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Introduction

LOOKING TOWARD AN (INTER)DISCIPLINARY FUTURE?

Richard N. Matzen Jr. and Matthew Abraham

To begin at the beginning, *Weathering the Storm: Independent Writing Programs in the Age of Austerity*'s chapter 1 offers a detailed account of the events and considerations inside the University of Texas Austin's Department of English that prompted Maxine Hairston's 1985 landmark Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) address, a call for writing programs to separate from English departments.

Thereafter, the history of independent writing programs (IWPs) was portrayed in 2002 in *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies* (O'Neill, Crow, and Burton). IWPs' history was extended in 2017 with the publication of *A Minefield of Dreams: Triumphs and Travails of Independent Writing Programs* (Everett and Hanganu-Bresch). Among other things, our book *Weathering the Storm: Independent Writing Programs in the Age of Austerity* adds to this ongoing history and conversation by addressing the question that concludes *A Field of Dreams*' introduction: "Can we, as independent writing programs, shift our gaze toward the future in such a way that we are able to participate in the university that is emerging" (O'Neill, Crow, and Burton 2002, 18).

When viewed as a whole, the thirteen case studies herein suggest that generally speaking, IWPs possess successful futures possibly because they are participating in dialogues between university departments and offices that may develop into multi- or interdisciplinary relationships (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013) and perhaps evolve into alliances. Our case studies, moreover, are researched longitudinal narratives into how independent writing departments (IWDs), not just programs, fit into a disciplinary landscape—or a landscape of fields and disciplines—greater than English or writing studies. This essential *fitting* into the greater university, we think, signifies that writing studies are far from standalone programs or departments existing in an institutional

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hierarchy. In particular, we posit that these case studies may indicate that IWDs/IWPs will increasingly rely on diverse disciplinary perspectives, while also maintaining their financial durability.

All thirteen case studies discuss negotiating the Great Recession that started in 2008. Herein, the preponderance of evidence suggests that IWDs/IWPs are typically indispensable to institutions because of first-year writing courses regardless of, or possibly because of, economic times. As several scholars including Sharon Crowley (1998) and Susan Miller (1991) have documented, the first-year writing course(s) has had a contentious history in the university precisely because of its role in the production of institutional subjectivities that comply with authoritative figures and texts. The courses' relationship with literature is complicated, needless to say, in that these first-year *writing* courses could be teaching *reading* literature or could be teaching content less applicable to the writing tasks students will do later at the university or on the job. Furthermore, as read in *Conceding Composition, a Crooked History of Composition's Institutional Fortunes* (Skinnell 2016, back jacket), first-year writing courses may "help institutions solve political, promotional, and financial problems" not directly related to how best to teach students how to write well.

Nevertheless, during difficult economic times, IWDs/IWPs may not only be economically protected by first-year writing courses, the IWPs/IWDs may also expand writing studies' curricula and programs by creating writing majors or minors, by modifying existing writing curricula, or by creating (or expanding) English as a second language (ESL) programs or writing centers, for example. Such writing studies' activities, incidentally, may reinforce retention if not expand student enrollment. This book's case studies, subsequently, function as a collective account for how small, medium, and large IWPs/IWDs fared not only during the Great Recession but also during recent years when states have had smaller budgets for education, when fewer students have enrolled at universities, and when the national economy seems to have recovered from the Great Recession.

Weathering the Storm: Independent Writing Programs in the Age of Austerity may also be read as an alternative narrative compared to *A Minefield of Dreams* (Everett and Hanganu-Bresch 2017). Therein, its editors suggest that IWPs have "a difficult path" (5) in the future and still struggle to have writing accepted as a discipline (11). The alternative narrative, presented herein, is that IWPs' successes usually, but not always, outpace their challenges even during difficult financial times. In so doing, a question emerges, not about whether writing studies is a discipline but

about how best to describe the discipline of writing studies interacting with other disciplines.

THIRTEEN LONGITUDINAL CASE STUDIES

In general, this book's thirteen longitudinal case studies represent older IWDs/IWPs: twenty-five years is the average age of the case studies herein. The age of each is determined by subtracting its birth year from 2018 (see table 0.1). In each chapter, the case study's history extends to 2016 or 2017. The case studies consist of five small universities (1,275 to 6,824 students), four medium universities (9,384 to 15,196 students), and four big universities (19,396 to 39,619 students).

Collectively, the thirteen case studies (or chapters) suggest that not only can IWDs/IWPs fare well during difficult financial times but also during such times, they adjust writing curriculum to better address student needs and market conditions. In other words, the long history of these IWDs/IWPs suggests that if the future reflects the past—in spite of the ebbs and flows of finances, student enrollment, and curricular innovations—numerous ways exist for IWDs/IWPs to perpetuate their financial health.

A DEFINITION FOR AN INDEPENDENT WRITING PROGRAM?

Our book, *Weathering the Storm,* includes seven case studies of writing departments (chapters 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 14), five case studies of independent writing programs (chapters 3, 7, 9, 12, and 13), and a case study of an entire school devoted to writing studies (chapter 5). Two writing departments, however, recently joined English departments to help their universities save administrative costs (chapters 3 and 9). Nevertheless, in keeping with a traditional definition of an IWP, eleven of the thirteen case studies herein have a point in their past in which an independent writing program was born by separating from an English department.

But separating from an English department does not make all independent writing programs alike. For instance, five chapters herein demonstrate how an IWP may be founded on first-year writing (chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10); two depict how an IWP may start as a writing across the curriculum (WAC)/writing in the disciplines (WID) program (chapters 12 and 13); and one portrays an IWP as founded on both a first-year composition and a WAC/WID program (chapter 14). Two other chapters tell the story of how IWPs may merge with other IWPs within an institution (chapters 5 and 14).

Table 0.1. Thirteen independent writing departments or programs

Birth Year	*University*	*University's Size: Student Numbers*	*Chapter Author(s)*
1972	Loyola University Maryland	4,004 (small)	Moore and O'Neill
1975	St. Edward's University	4,023 (small)	Clements, Loewe, and Rist
1985	*Maxine Hairston's CCCC address, "Breaking Our Bonds and Reaffirming Our Connections"*		
1986	Syracuse University	15,196 (medium)	Agnew and Schell
1987	University of Minnesota Duluth	9,837 (medium)	Beard and Park
1987	University of California Santa Barbara	20,607 (big)	Adler-Kassner and Sorapure
1992	University of Texas Austin	39,619 (big)	Longaker, Charney, Davis, and Batt
1993	University of Arkansas at Little Rock	9,384 (medium)	Harris and Jensen
1995	James Madison University	19,396 (big)	Zimmerman
2002	University of California Davis	28,384 (big)	Thaiss and Whithaus
2003	University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia	9,726 (medium)	Ross, Wehner, and LeGrand
2005	Woodbury University	1,275 (small)	Matzen
2008	Hofstra University	6,824 (small)	Gaughan
2009	University of Wisconsin–Superior	2,362 (small)	White-Farnham

Note: Gray highlighting indicates independent writing departments; the others are independent writing programs (with the exception of James Madison University). The Birth Year column indicates when the writing program became independent from an English department or when the independent writing department or program was created. Information on the universities' sizes came from COLLEGEdata (2017).

Given such diversity in IWPs' roots, should we be surprised that some IWDs/IWPs find themselves enjoying multi- or interdisciplinary relationships or looking toward multi- or interdisciplinary horizons? Perhaps not, if we assume that often English departments themselves look like sites for disciplines (or fields) meeting each other. Yet, have we had any consistent language to describe the relationships among literature, writing centers, English teacher education, creative writing, basic writing, WAC/WID, linguistics, foreign languages, ESL programs, and professional/technical writing—all of which may possibly exist within one English department? A good question may be, how can we best describe such a variety of interrelations between English programs?

We may consider, as this book does, the usefulness and applicability of these terms: inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinarity, as they are defined by

interdisciplinary scholars (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013, 35). We may consider, for example, that the writing center is an interdisciplinary activity for integrating two disciplinary perspectives—education and writing studies—"to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the problem," which is how best to conduct a one-on-one tutorial. Or we may consider that the relationships between literature and writing studies may be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary.

Multidisciplinary means that "the study of a complex issue" is done from "the perspective of two or more disciplines by drawing on their insights but making no attempt to integrate them. Insights are juxtaposed . . . not integrated" (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013, 35). This may describe how literature and writing studies relate to each other. Or, as suggested earlier, theirs is an interdisciplinary relationship that constructs "a more comprehensive understanding of the problem," which may be defined as literacy (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013, 35).

Why not consider, furthermore, the possibility that neither an interdisciplinary nor a multidisciplinary relationship between literature and writing studies guarantees a happy or a troubled relationship (see chapters 3 and 9 for examples of these relationships). We should remember, too, that at the department or program level, personalities are known to define these relationships as well. But, generally speaking, and considering that close relationships may exist between literature and writing studies, it may be that writing studies has more often defined itself in relationship to literature (or English) as compared to the opposite case.

Subsequently, when reading this book, two good questions may be, first, do IWDs/IWPs possess multi- or interdiscplinarity qualities as a natural outgrowth caused by being located within English departments at some point, or were these qualities inherent in writing studies in the first place? Second, are the chapters' authors revealing a tendency to follow multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary strategies that help establish IWDs/IWPs more firmly in the institutional landscape? Said another way, in the long life of IWD/IWP, how definitive is its relationship to an English department and to other disciplines? In eleven chapters of this book, separating from the English department, however, seems to be only one event among other equally significant events that shape an IWD/IWP.

Considering IWDs/IWPs as multi- or interdisciplinary sites may not be particularly profound. For example, we can return to *A Field of Dreams* (O'Neill, Crow, and Burton 2002) and find mention of interdisciplinarity therein. Some of its chapters may be read as representing interdisciplinary perspectives as definitive or central to an IWP:

- **Chapter 1:** Harvard University's "independent and interdisciplinary" Expository Writing Program, led by revered writing studies scholars (O'Neill and Schendel 2002, 194)
- **Chapter 3:** Metropolitan State University, where IWP majors were characterized as fulfilling an "interdisciplinary" curriculum (Aronson and Hansen 2002, 54)
- **Chapter 4:** San Francisco State University's Technical and Professional Writing program that included "interdisciplinary breadth" (Rehling 2002, 73)
- **Chapter 9:** University of Minnesota's Program in Composition and Communication (an IWP) that was returned to the Department of English, resulting in the lessening of interdisciplinary qualities in the IWP (Anson 2002, 155)

In other words, *A Field of Dreams*' editors Peggy O'Neill, Angela Crow, and Larry Burton (2002) may be tacitly endorsing interdisciplinarity as a legitimate, if not desirable, basis for an IWP. Therein, reporting on national survey results regarding IWPs, author and editor Peggy O'Neill (189–92) says that significant numbers of IWPs characterized themselves as "interdisciplinary." Also, author and editor Angela Crow in her chapter 12 (216), after citing "disparate values" between literature and composition faculty in an English department, wrote that the "historical tensions between the two areas continued to grow as composition became an increasingly independent and interdisciplinary field." *Weathering the Storm* may be understood as confirming that latter thought.

PART I. ADDING WRITING MAJORS OR MINORS DURING THE GREAT RECESSION

Part I introduces readers to IWDs/IWPs that created writing majors or minors within the context of the Great Recession (2007–9). As is the case for part II, part I chapters are arranged from the oldest IWD/IWP at the beginning to the youngest IWD/IWP at the end. In part I, four chapters tell us that *during* 2008 and 2009, IWDs/IWPs were adding a writing major or minor to their existing curricula as a response to the Great Recession or as an extension of previous enrollment growth. Examples follow.

In 2007, a new writing and rhetoric major, built on a successful writing minor, begins at Syracuse University (chapter 2), and in 2009, a new writing major and new Department of Writing Studies debuts at the University of Minnesota Duluth (chapter 3). Also, regarding the University of Texas Austin, the basis of chapters 1 and 4, Professors Longaker, Charney, Davis, and Batt report that the "rhetoric and writing

undergraduate major officially began in the fall of 2006 . . . The program had enrolled 21 majors in January 2007, 140 majors in October 2008, 214 in September 2010, and 218 as of September 2016" (chapter 4).

Another positive development during the Great Recession, regarding new writing majors and minors, occurs at James Madison University (chapter 5). Specifically, Professor Zimmerman informs us, "On Valentine's Day 2008, the Writing and Rhetoric Program (W&R) was administratively merged with the Institute for Technical and Scientific Communication (ITSC), and the School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication (WRTC) . . . was born." How meaningful is this merger? "Before the merger, ITSC offered an undergraduate major and minor as well as a master's degree; W&R offered only a minor. After the merger, W&R faculty inherited a major and a master's program (literally) overnight, while the small TSC faculty of five gained twenty-two new full-time colleagues" (Zimmerman, chapter 5).

Nevertheless, the smaller universities—Loyola University Maryland (chapter 8), University of Wisconsin–Superior (chapter 7), and Woodbury University (chapter 6)—tell complicated stories about the Great Recession's relationship to problematic IWP enrollments and finances.

Regarding the University of Wisconsin–Superior (chapter 7), Professor White-Farnham writes that the university's enrollment actually increases in 2008 because of students seeking job retraining, a reaction to the Great Recession. The next year, 2009, the IWP leaves the Department of English and starts a writing minor. However, also during 2009, the IWP endures staff reductions, a restructuring of chairs' release time, and a merger of the IWP with Library Sciences. The merger is an attempt to save administrative costs. The year after that, 2010, the University of Wisconsin–Superior's enrollment reaches a high point, but enrollments decline thereafter. Professor White-Farnham observes that the IWP faculty "did little explicitly to acknowledge or enhance students' economic expectations of their college degrees until [faculty's] own financial stability was threatened." Eventually, the Great Recession means that this IWP "reevaluated the purpose and value of [the] curriculum," implemented a new curriculum, and grew the writing minor to a point that a writing major was successfully proposed in 2015.

Like the University of Wisconsin–Superior, Woodbury University initially experiences an enrollment increase starting in 2008 and lasting until 2012 (chapter 6). A shortage of seats for students in the University of California, California State University, and California community college systems drives this increase to the point that Woodbury University,

a nonprofit private university, experiences a historically high enrollment in the fall of 2012. In 2013, however, when California restores funding to its university and community college systems, Woodbury's enrollment steadily drops, reaching a low point in the fall of 2017. Because of enrollment losses—caused by the state of California recovering from the Great Recession—Woodbury's IWD successfully proposes a professional writing major in 2014. In the fall of 2016, however, Woodbury's IWD's new major only attracts five students. Subsequently, in 2018, the upper administration considers suspending the professional writing curriculum. Hoping to prevent that, the IWD presents positive financial evidence based on the stability of first-year writing courses' enrollment; a curricular, cost-saving alliance with the Department of Communication; and a steady increase in professional writing minors. The future of the professional writing curriculum is uncertain at the time of this writing.

PART II. ADJUSTING EXISTING CURRICULA IN RESPONSE TO THE GREAT RECESSION

Although it did not add a writing major or minor during (or because of) the Great Recession, another IWD leveraged its Writing Center to create greater financial security during the recession (chapter 14). As told by Professor Gaughan regarding Hofstra University, 2008 and 2009 were the first two years of the Department of Writing Studies and Composition's existence. While a hiring freeze impairs some ambitions, the department, "drawing on in-house expertise," creates "an undergraduate peer tutor program and a four-credit practicum course" (Gaughan, chapter 14). The upper-division course enrolls students reliably because its completion leads to Writing Center employment. At the same time, the Writing Center grows "by attending to the needs of core constituencies" (Gaughan, chapter 14). Total Writing Center appointments subsequently exceed "5,000 appointments per year" (Gaughan, chapter 14), remarkable considering that approximately 6,500 to 7,000 total students attend Hofstra University. Professor Gaughan also comments that "English language learners [made] up about one-third of the total tutoring appointments."

Another IWP, moreover, found greater security during the Greater Recession without adding a major or minor at that time but by addressing the needs of increasing numbers of English language learners. As reported by Professors Whithaus and Thaiss (chapter 12), "The University Writing Program (UWP) at UC Davis experienced tremendous growth; this growth affected all areas of the Writing Program but

was particularly pronounced in an increased number of English as a second language (ESL)–focused courses." The professors explain, too, that by embracing professional multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, since the recession the IWP "has greatly expanded its full-time (including tenure-line) research and teaching faculty, doubled course offerings, and developed a successful undergraduate professional writing minor and PhD emphasis in writing and rhetoric" (Whithaus and Thaiss 2017).

However, during the Great Recession, other IWDs/IWPs suffer varying degrees of short-term losses during which they reevaluate and modify their writing curriculum and programs for long-term gains. These IWDs/IWPs successfully adjusted, in other words, to effectively address new economic times. IWDs/IWPs at Loyola University Maryland (chapter 8), St. Edward's University (chapter 9), the University of California Santa Barbara (chapter 10), and the University of Arkansas Little Rock (chapter 11) exemplify this theme.

For example, at the beginning of the Great Recession, Loyola University Maryland's long-established IWD sees its "enrollments dip considerably" (Moore and O'Neill, chapter 8). Then, responding to the Great Recession, the department revises its writing major curriculum in 2009–10 to include "more rhetoric and professional writing options" (Moore and O'Neill, chapter 8). But only beginning in 2015, eight years after the Great Recession's start, do student numbers begin to increase, thanks mostly to the extensive long-term efforts of faculty recruiting students.

Also illustrating how challenging financial times may inspire curricular and recruitment innovations, the IWD at St. Edward's University (chapter 9) learns to use its writing program alumni as a resource to guide reconstructing the writing major and as a means for recruiting students and locating new resources for them. The program succeeds after a rebuilding period, as well.

The IWD at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (chapter 11), furthermore, suffers short-term setbacks during the Great Recession while planning successful long-term changes. Specifically, the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, also profiled in *A Field of Dreams*, revises its BA degree and begins to embed technology and multimedia into its curriculum in 2008. But, while that positive curricular revision goes forth, the Great Recession also means that the department's proposal for a new PhD program in rhetoric, professional writing, and digital media is "put on indefinite hold" (Harris and Jensen, chapter 11) because of the economic pressure created by declining enrollment. As the undergraduate writing major's enrollment declines in 2008,

the department fortunately experiences an enrollment increase in its master's writing program. This latter development eventually leads to the success of offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees in fully online formats.

Regarding curricular adjustments and the Great Recession, Professors Adler-Kassner and Sorapure write, in reference to the IWD at the University of California Santa Barbara, "Coming out of the Great Recession, Writing Program faculty numbers had shrunk only slightly and only through 'natural' attrition such as retirements. The program avoided the layoffs, workload reductions, and furloughs that affected other departments and universities" (chapter 10). The professors also explain that the Great Recession means the writing program "discontinued offering all non-GE-status courses . . . restructured its upper-division course offerings," and offered "new GE courses" (Adler-Kassner and Sorapure, chapter 10), all of which was done successfully.

Finally, in this book's case studies, one IWP simply endures the Great Recession. Professors Ross, Wehner, and LeGrand (chapter 13) summarize its effect on their writing program this way: "The Critical Writing Program of the University of Pennsylvania was . . . sufficiently stabilized and integrated into the university such that the financial crisis [the Great Recession] affected our program no differently from the rest of the university."

HOW DOES INTERDISCIPLINARY FIGURE INTO OUR WORK?

In other words, sometimes poor economic conditions and lower enrollments cause IWDs/IWPs to create inspired curricular innovations, with success usually, but not always, defining the innovations' results. As will be noted shortly, interdisciplinary connections are often an important, if not definitive, characteristic of the curricular innovations found in this collection of case studies. Before summarizing that point, however, a brief exploration of the term *interdisciplinary* is needed, given how usage makes this term problematic, if not ornery.

One problematic feature found in how the term is used is that interdisciplinary has contrastive, if not vague, meanings across university departments and curricular descriptions. A tension exists, in other words, in how individual departments (or disciplines) may define interdisciplinarity and how educational organizations (e.g., a university, professional organization, accrediting bodies) external to the department define the term. For example, interdisciplinarity does *not* have the same specific meaning in the disciplines of writing studies, engineering,

medicine, and education. Another problematic feature of interdisciplinarity is that in rhetoric and writing studies, it has multiple meanings that encourage either loose or multiple tight (too tight?) definitions of the term. To say that interdisciplinarity is the combining of two disciplines, for example, may not adequately define how a rhetorician may define the term from a historical perspective.

Hoping to create a tighter definition herein, the coeditors looked into interdisciplinary studies and found what may appear to be a tighter definition of interdisciplinarity as well as its relatives, multi- and transdisciplinarity (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013). Some writing studies colleagues may interpret this move as ignoring, diluting, or betraying our discipline (for example, see the reflection in chapter 3). Other colleagues may see this move as attempting to oversimplify how writing program administrators decide what to do (for example, see the reflection in chapter 10). Professors Adler-Kassner and Sorapure (chapter 10) describe interdisciplinarity's difficult situation this way:

> [The] brief history of the UCSB Writing Program shows that interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches are all in play in the development of an independent writing program. There is no "correct" way for a program to define its relation to other disciplines or reach out to other academic departments and units.
>
> Rather, an array of contextual factors—economic, curricular, institutional, students, and staffing—determine the most strategic and effective ways for an IWP to define itself and make connections across campus, and these factors are constantly in flux.

In the postscript, the introduction's final section, we return to the complications swirling around interdisciplinarity. Thereafter, chapter authors address these complications, as well as complications that exist around the term *independent*, by writing a reflection—a response to the postscript—that ends each chapter.

According to *Weathering the Storm* professors, multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinarity bring diverse prospects to writing studies. For example, just because an IWD possesses such inclinations does not mean other departments will reciprocate. In chapter 2, Professors Agnew and Schell write, "the vitality of our [writing] program has depended upon our awareness of the intrinsic interdisciplinarity of writing and rhetoric scholarship and pedagogy," but they also examine their "university's tendency to create silos of expertise" and to market these disciplinary silos, which in turn fosters "competing perspectives about literacy"—not conducive to creating a broader interdisciplinary view of writing, much less to sharing resources.

How multi- or interdisciplinarity may or may not mediate discussions between writing and literature faculty is noteworthy as well. In chapter 3, Professors Beard and Park describe what happens when their IWD is forced to (re-)join an English department. In their reflection they write, "While re-merger has been described as an opportunity to institutionalize interdisciplinarity, it has been experienced as an exercise of power," that is, interdisciplinarity is irrelevant.

Nevertheless, other faculty groups have different collegial experiences, and describe the diverse scholarship among English professors as *interdependent* as well as permeated by interdisciplinary concepts. Chapter 13's professors write in their reflection that "everything is inter-/multi-/transdisciplinary-specific." Then, after characterizing Ken Bruffee as an inter-/multi-/transdisciplinary figure, they emphasize that their writing programs find "new ways to express [their] glorious interdependence." After writing that their academic, creative, and professional writing faculty members are "interdependent," chapter 12's professors also write that their faculty are "engaged in debating the ways we translate inter- and multidisciplinary frameworks into curricula and degree programs." Likewise, chapter 4's professors characterize the relationships among an independent writing (and rhetoric) department, a writing center, and a digital lab as "interdependent" and add that their "proposals to partner with departments in other colleges to develop multidisciplinary writing courses were received favorably at both the college and university levels" (chapter 4's reflection).

Considering these thoughts, multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinarity are perhaps useful terms for us. In chapter 7's reflection, Professor White-Farnham writes that he has "come to appreciate the fact that writing belongs to the university through its capacity for transdisciplinarity—or participating in the larger political project of public higher education in creative ways alongside other disciplines." Mining this possibility, chapters 4, 7, 8, and 10 claim that interdisciplinary concepts help their IWDs/IWPs broaden their universities' mission. Chapters 5, 7, 8, and 10 also demonstrate how interdisciplinary concepts can support universities' general education curriculum. Chapters 2, 8, and 10, moreover, include interdisciplinarity as a basis for first-year writing curricula.

In other words, interdisciplinary concepts may be understood as underpinning an IWD/IWP and making its work relevant to other departments and disciplines. For instance, at James Madison University (JMU), three independent writing programs were joined, with the result that faculty shared an "interdisciplinary status" to create one curriculum (chapter 5). Then, their "major courses [were] also affiliated with several

multidisciplinary minors at JMU as well as with two study abroad programs." Their "Community Based Learning courses (a requirement for all our majors)" connected their "students in valuable and visible ways to the surrounding community," perhaps exemplifying transdisciplinarity.

Interdisciplinary concepts may be understood not only as a means to create greater engagement with the university but also as a way to secure an IWD's/IWP's bottom line. Consider the reality, discussed in chapter 8, that a writing major may exist alongside an interdisciplinary writing major (i.e., half the courses being in a discipline outside the writing curriculum). Or, consider chapters 9 and 10, which illustrate interdisciplinarity as a basis for successful writing minors. Furthermore, consider chapters 7 and 9, which demonstrate how courses in a writing major may attract students from other majors, given the multi- or interdisciplinary nature of the major's writing courses. Chapter 6 ends with that thought by describing combining professional writing and communication curricula in the hope of saving the professional writing curriculum from being suspended. Chapter 14 also discusses multi- or interdisciplinary concepts as emerging within an IWD.

Finally, we may review chapter 11, in which the idea is proposed that while interdisciplinary concepts may be useful now, a fully online IWD may mean that eventually all disciplinary boundaries will be removed because of the effects of networking in the future.

POSTSCRIPT

In *Weathering the Storm,* it's difficult to define a "model" for an IWP or IWD because any particular one—given the average age of twenty-six years for all the IWPs/IWDs herein—embodies more than one model, hence more than one definition. This quality, combined with the research adage not to over-generalize from any one particular case that's contextualized by local conditions, means that drawing reliable conclusions about the nature of IWPs/IWDs is tricky at best.

Not surprisingly, any study of IWPs/IWDs entails complications. For instance, an IWP/IWD, in order to be successful, likely has to change over time, which complicates the notion of an "independent" writing program or department. As read in these chapters, no writing program or department is ever truly independent of, or liberated from, the working conditions of a university. That is, every writing program or department is dependent on others for funding: student enrollments, university finances, state financial support, federal student financial aid, and so on. Also, as read herein, a writing program's independence or

liberation from an English department may be just one significant event among others shaping any writing program that has sustained over decades. A good question to ask, subsequently, may be whether a narrative built around independence from an English department is the most constructive way to frame *independent writing programs* as notable.

Weathering the Storm, we think, makes an argument for understanding the *independence* of a writing program or department to mean a willingness to define writing studies in relation to other disciplines and departments. Such willingness may be cast into high relief during times of economic scarcity. That said, we wonder if IWPs/IWDs are steadily pushing toward interdisciplinarity and if this pressure necessitates a greater examination of the relationship between writing studies and interdisciplinary studies.

In *Interdisciplinary Research Process and Theory*, interdisciplinary scholar Allen Repko makes a distinction between a "discipline" and "studies." According to him, "Every established discipline has a universally recognized core of knowledge, and this core is subdivided into specific courses called a curriculum" (Repko 2011, 7), which for us may be a way to describe literature as a discipline. Then, with interdisciplinary studies in mind, Repko (2011, 8) writes, "'Studies' is an integral part of interdisciplinary studies because it refers to a wide array of knowledge domains, work, and educational programs that involve crossing disciplinary domains." This may be a way to understand *writing studies*, in contrast to literature, as possessing a similar "wide array of knowledge domains" (e.g., writing, rhetoric, sociolinguistics), "work" (e.g., writing program administration work), and "educational programs" (e.g., literacy programs and writing across the disciplines and writing in the disciplines programs) "that involve crossing disciplinary domains."

In other words, we may explore independent writing programs, and writing studies in general, as sites that may include interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or transdisciplinary features. If we go down this path, interdisciplinary scholars Allen Repko, Rich Szostak, and Michelle Phillips Buchberger may be our guides. For instance, they tell us, "Multidisciplinarity is the study of a complex issue, problem, or question from the perspective of two or more disciplines by drawing on their insights but *making no attempt to integrate them.* Insights are juxtaposed (i.e., placed side by side) and are added together, but not integrated" (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013, 35).

Here, our guides might ask us if multidisciplinarity describes writing center tutorials, in which *writing* meets a *discipline.* Referring to

tutorials, they may note that neither tutors nor tutees expect to have fully integrated writing into a given discipline as a result of their work. Our guides may ask, too, are writing center studies typically discussed in terms of multidisciplinary activities?

Our interdisciplinary guides, perhaps our colleagues, may also inform us about transdisciplinarity: "Transdisciplinarity is the cooperation of academics, stakeholders, and practitioners to solve complex societal or environmental problems of common interest with the goal of resolving them by designing and implementing public policy" (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013, 36). Hence, our guides may ask whether our support for the Common Core, or our understanding of the Core Competencies, as defined by Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditors, are really transdisciplinary activities. Would we agree? If so, would we study transdisciplinarity to enhance our participation in the Common Core and to better integrate the teaching and learning of the Core Competencies on our campuses?

As we consider answers, our guides—the interdisciplinary scholars—drop us off at the conference center and ask whether we think literacy and writing studies may benefit from interdisciplinary insights. But seeing that we are exhausted, they leave us with their company's business card, which reads: "Interdisciplinarity is the study of a complex issue, problem, or question from the perspective of two or more disciplines by drawing on their insights and *integrating them.* The interdisciplinary process is used to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the problem. The object of inquiry may be an intellectual or a real-world issue" (Repko, Szostak, and Phillips Buchberger 2013, 35).

Inside the conference center, each of us pockets the business card.

An ESL specialist asks, "Do you think that our interdisciplinary colleagues—our guides—are asking us to study their knowledge of interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity to better focus our understanding of the problem, how best to teach writing?"

A colleague with an EdD degree says, "That's a huge question. But it might be helpful if we knew, before entering into a campus collaboration, if a particular discipline is more open to a specific interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or transdisciplinary perspective. Or we could ask ourselves if at the graduate level, rhet/comp students should study business courses to enhance their qualifications to become WPAs. Then we would have to decide if that curricular relationship is fully integrated, an interdisciplinary approach, or more like just setting the two subjects side by side, a multidisciplinary approach."

"At the undergraduate level, professional writing and media studies programs," says the ESL specialist, "might have to decide a similar question. Is theirs a multidisciplinary or an interdisciplinary relationship?"

As the two scholars talk into the night, they realize they're not so different. But, after all, they both work in the same independent writing program.

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