutionally sanctioned and become institutionalized through reinforced practices. Both rhetorical genre studies and institutional ethnography provide a framework to question how behaviors, or expectations, become institutionalized and, I will also assert, predictable, based on

the stability of texts, the exigence of these texts and the interactions they prompt, and the way activities may become organized across locations through these texts.

Text-Reader Conversations and Coordination

An important assumption of this institutional ethnography is the dialogic relationship between a text and its reader. The act of reading occurs in the local setting during a specific time and in a specific place, and typically with a specific goal in mind of the reader. The purpose of the reader approaching a text and their reason for choosing the text are important considerations, too. The reader and the text interact in conversation with one another for all these reasons. While a text may be stable and present the same words on the page for all to encounter, the person reading and engaging with that text will approach the text from their own unique standpoint and will, therefore, activate that text in a way that aligns with their own interpretations, goals, and ideas (LaFrance; Smith, *A Sociology*). The ways in which a reader activates a text and the action process in which that text is encountered has the potential to shape, or coordinate, activities.

As activities become textually coordinated, the collective ideas and behaviors become institutionalized in ways that represent the actual use of a given text (Smith, *A Sociology*, 102). The actual use of texts across an academic institution - this distinction is important- reveals the social interactions and ruling relations that govern and build interpretative lenses. Institutional Ethnography (I.E.) provides a framework to study how texts play a role in coordination and becomes an appropriate lens for investigating the ways the concept and action of writing manifests in colleges and universities.

The aim of this project is to provide a rhetorical analysis of institutional texts, their audience, their exigence, and their consequences to consider the ways stakeholders engage with the textually constructed university and the implications this provides writing program

administrators. Institutional Ethnography seeks to "map the institutional aspects of the ruling relations so that people can expand their own knowledge of their everyday worlds by being able to see how what they are doing is coordinated with others' doings elsewhere and elsewhen" (Smith, *A Sociology*, 225). By creating profiles of writing services at five universities and examining their organizational charts, policies, and online sites of writing, I will begin to map the ways public-facing texts shape how writing is conceptualized, accessed, and organized on these campuses. Using my multifaceted standpoint at my home institution, which includes writing instructor, advisor, former-tutor, and graduate student with a concentration in writing program administration, I will demonstrate how ruling relations emerge and make visible some hidden realities about the nature of writing services and the sites where they occur. I will also extrapolate and apply these strategies to four peer institutions with the goals of exploring how institutional organization impacts the way writing is conceptualized, the key relationships for WPAs to build campus alliances for writing support, and the ways policy and lived experiences might shape one another through coordinated texts.

Scope of Institutional Profiles

Academic institutions and their identities, as well as their processes, are built and maintained through texts. The intent of this project is to identify key texts that relate to the writing services frequently associated with writing instruction and begin to map how these texts coordinate writing activities, assumptions, and associations across an institution's stakeholders.

Writing Services and their Texts

The term writing services in used in this text to encompass institutional writing sites and offerings. For this project it will include:

- Writing program websites that facilitate the FYC courses. These are often housed within the Department of English are the most traditional use of 'writing instruction'.

- Writing Center websites that facilitate writing support for specific courses that include FYC as well as other types of writing.

- Tutoring program websites that include any type of writing specific tutoring related to academic coursework.

Institutional Policy and Associated Texts

Institutional policy is the term used to encompass sites that regulate the enrollment processes around writing courses or writing services. They include:

- Placement policies that affect enrollment into FYC courses which can include test-based placement and transfer policy articulation.

- Curriculum documents such as general education requirements and course descriptions.

- Advising practices for new students.

The Institutions

Throughout this project I explore five institutions that share common institutional profiles. One of the five is my home institution and four are benchmark institutions that share the following attributes:

- Public university

- Student populations 24-26k

- The following Carnegie Classification characteristics:

- Doctoral university

- Very high research activity

- High undergraduate populations

- More selective

- High transfer in rates

The purpose for selecting schools that shared these common characteristics is to account for shared institutional characteristics at the highest level and see how organizational structures and texts shape the concept and relations around writing at a given institution.

The following sections will provide descriptive profiles of the five institutions that will continue to deepen as they develop in the subsequent chapters. In this chapter the descriptive profiles are designed to provide a cursory understanding of:

- What types of first year composition (FYC) courses are available for students?

- Which FYC courses are required in the general education curriculum?

- Which students will enroll into those courses?

- What types of writing services are offered beyond FYC courses?

- Which departments develop and staff those services?

- Where is writing represented on the campus for students to access?

The data collected to build these initial profiles were collected in January and February 2021. Curricular policies can update each academic year and the information included in these profiles can be amended as needed.

Institution A

Institution A is a land-grant university located in the southeast region of the United States. It boasts a teaching ratio of 16:1 and a six-year graduation rate of 84.9%. Its admission acceptance rate is 51% and its undergraduate student body is comprised of students predominantly from the southern and eastern regions of the United States. This institution could be described as a regional institution, though it is not a state flagship.

FYC Courses

Institution A has one 3-hour course requirement for composition that is categorized in the general education curriculum under the 'Communication' heading. While students need a minimum of 6 hours of credit, the FYC course is the only option available under the subheading 'English Composition' while the additional 3 hours will be selected from a list of courses categorized as 'Oral Communication'. The FYC course has an optional lab component available for an additional credit hour.

Students may receive credit for the FYC course through the International Baccalaureate (IB) and/or Advanced Placement (AP) programs. Transfer credit for the course is an additional option for fulfilling the requirement. In the Fall 2020 semester there were approximately 1470 seats offered for the FYC course and 2000 seats available for the accompanying lab. 664 of these seats were enrolled per the publicly accessible course view. The Spring 2021 course listing shows that approximately 1617 seats were available in the FYC course and that 561 students enrolled in the accompanying lab. While many sections had a handful of seats available, it is evident that the writing program had enough seats to support 3087 new students in their writing program with an entering freshman class size of 3932. About one third of the writing students enrolled in the accompanying lab. This data suggests that while the general education curriculum places the FYC course as a common learning experience for students, test and/or transfer credit likely exempts about 23% of the new freshman class from enrolling into the course. Without the requirement of additional composition courses, it can be deduced that many of these students may not take a writing course through the English department prior to graduation.

The FYC course in this program is established a rhetorical analysis and argumentation curriculum that connects course outcomes to the WPA Outcomes Statement on their site. The

FYC course cannot be taken for credit if students have test or transfer credit for both composition I and II per their course equivalencies, which indicates the course may be used as a general writing course for the institutional goals broadly rather than supporting specific types of programs. Students may opt to take additional literature courses in other areas of the general education core.

Writing Services Outside of FYC

Writing Center

Institution A has a writing center currently being rebranded as a writing lab. On its site it states that it is designed as the lab to support the FYC course and is supported by those fees, as well as saying it is available to all students seeking any type of writing support from academic to professional writing. The lab offers traditional tutoring services as well as hosts several writing events such as how to use popular writing software, navigating MLA, and how to talk about your writing.

The writing lab at institution A is strongly connected with the English Department and the FYC course. As mentioned above, it says in its description and in its FAQ section that it is designed as the companion lab to the required FYC course, yet it has already been addressed that not all FYC students enroll in the lab any pay the associated fees. Further investigation is needed to uncover the details of the enrollment relationship, though the strong association is still primarily addressed. Further, the writing lab employs predominantly undergraduate students and a few graduate consultants. Its leadership is further testament to the relation with the English department and lists the Chair of the English department alongside the director and assistant director of the writing lab, both of whom hold doctoral degrees in rhetoric and composition.

Library Services

Institution A has a library guide (libguide) dedicated to the assignments and learning outcomes of the common FYC course. The libguide contains modules specific to each assignment and its unique processes, research strategies, and instructor resources for the course. The site was updated in the Spring 2021 semester indicating that it is likely regularly maintained. A research librarian is listed on the page, though their role does not indicate they work specifically within the English or writing discipline.

Student Success Center

Institution A has a traditional student success center that offers tutoring, academic coaching, and peer teaching. Many features of the site require an institutional log in for full details, but the courses listed for Summer 2021 tutoring included business, science, and math courses. These were the same courses listed for the peer teaching page, too. Each of the subcategories listed learning strategies, and none mentioned direct writing support. On the side menu of the page, the writing center was listed as a related link. From this reading, it seems that writing support is connected to the writing center (lab) which is closely aligned with the English department.

Specialized Student Groups

Institution A has an additional academic center to support their student-athletes. The academic support center is representative of other schools in the same athletic conference and the site mentions holistic support for student success, tutoring in all available courses, and individual course progress monitoring. No specific course is emphasized for academic support, but it can be assumed that the holistic center provides writing support to its student athletes.

Institution B

Institution B is a land-grant university located in the Midwest region of the United States. In the Fall 2019, it had a freshman acceptance rate of 92% and a freshman class size of 5,597. The faculty-student ratio is 18:1. The undergraduate student body is 56% in-state students, and has students attending from every state, though the Midwest region has the strongest representation. The university is the largest research university in its state.

FYC courses

Institution B has a 2-semester course sequence for FYC, and it is designed to be taken across two years. The course placement descriptions recommend that the second semester course should be taken in the second year as it is designed for sophomore level students. Both courses, which total 6 credit hours, are part of the required general education curriculum for the university. The relationship between these courses themselves, the general education curriculum, and the library curriculum is robust and complex.

The two FYC courses at Institution B are part of the general education requirements and linked to a communication across the curriculum program. The courses build from a critical thinking foundation into a multimodal curriculum focusing on written, oral, visual, and electronic communication. While communication is the way the courses are classified, they are offered through the English department. In the placement literature and description these courses are consistently referred to by their course code and traditional composition titles are not used. Both courses are connected to a library studies course; it is listed as a recommended corequisite in the first and as a corequisite in the second. This course will be discussed more in the library services section below.

Institution B devotes significant space across their platform to address placement into the FYC courses. The typical student will enroll into the first course during their freshman year and the move into the second sophomore year. However, a student may seek exemption from the first course from ACT or SAT scores and may be exempt if they are accepted into the honors program. They must earn a C or higher in the second-year course to receive the retroactive graduation credit for the first. The 6-hour requirement is not waived. Students may also 'test out' of the first semester course via advanced placement exams in either Language and Composition or Literature and Composition with scores of 3 and 4, respectively. Institution B has a statement about transfer credit and the importance of how the English courses are connected to their institution's overall curriculum. They encourage all new transfer students to enroll into the second-year course regardless of transfer credit. Institution B has a robust transfer credit page devoted to the 2 English courses and the various scenarios that arise when evaluating transfer courses against institutional, departmental, and graduation policies. The scenario I would like to note in this profile section is what students will do to complete the 6 hours of credit if they transfer in the 2nd course credit only. They do not return to the first level; instead, they choose a course from a list of advanced English courses and receive permission from the Director of Foundation courses.

Institution B did not allow for a retroactive search for Fall 2020 courses, so the estimate of seats available in the first-year course is based on publicly visible sections in Spring 2021 and Fall 2021. According to this data there are 1824 seats available, and the Fall 2020 freshman class was over 5,500. It can be deduced that approximately 32% of the freshmen class are expected to be enrolled in the first semester course of the two-year sequence. For Institution B, there is an implicit emphasis emerging on the sophomore year course perhaps for developmental reasons

indicated by the statement on the placement page, "when possible, students should take English 250 after their freshman year, as it is a sophomore-level course" (check citation style as not to name the institution). Sophomore-level suggests that the course content is not about testing out or mastery of the first course, and therefore invokes a consideration of student development during the first year. Institution B also explains how the English courses are connected to other curricula across their institution and this note may reflect the relationship between the content of the second-year course and other courses the student may enroll into during their second year.

Writing Services Outside of FYC

Writing Center

The writing center at Institution B is called the Writing and Media Center which reflects the nature of the general education communication requirement and the outcomes of the FYC courses. The writing center is organized under the Dean of Students office and is centrally located to support students across all the university's colleges and majors. All colleges are present on their site, but much of the content is dominated by the FYC courses through the English department. The writing center offers a robust menu of services including consultation, writing groups, writing retreats, webinars, and author series. The center also has a section for faculty and staff support and includes resume support. The website lists consultants by discipline, but there is not a clear director of the center listed and all contacts are connected back to the main writing center contact details.

Library Services

The relationship between the library services and the FYC courses is directly expressed through a course called "Information Literacy". This course is managed through the university library system and is required for all students prior to graduation. It is recommended in the first

year alongside the first English course and required as a co-requisite for the second. The course content, description, and syllabus do not directly address the English course(s) nor the content of those classes and, instead, approaches information literacy from a global point of view. The library does offer library guides for English courses but does not have one for either of the FYC course sequences.

Student Success Center

Institution B houses a centralized academic success center that provides supplemental instruction, academic coaching, tutoring, and success courses. On their FAQ page they state that English tutoring requests are referred to the writing center. They do, however, offer many support services that could be used alongside direct writing support.

Specialized Student Groups

Institution B provides an academic support center for student-athletes. These services include tutoring and a satellite location from the writing center.

Institution C

Institution C is the main campus of an 8-institution system and is a large, public university in the southeast region of the United States. It shares the same home state as one of the land-grant institutions also discussed in these profiles. This university's application count is comparable to the other institutions, but the university's admission and institutional research do not include the raw count of accepted students. According to US News, the acceptance rate is 69% and according to the institution's freshmen profile of 2020, 30,778 applied and 5,848 enrolled in the institution. 56% of the undergraduate population are in-state students.

FYC Courses

Institution C has two sequences courses comprising their FYC curriculum. The core curriculum has ten components and the two FYC courses are the only options for completing the 6 required hours in one of the ten areas, therefore it is implied by the curriculum and stated on the English department's site that FYC courses are the "only academic courses that all undergraduate students must complete before graduation". They provide the statistic that approximately 3,000 students enroll in the two courses each year. Combining this data with the size of the entering class, it can be assumed that approximately 51% of the entering class is enrolling into FYC courses. Institution C accepts IB and AP credit by examination and accepts transfer credit for these courses from other accredited schools.

The course sequence between the two FYC courses begins with "Critical Reading and Composition" and builds into "Rhetoric and Composition". The course descriptions cite the importance of reading and writing as foundational to building an effective argument and point to the learning goals and approaches of the liberal arts. The institution's core program builds in a course requirement that links the learning outcomes of the core to the specific discipline of a student's major. By contrast, the FYC courses do not speak to other curricula on campus.

Writing Services Outside of FYC

Writing Center

The writing center at Institution C is embedded in the English department and their web presence reflects this by linking from the main English Department page, just as is the FYC information. The writing center has a director distinct from the department chair and is posted on the main page for contacts. The center provides services to all students, staff, and faculty and

does not directly address the FYC relationship with the tutoring services provided although the resources page for the writing center includes the required textbook for the FYC courses.

Library Services

The university library at Institution C offers library guides for 47 subject areas, yet there were none available for the FYC nor English courses, broadly.

Student Success Center

The student success center at Institution C appears to be a centralized student support system staffed by professionals in student affairs or academic affairs based on their job titles. The success center offers tutoring, workshops, and population-specific services. Their site does not directly link to the writing center nor does the writing center link to the success center. There is not a separate writing hub on the success center's site, yet there are writing workshops, videos, and strategies that make it evident the success center is involved in centralized writing support.

Specialized Student Groups

Success Center

The student success center offers generalized support for sophomore students, transfer students, and student veterans. As mentioned above, this is not wholly writing specific support, but the success center offers writing support services alongside other academic support.

Student Athletes

Similar to other institutions, Institution C has an academic center devoted to student-athletes that includes tutoring, mentorship, and other learning technologies to support the student. Notable among this institution is the inclusion of a bridge program focusing on reading and writing as a key part of adjusting to college and additional technology such as note-taking pens, software that transcribes spoken words into texts, and software that scans text then reads it

aloud to the student. These services expand reading and writing support into realms similar to academic accommodations for reading, writing, and communicating,

Institution D

Institution D is a public land-grant university in the east central United States and is the main campus in a system comprised of five campuses. Institution D has an acceptance rate of 78% and its most recent freshmen class included 5,512 students. Seventy-eight percent of its current undergraduate students are in-state residents. It has a student-faculty ratio of 17:1.

FYC Courses

Institution D has a 2-semester course sequence for the FYC courses. There are 2 traditional courses that are modified for intensive instruction, honors sequencing, and AP credit sequencing. The course numbers change throughout the honors options and an equivalency logic seems to apply for the graduation requirements, similar to those policies for transfer students.

The university's core requirement includes three writing courses. Two of the three must be the FYC courses and the third is an intensive writing course. The approved intensive writing courses are fulfilled by discipline specific courses. The first FYC course description states that it focuses on "analysis and argument" while the second emphasizes "inquiry and research". The second course diversifies via special topic section options. Both courses have an optional companion course for writing support. These are 1-hour credits offered through the writing center. There are options for ACT/SAT and AP exemptions for the first course in sequence, but there are no test-based exemptions from the second course. In the academic year 2020-2021 there were approximately 3117 seats available in the first semester course, which indicates approximately 56% of the freshmen class may enroll. The second course in sequence may have freshmen or sophomores enrolled depending on their course sequencing needs. There were

approximately 3760 seats available for the second course during this same time. The increase in enrollment availability may account for students who tested out of the first course, students continuing from fall to spring in the course sequence, or the inclusion of sophomore students in the Fall term who are completing their course sequence from the prior year.

Writing Services Outside of FYC

Writing Center

The writing center at Institution D is connected to the English department through the supplemental 1-hour course with FYC. It is unclear by the writing center's website if it is organizationally aligned with the English department or the College of the Arts and Sciences. The reason for this confusion is the inclusion of college-level language on the writing center's page yet the link to the writing center itself is housed under the Writing Program header on the English department's website. This could be simply a nod to the connection of a support service to a writing program or it could indicate that the writing program is supported by both the department and the college.

The writing center supports all undergraduate students, graduate students, and instructors. Their services include tutoring, workshops, and online resources as well as lesson materials for instructors. There is a direct link for students in FYC courses should they wish to enroll in the 1-hour companion class, too. Enrollment into the companion class for the 1st FYC course in 2020-2021 was 796 according to the class database.

Library Services

The library services provide libguides for students and have 24 available under English. While many are course-specific, there are none designated for any of the FYC courses. There are some skill-related libguides that students in the courses might use.

Student Success Center

Institution D has a centralized student success center organized under the division of Student Success. The student success center offers academic coaching, supplemental instruction, and tutoring. The tutoring services are locked behind an institutional login and there is no clear indication if writing services are provided through the center. The center does offer a robust list of resources beyond the services they provide, which includes specialized tutoring through the writing center as well as math and science tutoring in respective locations.

Specialized Student Groups

The student-athlete center provides additional academic support to all student athletes. Institution D includes an independent writing lab within their academic support facility for their athletes. The athletic support center follows a tutoring model across all subjects and identifies the writing (and math) labs as related yet independent of the tutoring program.

Institution E

Institution E is a public land-grant university located in the mid-south region of the United States. It is the flagship institution and part of a seven-campus system. It shares an athletic conference with two other institutions in this project. According to US News, it has an acceptance rate of 77%. Institution D has a student to faculty ratio of 19:1 and its 2020 freshmen class was 4,726 students. The total undergraduate student population consists of 55% in state students. Institution E can be described as a regional university supporting its highest concentration of out-of-state students from the mid-south and mid-west regions of the United States.

FYC Courses

Institution E has a 2-semester FYC course sequence that is required for all students as part of the university core. The courses build from a methodological approach to writing (summarizing to synthesizing) to a rhetorical awareness of genre according to the course descriptions on the English department's website. The course descriptions in the class search only state "Required of all freshmen unless exempted by the Department of English".

The exemption and credit by examination policy for FYC is the most diverse among the other institutions. Students may receive full exemption from both FYC courses from SAT and ACT exam scores. Credit by examination is possible through AP exams, IB exams, and CLEP credits. The institution also accepts transfer credit for both FYC courses from accredited programs. Whether a student receives an exemption or credit, they are not required to take any additional writing courses from the English department in the university core.

There were approximately 3496 seats available in the first FYC course in 2020-2021 according to the publicly accessible class search. The course availability reflects a potential enrollment availability to 74% of the entering freshmen class. The English department does not have a website devoted to the FYC courses or program, but it does have a page to explain any remediation enrollment requirements related to FYC. The site is robust in discussing options and resources for writing support, but the resources are outdated. For example, they point to two writing resource centers that have been discontinued or rebranded and use outdated language for the exams used to exempt from remediation. The writing services linked are related to the writing center and tutoring services. The information is mostly accurate in describing the types of tests and support available but indicates that the site may not be frequently used or maintained as a primary source of enrollment data.

Writing Services Outside of FYC

Writing Center and Student Success Center

Institution E has a writing and communication studio embedded in a centralized student success center. The writing center and student success center are blended on the website so fully that it is challenging to distinguish which services are specific to the writing studio and which are part of the general success center. The writing studio has specialized writing consultants, scheduled tutoring options, and writing resources on their site. The hyperlinks for writing resources route to a page with additional study resources and is housed under generalized academic support. The writing center advertises as open to all students pursuing diverse writing projects.

The staff of the writing consultants are predominantly graduate students in the English department and undergraduate English majors. The tutoring staff are much more diverse with tutors across the disciplines in social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and business which indicates that the writing consultants and tutoring staff are independent within the student success center. The writing center offers a chat service in addition to the consultation and tutoring appointments.

Library Services

Institution E's library website includes research guides for many subject areas and specific courses. Included in these are course-specific research guides for both FYC courses. The research guide for the first course in the sequence does not include specific assignment details, but states that the tutorial was built to develop skills needed to complete the assignments in the course. The library source is not linked on the English department site nor the writing center site.

Specialized Student Groups

Student Athletes

Institution E has an independent student-athlete support center that offers tutoring and a writing lab for student-athletes.

Business Majors

The business college at Institution E has a communication lab independent of the writing studio in the success center. The business communication lab describes itself as supporting communication skills through writing and public speaking and is open to all business majors or students enrolled into a business course. The structure of the lab and the note about course/majors suggests that college-level fees likely fund the lab program.

Discussion

The descriptive profiles presented in this chapter are necessary to understand the local context of writing instruction and support across various sites in the university. The multiple sites of writing with various connections to the FYC program are not unique to my home institution and suggest that the phenomena I experience are likely to be present for those at these institutions, too. Through the existence and inclusion of these sites, college-level writing becomes something course bound, skill bound, identity bound, and task bound depending on how users enter and engage with the writing support offered through classrooms, research assistance, specialized tutoring centers, and writing centers.

The texts that shape the curriculum and ultimately are presented to students as graduation requirements indicate a high value placed on college composition. One to two courses are required in each of these institution's general education requirements and those courses are not part of a menu of choices like other general education requirements. The FYC programs build

specific courses as part of a researched curriculum meaningful for the local context of the institution which is shaped by the institutional research profile, institutional size, student admissions profiles, class size, instructor training, writing support services, and administrative agendas. The universities examined here all offer various exemption and equivalencies, though, to these course requirements. Instead of assuming all students will engage with the composition program at some point prior to graduation, enrollment data suggests that it is more likely that as few as 33% and as many as 77% might enroll into a composition course. In light of these statistics, it is less surprising to see specialized writing support develop across campuses to support the writing development of students.

The networks between these sites of writing might be recast into a new light where the relationships between external sites and the FYC are reconsidered as fully independent from, complementary or supplementary to, or substitution for required writing instruction via composition courses. This project is not asserting nefarious intentions across differing sites of writing instruction and support, but rather the importance of extending consideration of how FYC is situated in a broader writing network and the ways attitudes towards college writing are shaped by curriculum, policies, and the interactions between these sites.

Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced how my standpoint into the networked writing support at my home institution provided the exigence for this research project. Understanding the actual environment of writing support involves an examination of the institutional structures, policies, courses, and services that together coordinate activities around the concept of writing for students, staff, and faculty on a specific campus. The research values of institutional ethnography (I.e.) provides a framework for interpreting ruling relations through the ways texts coordinate

activity across time and place to illuminate the actual experiences of those within a system. It is a practical approach to understanding a social system and allows for an interpretive lens through which to consider the relationships within academic institutions and how behaviors or assumptions become institutionalized through texts.

In the next chapter the institutional profiles presented here will be expanded to include organizational charts for each institution to the extent that the writing programs and services discussed are included. This data will be paired with rhetorical analyses of the online texts for the services discussed. In Chapter 3, the data will be examined in a relational lens from the standpoint of the writing program administrator and culminate in a recommendation on inventorying one's own institution, identifying key partners, and suggestions on how to formulate online texts to indicate relational strength with key partners from an inclusivity inclination.

Chapter 3: Institutional Organization and Mapped Networks

A junior Psychology major enters my advising office and asks if we can discuss her current research methods course required for her major. She confides in me that her professor focuses on the APA style guide rules, but there is not much writing instruction in the course compared to the expectations in the graded evaluation of papers and she is worried because she has not taken a writing course since high school. She asks what I recommend she do and, because we're in the middle of the term, I ask if she has visited our writing studio for a consultation. She has not and is unsure of what it is, so I pull up their webpage and read it with her. We navigate through the services offered and see an option to schedule an appointment. I email her the URL and she is able to schedule an appointment when she feels ready.

In our conversation, I feel compelled to explain a bit more about what to expect in the appointment, how to make the most out of the consultation, and what she might need to share about the expectations in her Psychology course if the tutor is not familiar with it. My compulsion arises from my particularly situated knowledge as an alumna of the Psychology program, instructor of Composition, and a seasoned advisor who has referred many students to the writing studio. What, if anything, would change if the referral occurred online via web links to these resources relying exclusively on the written content provided?

In the preceding chapter, institutional narratives of participation in first year composition (FYC) were examined through curricular requirements, enrollment patterns, and other sites of writing offered by the institution. This examination uncovered a disparity in the ways institutional texts build narratives of student academic experiences that do not always translate to their actual lived experiences. Official institutional texts like the catalog of studies, enrollment policies, and placement charts can become boss texts that shape practices, attitudes, beliefs, and

behaviors across the institution. They can also create paradoxical experiences obscured to users who are separated across departments and programs, especially in the absence of strong interdepartmental networks. Organizational structures, faculty and staff dichotomies, and access can foster strong networks that are highly coordinated or collaborative, or they can blind users to the possibility, feasibility, or necessity of such networks.

A WPA might question, if entry into FYC courses is highly organized at the institutional level between admissions and orientation advising, what might the writing program's relationship with the orientation advisors or the admissions program look like? What communication between the two departments is needed? What should be stable and what is situational? How do these programs work together to accomplish meaningful enrollment cycles into the FYC courses each year? Textually, these relationships may be coordinated by external texts to all departments via the catalog of studies, placement policies, or transfer equivalencies. Academic departments may contribute to those texts, but to what extent are they the authors and how do they come to understand their audience and the ways they use these texts?

Examples like the one above are a part of every user's experience in the modern university. Due to the size and scope of our large research institutions, like those studied in this project, it is necessary for texts to be stably accessible online and written for a wide audience. Academic advisors, external faculty, and students may need to access information about the FYC program in different spaces, with varying exigences, and divergent standpoints or purposes. These texts in turn enhance, problematize, or confuse the ways we understand the university as a lived experience and as a construct expertly imagined just beyond our sensory environment. Professional staff and faculty have the benefit of their own past student experiences as well as their professional expertise which can allow for a more well-informed point-of-view in

university policies and processes. They are positioned to more likely to see the points of convergence across the university, and the varied users interacting with a text, and to selectively navigate to the information they need in those spaces. Student users, by contrast, must first understand the bureaucratic nature of the university in order to navigate it and develop the skills to selectively engage with the online texts that regulate the institution in a meaningful way.

Student Constructions of the University

Our students participate with two versions of our institution: the one that comprises lived experiences within the university and the one that is regulated and maintained through texts external to the sensory experiences of the student. These texts are most typically encountered virtually in 2021 and these distinctions could be understood as the physical and virtual spheres of the student experience. The physical and virtual worlds are synthesized into one complex and constructed experience shaped by a substantial number of forces – student peers, instructors, advisors, staff members, physical spaces, accessibility, policies, and courses, to name a few. There is the immediate university experience taking place for the student in a particular moment while the University exists apart from them, taking shape in their mind and signaling what is of value in this space. Experientially they are at the center of their university experience and the University as it is imagined to them.

In a classroom experience, the university is experienced sensorily through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Although our students' relationship with knowledge construction and Truth might vary depending on personal and educational experiences, the classroom is a space in which they are one embodied self, taking in information, interpreting it, and reproducing it in whatever way is required of them. The University, though, is external to the student and represented through online texts that regulate decisions and behaviors through official policies,

calendars and deadlines, and enrollment processes. The student moves through the University in a pre-determined way based on the ways they are classified within the allowable parameters: class standing, major, test scores, financial aid eligibility, club membership, and so on. They must participate in the University on its own terms while determining what is of value and what behaviors are expected through institutional signals such as course prerequisites, graduation requirements, registration holds, late fees, and student services. Students must also be able to self-identify using the language of the University to fully participate in these spaces. Our students are asked to have high verbal and reading comprehension skills as well as to participate in deep informational synthesis and process navigation to fully participate in university life which includes enrolling in appropriate courses and producing the level of work expected of them while there.

The Paradigm of the Semester Course

The global move to virtual learning in the wake of the 2020 Covid19 pandemic reminded educators of the ways we rely on interpersonal experiences in our learning environments. Technology enhanced collaboration in online learning spaces, but many instructors had to rethink fundamental assumptions about the learning experiences of their students and the exchanges students had with one another as well as their instructor. The classroom is the space and place that grounds the lived experience of the university for many students. This sentiment was reinforced in the wake of national debates of universities moving to remote instruction, legislative involvement, and student services that always remained open such as housing, dining, and physical buildings.

In the semester course – or whatever the duration: quarter, trimester, semester – students can expect a pattern that is shaped by the instructor and the University. To begin the course itself

there are enrollment deadlines, start and end dates, class meeting times to accommodate, and financial obligations to fulfill. Once the class begins there are assignment deadlines, a syllabus, textbook requirements, and usually an online learning management system a la Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle, etc. to extend and bridge the lived course into the virtual plane. Further, students engage in social learning from their peers not only in the covered content, but also in social regulation and expectations. Social feedback alongside instructional feedback reinforces, challenges, and deepens students' understanding of what it means to successfully participate in the University. Understandably, the classroom experience is so commonplace that considering its role in university navigation may seem unnecessary. Yet, the paradigm of the semester course with all of the forces of the managed university acting upon it are essential considerations for the writing program administrator (WPA) and the relationships they build with other programs who support writing on their campus.

When the course becomes the predominant interpretive lens for the ways students understand the University, it has the power to shape the ways students engage with other resources, courses, and programs. Through the curriculum the WPA develops and supervises, they expand the ways students understand research, community engagement, the writing process, and their role as author. Through institutionally sanctioned and recognizable texts, like the course syllabus, students interpret what constitutes academic writing based on what assignments are required, what skills they are asked to hone, and what policies are set forth by their instructor. What may be hidden to the average student is the way their specific course is part of a larger program of courses and the components authored by the instructor, the WPA, and the institution may be confused or obscured. The student may not yet have the ability to differentiate what in the course syllabus is sourced externally from the course and from the instructor when it is

presented as a unified text. Although institutional policies might be cited in the syllabus, a new freshman reader might not be able to contextualize what that means within the larger University and how the university policies influence specific experiences within the class itself.

Universities are large, city-like structures steeped in long standing histories, traditions, and structures that shapes experiences in the classroom. Public universities have an obligation to keep information available to the tax paying citizenry and open access information has the additional advantage of large organization communication with a diverse array of users and stakeholders ranging from prospective new students to board of trustee members. As users enter and leave the site, stable and predictable texts are created to organize, guide, and govern users. While most organizing texts are open access, they may not be easily accessed and understood by all users. This can render them invisible forces shaping the lived experiences of those in the university while regulating significant aspects of the managed university such as organizational charts, budgets, networked calendars at the state level, and human resource policies that regulate labor in the institution.

Organizational Charts

Due to their size, universities have online organizational charts to communicate how departments fit together under a hierarchy. To place every department or program into one of these charts would be unwieldy and unnavigable; therefore, they typically show executive and administrative level departments or offices. Organizational charts are accessible online and easy to find for those users who know to seek them in the administration section of the university website. Organizational charts take on a recognizable shape to the average user, but they are not necessarily easily accessed or understood by all. Users might interact with organizational charts

to better understand their own positionality as well as to understand where external departments or programs fit within the university.

The function of the organizational chart is to show the hierarchal relationships between executive or administrative offices and large programs they oversee. The visual layout of these relationships serves a secondary purpose in understanding proximal relationships of departments or programs to one another. In a tertiary function, it provides an interpretive lens for the well-informed employee to interpret policies or requests. For example, a university employee is asked by an administrator to perform a specific research task. An understanding of university structure would empower the staff member to identify if the person asking the request was in an appropriate position to do so and determine if the appropriate conversations took place as needed to ensure sound decision making. While power dynamics under the guises of title, professionalism, and collegiality might tempt the staff member to agree to the task without further investigation, a well-informed staff member would be equipped to ask questions about the purpose and desired outcomes of the task. They could recognize who was present or omitted from key decision-making processes via their understanding of how the decisions should be made. Understanding the invisible structures that govern the university and one's defined role within it becomes a portal to participation via job performance, compliance, disruption, and interrogation. Though it might lead to the same behavioral outcome, compliance without awareness co-constitutes institutional beliefs, behaviors, and culture interpreted through power structures as they exist and not through partnerships as they could be.

Institutional organizational charts are a valuable source of baseline data to establish the organizational narrative and relationships at the five universities examined in this study. Similar to the way curriculum established the university's valuation of composition via the expressed

requirements in general studies, organizational charts provide a point of origination in understanding the way universities classify and align programs and departments. Of particular interest are the nexus where faculty and staff roles diverge or converge on the hierarchal plane and the implications that has on the work conducted in those spaces.

Figures 3.1-3.5 present composite organizational charts for the five institutions in this study. The charts encompass the highest executive role and flow downward until each of the following departments or programs are presented: FYC program, writing center, athletic academic centers, and library services. The organizational charts are considered composites because none of the universities had a publicly accessible chart that included all of these programs. The charts were built by first accessing the central administration's organizational chart which had varying amounts of detail by school. From there, and working from the top down as the chart flowed, supplemental data was gleaned from the college-level leadership pages, department-level program pages, and directory pages. Some of the programs provided their own organizational chart that was synthesized into the administration's version while others required using cross-referencing directory pages, titles, and policies to determine the organizational alignment. The composites are presented in the alphabetical order of their institutional aliases in the following figures.
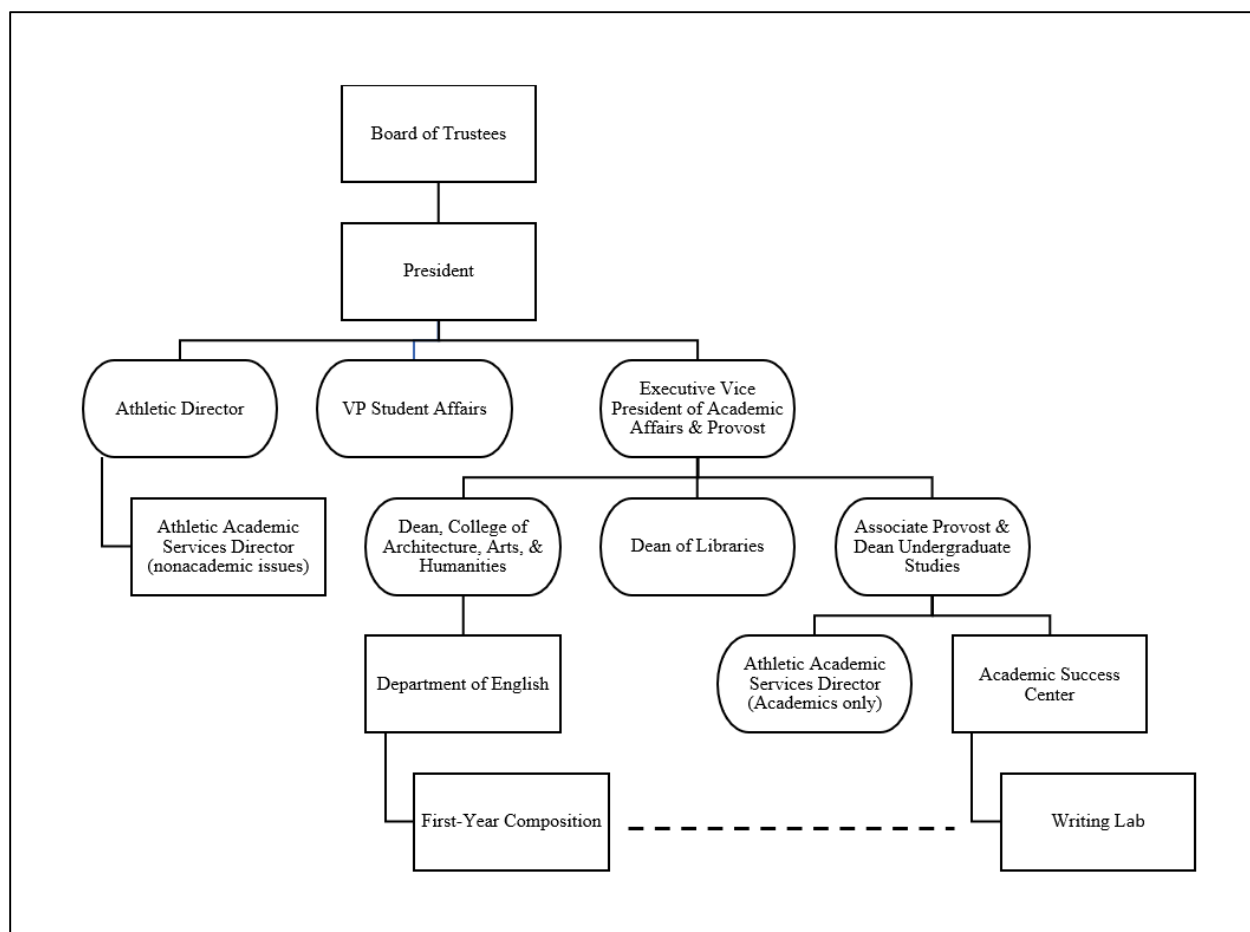
Figure 3.1 Composite Organizational Chart for Institution A

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   Board of Regents  │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                                  │
                        ╭─────────────────────╮
                        │      President      │
                        ╰─────────────────────╯
```
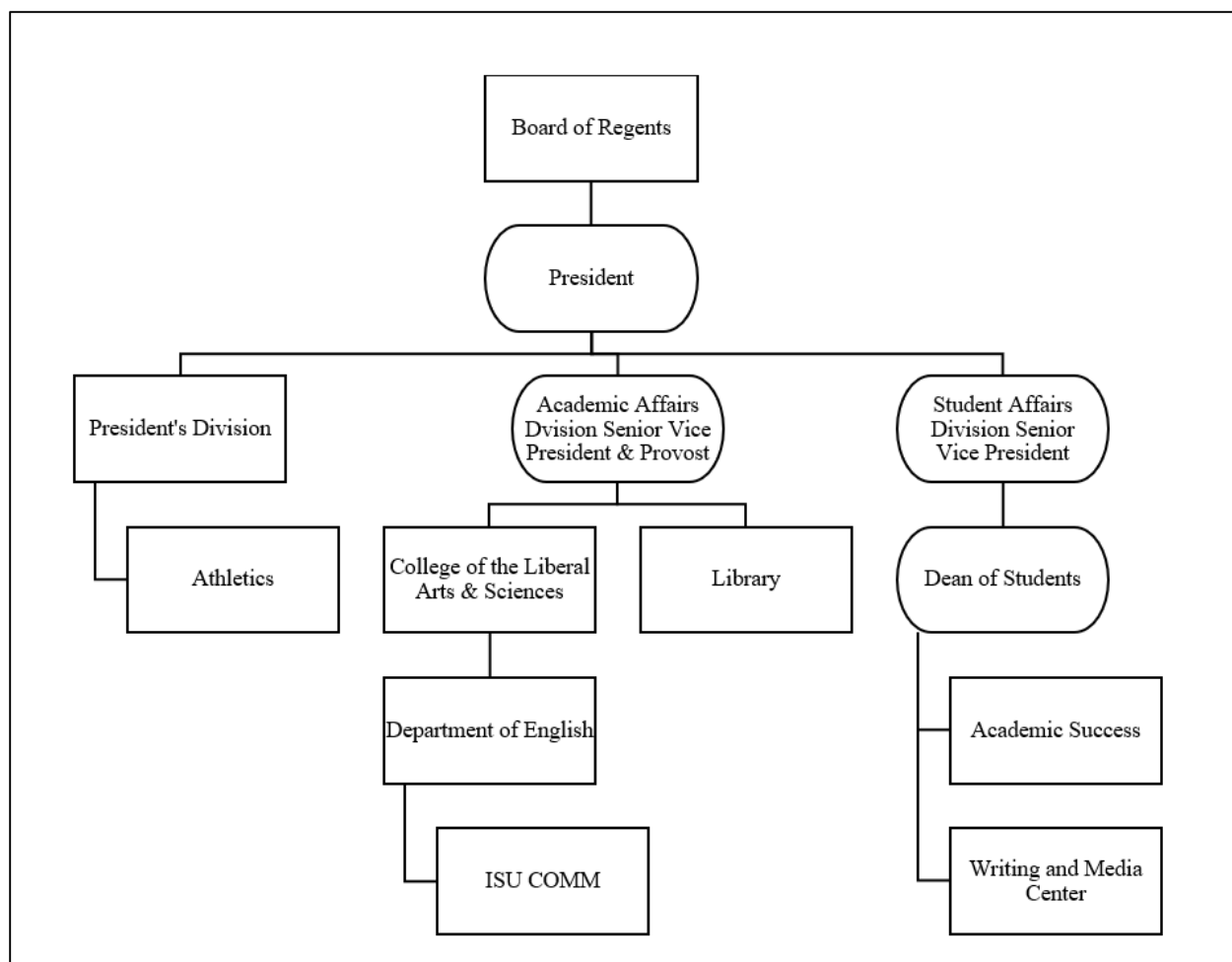
Figure 3.2 Composite Organizational Chart for Institution B
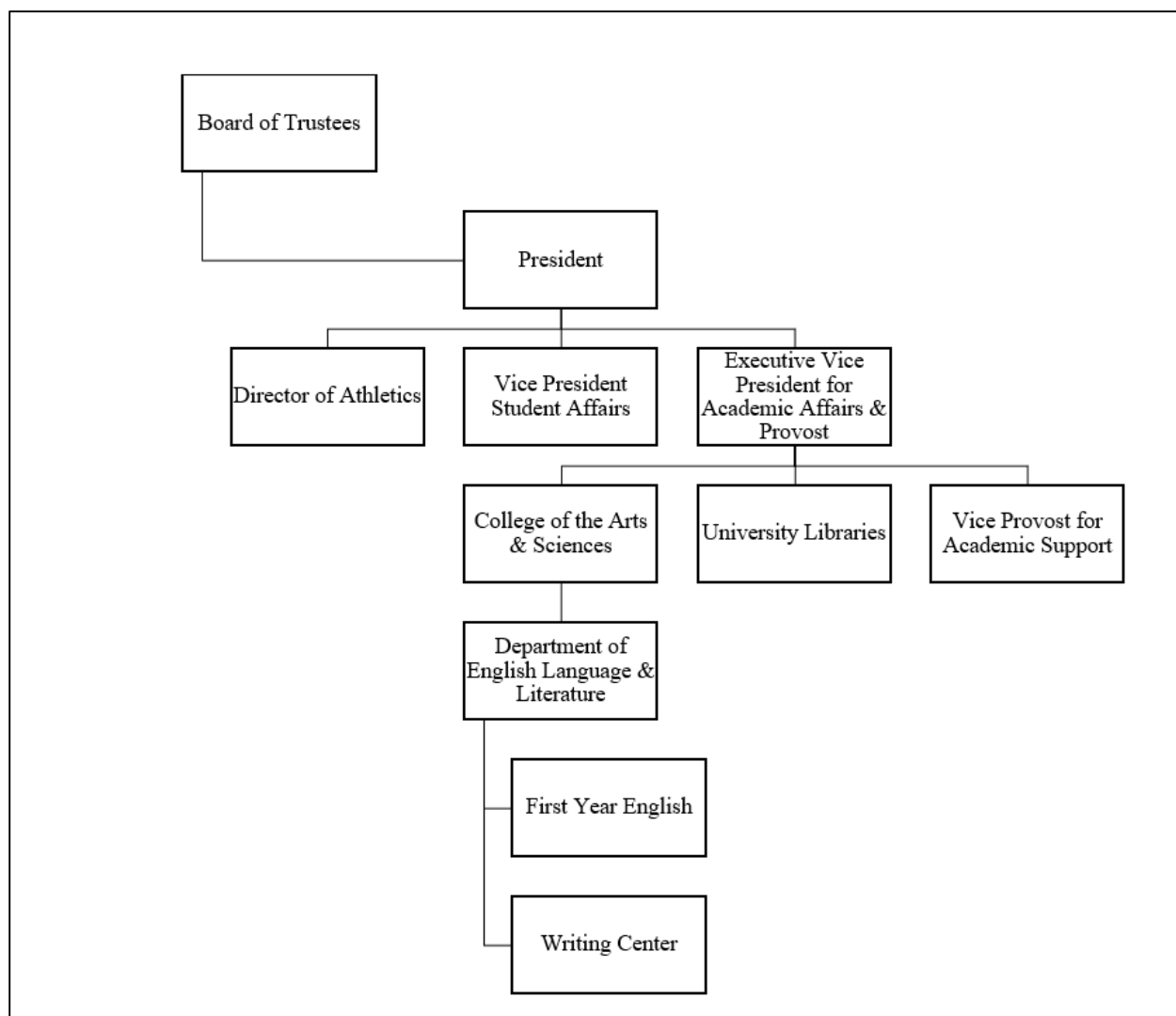
Figure 3.3 Composite Organizational Chart for Institution C
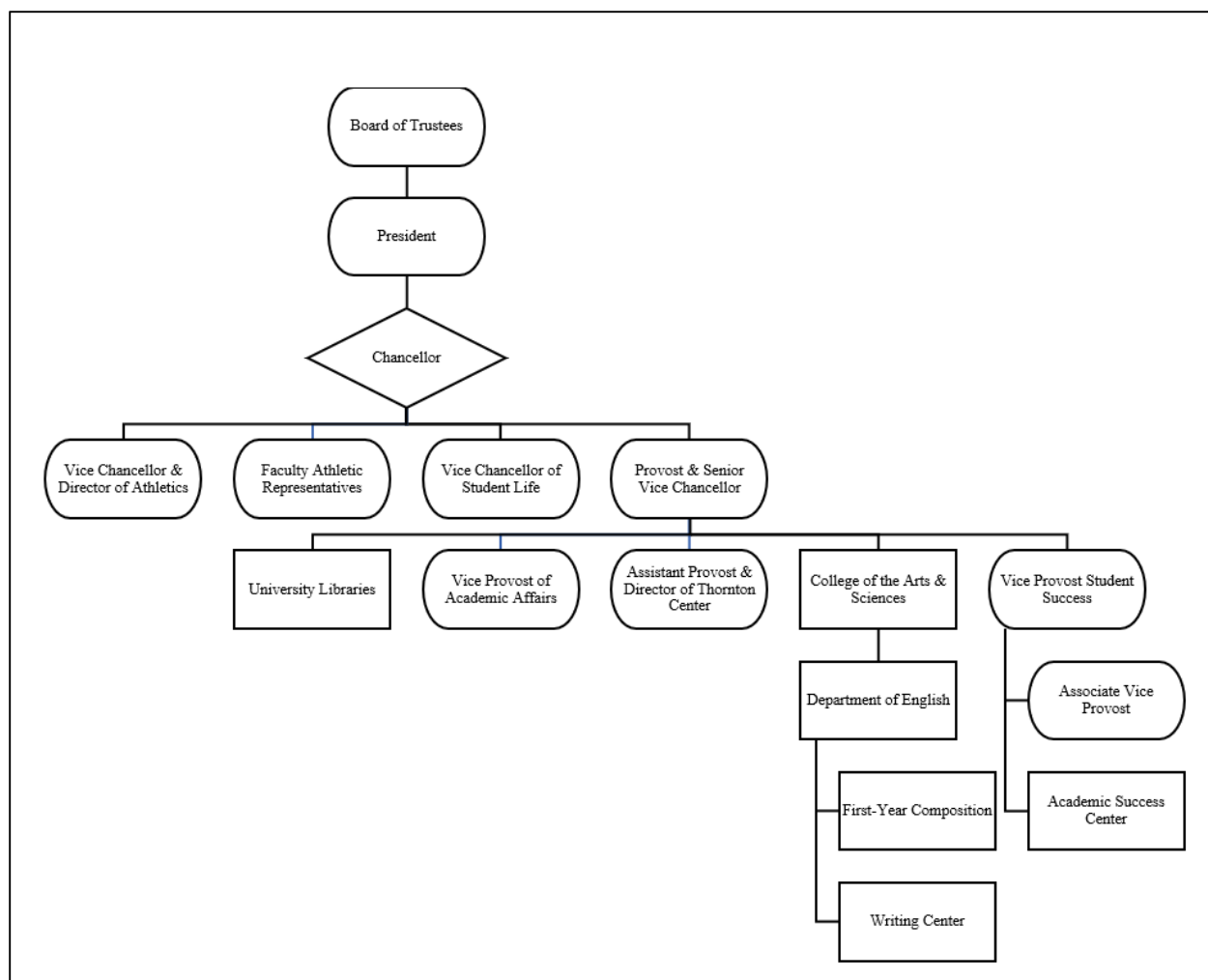
Figure 3.4 Composite Organization Chart for Institution D
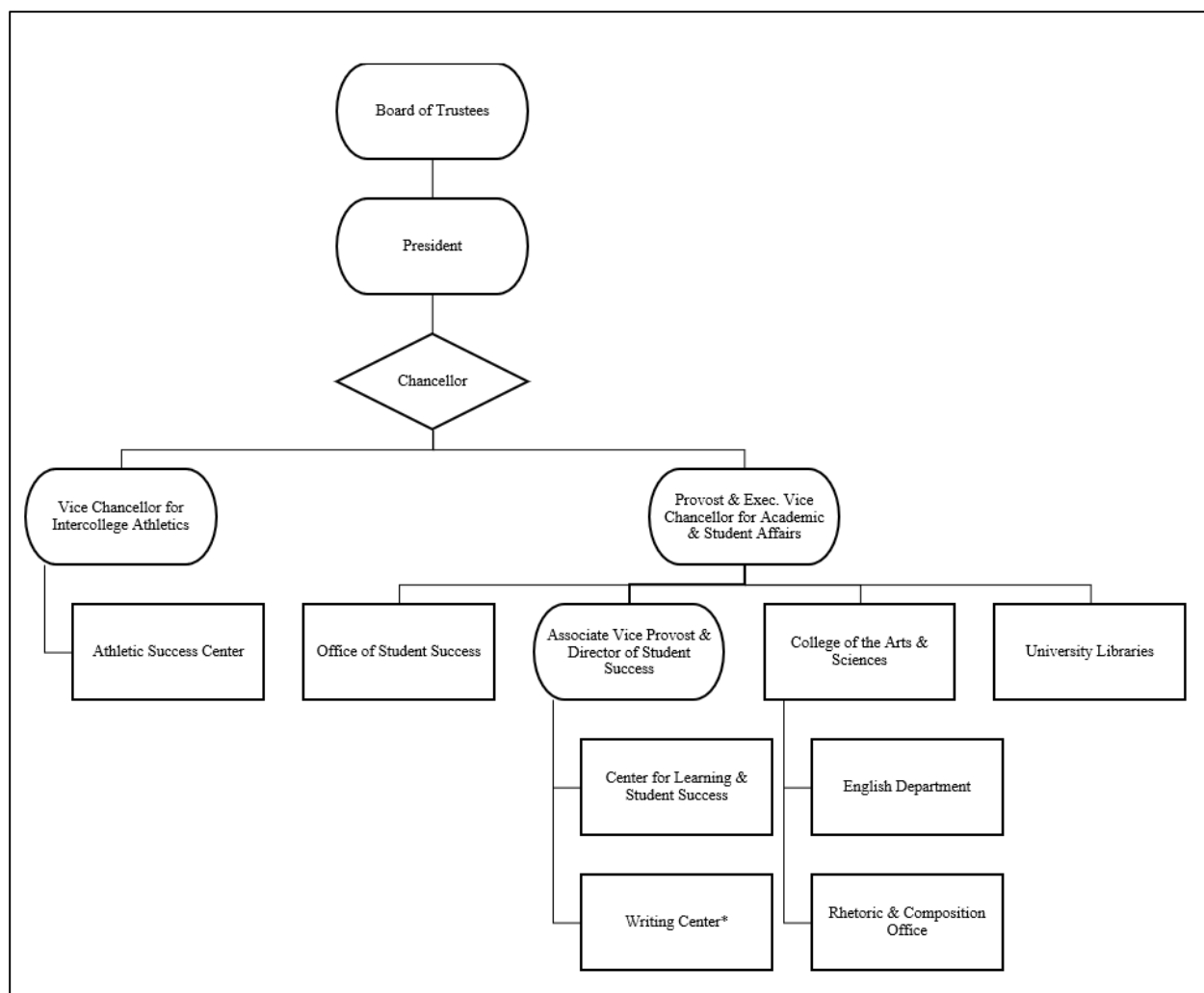
Figure 3.5 Composite Organizational Chart of Institution E

Across these institutions, it is not until the executive administration levels that these sites

of writing converge under leadership. In each of the organizational layouts the athletic

department occupies an outlying space the most separated from each of the departments

examined. If the athletic department is excluded, except in Institutions A and D where the

athletic academic center is separated and under the academic affairs division, the organizational

charts condense and patterns under student affairs and academic affairs emerge.

Institutions A, B, and C house the library, writing center, and FYC programs under the

umbrella of academic affairs. Each of these institutions distinguish a division of student affairs,

which is important to note regarding the writing center. Institutions D and E both house their writing centers in the division of student success, yet student success may be interpreted as either academic or student affairs. Institution D clearly delineates the writing center and Office of Student Success under the student affairs umbrella while Institution E remains unclear. At Institution E there is an executive position that oversees both student and academic affairs. The website for the student affairs division does not include the Center for Learning and Student Success that incorporates the writing center indicating that it is aligned under academic affairs. The alignment of the writing center and its relationship to the FYC program emerged as the most frequent and strong connections between the FYC and other sites of writing across the 3 institutional network maps in figures 3.6-3.8 and it worthy of further examination. Writing centers and FYC programs consistently share the same position in the institutionally hierarchy, share the same level of removal from the executive positions that oversee them, and are always distinct offices even when there are financial connections.

University libraries share a common positionality across all five institutions. Leadership is typically level with that of the college Dean and there are no direct nor indirect connections between the university library and the other sites of writing observed. As illustrated in the network maps below, the organizational paradigm of the universities is reproduced via the text and hyperlinks in the departmental and program websites.

Websites and Network Mapping

Organizational charts provide valuable insight into how the university is officially structured. Departmental or program websites, which are typically descriptive and collaboratively authored, shed light on the ways the structures are enacted through lived experiences and virtually nod to related programs, offices, or services that comprise official and

unofficial networks of support. Institutional ethnography asks researchers to look up from their position in the ecosystem and to observe what is happening and why that might be (LaFrance; Smith). As an academic advisor situated in a large, diverse college with 19 academic departments and 34 programs of study I rely on descriptive website content in every interaction with my students because it is impossible for me to retain and update information across the spaces to which I am accountable. In my profession, we use online texts to both cite our sources as interpreters of policy, to direct students to pertinent online hubs, and to learn about the programs or services offered. The seemingly innocuous departmental website becomes a critical tool for understanding and engagement as a staff member connecting with a student. Working with new students, too, allows me to separate myself from what I tacitly know and instead point to what is documentable in these online sites.

Departmental and program websites are rich textual sources for this project because they are rife with author standpoint bias, multiplicity of purposes, and signals to valuable institutional relationships. Authoring online sites can be a collaborative process local to the department or it may be handled top down from the college or unit's communication team. Sometimes a website is constructed poorly because of the designer's ability and physical constraints or access issues. As a public user, I cannot know why a website manifests in the way it does and as a researcher I will not engage in valuation criteria. Instead, I will examine these texts as an external user who enters the space to better understand what the department or program has to offer and the relational connects it makes visible through text, titles, and links.

The purpose in examining departmental or program websites is to see what type of writing support network is signaled by the FYC program website and if that network is stable across the institutional sites of writing support. In contrast to the top-down organization of the

institutional organizational charts, the mapped networks in figures 3.6-3.8 center the FYC

program website and expand outwardly to the other sites of writing support. Directional arrows

indicate the ways in which the text (in blue) or the hyperlinks (in green) direct the reader-user to

related sites of writing support. Using the organizational patterns in figures 3.1-3.5, three

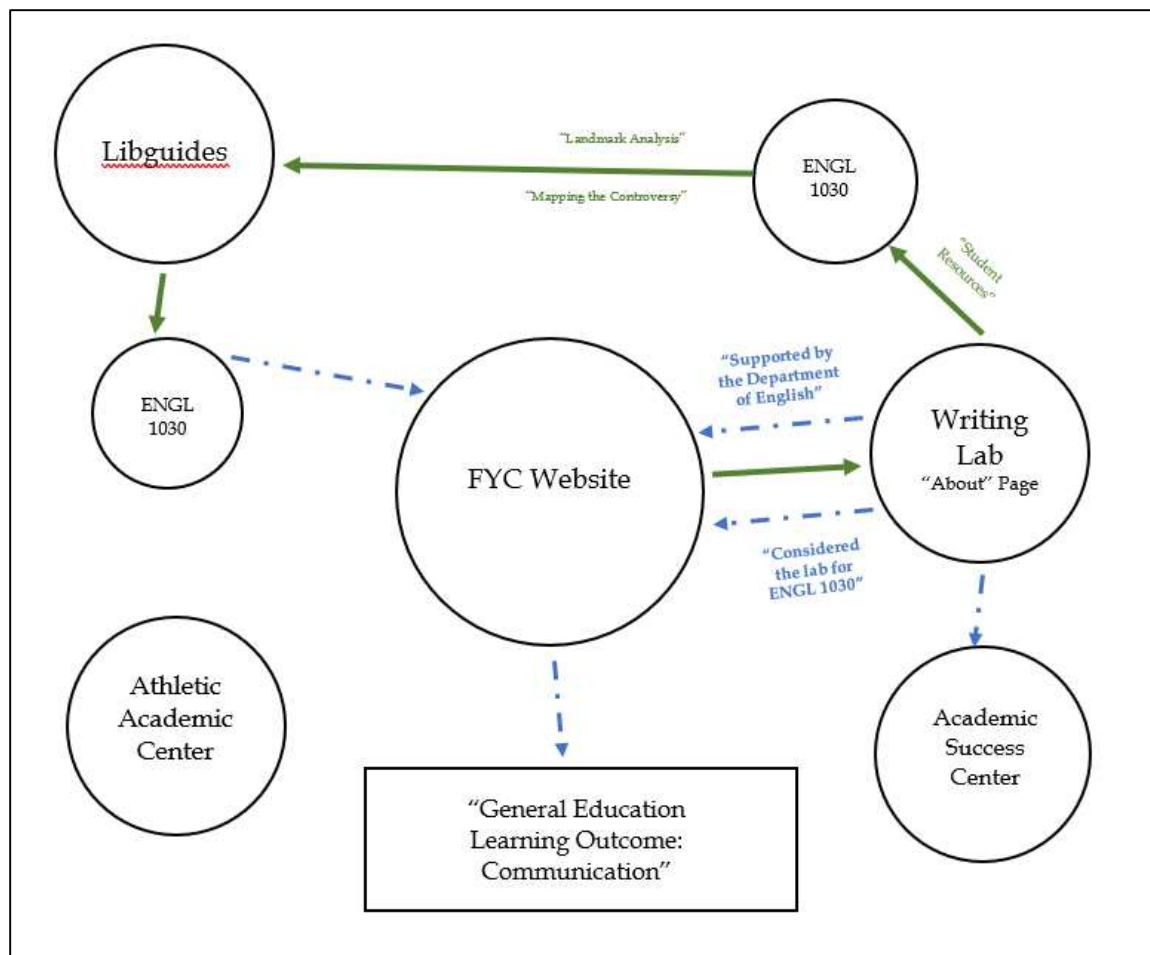universities were selected for these network maps.
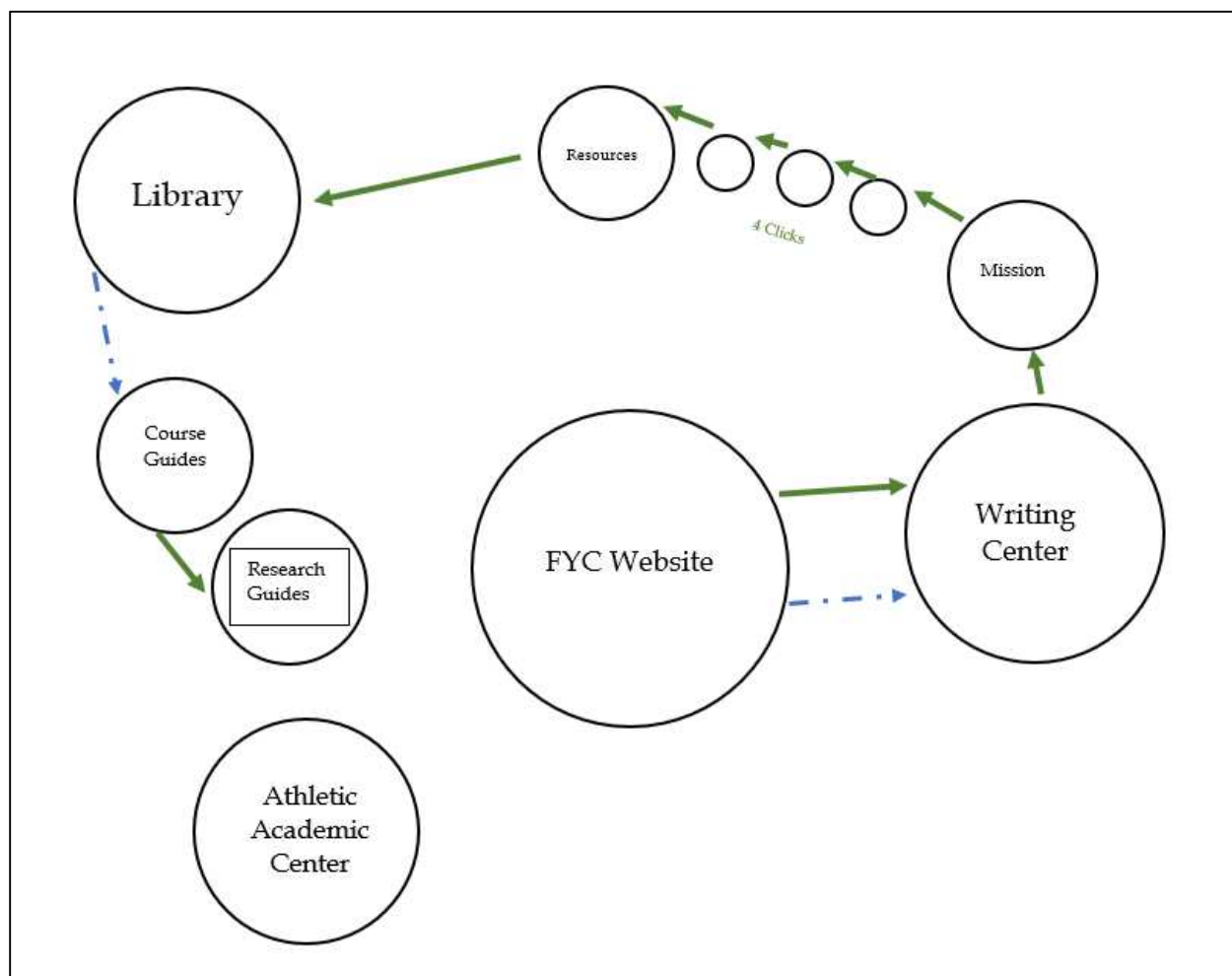

Figure 3.6 Configured Writing Network Map of Institution A

Figure 3.7 Configured Writing Network Map of Institution C
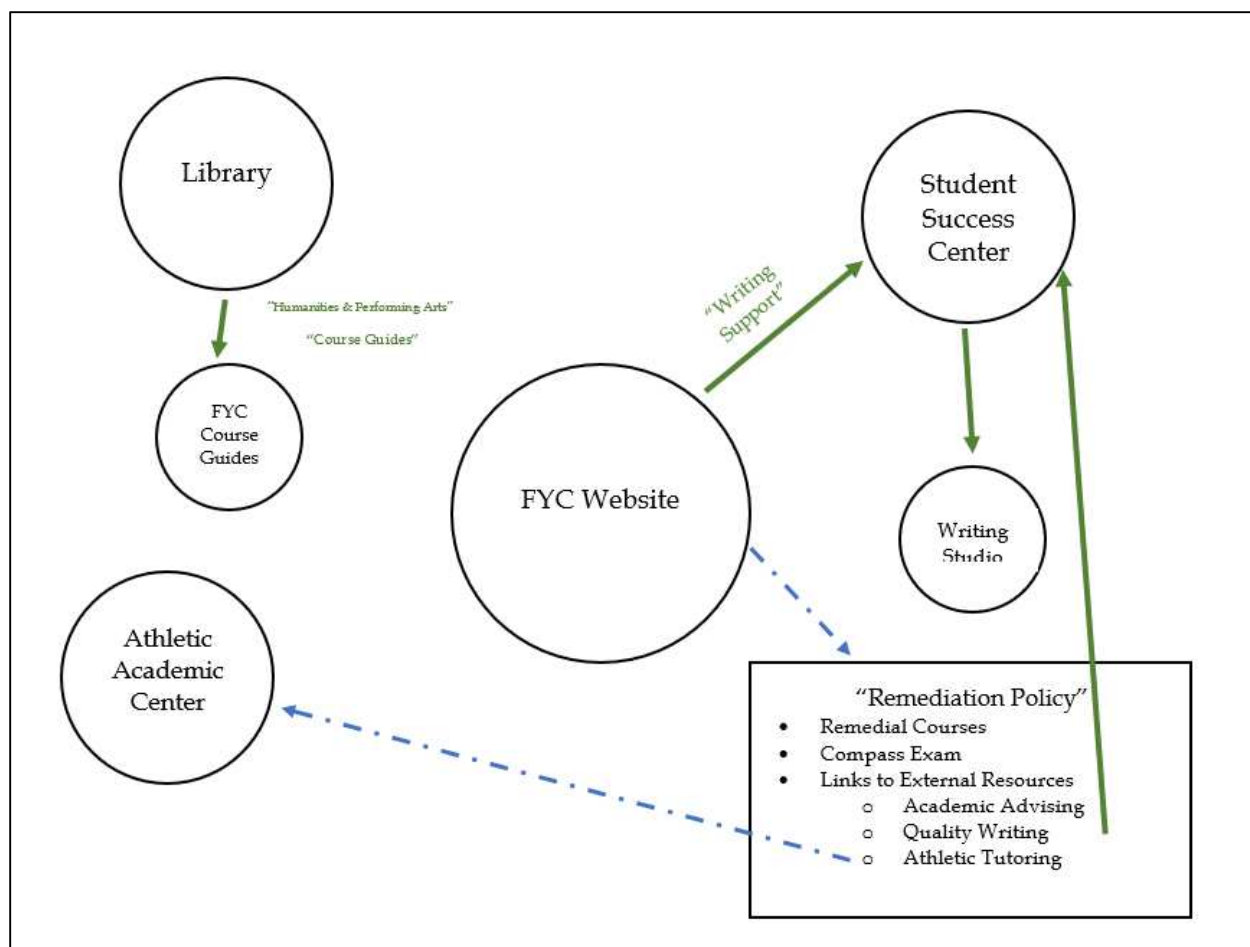
Figure 3.8 Configured Writing Network Map of Institution E

The FYC website is the center of this network because it is the textual extension of the WPA's purview and the inter-departmental relationships can be extended to consider not just how the FYC writing courses may connect, intersect, or diverge from other sites of writing support but also how the WPA might interact with the individuals and collectives who oversee these sites of writing support, too. Across all three institutions there is a trend of the FYC site acknowledging and referring students outward to the writing center at minimum, and in some cases to several other entities. None of the non-FYC writing sites used a hyperlink option to connect or direct students to the FYC program site. One institution textually acknowledged the relationship between the writing lab and the FYC course, yet there was no expansion on this

relationship, description of the FYC course, nor a link back to the site which terminates the ability for a user-reader to participate in the connection. Instead, they would have to independently access the FYC program site weakening the connection between the two sites for the user.

Institution A

Institution A was selected for network mapping because of its consolidated leadership of all four units under the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost as well as its financial relationship between the FYC program and the Writing Lab which both report independently to their respective departments. The FYC program is housed within the English Department within the College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities. The writing lab, while funded by the FYC course and labeled as a lab for ENGL 1030 is housed within the Academic Success Center under the Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The financial relationship is indicated by a dashed line in figure 3.1. The relationship between the two would suggest a subordination of the writing lab to ENGL 1030 course, but both departments are placed in similar positions within the university hierarchy.

Entering the FYC itself is a challenge at this university. The breadcrumbs at the top of the page reflect a navigation resembling the organizational chart itself: College-Level Site > Academics > English Department > Undergraduate > FYC. The breadcrumbs are not surprising, and they speak to the ways understanding university organization is asked of all users in a navigation capacity without much description or directions for use. Organizationally, the site embedded in the English Department page follows expectations but does not inherently welcome students. The English Department home page does not have a main menu link into FYC and a user must trust their instincts to click through until finding it as outlined above. The buried

nature of FYC is in contrast to the other two universities observed and is important to note because user interaction from those unfamiliar with traditional university structures – like many new students in general and specifically those considered at-risk – can be stifled or suppressed by the assumption of organizational navigation.

Once on the FYC site, or landing page, Institution A provides a highly descriptive account of the FYC course and what students can expect to encounter. Immediately to the right is the contact information for both the Director and Assistant Directors and immediately below is expanded detail of the general education learning outcome for the category FYC fulfills. In this section specific student learning outcomes are listed and the WPA Outcomes Statement is linked. This hyperlink to a fully external site is the only hyperlink present on the page suggesting the high importance and emphasis placed in the outcomes statement and the ethos of the writing program. The page concludes with a textual acknowledgement of the accompanying writing lab and how fees are used. The writing lab course code is provided – and coded as an ENGL courses – but the fee structure or disbursement it not listed.

Across the institution itself, the textual link to the writing lab is the only one present on the FYC site. Without the hyperlink provided a direct connection, students would have to search for the writing lab independently to gain access and enter the writing lab through its main page on the academic success center website. The location information is provided on each web site and similar to students exiting and re-entering online locations, the FYC program and the writing lab are physically distanced in separate buildings on the main campus, too. Once a user-reader is on the writing lab's website, they must search for the "about" page in the top navigation menu to find descriptive text about what the lab is and does. There is a similar textual relationship established on this main about page with recognition that the lab is "supported by the

Department of English" and "considered the lab for ENGL 1030" yet there is no hyperlinked text to direct students back to the Department of English nor the FYC program.

Under "Student Resources" there is another mention of ENGL 1030 and the hyperlink there takes students to the library's research guide for ENGL 1030. The research guide at Institution A is the most well-developed of the three discussed in this chapter. Within the research guide – called libguides at each of the universities discussed – ENGL 1030 appears frequently in the text and resources, skills, and activities are described in relationship to the course. Yet there are no hyperlinks used to connect students back to the FYC page or the lab at any point in the libguide. While the FYC course is the center of the efforts of the writing lab and the libguide it is present in name only and there is no opportunity for engagement or referral back to the program's site. This webbed network shows traffic moving only outward from FYC and upon reexamination of the FYC main page, there is no welcoming, directive text. Notably absent in this map are the connections between FYC and any other site of writing support and the athletic academic center.

Institution C

Similar to Institution A, Institution C's FYC provided a descriptive overview of what students can expect in their courses, learning outcomes, and how the courses fit into the general education curriculum. In contrast to Institution A, the FYC website was easy to access under the Department of English's main menu and the link to the writing center appeared just below it. The writing center is also highlighted to the right of the main page text with a photo, description, and link as well. The writing center is represented a third time once more in the main left side menu under "Beyond the Classroom". The high frequency and organization of the links suggests a strong desire for user-readers to engage with the connection between the FYC program and the

writing center. The connection between these two programs in particular is the primary reason Institution C was selected in this section; the writing center and the FYC hold an equal space on the organizational hierarchy within the English Department. The FYC program page signals a strong connection between the two and the website itself is user oriented and visually well organized.

Overall, the FYC website welcomes in the user-reader by contextualizing the program, identifying the size and scope, providing directory information, and then moving in a top-down approach from global writing skills to specific course outcomes in a two-course sequence. There are two subpages: one for FAQs and one for the program staff. The FAQ page has a question about getting help with papers and once again links back to the writing center. The connection to the writing center is strong and frequent, yet that is the only referral out of the FYC site.

Once on the writing center page, there is no reciprocal relationship connecting or directing students back to the FYC program website. At the top of the page the mission statement describes that the writing center will help students in any discipline at any stage of their writing development; there is no explicit connection to the FYC program as there is at Institution A. Once on the writing center page, there is no mention of either FYC writing course by name, either. While the writing center is heavily present on the FYC website, FYC is wholly absent from theirs. Under the "Resources" section, there is a link to "chat with a librarian" which directs the user-reader to the library's research page. At the top of the page is the chat feature and below is a menu for research guides.

On the library's research guide menu there is an option for "course guides" which will lead the user to a course guide for the second FYC course only. The course guide provides one descriptor statement and that it provides "resources for ENGL 102 assignments" yet there are no

specific connections provided between the assignments and the resources provided. Aside from the title and opening line of text, ENGL 102 is not mentioned again and there are no links back to the writing center, the FYC program, nor any other institutional writing support. Notably absent in this activity are the peer-writing tutors in student success and the athletic tutors for writing in the athletic center.

Institution E

Institution E's FYC program information is also located on the Department of English's site like the other two universities examined in this chapter. Distinguishing Institution E from the two preceding universities is the siloed nature of each unit mapped without significant differentiation in the overall organization of the university itself. A notable difference is that none of these programs or departments share administrators until the executive level, and in the preceding two universities only two programs intersected or shared leadership at a subordinate level. The FYC and writing centers are in the lowest subordinated positions on the university hierarchy and share the same degree of removal from shared executive office.

The FYC program website does not exist in the same way as the two preceding universities. Using the main left side menu of the English Department website there are two options a user might select in search of information on FYC: "undergraduate" or "writing support". The undergraduate menu opens up a submenu that does not contain a FYC page. The nearest option is a "remediation" page that reads similar to the FYC pages above with course descriptions. The remediation page also links externally to testing information for placement, the undergraduate advising center, and the tutoring center with an outdated title. There is a text placeholder for the athletic center, but no hyperlink for navigation. This is the only page of the three schools to link to a broader university network involved in placement and advising, too.

The writing support option on the main menu navigates the user away from the English Department and to the writing studio in the centralized Student Success Center. Once there, the writing studio has a well-developed and multi-tier website with a variety of services and information. There are internal options for tutoring and coaching alongside the studio. Under the "access writing resources" option there are guides divided by three columns: "types of writing"; "using sources"; and "writing tips". Within the writing center pages there are no textual cues or hyperlinks back into the FYC program or any other writing site at the institution. Although there is no online network present linking the library to the FYC courses, the library does offer two research course guides for both of the FYC courses. While they are both are well developed with research support information, there are no textual or hyperlinked connections back to the FYC program. The athletic academic center is textually linked to the FYC page, but does not reciprocate the connection on their own website.

Discussion

Examining the online linked writing networks at these universities is valuable work because they show a trend in disconnected writing sites and practices across the university as viewed from an external user such as new students, staff, or faculty. The writing networks analyzed flowed in one direction out of the FYC site allowing a network to be constructed at all because it originated from the English Department or the FYC website itself. None of the other sites of writing support would have directed a user back to the English Department much less the FYC program. One might assume that this is not problematic because a student in a writing course might seek assistance across the university, but that a student seeking writing support for a specific purpose would not need a connection to the English Department nor its composition courses. Underlying this argument might be that those who need the type of support offered by

the FYC program would have already been enrolled into the necessary writing courses, and therefore, the services offered elsewhere are independent and distinct. Yet, the enrollment profiles in Chapter 1 of this project demonstrate that a while FYC courses are a stalwart of the general education curriculum, it is common for students to exempt or transfer credit in for these requirements and never participate in the curriculum as designed by the WPA and the general education requirements. Therefore, assuming a student has access to the resources available from the writing program itself is an incomplete foregone conclusion.

Conclusion

The most concerning trend on the external writing sites is the omission of the FYC website or the writing program in general as resource for students to read about in the text itself or have the offering to click into the site. After experiencing these online networks as an external user, though, it is clear that linking back to the FYC sites as they are designed would not strengthen the perceived writing network to external users as they are currently constructed. While including the FYC website as a linked resource on its own could signal a networked connection, it is most valuable when it contextualizes the relationship, describes or explains what the linked resource is, and provides details on when and how users might engage between the two sites. In each of the three institutions examined in this chapter, users directed back to the site would be left with lingering questions about the value of the online site beyond describing the course and potential learning outcomes.

As users engage with online texts to construct meaning about what constitutes the university holistically as well as specifically writing support within the university, it is important for WPAs to consider how their programs are presented to a wide variety of stakeholders. Who is the most important primary audience of their content? Who are the secondary and tertiary

audiences? What is the purpose of the online site for the writing program? What can be gained

by strengthening online writing networks? What is the cost to the WPA and to the writing

program of expanding the online presence of FYC and the writing program?

Chapter 4: Implications for the WPA

"*A student stops by my office the day after the final registration deadline. They were admitted on the fifth day of the term and can just now register for courses. It is an unfortunate situation I am familiar with because each year a student is admitted through one office to run into a roadblock at another. They are a biology major and need to permission to add all five of their classes. I print them five forms because each form needs an instructor and department chair signature, and each of the classes is: in different academic departments as common to freshman schedules.*

We sit together while I give them a speedy course on university organization: how to search for classes and find the instructor information, how to use the directory, and how to use the campus map to find the academic departments to gain the signatures. It is clear from an advising perspective that the defined roles, department organization, and relationships between these roles and the course itself are vital for a student getting registered. There is no line on our form for an advisor's signature, yet we are often positioned to teach students ways of navigating the university to complete processes we have no control over.

The enrollment exception form described above and the processes surrounding it have the power to shape my job function and the way I interpret my job duties, yet I am not visible or voiced in any component of it. This is the power of texts and how they translate into lived experiences and reshaped relationships in my primary advising role."

The Genre of the Enrollment Request Form

Class enrollment establishes a recognizable semester rhythm for most academic advisors. From the perspective of advising, enrollment is a complex process presented as a simple once-a-semester student transaction in the course management system. Beyond the click-and-add

interface, there are financial policies, registration periods that open and close, registration holds, pre-requisite issues, seat availability, and the emotional toll of decision-making that align in various ways to make the process simplistic for some while nearly impossible for others. In the midst of this cyclical process in which every student participates, there is a form to accompany outlying experiences that necessitate administrative enrollment to be completed by the Registrar's office. At my home institution, there are many reasons the form might be used and the form itself is presented alongside two others in the next section.

Versions of the Enrollment Request Form

Institution E and the Administrative Change of Registration (ACOR) Form

At Institution E the enrollment request form is called the "Administrative Change of Registration" (ACOR) form and it is included in figure 4.1 below. The ACOR form is housed on the Registrar's website under "Forms" and classified under "Registration". There is no distinction between faculty, staff, or student forms. Alongside the ACOR form in the "Registration category" are three other forms: "Out of Career Registration"; "Overload Petition"; and "Senior Citizen Tuition and Fee Waiver Form". Aside from the final form, the other three forms indicate by their very existence that the enrollment situations which require exceptions occur frequently enough in these areas for these forms to be created and prioritized on the website – the registration section is at the top of the forms page.

The ACOR form indicates six to twelve situations related to an override request in its prescriptive format. The form is highly structured and there is only one space for a user to add any narrative account for their situation. The range six to twelve and its subsequent confusion emerge because there are twelve boxes present at the top of the form and no indication of what should be checked. There are some instances where multiple boxes could be checked, such as a

student would like an override into a full class and the class is full. As a knowledgeable advisor, I see the hierarchy emerge and can reason that first a student would need permission for a requisite exemption and then they would need permission for a capacity override into a full class. The interaction between these two requests would be clear to me, but unlikely for a new freshman who may construct enrollment as a transaction between the student and the instructor. The form indicates that enrollment is a conversation between student, instructor, department chair, dean, and the registrar.

The ACOR form is doing significant institutional work in the ways it is designed to be used in any type of enrollment situation except in those covered by the three other registration forms – out of career registration, overload, and senior citizen waivers. The ACOR form presents a menu of options that requires a student to interpret their situation and then relay it in the language of the university with no definition or translation. The institution is forcing its understanding of the registration process through the design and language on the form.

The ACOR form is housed on the Registrar's website and there is a line near the bottom of the page that instructs users on how to return the form to the Registrar's office when it is complete. There are no complementary directions for the student to know where to begin with the form. Navigating the page from top to bottom and left to right the form can be broken into five sections, though they are not labeled in this way. The top of the page begins with the student's personal information and the term, year, and college they belong to. There is no language explaining that the term and year indicate the *registration* term and year instead of the current one – though, it could be the current one depending on the specific enrollment period. The college menu is specifically asking for the student's home college based on their major, but there are no details for this, nor is it prompted by asking for the student's program or major. The

simplest section of the form still requires insider knowledge of the registration process to make the process indeed simple.

The next section is labeled for "Department or Dean's Office Use Only" which appears to be instructions for the Registrar's staff processing the form and not for the student completing the form. It is in this section that the most significant language barrier exists for students. Students at this institution often learn that they have a registration issue when they receive an error message while trying to add a course. Some of these error messages align with the language on the form proximal enough to recognize the selection, but the form is not linked or provided in that registration screen. A student would have to recall the error at the time of completing the form or recreate the error. Six of the twelve options are not present in the error messaging provided in the enrollment screen. There is a box for "other- see explanation" where a student could add more details if they were uncertain about their registration needs.

The third section asks for class details which are more detailed than course numbers. There is a table provided that once again is broad enough for either an add or a drop option without any instructions on how students should navigate the form. There is an example line at the top of the table, but it is not strong enough for all students to know which columns are required and where to go to get the information to complete those columns. Specific institution identifying information has been removed in this discussion and in figure 4.1. Once again, the headings are written in a language preferred by the Registrar for processing the request and not to the student audience. The "Class #" refers to a specific number only listed in the course management system that indicates the specific day, time, section, instructor, and location. The "Catalog #" is not a term used in other areas of the registration process and the class search screen replaces this with "Course #". Variable hours only apply to courses with a V in their

catalog number and "Student's Location" is only required for online courses. There is no way via engagement with the form alone to interpret which columns apply to an enrollment situation and the less experienced students are the ones most likely to assume that all data is needed and then need support when they cannot find it. The form lists many offices and roles, but it does not say who is ultimately responsible for assisting the student through the process. The absence of support alongside a form for requesting exceptions to policies has the potential to be interpreted as hostile or unwelcoming for those who are the most unfamiliar with institutional processes and structures.

The roles associated with the exception request also point to traditional university academic structures. The form has lines for up to seven signatures with five of those are related to completing the form and the final two for representatives of the Registrar's office. Some of the override options at the top indicate which signatures are needed while others are blank without explanation. Signatures move upward from the student to the instructor, then the department chair, and then the dean(s) for the college(s) involved. If a student is taking a course outside of their home college, which can happen especially frequently for students outside of the Arts and Sciences enrolling into general education requirements, they are now tasked with navigating an unfamiliar department up to the dean level. The lived experience might be a rubber-stamping process once it is past the instructor's consent, but that cannot be known until the student is in conversation with the department and at first reading it looks like a serious, bureaucratic process that may require a student to explain their situation up to four times for approval. The signature lines also assume that all programs follow the same structure and hierarchy and, when they do not, cause further confusion or barriers to students trying to enroll into the course.

The writing program at this institution disrupts the traditional structure of the English department when it comes to the seven composition and two world literature courses under its purview. The instructor of the course is unlikely to grant permission because they are likely to be a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) and will need to check in with the Writing Program Administrator (WPA) or one of the associate or assistant directors for the program. The WPA is unlikely to need the chair's signature on the form as they have discretion for the enrollment overrides for the courses. In this situation, the WPA or their program staff, take on the function of the faculty and the chair for the purpose of the form yet that is in no way visible to users outside of the program and the dean's office who knows to process the ACOR form when one of these approved signatures is included.

The ACOR form is designed to meet enrollment needs across the institution and for a wide range of student experiences. It is used frequently by advising and departmental staff and is a critical piece in the enrollment process for students in enrollment situations recognizable as atypical, but potentially warranting an exception. Through the design and language, though, situations warranting exceptions are cast in the language of the institution and those in power to determine when and if exceptions can be granted. When access to those people is obscured, as the WPA's role is through this example, their connection with these students becomes reliant on the departmentally external conversations support staff have with these students. Once again, composition enrollment is potentially recast in an enrollment environment outside of the First Year Composition program and student access to FYC is potentially diminished. The circumstances around the ACOR form are not unique to Institution E as figures 4.2 and 3 will demonstrate. Those forms are discussed in contrast to the Institution E analysis presented in this section.

Administrative Change of Registration

ID#: _____ Name: _____ Email: _____

Year: _____ Term: _____ ▼ College: _____ ▼ ☐ GRAD ☐ UGRD

Department or Dean's Office Use Only
Reason for Administrative Action *Form will be returned if appropriate boxes are not checked or has missing information.*

Overrides　　　　　**Adjust Fees** ☐ Yes ☐ No　　　　　**Final Grade Roster Clean Up Only**

☐ Full Class (Instructor & Department Head Sign)　☐ Placement　　☐ Never Attended. No fee adjustment.
☐ Class Time Conflict (Instructor & Student Sign)　☐ Advising Error
☐ Co/Pre/Dual Requisite (Instructor & Department Head Sign)　☐ Lacks Pre-requisite(s)
☐ Consent Required (Instructor Sign)　　☐ Section (or Class) Canceled
☐ Late Registration (All Sign)　　☐ Change of Section or Section Added
☐ Other - See explanation　　☐ Waive late registration fee (explanation required)

Explanation:

Action	Class #	Subject	Catalog #	Section #	Variable Hrs.	Student's Location	Instructor's Signature
EXAMPLE	2992	PHYS	502V	001	2	▓▓▓▓▓	▓▓▓▓▓
D						▼	
R						▼	
O						▼	
P						▼	
A						▼	
D						▼	
D						▼	
AUDIT						▼	

_____　　_____　　_____　　_____
Student's Signature　　　　　Date　　　　Student's Dean's Signature　　　　Date

_____　　_____　　_____　　_____
Department Head's Signature　　Date　　Instructor's Dean's Signature　　　Date

Please scan and email completed form to: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Office of the Registrar Use Only
Your request cannot be processed due to:
☐ Exceeds term limits.　　　　　　　　☐ Is missing the Student's Location Indicator.
☐ Change creates a time conflict with _____.　☐ Is missing a co/pre/dual-requisite for this add.
☐ Is already in section _____ of the same class.　☐ Will be missing a co/pre/dual-requisitie if this class is dropped.
☐ The class number does not match class for this term.　☐ Is missing a number of variable credit hours.
☐ Has a _____ hold.　☐ Missing signature from _____.
Other Reason:

_____

_____　　_____　　_____　　_____
Posted to ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓　　　　Date　　　Returned By　　　　　　Date

Figure 4.1 Image of blank ACOR form from Institution E

Institution C and the Registration Exception Form

　　　　Institution C uses a "Registration Exception Form" also housed on the Registrar's website. An example of this form can be found in figure 4.2 below. The overall structure of the form is similar to that of the ACOR used in Institution E and requires a similar set of signatures

and course information. The form does not provide for open narrative space for students to explain their situation and instead, as with the ACOR form, they must conform to design of the form. An important distinction between the two is provided in the first line at the top of the "Registration Exemption Form" (REF) where it states that this form is only used to request adding courses after the deadline in the academic calendar. By contrast, the ACOR form could be used to add or drop courses in a variety of circumstances.

Financial language like the bursar's office, financial agreements, fees, and financial responsibilities are listed ten times in the REF, and the bursar – or treasurer – must also approve the registration request. There are not instructions directing the student through the process of requesting an override, yet the form's flow indicates a hierarchy that places the bursar as the ultimate grantor of the request. This form raises questions about the relationship between the bursar and the registration and the governing policies around enrollment. The REF at Institution C recasts enrollment as a primarily financial transaction, a conversation that is not traditionally represented on departmental or program websites in academic affairs. The financial costs of a course and the financial temptation to exempt or waive requirements are potential enrollment barriers to many at-risk students and students needing FYC courses are not immune to this reality. A separation between the financial policies and the enrollment policies is challenged via this form that juxtaposes instructor and dean signatures below that of the bursar.

Registration Exception Form

This form, with the appropriate signatures, must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar for all adds, section changes, or credit/audit changes made after the deadline dates as printed in the academic calendar. This form should only be used for the current term. The student's academic dean (or designated representative) must approve these actions.

Note: This form will not remove the course or the fees if you have dropped/withdrawn with a 'W' or 'WF' from another section of the same course.

Student Name: _____ USC ID: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

School: _____ Major: _____

Term: ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer Year: _____

The above-named student is authorized for the schedule adjustments listed below with the exception of courses which are at full enrollment capacity.

Requested Action	Course Subject	Course Number	CRN	Credit Hours (if for credit)	Audit Hours (if for audit)	Instructor Signature (does not authorize capacity override)
Add (Register)						
Add (Register)						
Add (Register)						
Add (Register)						
Change Section to ***						
Change Section to ***						
Change Credit Hours to						
Change Credit Hours to						
Change Audit to Credit						
Change Audit to Credit						
Change Credit to Audit						
Change Credit to Audit						

Student Signature*: _____ Date: _____
By signing above I acknowledge that I am aware of any financial consequence of this change to my registration.

Dean Signature: _____ Date**: _____
Signature of undergraduate student's academic dean (Signature does not authorize course capacity overrides)

Graduate Director Signature: _____ Date**: _____
Graduate students only
** Authorization expires three (3) business days after this date.

Bursar's Office Signature: _____ Date: _____

Students who have been dropped from their classes due to nonpayment and wish to be re-enrolled in classes for the same term after the drop/add date may be assessed a $75.00 Reinstatement Fee. This fee is assessed per occurrence each semester.

By submitting this form, I acknowledge that I am responsible for payment of all tuition and fees to the University of South Carolina associated with these course(s) within 24 hours of being registered for these courses.

By submitting this form, I acknowledge that I am entering into a financial arrangement with the University of South Carolina and agreeing that I have read and agree to abide by the terms of the Student Financial Responsibility Agreement.

I understand that if I fail to abide by the Student Financial Responsibility Agreement my course(s) will be dropped from my schedule

Office of the University Registrar

Figure 4.2 Image of blank REF form from Institution C

Institution D and the "Registration Add Form"

Institution D's version of the registration exemption is called the "Registration Add Form" (RAF). The RAF is similar to two other examples discussed and can be found in figure 4.3 below. The RAF shares the same overall top-down flow moving from the student's personal

information to the course they are trying to add. Missing, though, is the statement about the purpose of the form or options for the student to select for an override. There is no institutionally provided context preempting why this form might be used. Instead, there is an open text box with enough room for a paragraph where the student can add a description or details about the "reason(s) or error message(s)" they are receiving. The inclusion of the text box reduces the work of the student to interpret and match university language without a guide and is instead moved to the instructor and department head granting the request. There is still a risk in this approach, but the rhetorical effect is one that is more inclusive and allows for student participation in the process.

At the top and bottom of the form there are instructions to "present completed form to the academic department responsible for the course to be added". In the absence of a process flow chart, it can be assumed this department is the same as the one offering and approving the course for enrollment. This form suffers from the same vague language of the ACOR from in Institution E, yet the inclusion of the academic department at the top and bottom of the form offset in the dark text box positions the academic department itself as central to the process and the ultimate authority. This is the only form of the three examined to situate the academic department in this position of authority. Situating the academic department in this way is a powerful rhetorical move that positions the academic department and the student in conversation together with external agencies minimized. Institution D is not immune to the financial and registration deadlines, but those are not prioritized in the RAF in the same way. The form suggests that the academic department itself will interpret the validity of the request and move it along through processing.

Figure 4.3 Image of blank REF form from Institution D

The enrollment exception request, though the name varies by institution, is a predictable

and reoccurring text that is well situated to shed light on the enrollment culture and social

organization of an institution. Its inclusion in this project is not to suggest that the WPA nor the

writing program should ultimately be primarily concerned with the enrollment processes of their

university, but rather the ways institutionally circulated documents function and shape perceptions of authority, roles, and ways students come into the composition classrooms. The forms across all three institutions examined rely on instructor approval which does not typically align with the teaching structures in first year writing programs. This form, and others like it, that reflect a traditional academic structure perpetuates an understanding for its users as to how the university is organized and the way it functions. When forms like these do not reflect the ways an academic department actually functions, institutional knowledge becomes a part of a social network of understanding that perpetuate knowledge and language gaps across inside and outside uses.

Websites

"A student emailed me and would like to drop a science course lecture yet remain in the associated lab. They know they need both credits for their major and plan to re-enroll into the lecture in the next term. I show them our enrollment exception request and let them know that they are seeking an exception to an institutional policy- the co-requisite issue- and they must seek departmental approval.

After showing them how to complete the form, I then add the note that this particular department processes so many requests that they have created their own sub system. Instead of going directly to their instructor, who teaches 800 students, they can email the form directly to the department's enrollment coordinator who will then determine if the instructor's signature is needed and request it on behalf of the student. I turn my computer screen to show them the department's undergraduate website where they link the enrollment form and provide instructional guidelines on how to complete the form and submit it."

The scenario above is one I encounter as an academic advisor regularly, and one that I expect as part of my primary staff role. The science department in this scenario has added information to their website to respond to the frequency of the requests caused by articulated co-requisites, high drop/fail rates, major requirements for graduation, and the choice another popular academic department made that placed this particular science as a critical first-year prerequisite to a major course. The hierarchal structures in the enrollment exception request did not work for the people who were involved in the decision-making process to allow withdrawal exceptions and so a new process was created to expedite the requests and apply them equally to all students, which means the process behaves like a policy and no longer an exception. The form and the environment in which it operates have begun to reshape one another in the departmental setting.

The WPA may find themselves in a similar position as this science department due to the high number of first year enrollment, the potential for FYC courses to become pre-requisites in major courses, the co-requisite designations in FYC courses and especially those with remediation, and the structural variance in the English Department that houses the writing program. The science department in this scenario responded with procedural text on their website that indicated exactly how to complete the form and the email address for submission. The text does not explain why this process is in place, the likelihood exemptions will be granted, or what the student can expect next. It adds descriptions for the boxes and tables in the form as well as images from the course enrollment system, but there are not directional cues to tell students to navigate to their course schedule. Instead, it relies on visual recognition in the data itself.

I returned to the FYC websites in the three institutions above to search for language about the enrollment processes. I accessed each website anew and navigated between it, the English

Department website, and the Undergraduate sections as available in those sites. In my first online

visit to these programs I investigated the ways writing networks were communicated. This time,

I searched for content or links that indicated a rhetorical awareness of the writing program within

the larger context of the university processes and the lived experience of students trying to enroll

or participate in the writing program itself.

Institution E

Institution E has the weakest overall website for communicating information to

undergraduate students, though it does have the most external signaling to other offices on

campus. As noted in the last chapter, Institution E does not have a true FYC program website as

the other campuses have. It has a smattering of links on the English Department main page that

requires insider awareness of the department's organization. The departmental page is evaluated

here by its textual consideration and awareness of the enrollment process and relational

awareness between the FYC and university itself. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show the English

Department website at Institution A discussed in the pages below.

Strengths

When Institution E's English Department website is considered holistically it

acknowledges some placement policies, financial resources, course descriptions, and

departmental contacts. The resources are scattered across the departmental site and requires a

high degree of familiarity with traditional university organization. On the main department page

users can navigate to the Undergraduate drop-down menu to find course descriptions (that omit

FYC courses); advising specific to the department, but not the college; and remediation, which

refers students to college advising, testing, the FYC program, and the writing center. The

undergraduate homepage describes the major and at the bottom of the page there is a line of text

About the Department

Undergraduate ⌄

    Majors

    Course Descriptions

    Advising

    Remediation Information ›

    Honors Program

    Career Information

    Study Abroad

Graduate

Directory

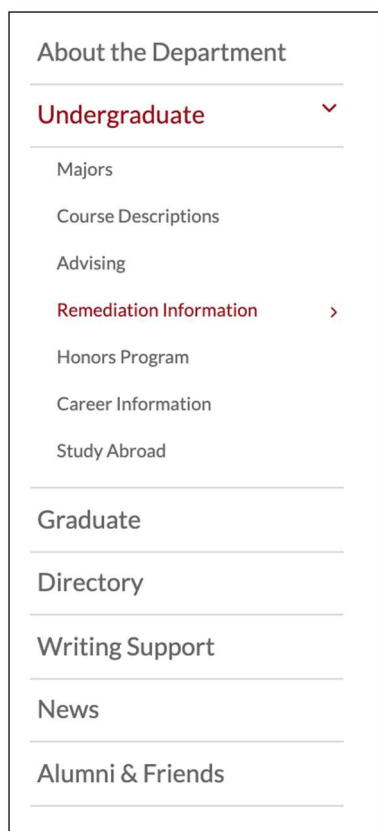**Writing Support**

News

Alumni & Friends

Figure 4.4 shows the main left-side menu for the Department of English at Institution E with the

undergraduate menu expanded retrieved on December 8, 2021.

that links to the financial aid office or the college scholarships office. On the home page there is

the location and contact information for the department. A directory link can be found on this

page, too, with faculty profiles and email. A savvy student or experienced staff member could

navigate this site to answer a question if they understood who did what for the department.

Weaknesses

       Institution E has a significant weakness in the organization of the English Department

webpage between the submenus. The closest page to a FYC program site is found under the

Graduate menu option and not the Undergraduate menu. It functions like a staff handbook for the

graduate teaching assistants instead of a place for undergraduate or external staff to navigate the program. It is well developed with a mission statement, a staff directory, a teaching assistant

Figure 4.5 shows the mission statement for the Program in Rhetoric and Composition at Institution E retrieved on December 8, 2021.

directory, and courses taught page but none of this information is available to the student user or to users without a deep understanding of the program structure. There is a separate email address for the program on this page, but it is not prominent on any other subpage nor is it clear when students should use that address.

There is no direct acknowledgement of the enrollment process in general nor what to do when a student experiences a situation that disrupts their enrollment capability.

Institution C

Institution C's FYC site is similar to institutions A, B, and D. It is embedded in the English Department page under "Study" and is listed at the same level as "Undergraduate" and "Graduate" menu items. The FYC site is considered alongside the full English Department site for the institution in this discussion. Figure 4.6 below shows the main content page for the FYC website embedded in the Department of English's main website.

Figure 4.6 shows the main left-side menu for the Department of English at Institution C and the main content page for the linked FYC website retrieved on December 8, 2021.

Strengths

The FYC website is well-developed and provides contextual information at the top of the site to indicate what the FYC program does, which courses they teach, and the reason most students take their courses. Institution C provides contextual information throughout their page and in their first paragraph acknowledge the size of their program and link an FAQ page and a staff directory for students or other users to access. The overall flow continues to move from broad context to specific course information yet it always remains focused on the two course sequence. The greatest strength is the organization of the site and the meaningful links to the staff directory for the writing program.

The English Department website overall provides context heavy text with subheadings, links to related departments, and FAQs to help students navigate FYC, the undergraduate major, and advising. While finding a departmental contact on the main page is challenging, each subpage provides a staff directory and the undergraduate office seems to be a general place for students to stop in with questions.

Weaknesses

It is hard to distinguish which services offered by the English Department are for undergraduate majors and which are offered to all students. The FYC program states that it serves students across the university, but the rest of the website appears to be written for students already in the major or minor program. Language like "explore our minors" appears to be for any student, but there are no directions given for how to declare or join the program. Although offices like study abroad and the career services are provided, the enrollment processes are omitted. There is a link for student and faculty forms, yet the enrollment exception request is not included.

Institution C provides an example of the benefits of contextualizing writing courses, programs, and services yet it still perpetuates a divide between the curriculum and the ways students access that curriculum through enrollment practices.

Institution D

Institution D offers the most comprehensive and informative English Department website of the three institutions examined here. The organization of the website is cohesive and reflects multiple points of entry into the English program. When expanded, each menu option reflects a similar organizational structure to the others making overall navigation more accessible to the novice user. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show the menu and main content page that are discussed on the following pages.

Strengths

The organization of Institution D's English Department website signals an understanding that users will interact with the page from various standpoints with diverse needs. The left-side menu – aside from the home page option – leads top-down to include: "Prospective Students"; "Current Students"; "Advising"; "People"; "Writing Program"; "Public Events"; "Alumni and Friends"; "About the English Department"; and "Giving to English". This rhetorical move signals inclusivity and ultimately allows users to interact with the page from a place of their own positionality – especially the distinction between prospective students, current students, and the writing program. The prospective student menu expands to include subpages of interest to the student in the decision-making process including "Awards and Scholarships" and "How to Apply". The inclusion of this content acknowledges real world conditions impacting students'
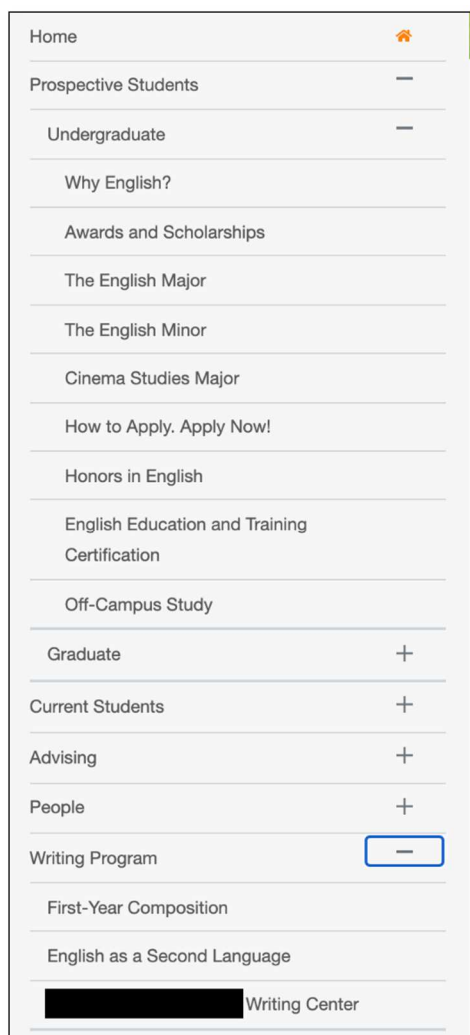
Figure 4.7 shows the main left-side menu for the Department of English at Institution D retrieved on December 8, 2021.

declaration of the English major or attending the university that allows them to enroll into English courses.

The "Writing Program" menu opens to the writing program itself as well as providing options to access the writing center due to both being housed within the English Department. The landing page for the FYC program devotes a full page – including an introductory video – to contextualizing the writing program, its structure, and the learning outcomes. To the right of this
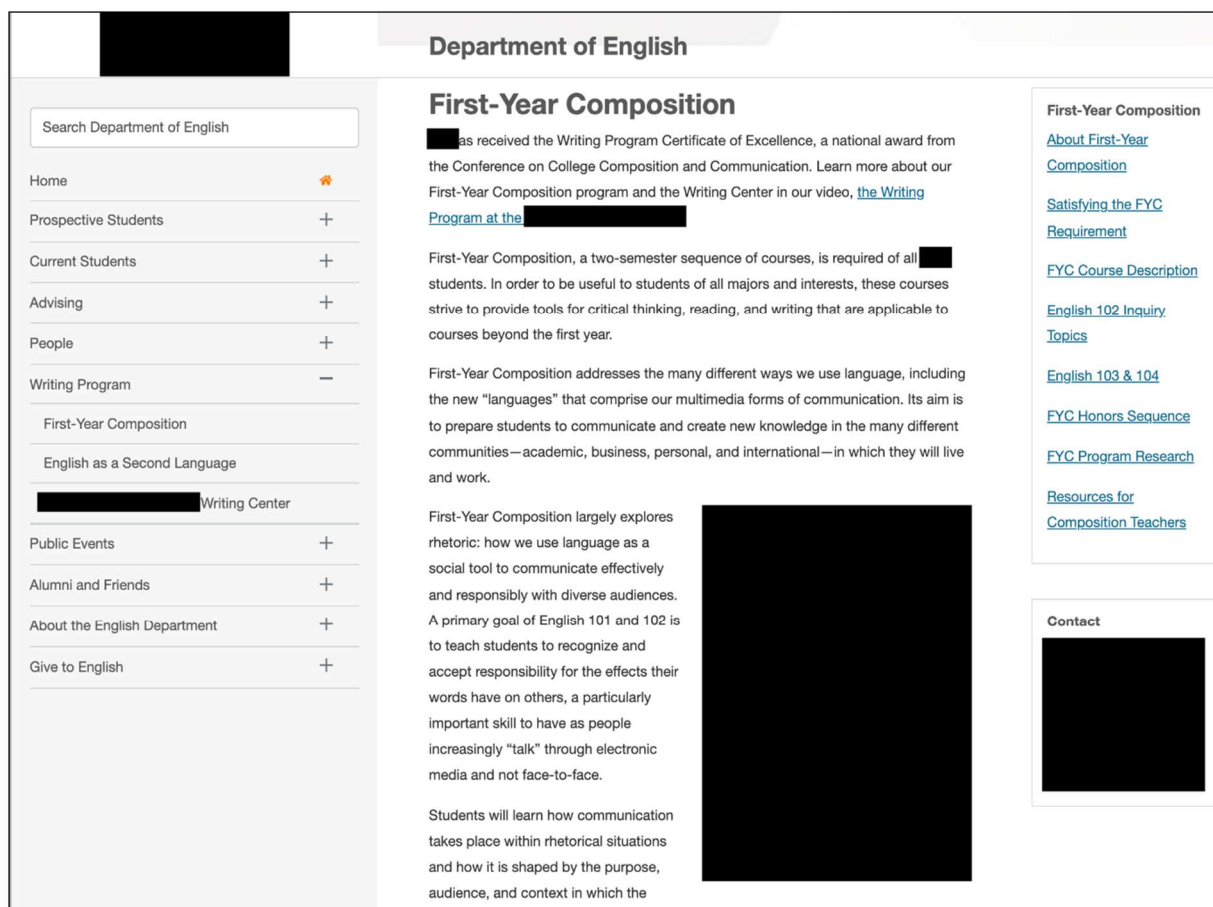
Figure 4.8 shows the main content page for the FYC website within the English Department at Institution D retrieved on December 8, 2021.

page is an internal menu with details about sequencing options, how to satisfy the requirement, program research, teaching resources, and the contact for the director, though his title and relationship is missing from the context itself. The page and pdf with placement information and sequences acknowledge transfer credit evaluation and refers students back to the English Department – not the writing program itself – with transfer credit inquiries.

The "Advising" menu is well developed and provides resources for majors and minors, an English undergraduate advising handbook, and a link back to the college-level advising center. The directory menu also includes a time schedule of faculty office hours and locations

which helps students not yet enrolled into their courses access the faculty, something required in all of the enrollment forms studied above.

Weaknesses

Institution D begins to acknowledge the enrollment processes through its inclusion of admissions, but that is as far as it goes in the enrollment conversation. The advising menu, the FYC page, and the undergraduate menu indicate a rhetorical awareness of student needs as networked across the college, but does not include any information, context, or resources beyond course descriptions to support students through the enrollment process.

Institution D provides a contextually aware and highly designed website with various users in mind. Overall, its strengths outweigh its weaknesses yet it still fall victim to the institutionally dichotomy that separates academic interests with the managed side of the university processes.

Applications

The purpose of this analysis is not to position the FYC program nor the English Department with the responsibility of representing all facets of the student experience through the university. Instead, it is to consider the ways that texts shape those experiences and to determine how the online presence of the writing program responds to the institutional environment, authorial decisions made by the WPA or their staff, and the ways the writing program signals a rhetorical awareness of their position and their students position within a larger writing network across the university. I put forth here an argument for the inclusion of contextualized referrals to sites of writing support, clarity of roles and relationships with writing program personnel and English departments, and acknowledgement of enrollment processes that increase access to offered writing courses. The ultimate result is not a stylistic website, but rather

a usable portal between our writing programs and the community they support that will ultimately enhance the visibility of the WPA's role within that community.

Context Building

Context building can occur through language or text as well as through linked networks. In the previous chapter I examined the ways writing networks become visible through both means, yet the work best when coupled together. On the FYC or writing program page – these might be the same thing or distinct based on the institutional setting – contextualizing the FYC program through course requirements, course descriptions, course placements and exemptions, and the relationship between writing development and college success helps both students and external faculty/staff understand the program's purpose. Deeper context about the way the program works within the English Department – even a sentence – helps connect the recognizable university structures and the unique aspects of the writing program for external users. Contextualized referrals to the writing center, library, advising center, and other student-specific resources will illuminate the multifaceted writing experience for a student in the large research university like the institutions studied in this project. Contextualized roles and how to access the people inhabit them will bolster meaningful connections and inclusivity.

Context need will vary by user experience and knowledge as well as be shaped by local institutional context, texts, and desi red goals for the writing program. Contextualize the FYC courses within the general education requirements and ways to fulfill the requirements. Recommended approaches include:

A one sentence statement acknowledging the FYC requirement within the general education and any institution-specific details about this requirement.

Recommended hyperlinks include:

- Catalog of Studies general education requirement page

- University testing and transfer equivalencies

Contextualize the FYC courses with one another and with any co-requisites such as a writing lab or library service course. Suggested approaches include:

- Establishing the course sequence as needed.

- Providing course descriptions within the sequencing paradigm.

Course suggestions for students seeking to improve or develop their writing beyond the FYC course offerings.

Recommended hyperlinks include:

- Writing lab/studio if applicable

- Library course or guide if applicable

Contextualize the relationship between the FYC program, its courses, and the broader writing support network available to students. Recommended approaches include:

- Describe what to expect in the composition classroom and the ways instructors support their students.

- Describe the types of support the writing center offers in relationship to the support offered in the classroom, the way to access the writing center, and how to apply that knowledge inside the writing classroom.

- Describe the type of research support offered in the library and the ways those resources relate to the FYC requirements, assignments, and outcomes.

- Describe the other types of writing supports that you – as the WPA – would like for your students to know about specifically or a broad suggestion on how to find additional writing support and how to gauge its effectiveness.

Recommended hyperlinks include:

- Writing center

- Library research guides

- Other writing support sites at the WPA's discretion

Contextualize the writing program and its staff within the broader context of the English Department. Recommended approaches include:

- Differentiating the writing program and its courses from other English courses as necessary.

- Listing the courses that fall under the writing program's purview.

- Describe the types of issues that the WPA and their staff can address through FAQs, descriptive text, or role articulation such as titles.

- Describe the teaching staff and any circumstances that should include the WPA or writing program personnel in proximity to the directory information.

  - Ex: Our writing courses are taught by graduate teaching assistants trained in writing pedagogy at our university. If you have questions about your individual class, please reach out to your instructor below. If you have questions about joining a class, please email _____.

- Contextualize the WPA's role proximate to their contact information.

Recommended hyperlinks include:

- Links to the departmental directory as needed

- Links to the English Department office as needed

- Links to the FYC and writing program course description page

Roles and Relationships

Defining primary roles and the relationships between roles in the writing program, English Department, and the broader network across the university enhances access and understanding in navigating the FYC courses and program. As evident in the enrollment exception request analysis in this chapter, the ways organizational structures shape networks in chapter 3, and in the ways complex writing ecologies emerge in chapter 2, it is clear that small texts make big impacts in the ways students, staff, and faculty interpret, understand, and interact with the university. Aside from a potential dual appointment as a departmental faculty, external processes might ask the WPA to function as instructor or department chair as demonstrated in the enrollment exception request above. The dynamic capability of the WPA is not easily visible to those outside of the FYC program, and situations arise where using organizational logic does not fill in experience or exposure gaps.

There are two key relationships I suggest WPAs define on their program page to help students and staff understand the work they do and the ways they may interact with the WPA and the writing program.

WPA and the FYC Instructor

The institutional power given to the role of instructor in official documents like the enrollment exception request is significant. Writing programs are often staffed by graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who have the potential to function like an instructor and a student simultaneously. It's important in GTA training to establish boundaries and situations where the GTA is equivalent to an instructor and when they must defer to the WPA. For example, can the GTA sign the enrollment exception request, must they seek permission from the WPA, or does the WPA sign in place of the instructor?

All of these details do not have to be divulged on the FYC program site, but the relationship the WPA has with GTAs would be advantageous to help students navigate complex processes, external personnel to make referrals, and colleges to interpret exception requests. For example, the relationship can be defined in the GTA directory page and in the WPA contact information with a simple sentence like the ones below:

Below the contact information for our graduate teaching assistants is provided. If you have an official university document requiring your FYC instructor's signature, please send it to ____.

Dr. __ is the Writing Program Administrator for the FYC program at ___. Dr. ___ oversees the course development, instructor training, and enrollment processes for (linked list of courses) within the English Department.

WPA and the Department Chair

Because the WPA is likely to be an appointed faculty in the English Department, they are also likely to report to the Department Chair in the ways the institutional organization establishes. The hierarchy between the WPA and the chair is not the relationship that needs to be defined, but rather the moments when the WPA is proxy for the departmental chair in institutional processes. The moments when the WPA becomes proxy are the moments that deep institutional knowledge and process awareness will intuit the relationship between they and the chair, but without this keen understanding it would be hard to determine with online texts alone.

Defining the administrative relationship will probably be of most value to the faculty and staff who interact with the department and the writing program. It is also likely to arise in administrative conversations around enrollment, course availability, and grievances. The relationship can be defined in multiple places including the FYC personnel page, on the "about"

page of the department where the chair typically introduced, in the "about" page for the FYC, or in an enrollment support section should websites add those to existing structures. Once again, this can be a brief statement acknowledging the exigence for a user to seek a chair function:

Dr. ___ is the English Department chair and does _____ . For enrollment questions about our FYC courses, please contact our writing program administrator _____ .

Enrollment Processes and Policies

In this section, I argue for the inclusion of targeted texts that support student registration into the FYC courses and other writing program courses at the discretion of the WPA within their local institutional context. Enrollment itself is a highly coordinated, long-term activity across the institution. There are a couple of enrollment processes and policies of high significance to the writing program that I suggest being included in the writing program site:

- University requirements for the FYC courses

- Exceptions to the requirement and their implications for the student who selects them.

- Placement policies into the FYC courses and the ones immediately following in sequence for students who would like to continue their writing development.

- Pre- and Co-requisites as applicable in the writing sequence

- Who to contact with FYC course enrollment questions

Usability Testing

Periodic and strategic website usability testing is an effective way to evaluate the usability of a program website within the local needs of its users. Identifying the potential users, understanding their goals, and testing program goals are all important components in the process. Below are potential scenarios writing program administrators and staff can use to evaluate the usability of their site. The scenarios are informed by the research presented in this project and

can be amended easily to adapt to the needs of a program. They are by no means designed to be an exhaustive list of usability testing scenarios.

Student Scenarios

- A student missed their summer enrollment date and is seeking permission to add FYC to their fall schedule a day after the enrollment deadline. How do they get permission to join a class?

- A student is worried about their grade in their FYC course. Who should they talk to first?

- A student is overwhelmed in the FYC course and needs extra support. Which resource would the program recommend for the student? How does the student decide between the many resources offered on campus?

- A student's FYC class is consistently canceled, and they are worried about their ability to success after so many missed class meetings. What are their options?

- A student exempted from FYC courses due to placement scores. How can they decide if they want to take that option or enroll in a FYC course anyway?

Advising or Staff Scenarios

- A student is seeking permission to add a FYC course without it the remediation co-requisite because they are waiting for their most recent ACT/SAT scores to post. Will the English Department or the FYC program allow them the exception? Whose permission does the advisor need?

- A student wants to take a test, like College Level Exam Program (CLEP), for exemption from the FYC requirement. Will they be prepared for advanced writing courses in their major?

- A student wants to test out of the FYC requirement. They now meet the pre-requisites for the upper-level writing courses in your program. Will they be prepared for those courses? What resources can I share with the student to help manage their expectations outside of the course description?

- A student tells me, their advisor, that their instructor does not reply to their emails nor have posted their grades online. How do I help them navigate that relationship in the department?

- How do I explain the difference between the WPA and the Department Chair in context of the course management and enrollment?

- How do I explain the difference between the FYC and the Writing Center when a student comes to me concerned about their FYC course? How do I determine the best referral?

Collaborative Input

This project has demonstrated the ways the FYC program is networked within a writing ecology and in broad institutional processes like enrollment. Mutual understanding of roles, services, and processes enhance these networks as entities unto themselves and the interaction between our students and the processes they must navigate to successfully enroll and complete our writing courses. WPA's can use their discretion alongside the research presented here to determine whose input is needed to craft rhetorical aware and engaging writing program sites that reflect the experiences of shared students?

Input can manifest in many ways through research projects, committee memberships, surveys, ethnographic site observation, interviews, meeting notes, etc. I do not suggest one route of input over the other, but rather recommend a breadth of input from various user types within student, faculty, staff, and administrative roles as permissible. Using institutional-level, college-

level, and department-level forms to examine who is being asked to participate in these processes

can be a fruitful way to begin a list in addition to identifying the writing ecology and desired

networks at an institution.

From the data collected in this project, I recommend the following roles for involvement in the

input process:

- Experienced and new graduate teaching assistants

- English Department administrative support staff who field departmental questions

- English department faculty advisor

- College level advisors

- Orientation advisors and staff

- Admissions liaisons

- Dean's office staff in enrollment processes or college representatives as indicated on the
  enrollment request forms

- Undergraduate students enrolled into the courses

- Questions to Initiative Input from Collaborative Partners:

- In what ways do you interact with our FYC program?

- When do you use our website?

- What would you like to see on our website when you are working with students?

- When you fill out X form, is it clear who you should connect with in the department?

- Is there content on our site that you have book marked or share frequently with students
  or staff? When do you navigate to it?

Conclusion

     In this chapter the rhetorical genre of the enrollment exception request was used to examine the ways institutional processes obscure the role of the WPA and the ways writing program websites overlook enrollment conversations in order to uncover ways of improving the relationship between the two for the WPA and campus partners. The enrollment forms and writing program websites were examined across three institutions from the study and similarities in their structure, roles, and processes were compared to establish signals WPAs at other institutions might recognize and ways they can respond through authoring their own program sites.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the project presented by reflecting on the research aims, the key findings, and implications for future research. Particular attention is paid to the points of authorial intervention for the WPA.

This dissertation project ultimately aimed to better understand how the writing program administrator and their writing program are connected to institutionally sanctioned sites of writing across their campus. The purpose of this investigation was to uncover specific points of authorial intervention to increase the visibility of the WPA's work where appropriate, increase transparency in accessing the writing program and its offerings, and articulate pathways between sites of writing. To discover these points of authorial intervention, it was necessary to understand the ways writing ecologies are articulated, the ways texts shape writing networks, and the places where language particularly obscures the role of the WPA.

Project in Review

I began the study with a broad institutional perspective to investigate if the situations I experienced in my home institution were likely to be present on similar campuses. I used traditional benchmarking data to identify four benchmark institutions with the most similar institutional profiles and then looked more closely at the student profiles and writing ecologies in all five universities. In this phase of the study, I sought to answer the question of who are the students in the first-year composition (FYC) classroom and what had to be in place for them to enroll into the FYC course? Institutional placement policies, competitive admissions, and general education requirements converge to create the landscape of the modern writing classroom.

In this phase of the study, it became clear that the curricular and placement structures enacted at my home institution were likely to be present at similar ones. Further, similar writing

ecologies emerged that included library services and athletic centers in addition to the traditional writing program and writing center. Although all institutions had similar writing requirements in their general education, and similar types of writing support, there were notable differences in the percentage of new students who enrolled into FYC courses, the relationships between the writing centers and the writing program, and the role of library services. Each institution had an independent athletic academic center. Key findings in this phase, noted in chapter two of this project, were the ways in which similar writing ecologies emerge across an institution and spread across academic and student affairs.

The second phase of the study examined institutional hierarchal organization through official organizational charts and the proximity of the writing program to the other sites of writing instruction and support. Organizational charts from the central administration and specific departments were synthesized to create narrow in scope illustrations of these hierarchal relationships, showing that at most institutions shared oversight does not appear until executive level administration. There was a high variance in proximity – and perhaps decision-making autonomy – of the WPA, the writing centers, the library, and the athletic center to these executive levels. For example, it is common for the athletic director to oversee the academic center and report directly to the chancellor or president while the WPA reports to their department chair who reports to the dean who then reports to the provost or other executive academic officer. While organizational charts cannot provide insight in the lived experiences of those staffing these positions, they can provide insight in the organizational structures that shape communication, decision-making, and outcomes.

To complement the organizational charts, I mapped writing networks beginning with the writing program website and mapping outward. In contrast to the top-down flow of the

organizational charts, the mapped networks showed referral flow moving outward towards the writing centers, libraries, advising, and athletics but infrequent reflexive referrals back to the writing program. The mapped relationships varied by institution, but the trend of referrals out of. the writing program not being reciprocated was present in the three institutions mapped. The findings in this chapter raised questions about the assumptions made across campus regarding composition enrollment. Are the writing programs not linked because they are not perceived as useful texts? Or because there is a campus wide assumption that students know what to expect from the writing program because they are enrolled into the course if needed? Or because there is assumption that support derives only in the writing classroom?

In the third phase of the study, I examined the specific genre of the enrollment exception request form. This approach was highly influenced by my own experiences in advising students through exceptions in a large college with varying departmental cultures. The purpose in examining this form was prompted by the first two phases of the study and the way I saw an enrollment assumption bias emerging in the texts. The enrollment exception request serves a dual purpose in reminding scholars that enrollment is a manual process completed by people, usually, each term which means errors and external constraints can prevent or block registration and it demonstrates the ways in which forms shape institutional assumptions about power structures. The three forms examined in this chapter all rely on the instructor and department chair or dean to approve an enrollment request which obscures the unique relationships between graduate teaching instructors and their WPAs.

To complement the genre analysis, I examined the writing program sites for the three institutions whose forms were analyzed. In each of these program websites there was no content related to the enrollment processes into composition courses or what to do should a student have

enrollment issues. Enrollment conversations were externalized from the writing program itself which raised questions about the separation between enrollment and FYC courses and how did the WPA or their staff join those conversations?

Key Findings and Interventions

The research presented in this project culminated into four key findings and implications for the WPA, specifically. They are listed below and expounded upon in the discussion section immediately following.

Key Findings

- The general education curriculum perpetuates a misconception that all students will participate in the writing program.

- There is an enrollment assumption bias that is persistent across the online texts for campus sites of writing.

- There are inequitable relationships and referrals between the writing program and its counterparts in the campus writing ecology.

- The genre of the FYC writing program website lacks pathways into and up through the writing program.

The general education curriculum perpetuates a misconception that all students will participate in the writing program.

Writing program administrators, advisors, and students are all familiar with the many options to transfer or test out of composition within their local institution. The claim here is intended to move focus away from the reality that exemptions are commonplace and refocus on the ubiquitous inclusion of FYC courses in the general education curriculum. The curriculum presented in catalogs of studies, admission's websites, and on departmental websites suggests

that all students will engage in college-level writing via the writing program. External synthesizing of transfer policies, test exemptions, and enrollment reports show the variance of FYC enrollment across the five institutions studied in this project. The claim presented here is not to suggest that there is an intentional deceit perpetuated in the general education requirements, but instead the concern that engagement with the writing program support may be limited to those who earn exemptions or credit before attending their university. The study presented here suggests there are limited pathways into the writing program represented beyond the general education requirements.

There is an enrollment assumption bias that persisted across the online texts for campus sites of writing.

In each institution examined, FYC is the only site of writing examined that is primarily accessed through course enrollment. There were a couple of exceptions such as a writing lab or library research course, but overall other sites of writing were either open access to all students or were identity based such as student athletes using the athletic academic center. None of the online texts within the writing networks addressed enrollment needs for students nor offered decision making guidance in selecting the best type of writing support for the student's development.

I assert that this is an enrollment assumption bias because the omission of this information indicates that it assumed the students who place into FYC will be enrolled and those who do not need the credit will utilize resources as needed. Writing support sites offered links and advice, but they all fell short of suggesting or referring to writing courses offered at the university. Course suggestions and enrollment advice are entirely removed from the writing centers, library, and athletic pages. This was unsurprising to me as a researcher, too, because my

own prior experiences with my home institution did not lead me to expect to find course suggestions in these online texts either. Yet, through the data collection process and network mapping from the perspective of the writing program it became obvious that writing courses were not part of the writing network outside of the curriculum.

There are inequitable relationships and referrals between the writing program and its counterparts in the campus writing ecology.

When I began this project, I had a researcher bias that first-year writing programs held a lot of power by virtue of the FYC courses present in the general education curriculum. Many of the campus partners with the writing center, though, are staff in programs outside of the traditional academic department structure. The divide in language and structure manifested in the ways online texts refer and direct students to writing support. Regardless of the institutional organization, writing programs referred students out to writing support in external programs more consistently than any other site of writing connected students to the writing program itself. While conceivable that external programs would not recommend specific courses, it was curious that a referral back to the writing program was not accounted for in the writing resources. The genre of the FYC program website established through the institutions in this study lacks pathways into and up through the writing program. Four of the five institutions studied had a distinct FYC program websites with course descriptions and varying degrees of further details. None of the websites delved into selecting a writing class based on prior experiences, learning goals, or programs of study. There was no clear movement through the FYC websites that moved conversations from FYC to writing program offerings themselves or other writing development in general. The best cultivated websites provided context for the FYC courses, related writing

support, and had an easy-to-follow main menu page. In general, though, there were not strong

connections bridging the FYC courses with other writing courses available.

Suggested Interventions for the WPA

In this section, I connect the key takeaways to actionable interventions for the WPA.

1. WPAs author pathways into the writing program on the FYC sites.

Four of the five FYC websites studied in this project shared a common approach to their

website design and content. The writing program was organized under the English Department

main page, provided brief context of the program in relation to the general education

requirements, and offered course descriptions in the language of the catalog course description.

Although informative, the sites lack the ability for a student to participate and engage in

decision-making about the courses. Being rhetorically aware of the enrollment environment at

their particular institution, the WPA – or their staff – can create a rhetorically effective moment

by allowing students to identify their needs and then click onto the options that pertain to them.

Suggested information to include:

- Welcoming message to student writers

- An acknowledgement of the scope of the writing program

- FYC course offerings

- Advanced writing courses

- Suggested courses based on desired skills

- Connection to creative writing courses if offered outside of the writing program

- A brief translation to help students articulate what they are looking for and what the

    program offers or links to other English Department courses that could meet those needs.

The rhetorical move of linking to other English courses deepens the perceived connection between the writing program and the English Department.

Examples of what students might search for:

o   Scientific report writing

o   Career and professional writing

o   Academic writing after completing FYC

2. WPAs create context for writing network referrals acknowledging students enrolled into FYC courses and those who are not.

The FYC websites of three institutions were studied in chapter 3 to map how connections were signaled between the writing program and other sites of campus writing. The most common rhetorical move was to refer students to the writing center page with brief context about their services. When other departments were connected it was commonly through a titled hyperlink to their webpage which moved the context the 'about us' page on the new site. The work then falls on the student to determine which service is available to them as well as when they should use it. When there is an enrollment barrier, too, students can be confused as to how to engage with the FYC program or even if they should. Because writing programs typically offer more than FYC courses and because the other sites of writing support are predominately open access and free, there is opportunity in creating welcoming pathways and reflexive referrals with these sites of writing support.

I suggest that WPAs – or their staff – develop a contextualized writing support page on their program site that includes:

•   The ways composition instructors support student learning in and out of the classroom.

•   How to access instructors during office hours.

- o One the sites studied posted all instructor office hours and locations for the semester which had the effect of increased transparency and normalizing office visits.

- What to expect in terms of personalized writing support in a composition class.

- When to seek help from the writing center, library, or other service.

- Decision-making support for students who are not required to take a writing class but are interested in one.

- Link to the information suggested in Intervention 1

- Link to English course descriptions.

- Information for the staff/faculty who is available to chat with students who have questions about the writing courses.

- Link to the undergraduate advising center as appropriate.

- Writing support referrals outside of the English Department and context about the service as well as its connection to the writing program.

- Suggest ways students approach synthesizing advice from two sources such as from their writing instructor and an outside source like a tutor.

I recommend that WPAs prioritize these intentionally without using a ranking structure. WPAs can request that other writing sites link the FYC program site as desired and ask to provide a short sentence-length blurb with your link. In turn, they can extend the offer for those sites to add to the blurb on the FYC program page, too.

3. WPAs and their staff have a directory page with a brief biography highlighting what they do for the writing program.

This may seem like the simplest suggestion I put forth, but I argue that it is a small rhetorical move with a large effect. The WPA title is not easily understood across the university and there is little context in the sites examined here to help unfamiliar readers draw conclusions. The WPA biography is often found in the faculty directory page, and here I am arguing for a functional biography on the writing program subpage itself.

Functional biographies for the staff and instructors – including the graduate teaching assistants – are encouraged to bolster visibility in the size, scope, and support of the writing program. Headers, expandable menu options, and introductory context can help keep the bios searchable and readable without overwhelming the reader. Further, instructor bio links could include the office hours and link to the 'what support to expect from your instructor' blurb discussed in Intervention 2.

4. WPAs and their counterparts in the English Department provide an Enrollment Support section to facilitate troubleshooting issues in the student enrollment processes.

As discussed in chapter four of this project, enrollment issues are not unique to writing programs or solely the concern of WPAs, but the processes around correcting enrollment errors tend to rely on traditional university structures that obscure the WPA. In this section I am suggesting that either the writing program page or the English Department page that houses it add an enrollment support section that includes:

- Who to contact for enrollment permission into writing courses.
- If the enrollment support section is on the main English Department page, then a classification system recognizable to students is necessary. This could include a course category or course numbers.
- Links to any pertinent forms and a brief description providing context for use

- Link to college enrollment support as appropriate with a brief description for context

- College advising center as appropriate

- College enrollment services as available or appropriate

The authorial interventions put forth here are simple, yet effective. The research conducted in this dissertation project uncovered the many ways that enrollment into writing courses and writing support become externalized and independent of the WPA, the writing program, and the English Department. Authoring website content to increase engagement from prospective and current students as well as staff can create opportunity for the WPA, via the website, to engage in a broader campus writing conversation. The WPA and the writing program can also become more visible via translation of their role in the English Department into usable language for students and colleagues. The ultimate goal is not to drive more work towards the writing program, but instead increase participation between the writing program and other sites of writing on campus as well as meaningful engagement with students.

Directions for Future Research

The rhetorical analysis used in this study allowed for a measured consideration of texts' rhetorical effect from a broad, organizational perspective and the implications for a WPA as steward of the writing program. Institutional ethnography, though, calls for texts to be considered as an occurring in time with a consequence, and this study was not able to capture the ways texts occur and the consequences they create when activated by a reader. The work in this project can be carried forward via a deeper ethnographical approach in a local institution and with a specific text or process – the study of one should extend to the study of the other. Shaped by my professional experience and work in this study, I recommend an investigation into the enrollment

process for FYC courses and the institutional statements and documents that articulate attitudes

and understandings of what constitutes college level writing.

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