

Administrative Philosophy – Writing Major, Curriculum, and Assessment

My experiences at Florida State University have provided me with numerous opportunities to not only study administrative work, in classes such as Designing Writing, but to also experience and put it into practice as a graduate co-administrator for the Museum of Everyday Writing and as the Graduate Coordinator of the Johnston Digital Studio. My administrative philosophy has been greatly shaped by moments of praxis and have led to an increased interest in thinking programmatically about the curriculum of the undergraduate major in Writing and Rhetoric. My administrative philosophy is built around serving the localized and contextual needs of students, both graduate and undergraduate, and how the relationships between faculty and students intersect with the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. As such, I see three major threads emerging in my administrative philosophy. First, that writing majors need to leverage and be adaptable to local contexts, expertise, and needs. Second, that they should be built on inquiry into the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. And third, that an effective writing major is built on praxis.

I see a writing major as playing an integral part of a 21st century English department, building on local expertise and disciplinary knowledge to effectively prepare students for the variety of contexts in which they will write, edit, create, and critique in a variety of modes, medias, and genres. With the development of such majors, minors, and concentrations across English and Writing programs, the need for developing and deploying specialized knowledge with prepared administrators that is different from those of a WPA, Writing Center, or WAC director. While there is a great deal to be drawn from these longer administrative traditions, the need for developing cohesive and contextualized majors is a potential area of opportunity. I will work to seek collaborations and opportunities outside of traditional English department for

faculty, staff, and students, to build a major that feels relevant and responsive to community needs and adaptable to changes within and beyond the academy.

Local Contexts

The most important consideration as an administrator is recognizing and reflecting upon localized contexts. As an administrator, I draw upon the strengths and talents of faculty, staff, and students to build a program that is adaptable and relevant. I see my role as someone who is empathetic and seeks out the input and experiences of others. It is important to gather the experiences of stakeholders, and to communicate my own adapting vision, early and often. I see informal feedback, in the forms of open office hours, email communications, and hallway chats, along with more sustained assessment as important aspects of being an effective administrator of a writing program and major. Along with being empathic and attuned to a local context, is the need to be an advocate and to work to sustain and develop programs in response to feedback. Faculty will be supported through hands-on workshops within the classroom spaces, development opportunities through informal meetings like lunches and first Friday speakers, and through more formal development such as retreats and pre/post term meetings. There should be open spaces in which faculty and students can collaborate, individually or together, along with integrated space allowing for the development of projects and professional relationships.

Disciplinary Knowledge

Working to develop, deploy, and assess a writing studies major, I would turn to outcomes built on scholarship and practice in rhetoric and composition—from scholars such as Doug Hesse, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Heidi Estrem, and Sandra Jamieson--and leverage the expertise of stakeholders in and intersecting with the University. The curriculum should involve internship experiences, with options both on and off campus, courses primarily in rhetoric and composition,

and a core within English studies with options such as critical theory, creative writing workshops, and literature. This core would be developed with other members of the English department, with an attention to providing an integrated, cohesive, and coherent core that is adaptable and agreeable to students, faculty, and administrators.

Praxis

Building from local expertise and contexts, my philosophy is driven toward structuring around moments of praxis. I would encourage faculty to theorize and implement pedagogies within the curriculum, ideally through professional development, sharing of materials, communication, and the design of classes. I strive to be a reflective teacher, scholar, and writer, and this would extend to my administrative work. Following Wendy Bishop, I seek to have Creative Writing, Rhetoric and Composition, and Literature partner in the development, teaching, and assessment of a writing major. It should be part of the work of the whole of the English department, adapting to local contexts and building on local expertise. I see an effective major, and an effective administrator, as cultivating the talents and utilizing the expertise within the department as a collaborative endeavor in the program. I will build this by having classes being taught by a variety of instructors, with support and resources provided from administration and each other, with a developed investment in the growth and health of the major and those involved. This will take the form of allowing instructors to propose classes, encouraging involvement in planning semesters and the curriculum, and purposefully using the assessments to change and grow the program responsibly and within local needs.

Most importantly, I see my administrative approach developing as praxis. I want my administration to be informed by theory, and to reflectively respond to practice, being aware of developments within the discipline and within the local context. I also see my administrative

philosophy as being highly collaborative, drawing upon the input and expertise of those that I work with, administer, mentor, teach, and learn from. I want to be a partner in the development and administration of the major, and to be willing to rotate back out of an administrative position with support and continuity, so that the major becomes an investment of the department, with multiple stakeholders and caretakers, and can continue to serve and adapt to local and global contexts and needs.