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INTRODUCTION

Sign o' the Times

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NECESSARY IS NOT ENOUGH: TROUBLING COMMUNITY COLLEGE WRITING STUDIES

We brought together this collection during the years 2019–2021: a strange and terrible moment in history, a potential fulcrum for critical corrections in education. We were teaching, tutoring, advising, and administering programs from mostly remote and hybrid environments—meeting with students via web-conferencing tools, communicating largely through texts, chats, videos; voicing our challenges, concerns, encouragements to stacks of small black boxes and the occasional face, smile, colleague, friend, nod of a student on a screen that looked eerily like the opening to the *Brady Bunch*. When we met our students in person, half of our faces—that is to say, most of our emotions—were hidden behind masks, shields, and plexiglass dividers. We felt, in some ways, more removed from our students than we had ever been. In other ways, however, we were closer to our students' lives; their homes and families were opened, more visible, their living rooms and kitchens overflowing into the provisional spaces where we hosted our COVID-19 classrooms, writing centers, and office hours.

At the margins of our classroom screens and learning-management systems, a consistent feed of violence streamed live: Black citizens were insulted, attacked, and murdered through sanctioned and unsanctioned violence by the state, Asians and Asian Americans were attacked, spit on, cut, and murdered. A coalition of insurgents made up of white supremacists, Christian Nationalists, and chaos opportunists caused the buckling of Washington, DC, a global symbol—however flawed or romantic—of the ideals of deliberative intellectualism and aspirational humanism. The pandemic has cost more than 1,100,000 lives in the United States alone and has revealed even more clearly the ways our society is inequitable and often hostile. Without any irony, we feel the prescience of

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whoever first said truth is stranger than fiction. Quite literally, rhetoric is on trial in the US—and our students, the students of two-year colleges, are squatting at McDonalds and in our college parking lots to access reliable wi-fi to access a sliver of the uplift promised them by mythologies of American exceptionalism. Neither of us as editors, nor any of the writers here, likely imagined—no matter how dire we thought our situation was—that we would live and teach in our current dystopia.

In the chapters that follow, writers detail the ways their teaching and research efforts seek to unseat the pernicious reproduction of racist and classist institutional structures and to decrease the struggles for being and identity our students face every day in their pursuit of an education and an even playing field. Our writers describe the deliberative dialogues they engage on their campuses and with their disciplinary peers to recognize the role of rhetoric and composition in the social uplift of students enrolled in two-year colleges, students who disproportionately represent minoritized, disabled, first-generation, and/or otherwise underrepresented people in the enrollment histories of our higher education in the US (American Association of Community Colleges 2022). They describe their efforts to collaborate and adapt to top-down reform initiatives, to advocate for the very best teaching and assessment approaches to support and sustain their students. Ultimately, the authors of the final chapter in this book describe the systematic and politically motivated dismantling of the two-year college system in Wisconsin, where efforts to "reform education" led to the dramatic divorce of rural citizens from educational opportunities available in urban areas. Their case study echoes a mass disenfranchisement of students from academic transfer paths that emphasize learning and critical thinking to outcomes-driven education imperatives that prioritize completion and credentialing (i.e., Arum and Roska 2011; Johnson 2013).

It is not an aberration that the murder of George Floyd drove many of us out of our homes to defend the lives of our neighbors. Nor was it an aberration to when Right-wing radicals assaulted the capital and seat of our democracy. These moments are not new; they are more of the same—the US wrestling with the legacy of our democratic and our white-supremacist social contracts (Mills 2014). Those of us who work in two-year colleges know this because it has been playing out in our classrooms, in our institutions, and in the education policies that have shaped our work since the day our work began. It is present in the policy and economic rifts between our institutions and the neighboring universities down the road, and we hear it in the deafening silence and patronage of our colleagues at those universities who advocate for

equity but frequently dismiss the day-to-day work at open-access colleges aimed at bringing it about. We know our pleas to administrators, to our colleagues in the field, to our professors and mentors in graduate school have gone largely unheard. For, even as disciplinary leaders call on us to "get uncomfortable" (Inoue 2019), to fight the racism and systemic injustices our country's educational systems reproduce through us, two-year colleges and the work they do generally go unnamed—or, perhaps worse, are raised solely to champion workforce development or bemoan low graduation rates (see, e.g., Jacobs and Worth 2019; Juszkiewicz 2017; McPhail 2011; Yarnall, Tennant, and Stites 2016). That is to say, half the instruction of the field and a disproportionate percentage of minority students are overlooked, elided, ignored, or pigeonholed even in these pleas. Our students continue to go unnamed, unseen, and labeled as unprepared, unacademic, and "not college material"—at least for the university down the street or up on the hill. As we pass the twentieth anniversary of John Lovas's (2002) clarion warning from 2002, "You cannot represent a field if you ignore half of it. You cannot generalize about composition if you don't know half of the work being done" (276), we argue twenty years is too long. We cannot trouble this concern enough. We know our own mentors, advisors, and colleagues often see our work as "less than" the work of four-year institutions or "outside the purview" of graduate mentoring and education. We know serving and advocating for those most underserved in our education system is not appealing when it happens every day, when it doesn't check a box for a tenure application at a research institution. Still, we struggle to understand how those advocating for equity in our field can visibly ignore two-year college professionals and activists. We struggle to understand how elite members of our field can marshal calls for equity and inclusion, all while unaware of or unperturbed by the teaching and learning environments of the two-year college. We think this lack of awareness and interest can only be possible in a world where the public disciplinary discourse has grown disparate from and desensitized to the professional reality of more than half its members.

NOT "JUST TEACHING": DISCIPLINARITY AND PROFESSION IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGE WRITING STUDIES

To interrogate the disconnect between disciplinary hallmarks and professional realities, we must disentangle the notions of disciplinary knowledge and professional identity. The field of writing studies continues to relegate two-year college writing instructors to the margins of the

intellectual and educational field of writing studies—as consumers and recipients of the discipline, rather than as knowledge creators and scholarship shapers. As Louise Wetherbee Phelps and John M. Ackerman (2010) describe, "A disciplinary identity is necessary for [the scholarly and educational work] to be taken seriously within the meritocracies of higher education and to help sustain the working identities of practitioners, scholars, teachers, and administrators across the United States" (181). They argue that a key indicator of the existence of a discipline is the presence of its study in advanced education, meaning graduate school. Despite calls to develop graduate level programs that emphasize instructional methods that work in two-year college settings (Jensen 2017; Knodt 2005), few graduate programs name teaching at two-year colleges as a subject of study. In fact, Jensen (2017) and others have found that students in writing studies programs in elite research institutions are actively dissuaded from pursuing teaching positions in two-year colleges or situating their research at two-year colleges. While certainly more than a decade of attention paid to two-year colleges, including funding incentives to develop curricular interventions in two-year colleges, has helped bring greater awareness to these locations as sites for valuable research, our own field of writing studies continues to operate as if a veil separates the discipline of composition studies from the institutions where half the work of first-year college-level writing is taught.

If we apply Phelps and Ackerman's (2010) definitional lens for determining disciplinarity, then we can describe the profession of two-year college writing studies as aspirational and incomplete—well established enough to have decades of peer-reviewed scholarship and participation in scholarly activities, such as regional and national conferences, but missing from the sustained attention graduate education provides and, thus, the professionalization in institutional norms and methods of professional regulation (including but not limited to scholarly engagement, faculty collaborative mentoring, and professional service). In fact, we suspect the false dichotomy of "researcher versus teacher"—one teacher-scholar and teacher-scholar-activist movements have aimed to disrupt (Andelora 2005, 2013; Toth, Sullivan, and Calhoon-Dillahunt 2019)—reinforces the fallacy that two-year college writing instructors "just teach." In this way, "just teaching" most often means working outside of a research setting, regardless of what research, assessment, or advocacy the faculty member who "just teaches" does, thereby suppressing membership and ownership over disciplinary and professional conversations—both by ourselves and by our four-year colleagues. This lack of professionalization may explain why scholars

and teacher-scholar-activists have noticed the apparent disengagement of so many two-year college writing instructors from their institutions and their professional communities (Suh and Jensen 2020; Toth and Sullivan 2016).

However, the just-teaching mythology is incomplete and misleading. Responding to the fastest changing demographics in higher education, we argue that two-year college instructors have a greater responsibility to follow pedagogical developments in the scholarship, that they have the right to be compensated for the labor engagement requires, and that their experience adapting their teaching approaches to support the diverse needs of a rapidly expanding student population constitutes a reason scholars at elite research institutions should be paying *more* attention. If the term *discipline* refers to the scope and depth of knowledge about a particular field, then we could conclude the discipline of two-year college writing studies is robust. Yet, if we apply Magali Sarfatti Larson's (2012) definition of profession in the postindustrial world—being recognized, having, sustaining, and regulating the dissemination and application of expert knowledge, to having control over the strategies and practices of one's disciplinary knowledge—then we can only conclude that our professional status is incomplete and provisional. Our status fluctuates with the foci of the media, the tides of educational policy, and the state and millage funding that determines our budgets. These pressures, compounded by structural variations in institutional organizations between two-year colleges and their four-year peers, profoundly undermine our work—and thus the learning of our students. As a result, even those two-year college writing instructors who are deeply engaged with their discipline and professions are often positioned poorly to affect discipline-oriented changes in their departments and at their institutions (Griffiths 2017; Griffiths and Jensen 2019; Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf 2013).

Further, a general lack of knowledge about these institutional differences poorly prepares new graduates to effect change once they begin to work within a two-year college structure. Few graduate programs offer curricula addressing the unique political and educational histories of two-year college instruction or the pedagogical philosophies and strategies recommended for teaching in these contexts. Graduate work in composition studies alone insufficiently prepares instructors to teach at two-year colleges, in part because the administrative structures at two-year colleges are radically different from those at four-year institutions, with faculty positioned similarly to K–12 instructors (Griffiths 2015; Griffiths 2017; Griffiths 2020). More, for instructors whose only teaching experiences

have been at four-year institutions, it is difficult to anticipate these differences alongside the diversity in student experiences, goals, and needs of students at two-year colleges—not only those tied to academic goals but those tied to the transportation, sustenance, and safety necessary to achieve those goals (Goldrick-Rab 2018; Nazmi et al. 2019; Nikolaus et al. 2020; Phillips, McDaniel, and Croft 2018), requiring increased flexibility and creativity from instructors (Griffiths and Toth 2017). To wit, practical strategies for teaching writing successfully to a student group that includes overlapping identities of students with unstable housing and insufficient access to food, forced immigrants, academic high achievers, underprepared students, domestic-violence survivors, new veterans, and minoritized students is rarely discussed in graduate programs, even if the concept of equity and individualized teaching is celebrated in abstraction.

Confounding this silence in the field, some graduate programs actively discourage students from working in two-year colleges (Jensen 2017). The notion of developing explicit graduate instruction in two-year college writing studies has existed since the very origins of the discipline of composition studies (Jensen 2019; Jensen and Toth 2017; Knodt 2005; Toth and Jensen 2017). However, as of 2022 few such programs or specializations exist (e.g., DePaul, San Francisco State University). When graduate programs fail to prepare students to teach developmental writing, students with disabilities, first-generation students, working poor, and students of color, they necessarily harm the millions of students at community colleges. Further, when they send these poorly prepared graduate students (Klausman 2018, 2019), they create poorly professionalized instructors, most of whom end up being contingent labor. The contingent labor crisis and the fossilization of two-year college English instructors who do not recognize the need to professionalize themselves (Suh and Jensen 2020; Toth and Sullivan 2016) represents our second major barrier: resistance from graduate institutions. A close analysis of the professionalization of graduate students in composition and rhetoric programs suggests our teaching discipline thrives as a twin at the margins of graduate learning. Graduate students often balance their studies and teaching while moonlighting as instructors at area colleges. They learn to navigate the complex shuffle of course preparation, grading, learning, and living that is the lifelong schedule of contingent instructors. This work, however, is neither visible nor valued within graduate conversations intended to prepare such students to take up the pedagogies and praxis of writing studies in our field.

This invisibility is inherent in the very design of our composition programs, which thrive on and perpetuate educational inequities within our

departments. Graduate programs in English invite robust cohorts of students into their folds each fall, dependent upon them to teach ubiquitous writing-course requirements less expensively than full-time faculty instructors could in exchange for educational funding. However, while many such graduate students are introduced to the field of composition studies and to teaching in this way, university structures cannot sustain the movement of these students into research-intensive faculty positions. The structures that privilege research over teaching implicitly devalue the very education and experiences students take up by participating in the funding system and perpetuate a quasi-pyramid scheme for higher education, reinforcing a false research/teaching binary before students have become fully integrated into the graduate education community.

Unsurprisingly, first-generation graduate students, especially women (see, e.g., Drew et al. 2003; Schell 1998) and BIPOC, are disproportionately impacted by this move, seeking to be a part of the university community and often having little knowledge of the political workings of publication and tenure that invisibly separate those students seen as valuable from those seen as expendable. This hidden curriculum maintains an inequitable and tacitly classed and raced power structure that reverberates in job placement and professional opportunities. Moreover, those students who take us at our word in composition studies—following in the footsteps of Patricia Bizzell, Mike Rose, Jaqueline Jones Royster, and Asao Inoue—find themselves (as some of the authors of this volume have found ourselves) shunned or undermined in our graduate programs for wanting to enact the equitable teaching ideologies our field both celebrates and prescribes. By choosing to teach in access-oriented colleges where such equity initiatives can benefit the most students, new graduates find themselves inundated with disparate pressures from state mandates, national policies, and institutional deprofessionalization, while simultaneously being marginalized by their university peer colleagues and graduate programs. This process narrows the positionality and power faculty have to enact equitable pedagogies within the systems where they teach, especially given the few resources available to reprofessionalize themselves or to respond to their new environment. In essence, we are positioned simultaneously as professional "twins" (sister organizations) and as children—a junior or quasi-professional status alongside our peers.

The reality is that many—if not most—two-year college English faculty are left to professionalize themselves (Suh and Jensen 2017). Professional organizations such as TYCA exist and serve a valuable function for two-year college professionals (Jensen et al. 2021). Unfortunately,

though, many institutions do not fund conference travel or recognize scholarly participation—even when lack of funding eliminates an important source of professional development that directly correlates to student success. In most two-year colleges, there is no pressure or impetus from external forces (such as program recognition or auditing), meaning two-year colleges have no reason to support such work, leaning instead on homegrown professional development in teaching that, while sometimes effective, can be divorced from disciplinary knowledge and—most often—administered by people who have limited or zero experience teaching in the classroom. This situation results in incomplete professionalization at two sites. First, from the preparation available in graduate school continued engagement with the discipline for two-year college instructors is neither acknowledged nor modeled. Second, incomplete professionalization happens within two-year colleges, where this disengagement is reinforced (or sometimes enforced) by the funding structures and tenure models in which continued engagement is unavailable or tacitly discouraged by colleagues who view participation in professional memberships as time "away" from students and therefore a shirking of the real duties of teaching.

Many top-down policy changes exacerbate this incomplete professionalization by constricting, redirecting, or revising the teaching initiatives at two-year colleges in service of finite goals for instrumentalist education driven by neoliberal logic (Giroux 2010; Stenberg 2015; Sullivan 2017; Welch 2018). These logics offer public-facing critiques of education and mandate inward-facing policies that undermine civic education and social uplift. They devalue public educational outcomes—such as a healthy, literate, and critically engaged society—while celebrating educational consumerism, in which education is reduced to individual economic benefits, a transaction of credits for jobs (see, e.g., Giroux 2010; Sullivan 2017). As we conduct final reviews of this book, a new book in print identifies explicit connections between this economic narrowing and the cost of higher education (Bunch 2022). The structural powers that undergird these initiatives and actors have made it difficult for the professionals working in two-year colleges to uphold the values of the field and to teach in ways that are inclusive, empowering, and ethical while using research-based pedagogy. Our incomplete professionals are perpetually disenfranchised on three fronts: by the institutions who do not understand and value the work of composition studies, by departmental colleagues who are divorced or disconnected from disciplinary knowledge, and by disciplinary colleagues in composition studies in university and graduate programs who ignore or devalue the work two-year

college faculty do because of where they do it. Meanwhile, the discipline of composition studies migrates further and further from first-year writing, all while publicly agitating for antiracist, revolutionary writing pedagogies even though the site of their work is not where the majority of first-year writing students are in attendance. Where better to place those pedagogies than at the community college? Who better to include in that agitation than the two-year college instructors who work with the most minoritized students in higher education? And yet, at every turn, the tradition of our discipline and the cultures of our institutions present barriers to our full adoption into these realms.

We must move beyond our current tiered model of the profession, in which professional status for two-year college instructors is provisional and the commitment of the field to our students depends on the whims of political fashion, in which a token chapter in a collection or the occasional article or special issue of a journal addresses the community college. For writing studies to take up democratic and inclusive pedagogies as its charge, the possibilities of two-year college instruction must be recognized as a central component of that work, not an accessory to it. Only by positioning writing instruction at two-year colleges at the center rather than the margins of the discipline, and by enabling *two-year college writing studies* as a discipline to emerge alongside the professionalization of its faculty, can two-year college faculty be positioned to construct, disseminate, and expand the teaching knowledge available to educators. Such a shift in our professionalizing structures are preconditions for activating sustainable frameworks of equity and access. This collection presents evidence for such a discipline and profession and follows in a line of persistent if periodic attempts to instantiate the disciplinary and professional identities of two-year college writing instructors.

Our discipline is engaged in a political turn, but to be effective in that work, we must be inclusive of work occurring in open-access, public two-year colleges. Our colleagues must recognize and include our work and must be willing to learn from the interventions in which we are engaging (Jensen 2019). We recognize that the writing studies and composition communities have made strides in this direction in recent years—launching the first national TYCA conference (Andelora 2018), publishing various special-issue volumes in scholarly journals focused on the work of two-year colleges (*WPA*, *JWA*, *Praxis*, to name a few). However, so long as the work of teacher-scholar-activists is relegated to special issues and to token chapters within the journals of our discipline—the framing dialogues of our field—we are, by definition, exceptions to the discipline, tokens, outliers. This provisional status

contributes to our confounded political status and lack of professional autonomy. Moreover, it tacitly undermines the knowledge being made in these institutions—and thus the disciplinary identities we form—thereby contributing, we argue, to the reproduction and justification of disciplinary disengagement among our colleagues.

EXIGENCE OR EXPEDIENCY: THIS POLITICAL MOMENT

Two-year colleges have always occupied a precarious political and educational space. Two-year college teachers, students, and staff have navigated this space, one foot rooted in the rhetorics of social uplift and pedagogical equity, the other in the shifting economics of workplace readiness and educational efficiency. Within these spaces we find deeply ingrained litanies of cultural values, personal goals, and the mercurial availability of resources such as time, emotion, and funding. Students' lives are often complicated by economic violence—including home and food insufficiency, institutional racism and classism, family responsibilities, a near daily need to hustle and grind to make ends meet—and a rhetoric of hope, hope for a better life for themselves, for the opportunity to model for their children a pathway of work for reward, the American dream they desperately believe in despite the persistent barriers placed in their path by the very system that propagates the dream.

The two-year college is popular now. Every president from Bill Clinton forward has incorporated community colleges into their State of the Union addresses. The current first lady, Dr. Jill Biden, is a two-year college professor, albeit with a mixed record of advocacy on instructional labor. The renewed interest and political popularity of two-year colleges might seem auspicious if the driving force of such popularity did not diverge fundamentally from the historical mission and potential of the institutions themselves. In each instance, our nation's leaders have articulated an ever-narrower vision for community college education, one that increasingly rests leadership and expertise on industry over education, one that fundamentally undermines pedagogical knowledge and autonomy of instructors. A cursory analysis of the presidential State of the Union addresses over the years and across administrations showcases the progression of these ideals. On January 20, 2004, George W. Bush described community colleges as a path for "training workers for industries" (Bush 2004). On January 27, 2010, Barack Obama identified community colleges as "career paths" for working families (Obama 2010), and then on January 28, 2014, he articulated a tighter nesting of education and industry, explaining "connecting companies to community colleges

can help design training to fill their specific needs" (Obama 2014). Left unmentioned in these speeches are general education, transfer, and community education—three parallel educational avenues that comprise the nexus of our strength and promise as democratic institutions and our potential for service and uplift: the multifaceted mission of our colleges. While these utterances clearly echo the economic boogiemen of their rhetorical audiences, they commit violence to the historical mission and integrity of low-cost, well-integrated, and locally situated higher education. Former president Donald Trump merely took the next logical step in his statement that he didn't know what a "community college is" and that they should be called "vocational schools" (Strauss, *Washington Post*, February 1, 2018). And even though President Joe Biden has outlined 302 billion dollars of expanded higher education funding, including free two-year college—a provision sacrificed in the most recent negotiations as of this writing—there is no mistaking that his language and rhetorical choices are neoliberal rather than humanistic. He noted that "twelve years of free education, long the standard in the United States, was no longer enough 'to compete with the rest of the world in the twenty-first century'" (Taylor and Berger 2021), suggesting a focus on economic readiness rather than critical or citizenship education.

These rifts echo a historical tension rooted in the founding of the first two-year colleges: the Armour Institute and Joliet Junior College, both in Illinois, intended to serve distinct educational missions—the first vocational and the other general, liberal education (Quigley and Bailey 2003). It is precisely this fundamental conflict that the Truman Commission described when first applying the now most widely used moniker "community college" in 1947. Observing the radical shifts in the fabric of the US community and social potentials after World War II—and mindful of the lessons from the same—the commission articulated the following recommendations: two-year colleges should be free, and the vocational and liberal education missions should be "well-integrated" to serve economic, social, and civic educational missions. It ominously noted that a failure to achieve, recognize, and expand such integration and equity would have dire consequences (President's Commission on Higher Education 1947). The commission warned,

> If the ladder of educational opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at all at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them. (55)

More than seventy years later we are in the moment they foretold.

The multifaceted mission of the two-year college affords multiple tensions, and those tensions have formed the source of misunderstanding and naïve branding of the purposes of our colleges (Cohen and Brawer 2008). Alongside the mission to prepare students to contribute to "the economy," community colleges also have the mission to provide the first two years of undergraduate coursework (general education) to most of their students who intend to transfer to four-year institutions, as well as provide and facilitate community engagement and professional development that supports lifelong learning for their surrounding communities. Across the paths for each of these missions there is also slippage, both in how students understand the purpose of their college experience and the ways college staff interpret and apply those missions to individual students. Burton R. Clark (1960) first described "cooling out"—the managing of students' expectations by directing them to different educational goals deemed more attainable (a certificate rather than a degree)—as an ethical responsibility of college staff and leaders. Since that time, others have critiqued "cooling out" in terms of the ways two-year colleges divert and dilute students' educational goals, leading working-class students into predominantly working-class jobs (Brint and Karabel 1989).

Either way, retrospective analysis is clear: our most vulnerable students—after they graduate—are underemployed, graduating into the same economic conditions neoliberal rhetorics have promised to eradicate (Ireland 2015; Valadez 2000). Too often the quest for "a little education" reifies the status quo and replicates economic stratification. Like the hidden curriculum of work described by Jane Anyon (2013) and explored by Patrick Sullivan in this collection, the issue here is not that low-wage jobs are of lower value to our communities. The global pandemic of 2019–2021 has, if nothing else, proven how very essential (albeit undervalued) some of the lowest-wage jobs, such as cashiers, are for the survival and well-being of communities. The issue is that the hand that extends an offer for "social uplift" renders that uplift moot with the very same mechanism by which it purports to effect equity. Efforts to "cool out" students—no doubt intended to help students reach education goals with less frustration—too often exchange big generational dreams at exchange rates far too costly to pair alongside the US rhetoric of merit. More poetically stated, we take in students' hopes and return fists full of bread and some pocket change.

Against this political and historical landscape, it is tempting to ascribe intention to the agents of US industry and policy, to identify a targeted conspiracy to undermine the authority and effectiveness of

instruction for the purpose of widening the income and opportunity gaps among most Americans and the uber rich. Viewed from this perspective, we observe the sleight of hand—one shell exchanged for another, over time—democratic, integrated education exchanged for neoliberal rhetorics advanced through the language and policies of completion, austerity, and adjunctification. However, taking such a perspective—however righteous we may perceive it—leads to a cynicism from which little can be built, expanded, or sustained. Our intentions are precisely the opposite—to amplify the voices of teacher-scholar-activists in this moment, to celebrate the value of a disciplinary narrative now coming of age, and to place breadcrumbs on the path for colleagues newly joining our community. This book and the conversations in which it participates are acts of defiant hope for our profession.

THE VISION OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The arrangement of chapters in this book follows a purposeful arc we hope will resonate with readers' experiences and provide a touchstone for thinking about the notion of two-year college writing studies in our institutions. Here we have aimed to set the historical context, the political landscape, and the multifaceted exigence for this work. In chapter 2, Sullivan revisits our histories: the histories of community colleges, generally—their civic, social, and economic purposes for uplift begun during the Truman presidency—and our history—the history of English faculty working within, against, and in spite of histories over time to fight for the rights of our students not only to learn but to be seen and heard and valued in a system that has so often classified them as excess. By implication, Sullivan calls out the kinds of education and opportunities we amplify or undermine when we make community colleges the object of study, prosperity, reform, or neglect. Sullivan highlights the ways the aspirations and ideals of the community college movement put into motion by President Truman's Commission on Higher Education conflict at a fundamental and practical level with the ways Anyon's (2013) "hidden curriculum" play out in the community colleges of today—where working-class students are encouraged to seek a degree or certificate to achieve working-class jobs that offer little stability, civic participation, or economic uplift. Sullivan explains that the College Redesign movement often fails to acknowledge the lived experiences of our students and the reality of the community college as a site of intellectual rigor and social nuance, a site with the potential to expand and

adapt to serve more than twice the number of student enrollments since 1973 (Snyder 1993; "Undergraduate Enrollment" 2022).

Sullivan reminds us two-year colleges are living institutions where teachers and students live, strive, adapt, resist, and ride out the tides of US economic and educational highs and lows, and that we do so first as humans living and reacting to other humans in our quests to understand, engage, and find our place in the social, economic, and political apparatuses we have called into being to organize our lives. Class is a part of this living. Racism is woven into its very fabric. The overlapping and deeply seated mythologies of literacy and work are part of this living. And the remaking of this fabric—of these mythologies—will require intentional, uncomfortable, and steady work at remaking ourselves and our own teaching. Sullivan describes community colleges as civic institutions whose purpose and responsibility are to serve and protect education as an accessible public good, rather than a private economic transaction.

Important, his chapter sets a hopeful stage for the continued potential of open-access two-year colleges and explores how all of us can fight for democratic and ennobling education. Sullivan argues that current community colleges remain ideally poised to take up the mission of social justice assigned to them by the Truman Commission, even if they have not always done so. At a time of extreme unrest and higher than normal rates of burnout, Sullivan's call may seem a bit naïve or even nostalgic. It returns to the idealistic origins of our fields in composition and writing studies, those wide-eyed justice-oriented days when open-access and free colleges were opening new doors and courses, days that saw the genesis of basic writing and the work now viewed as foundational to our field—that of Shaughnessy, of Rose, of Sommers. If Sullivan's chapter rings nostalgic, if the story he tells hits just too on the nose, perhaps it is because it speaks of promises woven into the foundations of writing studies—promises yet unrealized.

Sullivan argues that the foundational work of composition studies and our larger field of writing studies remains unfinished so long as writers are socially, economically, and racially excluded from their educational pursuits. Marilyn Smith Layton's Work "Lives Worth Fighting For" describes the ways her students—our students—teach us about composition studies, about teaching, about writing, and about learning as an embedded social relationship. She argues these relationships are still at the heart of our work and that supporting writers who are identified as under- or other-prepared for college in the traditional ways remains essential, not marginal, work for our field.

In chapters 3, 4, and 5, Bernice Olivas, Emily Suh, and Jamila Kareem dive into the hallowed space of our most important work—the classroom and the conversations afforded within them. They posit a pedagogy that validates students' identities, positionalities, and the structural and circumstantial barriers in their lives, incorporating each of these into the daily interactions of their courses. The authors envision and enact responsive learning approaches. They explore the ways organization, content, and ideology afford or dismiss students and their experiences.

Bernice Olivas, a first-generation scholar who went from GED to PhD in a decade, offers an intersectional pedagogy that resists student-deficit ideologies in her chapter "Identity Agents in the Two-Year College Classroom." She points to curricular and pedagogical interventions that help students rhetorically reframe themselves as college learners—as beings with an academic identity. Her model attacks deficit thinking in writing instruction and especially in first-year writing at community colleges. She pushes against the traditional paradigm of looking at students' deficiencies or mindsets and puts the onus on teacher-scholars to implement intersectional "identity-conscious classroom strategies." In Olivas's scheme, writing instructors as identity agents, rather than gatekeepers, help students position themselves as members of the academy. Her work draws on interactional theories of identity and takes up theoretical notions from Brandt and Freire to explore and model the nuances of identity construction and positionality in two-year college writing instruction.

Olivas applies the sociological framework of identity control theory (ICT) to describe how individual discursive interactions with students help shape their perceptions of themselves as college students or outsiders. She describes ways teachers can bring greater intentionality to the individual interactions and microinteractions of course design. These strategies help college learners position themselves as agentive in adopting or rejecting elements of this identity in ways that build trust, foster a sense of belonging, and empower them to engage in their learning as insiders. By drawing on this established sociological framework, she advances our methodological approaches to better reflect and respond to the social and political contexts in which we teach. She envisions two-year college writing studies as part of literacy sponsorship, investing in welcoming all who enter. Her work presents what we see as an important way to engage students and make them successful in the classroom.

In the fourth chapter, Emily K. Suh focuses on the specific identities and learning needs of first-generation, new immigrant language learners in developmental writing classrooms. Bringing together three theoretical

frameworks of cultural participation and learning—Bourdieu's symbolic capital, Norton's theory of investment, and Knowles's theory of andragogy, Suh identifies gaps between our teaching instincts and students' abilities. Suh highlights ways teaching professionals confuse students' abilities to navigate and overcome complex lived experiences (social capital) with their ability to navigate complex learning spaces (academic symbolic capital). Specifically, Suh provides two case-study analyses to identify gaps between social capital students gain through life experiences and the values instructors assign that capital in terms of symbolic capital for students' transition into US academic culture. In some ways distinct from the students outlined in Sullivan's chapter, Suh highlights ways students can perform the social norms and attitudes of the successful college student while adhering to misaligned or undercontextualized notions of academic performance and help seeking. She cautions that this kind of confusion among educational professionals can render invisible the actual needs of students new to our educational landscape.

In chapter 5, " 'I've Never Been a Good Writer': Disrupting Raciolinguistically Marginalized Students' Negative Writerly Self-Images," Jamila Kareem argues for "applying students' self-perceptions about their bad writing to see their already adaptable repository of social-rhetorical linguistic practices as a viable college-ready asset." Like Suh and Olivas, Kareem describes ways she helps students apply their lived experiences directly to their learning and writing at the two-year college. To accomplish this work, she turns to tenets of critical race theory (CRT). Kareem defines CRT as a theory that critically examines and responds to "racist ideas and actions in the legal system and other policy-making contexts in society, including education." She concludes that the language differences we see in academic and civic life are constructed to privilege and reinforce the linguistic hegemonies and structures of the historically dominant and artificially homogenous "standard"—a predominantly white, middle-class, artificial language of politics, education, and power.

Kareem's critique isn't new, but her insightful analysis of existing scholarship and its application to composition studies and two-year college writing studies pushes teacher-scholar-activists to act in our classrooms and institutions, not just our theoretical conversations. She examines our field's embrace—conscious or not—of the middle-class white enterprise of composition. In an incisive critical examination of some of our field's most treasured documents and an examination of "A DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice," Kareem makes a compelling case for how composition has failed students who bring other Englishes, especially

raciolinguistic dialects, to our classrooms. It is an important analysis for two-year college writing studies because the two-year college is the site where most students of the global majority begin their educational journey.

Kareem goes on to detail instructional practices that disrupt students' negative raciolinguistic writerly self-images. She discusses her syllabus, mini units with explicit instruction in multiple raciolinguistic rhetorical traditions, and explicit instruction in Black and Latinx rhetorical traditions, as well as Eurocentric rhetorical traditions. Her revisioning of a first-year writing course to make this work visible and explicit is detailed, compelling, and, we argue, vital to the future of writing studies, especially writing studies in the two-year college. These four chapters offer a vision of how two-year college writing studies can engage in the work of aiding students in developing. Sullivan's work in the first chapter frames teacher-scholar-activists as doing the democratic work of two-year college students because our students have "lives worth fighting for." Olivas, Suh, and Kareem provide an on-the-ground view of how this work happens in the intersectional multiracial, multilingual two-year college of the twenty-first century. These chapters offer a pedagogical and theoretical primer for who we can be and the work we can do.

Chapters 6 and 7 widen the focus to programmatic decisions, interactions between staff members and departments, and exploring strategies for naming and validating the tensions within our English departments while also responsively attending to the disciplinary differences among us and the inherited inequities our students experience when trying to navigate our layered and sometimes conflicting pedagogies. These concerns—while wider in scope—are vital to student success and the democratic mission of the two-year college. In chapter 6, Rhonda Grego examines the use of thirdspace theory and her work in creating writing studios. Grego's chapter, "Institutional Memory at a Two-Year College: A Case Study of Interactional Inquiry into 2YC Student Learning Outcomes," is a fascinating look into the work of two-year college English studies. She relates a case study in which she and her English Department built a department that uses authentic assessment and that has refigured their professional and curricular identity.

Grego makes a persuasive argument about how assessment data and research help create department and institutional change. She explains that "evidence-based storytelling" helped institutional and disciplinary connections evolve. She and her department coupled this work with what professional publications had to offer in helping the department

build "professional authority." Grego's narrative is of value because it differs so much from what our four-year colleagues and graduate students might experience. Her chronicling of working with an entrenched literature-based department and an administration engaged in the neoliberal logics of austerity is one that will be familiar to many two-year college professionals. The negotiation of institutional history and institutional power structures in the ways she describes is endemic to many community college English departments in the United States. She provides one of the clearest examples of working toward professional autonomy (Griffiths) and epistemic authority (Larson) we've seen.

Further, Grego addresses the labor structures of two-year colleges. She recounts how her own professional journey and her group's authentic assessment of student learning outcomes mapped onto a lack of professional development for both full- and part-time faculty. She writes that "opening up a third space for resisting the hegemonic scripts of erasure and articulating connections between student learning and two-year college faculty labor generated the rhetorical exigence for [her] department's progressively stronger connection to professional organizations and publications." The work she describes addresses the political and institutional needs of community college English faculty. It also demonstrates how two-year college English studies is structurally and pedagogically distinct from English studies at our four-year counterparts. Her call to look "inward to our own professional experience" and "outward to our institutional environment" is important and needed.

In chapter 7, Kirsten Higgins, Anthony Warnke, and Jake Frye examine assessment in "The Painful Eagerness of Unfed Hope: Equity-Centered Writing Assessment." Their work intersects with Grego's work in that it examines the assessment practices at their two-year college and how those practices measure up to our discipline's "values that center on questions of equity and inclusion." The authors look at student assessment and how that assessment is still tied to deficit models of education, arguing that outcomes assessment "objectifies by separating through its analytical operation and dehumanizes both its practitioners and its objects of study." The authors wonder how they can move from this broken paradigm of assessment that is often couched in the term "good enough." The authors ask how "assessment can be functionally reimagined to better serve our students?" They theorize a reimagination of assessment at the two-year college that can be described as holistic and authentic, as it "treats as whole and connected students' bodies, lives, and work" with the knowledge that the community and local context cannot be separated from this evaluation.

Higgens, Warnke, and Frye forward two "assessment dispositions" to accomplish this work: "disruption and rhetorical attunement." The authors place these moves within the tradition of critical reform and see the work as both pragmatic and paradigmatic. The authors provide three examples of this work, arguing for how this work creates space for a better model of assessment they believe adds value to the two-year college. Notably, they see this work as needing internal incentivization from faculty as part of their professional commitment and work that should concomitantly be externally incentivized by institutions' "material commitment." This model is compelling and demonstrates the context of and lived reality of assessment work in the two-year college.

Chapter 8, "Strategic Organizing: Scaling Up Two-Year College Teacher-Scholar-Activism" by Joanne Giordano and Holly Hassel, chronicles the work of two-year college English departments at Wisconsin colleges. Those departments don't exist anymore. Their curricular work—award-winning, research-based, and faculty driven—was undone just as two-year colleges in Wisconsin were undone by neoliberal fiat. The teacher-scholar-activist movement, elections, and unions are important precisely because they give us the ability to exist so we can build and implement research-based best-practices curriculum. "However," Hassel and Giordano write, "in the end, our [Wisconsin community college faculty] efforts were completely insufficient to combat the powerful political forces intent on reducing access to higher education for underprepared students and consolidating resources among the most selective institutions in the state system." The attack on two-year colleges and public education in Wisconsin is well documented, but this chapter goes into detail about the staggering consequences. The authors end their chapter with a call to national action for the two-year college English profession. This book echoes and amplifies that call.

TO OUR COLLEAGUES AT TWO-YEAR AND OPEN-ACCESS INSTITUTIONS

We hope this book serves as a beacon to our colleagues and would-be colleagues in the profession. To those who are new to working in two-year college environments, we say welcome. The work you do is essential, the cornerstone of writing studies, the work of preparing and supporting writers to find their voices and to stake claims to their rights and their experiences. This book is an invitation. We encourage professionals and graduate students to participate in the growing body of literature and activism that celebrates our work as teachers and

as scholars, to explicitly recognize the lived experiences of your colleagues and of your students, to embrace the work of amplifying voices from our classrooms, from our institutions, and from our profession. We believe the good work of the voices in this book—in concert with the voices joining every day to take up professional and political activism for writing departments and programs in two-year colleges—can bring not only greater awareness but also direct and practical adaptations to the professional environment and practices of our profession, to our classrooms, to our departments, and to the labor practices that embody and disembody the profession.

Contained in this anthology are chapters, yes—essays, studies, narratives, and reflections—but they are also letters written from our current educational contexts to you, our colleagues across the professions of writing studies, as a way of recognizing the work you do—that we do together—and a way of constituting the future work of our discipline. This collection is a love letter to the two-year college as an ideal, one situated in this kairotic moment, its potential and problems. In his public address in 2018 in Kansas City, Jeff Andelora described the Two-Year College English Association's long relationship with CCCC as relationship status = complicated. We couldn't agree more. Taken as a whole, it is a letter of love, appreciation, and commitment to the teacher-scholar-activists who have come before us and who have guided our practice and professional lives. Finally, the collection is a love letter to a possible future predicated in the chapters that follow. But hope and love—like equity and education—are mere abstractions without the grounding of daily work and substantial relationships, without the productive and difficult dialogues of critique (Calhoon-Dillahunt et al. 2017). Two-year college writing professionals are neither new to the discipline nor operating in the marginal niches of the field (Calhoon-Dillahunt 2018; Giordano and Hassel 2019; Hassel and Giordano 2013; Lovas 2002; Reynolds 1994, 2005; Reynolds and Holladay-Hicks 2005). Our love and our work are old, persistently bent to the wheel, theorizing and practicing writing pedagogies in a context shaped in equal parts by the promise of and resistance to social justice in the US, in the spotlight and the shadows of our educational mission.

Love might seem like a strange word choice here. But we draw on Jim Corder's (1985) notion in "Argument as Emergence: Rhetoric as Love," in which he "insist[s] that argument—that rhetoric itself—must begin, proceed, and end in love" (28). This volume seeks to create a space that allows the most diverse of institutions, two-year colleges, and the transdisciplinary work of writing studies within them, to be examined

so our practices and selves can serve our students and the institutions' democratic potential, can be a space where our "distinct and significant profession" is made more visible to ourselves and others, empowered to take up the work with which we have been charged in earnest.

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