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# Community College Writing Program Administrators: Implementing Change Through Advocacy

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS:  
IMPLEMENTING CHANGE THROUGH ADVOCACY

LIZBETT TINOCO

Doctoral Program in Rhetoric and Composition

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Charles Ambler, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

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## **Dedication**

Dedico este proyecto para mi mamá, Socorro Tinoco, y para mi papá, Alberto Tinoco, que me han apoyado siempre incondicionalmente. Y también a mi hermana, Valeria, y mi abuelita Lupe que ya no están con nosotros pero que siempre las llevo en mi corazón

COMMUNITY COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS:  
IMPLEMENTING CHANGE THROUGH ADVOCACY

by

LIZBETT TINOCO, M.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

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of the Requirements

for the Degree of

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation, *Community College WPAs: Implementing Change Through Advocacy*, examines the work and role of Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) at community colleges. Defining the role and the work of WPAs is very complex, and even more so at community colleges since these institutions are very diverse places in regards to programmatic structure and student population. The scholarship of writing program administration has typically excluded community colleges; as a result, my research focuses on including these narratives. Unlike a lot of WPA narratives that often describe WPAs as “composition wives” (Schuster, 1991; Hesse, 1999) who do much of the dirty work and have no real authority, I present community college WPAs as rhetorically savvy agents that create change. Using qualitative grounded theory, I conducted analysis of surveys from 53 community college WPAs across the country and nine one-on-one interviews. I present research-driven narratives of community college WPAs who use many rhetorical tools available to them to enact various forms of advocacy in the workplace. While most WPAs in this study encountered institutional and external challenges which could have defeated them and prevented them from doing their work, they continued to find strategic ways to voraciously advocate for the importance of WPA work. With the changing dynamics in higher education and with more students entering community colleges, I expand upon WPA scholarship to include the experiences that community college WPAs bring to our professional scholarship.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	v
Abstract .....	ix
Table of Contents .....	x
List of Tables .....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiv
List of Illustrations .....	xv
Chapter 1: The Exigency to Explore the Work of Community College Writing Program	
Administrators.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of Study .....	9
Research Questions .....	10
Terms .....	11
Community Colleges .....	11
Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) .....	11
Writing Programs.....	12
Advocacy .....	12
Overview of Methodology .....	13
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Overview of Chapters .....	14
Chapter 2: Writing Program Administration and Community College Literature .....	16
History of Writing Program Administration.....	16
Defining Writing Program Administration.....	18
History of Community Colleges .....	22
Writing Program Administration at Community Colleges .....	27
First Advocacy then Activism .....	29
Chapter 3: Research Design and Theoretical Framework .....	35
Rationale for Qualitative Design .....	35
Constructivist Grounded Theory.....	36
Data Collection .....	37

Participant Recruitment .....	37
Survey .....	38
Interviews.....	39
Data Analysis .....	39
Initial Coding .....	40
Focused Coding .....	41
Constant Comparative Analysis.....	42
Researcher's Memos .....	43
Theoretical Framework.....	43
Chapter 4: Findings from Community College Writing Program Administrators .....	47
Overview of Survey .....	47
General Demographics.....	48
Significant Themes from Interviews.....	59
The WPA Position .....	61
Challenges.....	65
Advocacy .....	71
Self-Advocacy.....	72
Peer Advocacy .....	74
Programmatic Advocacy.....	77
Resources .....	79
Conclusion .....	82
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications .....	84
Community College as a Field.....	84
Deficit Ideology .....	85
Buy-in .....	85
Labor Conditions .....	87
External Pressures.....	87
Access to Resources.....	89
Community College WPAs' Capital.....	90
Community College WPAs' Habitus.....	93
Recommendations .....	98
Future Research .....	103

Conclusion .....	104
References .....	106
Appendix A: Participation Email.....	116
Appendix B: Survey.....	117
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	127
Vita	128

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Examples of In Vivo Codes .....	41
Table 2: List of Interview Participants.....	60

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: In Vivo Codes to Focused Codes .....	42
Figure 2: Job Titles .....	49
Figure 3: Degrees Attained .....	50
Figure 4: Discipline of highest degree .....	50

## **List of Illustrations**

Illustration 1: American Association of Community Colleges Fast Facts 2017 .....	3
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## **Chapter 1: The Exigency to Explore the Work of Community College Writing Program Administrators**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2011, I started teaching as an adjunct instructor at a community college in central California. On my very first day, a student sitting in front of the classroom appeared angry and exclaimed loudly “I don’t know why I have to take this writing class. I came to school to be an auto mechanic.” Throughout the semester of teaching this basic writing course, I, along with the entire class, learned that this student had just been released from prison weeks before the semester started. Additionally, I learned many of my students had just completed their English as a Second Language requirements and were now able to take this writing course. I learned some students were returning to school after working for years. I learned students had recently graduated from high school and planned to transfer to the local four-year university. I learned many of them were parents. But mostly importantly, I learned how unprepared I was to teach such a diverse group of students. I quickly realized that my graduate course work focused on literature instead of composition, which I found myself teaching for several years until I decided to return to school.

My first semester as a graduate student in rhetoric and composition at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) I enrolled in a special topics course titled Writing Program Administration (WPA). I’ll admit that I had never heard of a writing program administrator and during my time teaching at the community college and did not quite know what to expect. As my time in this course progressed, it became very clear that everything we read was about writing programs at four-year universities. When I shared my experience or tried to relate to the content, the only thing that came to mind was my work as an adjunct instructor at the community college. I quickly became interested in this very specialized field of rhetoric and composition, and I had

the opportunity to present with my professor, and now dissertation chair, Beth Brunk-Chavez, and a few of my colleagues at the 2014 Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference. While attending this conference, it became more obvious that there were not many sessions focused on community colleges, and there were few faculty from community colleges in attendance. Regarding the absence of scholarship in writing program administration at community colleges, Lovas (2002) argues, “our profession has an intellectual blind spot regarding knowledge building in and about community college” (p. 274). Lovas also adds, “you can’t generalize about composition if you ignore half of it. You can’t generalize about composition if you don’t know half of the work being done” (p. 276). Through this project, my goal as a researcher is to advocate for the community of composition teacher-scholars working at community colleges and contribute to composition scholarship on community colleges.

Community colleges play a crucial role in higher education in the United States. Their open admission policy, coupled with low tuition and proximity to home, make them an important part of higher education for a diverse student body population. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2017), there are a total of 1,108 community colleges, including public, independent, and tribal colleges. Furthermore, community colleges enroll approximately 41% of the total undergraduate student population with 12.2 million students, both in credit and non-credit courses, including 56% of all Native American students, 52% of all Latino students, 43% of all black students (AACC, 2017). For many students, the cost of tuition of community colleges is appealing compared to four-year universities, as the average annual tuition for public community colleges is \$3,520 compared to the \$9,650 average annual tuition at four-year colleges (AACC, 2017). An illustration (see Illustration 1) of the AACC’s 2017 Fast Facts is below.

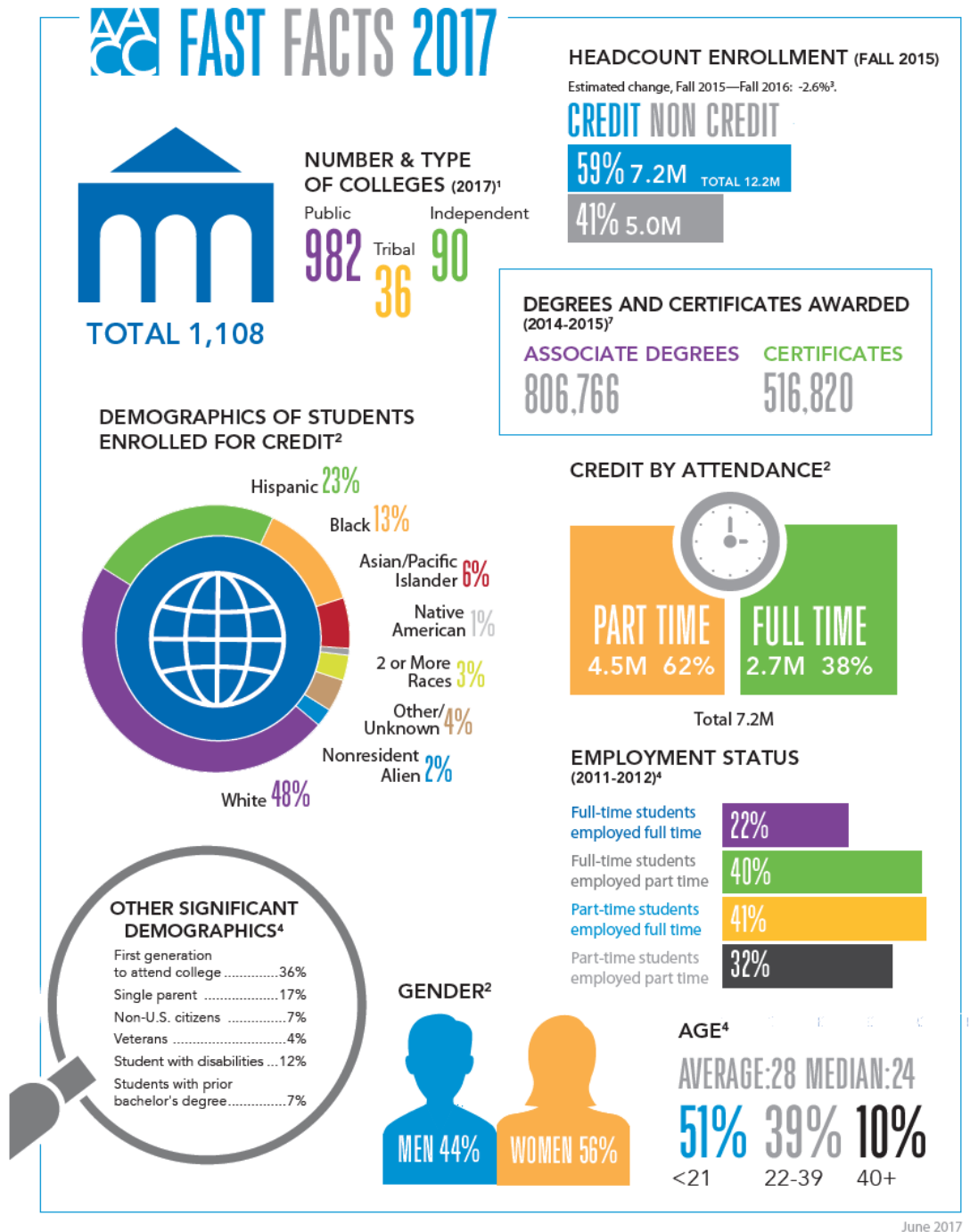


Illustration 1: American Association of Community Colleges Fast Facts 2017

Community colleges across the country vary in size and location. Each state has its own community college system. For example, the State of California has the largest community

college system with 114 community colleges, and Rhode Island and Vermont the smallest with one community college each (Provasnik and Planty, 2008). Most funding for community colleges usually come from state and local government entities. The revenue for community colleges in the United States is well over \$56 billion, with 31% of funding coming from state funding and 13.5% from federal funding. A large amount, 29% of funding revenue, comes from tuition (AACC, 2017).

Recently, community colleges have garnered much attention in the media. For example, on February 1, 2018, President Trump exclaimed the need for more people to be prepared to enter the workforce and therefore urged community colleges to change their name to vocational schools. He stated, “I think the word ‘vocational’ is a much better word than in many cases a community college. A lot of people don’t know what a community college means or represents” (Smith, 2018). According to Smith, community college leaders were quick to point out that many community colleges offer vocational programs, but they also offer more than that, such as dual enrollment programs and transfer opportunities to four-year institutions.

Prior to this, attention to community colleges intensified due to former President Obama’s America’s College Promise proposal, which aims to provide free community college tuition to qualifying students. This allows qualifying students to earn the first half of their bachelor’s degree and learn skills needed for the workforce at no cost (Executive Office of the President, 2015). As a result, in 2014, Tennessee was the first state to offer free community college tuition to recent high school graduates enrolled in community college (Smith, 2017). States, such as Oregon, Minnesota, and Rhode Island soon followed. Cities like San Francisco, Long Beach, Detroit, and Dayton followed by making community college free for all residents. Furthermore, starting in 2018, students in Tennessee, including non-traditional students, will

become eligible for free tuition at the community colleges in the state as long as they do not have an associate's or bachelor's degree. California and New York have also recently joined in tuition-free initiatives. Most states offer free tuition for students who are eligible and meet each of the state or city requirements. For example, states, like New York, require students to take 30 units and to live and work in the state after graduation for the number of years they received the tuition-free scholarship. If students do not stay to work, then their tuition-free grant becomes a loan (Smith, 2017).

Because community colleges are open admission institutions, which means they are non-selective and offer admittance to all students as long as they have been awarded a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate, the level of college readiness and preparedness varies from student to student. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) (2016) describes that 68% of community college students require at least some developmental courses. The majority of these courses are in math, reading, and writing. (CCCSE, 2016, pp. 2). According to the Two-Year College English Association (2005), two-year colleges teach an estimated 70% of all developmental composition courses in higher education. The majority of these courses are taught by adjunct faculty.

A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2008), claims two-thirds of faculty at community colleges are employed part time. At community colleges, “the primary activity of almost 90 percent of faculty at community colleges is teaching” and only 3% of faculty at community colleges report administrative duties as their main activity (NCES, 2008). In English departments, faculty usually have backgrounds in Literature, Creative Writing, and English Education. As a result, Hassel and Giordano argue “two-year college faculty don't have the primary responsibility for being more included (or arguing more profoundly for inclusion) in

the professional organizations and activities that shape writing studies, especially given the hierarchical way that higher education usually privileges the voices of professionals at research universities over the majority who teach at other institutions” (pp. 91).

Since community colleges are so diverse, and only a small portion of community college faculty report their administrative duties, it is difficult to describe the role of a community college writing program administrator. Often times, the writing program administrator (WPA) is known as the person who does everything related to writing. However, pinpointing the WPA at community colleges can sometimes be difficult since many performing WPA work do not necessarily use this title. The Council of Writing Program Administrators adopted “The Portland Resolution: Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator Positions” in 1992, to help improve the working conditions of WPAs and to describe many of the duties performed by WPAs. The list of duties outlined include teaching, faculty development, writing program development, writing program assessment, monitoring enrollment and registration, and scheduling, to list a few. The exhaustive list of WPA duties is meant to demonstrate how many duties this administrative work entails. Because of the list of duties is extensive, the Resolution states that WPAs should be provided clear job descriptions or responsibilities as well as a description of the release time that will be given for administrative work and a description of how this administrative work is counted towards tenure and promotion. Additionally, the Resolution also argues for the WPA position to “be situated within a clearly defined administrative structure so the WPA knows to whom he or she is responsible and who he or she supervises” (CWPA, 1992). Many community college WPAs perform these duties in addition to a full-teaching load, which can vary from institution to institution but is typically four to five classes. However, many of

those doing WPA work at community colleges identify with their teaching first and their administrative role second.

More than likely, someone in a community college English department is performing WPA work, but WPA scholarship at two-year colleges has faced some challenges, especially when it comes to defining a writing program. As early as 1987, Helon Raines asked “Is there a writing program in this college?” and after conducting a similar study to the one in this project, she could not create a cohesive definition of community college writing programs. Additionally, Klausman (2008) argued “university writing programs are the marginalized ‘other.’ At two-year colleges, however, English departments dominated by composition courses, are near the center if not *the* center in terms of size and power (pp. 241-242). However, Klausman argued that teaching many writing courses does not make an English department a writing program. But Calhoon-Dillahunt (2011) disagrees with Klausman since a “‘writing program, for CWPA’s purposes, specifically include all writing-across-the disciplines programs, writing centers, and writing courses with multiple sections.’ By this definition, a ‘collection of writing courses’ does indeed a program make, though the quality of such program may be questionable” (pp. 124). Regardless of whether a writing program is perceived as a set of writing courses or a coherent program, Klausman claims, “it is clear we in two-year colleges need a WPA to shape a collection of courses into a program that responds to the needs and expectations of our particular institutions and the academy at large, and to work with a diverse faculty to define that program and to move the faculty forward toward greater professionalism” (246).

As community colleges gained more prominence within composition studies, they started to become nationally recognized. According to Andelora (2005), two-year colleges were welcomed by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on

College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1965 when seven regional conferences were sponsored for two-year faculty. The first two-year college national organization was the National Two-Year College Committee (NTCC), and in 1974, the Committee established the scholarly journal of *Teaching English in the Two-Year College (TETYC)* where faculty from two-year colleges are encouraged to conduct research and publish. However, it was not until 1997 that NCTE formally recognized the Two-Year College Association (TYCA) (Andelora, 2005, pp. 584).

The role and work of community college WPAs has largely been invisible in writing program administration scholarship until recently. However, scholars such as Helon Raines, Jeff Sommers, Jeff Andelora, Holly Hassel, Patrick Sullivan, Jeffrey Klausman, Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt, Mark Blaauw-Hara, and Heather Ostman, are several composition community college scholars, among a larger list of community college scholars, who have and are actively pushing boundaries to create spaces for scholarship by those working at two-year colleges. TYCA has become a huge force in integrating community colleges into scholarship. Additionally, TYCA has also developed series of position statements such as the “TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College” (2016) and “Characteristics of a Highly Effective Two-Year College English Instructor” (2012) that are encouraged to be used by community college faculty. While TYCA has been doing a great amount of work to represent two-year colleges faculty, NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA have more recently made huge efforts to be more inclusive and have a larger presence of two-year college faculty as part of their organizations and attend their conferences every year. At the 2018 Conference on College Composition and Communication, it was announced that TYCA will hold its first ever annual conference next



year. This first national TYCA conference will allow for the seven regional groups to come together and share scholarship.

With all of the changes occurring in higher education, especially those associated with the America's College Promise, closer attention needs to be focused on the structure of writing program at community colleges. Hassel and Giordano (2013) claim, "writing studies professionals are perhaps in the best position to stage an intervention to increase the academic success and retention of students whose only pathway to college is through an open-access institution" (pp. 90). Scholars of rhetoric and composition at four-year universities should be interested in knowing how their local community college shapes the literacy practices of students who will eventually transfer to their institutions and if the practices align, or not, with those in place at their four-year university. As a result, through this project, I aim to answer Hassel and Giordano's (2013) call for "our professional organizations and the most privileged groups in writing studies (i.e., those who work at high-status, high resource institutions) have an intellectual, scholarly, and moral obligation to work toward creating an inclusive profession that fully accounts for the diverse range of teaching and learning experiences in postsecondary writing" (pp. 91) by adding to the scholarship of community college writing program administration.

#### **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

There is a limited amount of scholarship about two-year colleges within writing program administration; therefore, the purpose of this study seeks to understand the work of writing program administrators at community colleges and integrate their narratives into the field of WPA. By investigating the factors that shape and influence the work WPAs perform at community colleges, this study shed light and deepens our understanding of the challenges

community college WPAs face and how they work to overcome these challenges at community colleges across the country. Unfortunately, there are not many WPAs at community college sharing their stories or sharing their stories in venues that have visibility within in the field, nor have many studies focused on the work of community college WPAs. The lack of interest in writing programs and writing program administration at community colleges is disheartening since the majority of students enter higher education by attending a community college. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the work of WPAs at community colleges in order to thread their narratives into the already established narratives of WPAs at four-year institutions.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Much of the WPA scholarship published has typically focused on the work of writing program administrators at four-year universities; unfortunately, there are not many studies that focus on community college WPAs, and even fewer that specifically focus on the challenges and obstacles in the work place and how these are overcome with the limited tools available to community college WPAs.

As a result, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do Writing Program Administrators at community colleges describe their work?
- What challenges do WPAs face at community colleges?
- What resources do WPAs at community colleges draw on to support their work?
- How is the work of a Writing Program Administrator defined at community colleges?

Although the work of community college WPAs will vary due to their context, educational backgrounds, cultural background, and the political issues each community college, the research questions aimed to better understand how community college WPAs in the study navigate the

challenges they face in the workplace and the resources used to help them overcome those challenges.

## **TERMS**

In this project, I use terms that are often complex and do not have a clear definition. Additionally, many of these terms are contextually situated.

### **Community Colleges**

In the TYCA approved position statement, “Characteristics of a Highly Effective Two-Year College English Instructor” (2012), the committee proposed a change of name from community colleges to “two-year college” because it was more inclusive and incorporated technical colleges and other junior colleges. However, for this study, the term community college will be used because all of the data gathered was from community colleges. The data did not include any technical colleges. In addition, the term community college is also used to represent how community college WPAs use a network of peers and resources from their communities, such as their institutions or professional organizations, in order to conduct their work. Breznau explains it best: “the community college is, just as the term implies, an organ of the community, a way for local residents to be educated while remaining within the confines of their families, jobs, and lives” (qtd in Ostman, 2013, p. 59). Additionally, many participants in this study wanted to live in certain communities so they chose to work at community colleges. My goal in using community colleges in this project is to give credit to the various communities community college WPAs draw from and how they influence their choices.

### **Writing Program Administrators (WPAs)**

For this study, I draw from Malenczyk’s definition (2013) by stating a writing program administrator is “whoever coordinates/guides/administers/is in charge of/helps with” (pp. 5) the

direction of writing instruction at their institution. Additionally, Klausman (2008), a leading scholar in community college writing program administration explains that in addition to tasks, such as scheduling and budgeting, a two-year college WPA must “shape a collection of courses into a program that responds to the needs and expectations of our particular institutions and the academy at large, and to work with a diverse faculty to define that program and to move the faculty toward greater professionalism” (pp. 246). Klausman also adds that a community college WPA must stay current in composition theory pedagogy.

### **Writing Programs**

Klausman (2008), argues there is a difference between writing courses and a writing program: “A program...is characterized by an explicitly expressed coherent curriculum with integrated faculty development and assessment. Lacking that, we only have classes loosely related by too-often unspoken and, most likely, conflicting assumptions about aims, means, and purposes” (pp. 239). For this study, I am using Malenczyk’s (2013) description of a writing program: “sometimes it is an FYC program...with teaching assistants...or a mixture of part-and full-timers...; sometimes it is a series of first year writing intensive seminars; sometimes it is a set of courses that does not call itself a program at all (pp. 5).

### **Advocacy**

For this study, I draw from theories in social work, disabilities studies, and education to define advocacy as action that argues for a cause and obtains necessary support in behalf of oneself or others. Key components of advocacy are raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and gaining influence. Through advocacy, community college WPAs, and WPAs in general, can foster and advance understandings of writing practices and writing programs while influencing the attitudes of key stakeholders to advance issues that are important to them and their students,

faculty, institutions, and communities in order help bring lasting systemic change. Additionally, it is important to note that advocacy is not activism, but rather, it can lead to activism.

## **OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative study utilized a constructivist grounded theory methodological approach. This research approach allowed for a full and rich description of the experiences of the community college WPA participants. Data was primarily collected through a survey distributed to the WPA and TYCA listservs to gather a wide scope of information from community colleges WPAs across the United States. Additionally, data was also collected through in-depth semi-structures interviews conducted by phone or video conferencing. To obtain the data for the study, the survey questions and interview questions were purposefully designed to establish an understanding of WPAs working at community colleges. After all the data was collected, it went through various rounds of coding, from in vivo coding to focused coding. A more in-depth discussion regarding methodological decisions made for this study is presented and discussed in chapter 3.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's Social Theory of Practice, which comprises of three main elements, habitus, capital, and field, was used to analyze the data collected for this study. The interplay between these elements, according to Bourdieu, allows individuals to manipulate their positions in various social fields. A field is a space where social interaction occurs, and each field is different based on its own set of rules and the people who interact within each field. Each person in a field has a set of dispositions, referred to as habitus. The habitus of people is shaped and influenced by past events and structures, which condition our perceptions and shape our current disposition. In capital, not purely in the economic sense, but anything that is socially

valued, such as symbolic, cultural, and social capital, allow people to navigate interactions within fields. Bourdieu's theory of practices was particularly useful in this study as a way of understanding the different influences, habitus and capital, that shape the work of writing program administrators within the field of community colleges. The community college WPAs' previous experiences and knowledge of writing program administration and higher education accumulate into various forms of capital that help them facilitate their academic decision making and perform administrative work. It is through these various forms of capital that shape each WPA's dispositions that they can advocate for themselves and their faculty.

## **OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

This section provides a brief overview of the organization of this dissertation. The introduction, Chapter One: The Exigency to Explore the Work of Community College Writing Program Administrators provides a synthesis of current events and the exigency behind this project. Chapter Two: Writing Program Administration and Community College Literature guides the reader through an examination and historical trajectory of writing program administration and community college scholarship. The literature review conducted for this study shows the discrepancies in the amount of WPA scholarship published by those at four-year institutions versus those at community colleges.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Theoretical Framework explains the design and procedures of this study. This chapter offers an explanation as to why a qualitative methodology and constructivist grounded theory were used. Furthermore, this chapter describes the survey instrument that was created and the procedures in how it was employed. There is also a full description of how the data was analyzed using constructivist grounded theory.

Chapter Four: Findings from Community College Writing Program Administrators contains all of the major findings of this study. The findings are drawn from the direct analysis of the survey and interviews conducted. This starts with the findings of the survey, which was completed by 53 community college WPAs across the United States. Moreover, the chapter also contains the major themes extracted from individual interviews with nine community college WPAs.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications provides a discussion of general conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research in rhetoric and writing studies. This chapter aims to provide data driven answers to the research questions used to guide this project. At the end of the chapter, I offer recommendations for graduate programs in preparing future community college WPAs. I also discuss some of the implications of this research for community colleges and four-year institutions.

Through the qualitative methods used in this dissertation, this project contributes to the limited body of knowledge the field has accumulated of writing program administration at community colleges. Furthermore, through the data collected and the evidence provided, I construct a picture of the rhetorical moves community college WPAs make to create change for themselves, their faculty, and within their institution and the larger field of writing studies.

## **Chapter 2: Writing Program Administration and Community College Literature**

### **HISTORY OF WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

The history of writing programs is one that has not been fully explored. L'Eplattenier (1999) argued that the field of Rhetoric and Composition has largely ignored the administrative side of writing programs. However, writing program administration is closely linked to the history of first-year composition, as L'Eplattenier's explained, "the work of writing program administration has existed as long as there have been institutions offering writing courses" (1999, pp. 136). She explained that exploring the history of writing program administration is needed to validate and give authority to our positions in the field: "simply having a history creates legitimacy for contemporary work" (1999, pp. 136).

L'Eplattenier and Mastrangelo (2004) collected numerous essays on histories previously unknown to writing program administration. L'Eplattenier and Mastrangelo argued that these histories have not been told because often times administrative work is not easy to find within archival documents: "its traces are often destroyed or hidden in a multitude of files within the archives" (2004, pp. xx). The book examined narratives of individuals who helped form the discipline before the Council of Writing Program Administration was established. L'Eplattenier and Mastrangelo's focus is on specific individuals, such as Gertrude Buck, Laura J. Wylie, and Edwin Hopkins, among others, and the work they did within their institutions. Additionally, Heckathorn's (2004) book chapter attempts to historicize the group identity of writing program administrators (WPAs). Heckathorn argues that issues with group identity for WPAs can best be described in two time periods. Although writing administrative work has occurred since composition courses were developed, it was not until the 1940s, which Heckathorn coins as the



Early Era, “when WPAs began to publicly identify the individual problems confronting professionalization as writing program administrators” (pp. 192).

Additionally, Heckathorn (2004) identifies a second time period of WPA work as the Transitional Era from 1964 to 1979. This is when, Heckathorn points out, WPAs “gained more public responsibility and acknowledgement and began to form a group identity to address the problems hindering professionalization” (pp. 192). Heckathorn claims that dividing WPA history into these two eras is artificial, but it at least provides a heuristic for understanding the history and evolution of writing program administration. Similar to the L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo discussion of WPA archives being destroyed, Heckathorn states “Because WPAs’ duties vary widely, the challenge of locating documentary evidence might appear more difficult than in a closely unified field” (pp. 193). Other factors hindering the history of WPA is this work was largely perceived as a service, and WPAs often referred to themselves as “‘Administrators,’ ‘Coordinators,’ ‘Director,’ or ‘Chair.’” (Heckathorn, 2004, pp. 202). This service work was, and is, often times perceived as not worthy of careful record-keeping. Through archival research, these scholars historicize WPA work and illustrate how easy it can be for WPA documents outlining work to be destroyed, or even worse, go unrecorded.

According to McLeod (2007), writing program administrators began to organize after World War II by forming the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949 (pp. 63). CCCC was a place where those involved in the teaching of composition came together to have workshops and discuss pedagogy. Corbett (1993) also claims that writing program administration did not start until the late 1940s when there was an influx of thousands of veterans who entered college on the GI Bill. The early meetings, according to Corbett, were about the issues that administrators were facing (McLeod, 2007, pp. 65). These administrations

then starting forming specialized organizations. The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) first established itself in 1977, by creating an organizational constitution and by-laws. The same year, CWPA issued its first publication, which in 1979 became a peer-reviewed journal, *WPA: Writing Program Administration* (McLeod, 2007, pp. 71). Today, CWPA holds its annual institutes, workshops, and conference during the summer. Furthermore, Special Interest Groups, such Assistant Program Administrators and the Graduate Writing Program Administrators, have developed throughout the years.

### **DEFINING WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

Much like all of the archival work has uncovered, perhaps a reason why a history of writing program administration is difficult to define is because writing program administration is highly contextual. Like writing programs, students, and faculty vary from college to college, so does the role of the writing program administrator (WPA). Malenczyk (2013) writes, “Whoever coordinates/guides/administers/is in charge of/helps with any of these is, in my books, a WPA” (pp. 6). As Taylor stated, “WPA structures could likely be a collection of practitioners and administrators (2009, pp. 123-124). Ostman (2013), argued that “the WPA does not necessarily fit into a single, defined academic role” (pp. 101). What is at stake when the position is not defined, according to McLeod, is that the lack of definition leaves a space open for others to provide a definition: “Without a clear definition of the work, WPAs sometimes find themselves in positions that others define for them in unrealistic ways (McLeod, 2007, pp. 9). Unrealistic in the way that sometimes WPAs are asked to take on more tasks than they can or are perceived as the one person at an institution that knows everything about writing.

Bishop (1987) is one of the first scholars who attempts to define the work of a WPA. So new WPAs have an idea of what to expect, Bishop categorizes the various tasks and

responsibilities of a WPA: “student placement and record keeping, course staffing, program accountability, and curriculum development” (pp. 11). Bishop mentions that these are broad categories and that WPAs do not have a single role but must become experts in multiple areas. The way in which Bishop outlines WPA work is described as a task or service within WPA literature.

Because WPA work is often seen as a service with no real authority, WPA work is often described as women’s work and in gendered terms. Schuster (1991), in an essay describing departmental politics using a psychoanalytic, gender-based model, calls the teaching of writing “women’s work” because it demands “an instructor to be nurturing as well as demanding” (pp. 88). He goes on to say that writing faculty are the “dutiful wives who do much of the dirty work.” He adds, “That is the primary function of the composition wives; to maintain the house and raise the children, in this case the thousands of undergraduates who enroll in composition classes” (pp. 88). To add to the metaphor of WPAs as wives, Bloom’s (1992) essay uses Judy Syfer’s satire, “I Want a Wife” to list the various chores a writing director is expected to perform and without appropriate compensation and recognition (qtd in McLeod, 2007, pp. 12). To counter the metaphor of WPAs as wives, Hesse (1999) explains his work as WPA turned into a “father” role his program at Illinois State. Hesse describes becoming self-reliant, in order to be more efficient and not bother colleagues. However, Hesse relationship with his writing program ended in a divorce because “being a WPA had gotten bitter in the last year” (pp. 53).

To move away from gendered terms, scholars in the field have developed other frameworks for describing the work of a WPA. An early proponent that viewed work of WPAs as an intellectual activity was Richard H. Bullock. Bullock (1987) argues that the WPA’s role in various programmatic activities is a form of scholarly work that should be recognized. In an

effort to define WPA work, the Council of Writing Program Administrators developed and adopted “The Portland Resolution: Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator Position,” in 1992. This document is meant to provide WPAs with guidelines about working conditions, developing clear job descriptions, and the knowledge and experience WPAs should have for performing the job. Furthermore, since WPA work is often seen as service or a task, the CWPA also developed “Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Program Administration” (1998) to provide a framework on how WPA work should be evaluated as scholarship for tenure and promotion. For WPA work to be considered legitimate scholarship, the statement argues,

In order to be regarded as intellectual work, therefore, writing administration must be viewed as a form of inquiry which advances knowledge and which has formalized outcomes that are subject to peer review and disciplinary evaluation.

Just as the articles, stories, poems, books, committee work, classroom performance, and other evidence of tenure and promotion can be critiqued and evaluated by internal and external reviewers, so can the accomplishments, products, innovations, and contributions of writing administrators. Indeed, such review must be central to the evaluation of writing administration as scholarly and intellectual work (CWPA, 1998).

Furthermore, Rose and Weiser’s (1999) *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher* provides different essays which articulate how the work of WPAs is research. They argue that WPAs engage in various types of research, and “research in writing program administration is theoretically-informed, systematic, principled inquiry for the purpose of developing, sustaining, and leading a sound, yet dynamic, writing program” (pp. ix). Just as WPAs conduct research, they should also theorize about their work. Rose and Weiser’s collection (2002) *The Writing*

*Program Administrator as Theorist* provides various essays that exemplify how “WPAs engage in two critically important kinds of theoretical work: they must think about the applications of existing theories—rhetorical theories, pedagogical theories and learning theories are only the most obvious of these; and they must develop new theories of their own about their work” (pp. 2).

A dominant discourse surrounding WPAs is their function to affect change. McLeod (1995) characterizes WPAs, in particular those directing writing across the curriculum (WAC), as “change agents.” McLeod proposes that WPAs need to create roles for themselves in the university. Furthermore, WPAs can create change by changing curriculum and pedagogy practices within their departments as well as across the university. Gunner (2005) adds, “an agenda of a WPA change agent might be to support program changes that are potentially structural and system rather than static” (pp. 38). Adler-Kassner (2008) sees the WPA as an activist, someone who organizes and makes allies in order to create change around them. Adler-Kassner describes several community organizing strategies, such as interest-based, value-based, and issue-based, which activist WPAs can borrow from. Adler-Kassner stressed that activist WPAs should work from their own principles and values to enact change.

Strickland (2011) argues that the history of composition studies has ignored the managerial and administrative aspect of the work, which she coins as the “managerial unconscious.” Strickland points out that “Referring to composition studies as ‘managerial’ has come to be seen as something of an insult” (pp. 7). But Strickland argues that although WPAs are seen as researchers, theorists, and activists, ultimately, “WPAs function as managers” (pp. 96). She urges those in the field to theorize about WPAs work in conjunction with management theories in order to “develop critical interpretations of [writing program management]...and to

generate radical alternatives (pp. 16). For composition studies to deny the managerial aspect of WPA work is to give into dominant discourses of management, which “is based on a control that seeks to change the affective stances of workers in order to secure the benefits of their surplus labor” (pp. 119). Strickland asks us to consider theorizing the work of WPAs as managerial, which can simultaneously be intellectual work.

Lastly, there is a new generation of WPAs that does not necessarily relate to the narratives constructed by past WPAs. Charlton, Charlton, Graban, Ryan, and Stolley (2011) are current or past WPAs, most of whom chose to become WPAs and claim that unlike a lot of the WPA narratives and advice they were given, “what we experienced in our first years as WPAs was different than what we were told to expect” (pp. 5). Furthermore, they note:

we found that our relationships with colleagues need not be agonistic, that effective program work could be done without the power afforded by tenure, and that being an untenured WPA need not require that we forsake a domestic or extra-academic existence. The narratives peppering the scholarship of writing program administration told us we should expect otherwise, as did some of our mentors...we began to wonder if we were part of a new generation of WPAs—one for whom the conventional WPA narratives do not necessarily apply, or for whom they could be more deliberately disrupted (pp. 5).

## **HISTORY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2017), community colleges serve almost half of all undergraduate students in the United States. Community colleges have been the fastest-growing sector of higher education, but despite this, too little research exists that provides an insight to students and faculty working at community colleges today. The lack of research on community colleges could be because community colleges are

often seen as being on the margins of higher education and a second-best educational institution when compared to four-year universities. According to Grubb (1999), community colleges were developed to be subordinate to four-year institutions and have even been referred to as “high schools with ashtrays (pp. 210). Despite their perceived marginalized status, community colleges are playing an increasingly important role in American higher education. For this study, Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker’s (2014) definition of community colleges is used, “any not-for-profit institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (pp. 5). This definition does not include community colleges that award bachelor’s degrees, since the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) places these community colleges in the category of four-year public institutions (Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker, 2014, pp. 5).

What we now know as community colleges, or two-year colleges, dates back to the early 1900s. The development of community colleges grew from the larger number of students enrolling in secondary education and a demand for access to higher education. The first junior college was established in 1902 in Joliet, Illinois, as public high schools started to offer college courses. Harbour (2015), argues that “the objective was not to establish a new institution but to deliver courses to help students make the transition from high school to the university” (pp. 60). The primary mission of junior colleges became to offer the first two years of the baccalaureate degree in order to strengthen other educational institutions such as private universities and high schools. In essence, this became the model for junior colleges. Junior college programs at the high schools grew so much that decades later they become their own entities.

Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014), state that two names, junior college and community colleges, have been used for two-year colleges (pp. 3-4). Junior colleges were usually branches

of universities which offered lower-division work. In 1922, the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC) defined junior colleges as, “an institution offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade” (qtd. in Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker 4). As a response to the changing economic climate, the AAJC, in 1925, expanded the definition of two-year colleges to include “the larger and ever-changing civic, social, religious, and vocational needs of the entire community” (qtd. in Sydow and Alfred, 2013, pp. 15). As a result, in 1909 there were 20 junior colleges, and by 1919, the number grew to 170 (Ostman, 2013, pp. 66). However, the stigma of being a preparatory school for universities has stigmatized the discourse surrounding community colleges since the inception of these institutions.

In spite of that stigma, junior colleges flourished after World War II. After the war, the GI Bill provided assistance to 2.2 million veterans who attended college after returning home (Harbour, 2015, pp. 90). The GI Bill provided veterans tuition and living expenses if they enrolled in college. As a result, junior colleges saw an increase in enrollment. In 1940, 150,000 students were enrolled in junior colleges across the country, and several years later, there were 218,000 students taking courses at junior colleges—a 45 percent increase (Harbour, 2015, pp. 90). The American Association of Junior Colleges urged that 300 to 500 more junior colleges be established throughout the country due to the large number of students enrolling in junior colleges.

Junior colleges were appealing to students across the country due to their relatively cheap tuition, geographic proximity to students’ homes, and a growing vocational curriculum that prepared students for the workforce. During this time, many students dropped out of universities and private colleges, and the number of students enrolled in junior colleges from 1931 to 1934 increased by 70 percent, from 30,000 to 51,000 (Harbour, 2015, pp. 79). Furthermore, the



economic crisis created a priority to establish educational programs that prepared students with the skills needed for the workforce. As a result, junior colleges moved towards a vocational curriculum, which would prepare students to work in a variety of jobs including, but not limited to, construction and agricultural trades. These vocational programs would involve specific, work related training. During this time, the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) was signed into law by President Roosevelt in 1933. FERA gave federal funding to junior colleges to accomplish three goals: “to provide financial aid to college students, to deliver adult education programs, and to deliver worker education programs” (Harbour, 2015, pp. 79).

The Truman Commission Report in 1947 changed the landscape of higher education as it provided a plan for higher education to be within the reach of every American. There were several recommendations in the report, including the elimination of racial segregation in student admission, the creation of federally funded scholarship programs for undergraduate students and federally funded fellowships for graduate students. Two recommendations significantly impacted junior colleges: the elimination of tuition for students in their first two years of college and the establishment of “free, public, community colleges’ which would offer transfer programs, vocational education programs, and for students with remedial needs, adult education programs” (Harbour, 2015, pp. 91). The Truman Commission Report gave junior colleges a new identity and federal institutional legitimacy. Now, not only were junior colleges transfer institutions, but they would also be institutions that educated communities. According to Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014), in the 1950s and 1960s, the term community college was used for publicly supported two-year institutions. The terms junior college and community college have been synonymously used, along with city college, county college, and branch campus.

Although community colleges struggled for legitimacy, over the years, the number of students enrolled in community colleges grew. According to Harbour (2015), 900,000 students were enrolled in 1964, but by 1969, there were over two million students enrolled. This number continued to increase, and in 1974, there were an estimated 3.3 million students enrolled. In 1984, 4.3 million students were enrolled in community colleges, and this number grew to 5.3 million by 1994 and 6.2 million by 2004. In 2014, enrollment was up to 7.4 million. (Harbour, 2015). As the political climate surrounding higher education continues to make college more accessible, there is no doubt that community colleges will continue to provide education to a large number of Americans across the country.

The American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC), founded in 1920, has served as the primary advocacy organization for community colleges across the country. Today, this organization is known as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The AACC's gathers data and research on community colleges, provides professional development for community college administrators and faculty, and represents the needs of community colleges at the federal level. The AACC (2017) contends "community colleges are the gateway to postsecondary education for many minority, low income, and first-generation postsecondary education students," Currently, the AACC (2017) concludes there are 1,108 community colleges, 982 of them are public, 36 are tribal colleges, and 90 are independent. Collectively, they enroll close to 45% of all undergraduate students, compared to the over 3,000 four-year institutions across the country. In spite of the large enrollment numbers and the contribution community colleges make to undergraduate education in the United States, this part of higher education is very underrepresented in academic scholarship.

## WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A review of the literature to this date clearly reveals there is plenty scholarship regarding writing program administration at four-year institutions but limited sources on two-year colleges. To this date, there is only one book by Ostman (2013), titled *Writing Program Administration and the Community College*, which solely focuses on writing program administration at community colleges; however, there are a few articles that discuss issues related to writing programs at community colleges. Scholarship on WPA work at community colleges is difficult to do for a variety of reasons, including how rare this position is at a community college and the lack of a WPA title by those performing this work.

Schwalm (2002) discussed WPA work as a task, especially in regards to community colleges. Schwalm advised WPAs “to know right up front whether this is just a task or also a position” (pp. 10). According to Schwalm, the WPA position as a task is a “quasi-administrative” position, which is often ill defined and has no standing in the administrative hierarchy of an institution. However, Schwalm notes that “WPA *as a position* tends to be more common in larger institutions, *as a task* in small institutions or in a community college where managing the composition program is a major part of the job of the department or division chair” (pp. 10). Schwalm views WPA work at a community college as a task-oriented position, giving more value to this work at four-year institutions.

A large challenge related to WPA scholarship at two-year colleges is that often time the title “WPA” does not exist. Holmstein (2002), describes that WPA work in community colleges often have different names, such as “department chairs, assessment coordinators, assistant deans, writing program administrators, lead instructors, and more” (pp. 430). Similarly, Klausman (2010) added that formal WPA positions are extremely rare in two-year colleges.

However, community college writing program complexities have led community college scholars to wonder whether a set of courses makes up a writing program. One of the first authors that discusses writing programs at community colleges is Raines (1990), and she asks “Is there a writing program in this college?” Raines presents an analysis of 236 survey responses she received from two-year college faculty. Raines states, “even though I began with no hypothesis to prove, I did hope to find a pattern, to see some model of community-college writing programs emerge. None did. In fact, as I interpret the situation, two-year schools are, in many respects, as different from one another as they are alike (pp. 152). Raines found that “many departments do not offer writing courses as a series of interrelated activities grounded in common theoretical assumptions” (pp. 155). Klausman (2008) also argues that having a set of courses does not make a writing program: “A program...is characterized by an explicitly expressed coherent curriculum with integrated faculty development and assessment. Lacking that, we only have classes loosely related by too-often unspoken and, most likely, conflicting assumptions about aims, means, and purposes” (pp. 239). Additionally, Taylor (2009) also wonders whether community college writing programs can be programs when relying so heavily on adjuncts with different backgrounds.

Another common theme through two-year college WPA literature is that there is a decentered and collaborative approach to the work, meaning the WPA responsibilities are shared among several faculty. Raines co-authored another article with Nist (1995), in which they describe writing program administrators at community colleges:

Often a few faculty who have time and interest, or faculty who serve under a rotation system carry out the duties of the composition “director” after consultation with others at department meetings. Decisions on curriculum

planning, class scheduling, and managing of department resources are generally made by committee or department consensus. Sometimes a department chair or coordinator of several disciplines assumes these responsibilities, and occasionally faculty member may have released—time to coordinate the composition course or the writing center (pp. 65).

Clearly, Nist and Raines paint a complex system of writing program administrative duties that often involve a number of people at community colleges. An attempt to recreate Raine's study was conducted by Taylor (2009). Taylor received only 21 survey responses, which is a fraction of the responses garnered by Raines. However, even with this limited sample, Taylor was able to suggest that two-year colleges work on a "post-masculinist" and "de-centered" approach to program development (pp. 121). He writes, "[A] significant portion of WPA structures enact a team approach that effectively decenters the WPA role. Two-year colleges have often created collaborative WPA structures out of necessity, thus answering the call for decentering the WPA" (pp. 121). Calhoon-Dillahunt (2011), like Taylor, explains that much work done at two-year colleges is done collaboratively due to the lack of release time or compensation and the large amount of full-time faculty. Calhoon-Dillahunt discusses that full-time faculty is usually involved in hiring, mentoring, improving placement, and other things pertaining to the department (pp. 125). Taylor (2009) urges for "more detailed research about WPAs at two-year colleges since we all can learn from alternate models of WPA work... while also letting us see the effectiveness, weaknesses and strengths of various WPA models (pp. 133).

### **FIRST ADVOCACY THEN ACTIVISM**

In order to continue conversations about WPAs as agents of change, especially those conducting this work from community colleges, I draw from Adler-Kassner's (2008) discussion

of WPAs as activists. For many people, the term *activist* evokes different images. Most often times, it is associated with protesting social justice issues or campaigning for certain political issues. However, as the word suggests, activism implies action. But for a WPA, what constitutes activism? In a book which focuses on activist educators, Marshall and Anderson (2009), offer a useful definition of an activist educator as “an individual who is known for taking stands and engaging in action aimed at producing social change, possibly in conflict with institutional opponents” (pp. 18). Additionally, because the activism they are mostly interested in is connected to social justice, this activism is “aimed at increasing inclusivity, fairness, empowerment and equity...especially for heretofore oppressed and silenced group” (Marshall and Anderson, 2009, pp. 18). In the first chapter, “Working from a Point of Principle,” Adler-Kassner writes that WPAs and writing instructors should engage in creating change at the local level: “By changing stories at the local level and then working outward to our communities and with our colleagues, we can make a difference. *The Activist WPA* attempts to meet the challenge of changing stories—of reframing discussions—head-on by developing strategies for WPAs and writing instructors to engage in this work” (pp. 22).

Adler-Kassner states that WPAs and writing instructors have the role of “activist intellectuals.” Activist intellectuals engage in “the dialectical, dialogic process...through this dialectical individuals and groups bring their own cultures and experience to the development of methods for developing critical intelligence...the construction of knowledge is collective, not an individual, activity” (Adler-Kassner, 2008, pp. 83). To engage in “story-changing work,” Adler-Kassner discusses how WPAs and writing instructors can learn from three community organizing approaches: interest-base, value-based, and issue-based (pp. 96). Through these approaches, the

activist intellectual must work from a set of principles that are supported by other in order to collectively work at the local level and create change.

In interest-based community organizing, Adler-Kassner (2008) explains the organizer listens and hears the issues of the community around them, that lead the organizer to find leaders and community members to get involved and take action. What is crucial about this form of organizing is that issues are rooted in the community, not from the organizer: “The interest-based organizer always seeks to cultivate individual’s interests and passions and use them as the basis for accessing and cultivating creative intelligence, then to help individuals put that creative intelligence to work” (pp. 105). Adler-Kassner points out that this form of organizing can help WPAs bring people in their departments and across campus together based on issues in order to create communities surrounding collective interests. Furthermore, Adler-Kassner argues that interest-based organizing leads to the decentralization of power and long-term investment by community members. For WPAs, interest-based organizing means working around the interests of others and not around the interests of the WPA. However, what happens when the principles and interests of others do not align with those of the WPA? When the WPA has a different way of viewing writing?

Value-based interest focuses around the idea that individuals will come together around values. Values can be the reason why people come together and unite in order to create change. Adler-Kassner (2008) comments that value-based organizing is focused around the idea “of what we *want*, not what we *do not* want” (pp. 115). Issue-based organizing stems from identifying issues and using these issues to bring people together. This means working directly from these issues. According to Adler-Kassner, “The smart organizer—the smart WPA or writing instructor who wants to change stories—will ‘mix and phase’ elements of all three models” (pp. 127).

For this study, I take Adler-Kassner's (2008) ideas of the activist WPA to discuss how WPAs must first be advocates before engaging in activist work. Community organizing, advocacy, and activism are often interconnected, but they do not mean the same thing. Once problems and issues are listened to and assessed through community organizing, a WPA can take on the role of advocate and speak out for the community and for themselves. However, advocacy is a complex activity with many definitions and used differently across disciplines. Drawing from social work, Barker (2013) defines advocacy as "the act of directly representing or defending others" (pp. 11). In an entry of *The Encyclopedia of Social Work*, Mickelson (1997) describes advocacy as "the act of directly representing, defending, intervening, supporting, and recommending a course of action on behalf of one or more individuals, groups, or communities, with the goal of securing or retaining social justice" (pp. 95). Wilks (2012) writes that there is a relationship between advocacy and empowerment. Advocacy has "the capacity to both empower the individual and, through the adoption of practice approaches sensitive to the impacts of difference, to begin to alter power relationships between individuals, within their communities and in society more broadly" (pp. 3). Wilks also describe different types of advocacy, such as legal advocacy, formal advocacy, citizen advocacy, peer advocacy, self-advocacy, and group advocacy.

For this study, discussions of WPAs performing self-advocacy are significant. The focus of self-advocacy is for an individual to speak for themselves and to represent their own needs. According to Wilks, self-advocacy is "the act of an individual speaking out for themselves" (pp. 29). Furthermore, self-advocacy is often connected to disability studies. Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005), trace the various ways in which self-advocacy has been discussed in scholarship. First, self-advocacy has been conceptualized as an act or a skill, then it has been



overlapped with self-determination, and most recently, is discussed as an ability and a movement (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy, 2005, pp. 45). Additionally, an important part of self-advocacy is communication, “self-advocacy is the ability to communicate with others to acquire information and recruit help in meeting personal needs and goals (Balcazar, Fawcett & Seekings, 1991, pp. 31)” (qtd. in Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy 2005). Self-advocacy is often tied to self-determination: “the term refers to taking action on one’s own behalf; acts of self-advocacy lead to greater self-determination (Fields, 1996, p. 2)” (qtd. in Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy, 2005, pp. 48). Additionally, the idea of self-advocacy as an ability and movement are defined by Stodden (2000), “self-advocacy is referred to as the ability to articulate one’s needs and make informed decisions necessary to meet those needs (pp. 8-9, in Izzo & Lamb, 2002)” (qtd. in Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy, 2005, pp. 48).

Wilks (2012) describe self-advocacy, peer advocacy, and group advocacy as interrelated. However, when self-advocacy is interconnected to group advocacy, self-advocacy can also address collective issues and concerns. Peer advocacy, as described by Wilks, is more of peer mentoring and one-on-one. The advocate with more experience finds ways of supporting other individuals: “the purpose of advocacy here is very much about enabling service users to speak and using group support to address individual needs” (pp. 30). Group advocacy involves people who share similar values or experiences and come together to collectively speak up about issues that are important to them.

Advocacy work is, then, that part of Writing Program Administration where WPAs works to build their own power and to develop their own skills and capacities to use that power so that the systems in which they work realize they must make room and take their concerns seriously. WPAs as advocates take action in a systemic and purposeful way to advocate for themselves,

their faculty, and their students. WPAs must understand that their administrative position gives them the ability to be involved in the process of persuading others for change and also give a voice to the perspectives of others that are underrepresented.

As this literature review traces, writing program blends many personal narratives and theoretical perspectives. The first section of this literature review focused on the narratives of early WPAs, which was uncovered through archival work. Additionally, I traced the stigma of WPA work perceived as a task and its evolution to discussions of WPA work as intellectual work. However, as WPA literature points out, there are not many qualitative studies that examine the work of community college writing program administrators. In the next chapter, I discuss the methods used to collect data, such as a survey and one-on-one interviews, of community college WPAs across the country.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Theoretical Framework**

This dissertation project began after realizing the need for more research about writing programs and writing program administrators at community colleges. Specifically, the study involved the exploration and description of the lived experiences of community college writing program administrators in the workplace since these, for the most part, have been left out of WPA scholarship. Because this study uses primarily a qualitative method and principles of grounded theory, the research questions were refined during the data analysis. However, the primary research questions that guided this study are:

- How do Writing Program Administrators at community colleges describe their work?
- What resources do WPAs at community colleges draw on to support their work?
- What challenges do WPAs face at community colleges?
- How is the work of a Writing Program Administrator defined at community colleges?

These questions seek to fill the gap and provide much needed insight to the complexities of community college WPA work.

#### **RATIONALE FOR QUALITATIVE DESIGN**

A qualitative research design was used for this study. Qualitative research is interested in exploring the ways in which people construct meaning. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative study “is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to social or human problems” (p. 4). As a result, this study provided the necessary voice of each participant, that would have been difficult to capture in a quantitative study. Integrating the personal narratives of different community college WPAs lets readers see how the work of a community college WPA varies from community college to community college and how each community college WPA has different expertise he/she bring to their jobs. The

use of a qualitative approach in this study allowed me to explore the meaning the community college WPAs ascribed to the work that they do and to gather this data from their perspective. Strengths of qualitative research approaches include their ability to provide descriptions of how individuals experience a given issue. Additionally, a qualitative design was best suited for this study due to the scarcity of research regarding community college WPAs' experiences. With the inclusion of these perspectives, the analysis of the data collected enables for recommendations to be made on the importance of learning from this group of underrepresented WPAs.

Qualitative methodology positions the researcher as the principle instrument of data collection and analysis. As an "instrument" of research, this gives me the opportunity, as researcher, to interact directly with participants but to also create knowledge from the data. Having this role required me to examine personal biases and assumptions that motivated my research topic and influenced and guided my analysis of the data.

### **CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY**

Grounded theory is an approach for conducting research with the purpose of constructing theory about issues of importance to peoples' lives. The roots of grounded theory date back to sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss seminal work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory can be defined as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (p. 2). Glaser and Strauss emphasize that the researcher should have "no preconceived ideas" when collecting and analyzing data. Although this is one of the strengths of grounded theory, it is also a part of grounded theory that is often contested. One of the limitations to traditional grounded theory is that it fails to recognize the researcher and the researchers' agency in interpreting the data. As a result, variants of traditional grounded theory emerged.

A variation of grounded theory is constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theory was the most appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study. In this study, as constructivist grounded theory assumes, reality was co-created by the participants and myself as a researcher. It presented a method that enabled the research participants, which were community college WPAs, to integrate their own voices. Constructivist grounded theory is different from traditional or classical grounded theory, which claims the participant's experiences is discovered by the researcher and that theory, then, emerges from the data. Charmaz has contended since the mid-1990s that a constructivist approach to grounded theory is both possible and desirable, because, "Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524). Constructivist grounded theory emerges from the idea that "social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed" so the position of the researcher "privileges, perspectives, and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 14). This means that researchers must take into account their own privileges and preconceptions that can influence their analysis. Thus, the reports of results are interpretive rather than objective, which ultimately allow the researcher to be positioned as a co-producer of knowledge. For my study, this is important because many of the community college WPA participants of this study were ecstatic I was conducting this research since they themselves do not have the time and resources to engage in this type of scholarship.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

### **Participant Recruitment**

This dissertation study was conducted after approval was granted from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at El Paso. The data for this study were collected in two

phases, a survey and semi-structured interviews. To gain initial contact with those who self-identify as community college writing program administrators, a call for participants and the link to the survey were emailed to the Council of Writing Program Administrators and the Two-Year College English Association listservs. Although I recognize that there are limitations to only sending the email to two listservs, these were chosen because they are the primary professional organizations for writing program administrators and writing faculty at two-year colleges. The email containing the survey link was sent out May 2016, and the survey was available until early Fall 2016. This time frame was chosen because it is when WPAs are wrapping up their academic year, and potentially have “free time” before the next academic year starts.

### **Survey**

The survey was developed using Qualtrics, a web-based survey software available to UTEP students and was intended to gain insight into the activities of community college writing program administrators and to recruit participants for this study. The survey contained a total of 22 questions, which required the participants to respond to multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, and demographic questions. Multiple choice questions were used since I believed most participants would give more or less the same answer, so I provided predefined choices but left room for participants to give other responses. I made sure to include an “other” category as an answer option to the multiple-choice questions in order to give the respondents some flexibility. The open-ended questions, which requested that participants write a response in their own words, were used to give the participants a voice and more freedom in composing an answer (Lavrakas, 2008). Several demographic questions were included to gain a better understanding of participants’ age, race, gender, educational attainment, and institutional demographics. After participants completed the survey, the final question asked them to provide

their contact information, which was optional, if they would be interested in participating in an interview. Because the number of participants who provided their contact information was small, I contacted them individually through email to further discuss the purpose of the interview.

## **Interviews**

After participants agreed to be interviewed, we scheduled a time for the interview. Because participants were located in community colleges across the country, the interviews were conducted through Skype, Google Hangouts, or by phone. The interviews started with a brief welcome, a short refresher on the purpose of the interview, and a review of the informed consent and confidentiality agreement. The interview questions were informed by the research questions and each participant's responses to the survey. Before the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any closing comments or questions. This gave participants an opportunity to add information that was not otherwise included in the interview questions. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes. The exact wording of the questions was left open and probes were used to gain more detailed information and obtain clarification from participants (Creswell, 2007). All interviews were audio-recorded, and data from the recordings was then transcribed, coded, and analyzed. After conducting all of the interviews, I took several steps to organize and manage the data. In order to save time, I used an online transcribing service. I reviewed each of the transcriptions to ensure that the transcripts were accurate.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

This section details the research methods used to analyze the data. Grounded theory is not a linear process, which makes it difficult to capture the complexity. Some initial ideas were discarded, and some were returned to later. Data, according to Charmaz, are narrative reconstructions of experience; they are not the original experience itself (Charmaz, 2000, p. 514).

The various sources of data used in this study were the surveys completed by participants, interviews with community college WPAs, and my own observations and thoughts documented in memos. The most intense and laborious part of the data analysis began with coding. Coding of the data was in accordance to the constructivist grounded theory approach described by Charmaz (2014). This coding process has two phrases: initial and focused coding.

### **Initial Coding**

Throughout the data analysis phase of this dissertation, I coded the data using a constructivist grounded theory approach. After receiving the transcripts from the online transcribing service, I reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. After ensuring that transcripts were transcribed properly, the files of the data were imported into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose. Dedoose (2017) is a web based qualitative and mix-methods research application developed and designed by Eli Leiber and Thomas S. Weiserner at the University of California, Los Angeles. The software is a tool that assisted with the coding and categorizing of the data. Codes were created and assigned by me. I also used this time to start with initial coding. Initial coding is meant to open up the data. According to Charmaz (2014), initial codes are “provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data” (p. 117). Charmaz argues that the process of initial coding should allow the researcher to remain open to the different possibilities of codes that arise from the data. Part of initial coding required examining each of the survey responses and the participants interviews line-by-line.

During this initial coding phase, the participants own words were used as codes, also known as in vivo coding. Charmaz (2014) explains that “In vivo codes help us to preserve participants’ meanings of their own views and actions in the coding itself...in vivo codes serve



as symbolic markers of participants’ speech and meanings” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 134). An example of these forms of coding, in vivo and coding with gerunds, is included (see Table 1).

Table 1: Examples of In Vivo Codes

Examples of in vivo codes	Developing funding Developing program Advocating for position Building resources Using budget Cultivating connections Teaching resources Needing to hire part time folks Creating opportunities for professional development Building trust Going on strike Revamping divisional goals and mission statements Raising the profile of my college Doing more with less
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Furthermore, grounded theorists also suggest initial coding should use action words or gerunds, words ending in –ing. Charmaz adds that “coding for action reduces tendencies to code for type of people” (p. 116). The codes used during this portion of analysis gave the participants’ own perspectives.

### **Focused Coding**

The second major phase in constructivist grounded theory coding is focused coding. Focused coding is where the research selects the most significant and frequent initial codes to analyze larger portions of the data. Focused coding, as Charmaz (2014) explains, “condenses and sharpens what you have already done because it highlights what you find to be important in your

emerging analysis” (p. 138). Below, I have included three different examples of this process (see Figure 1),

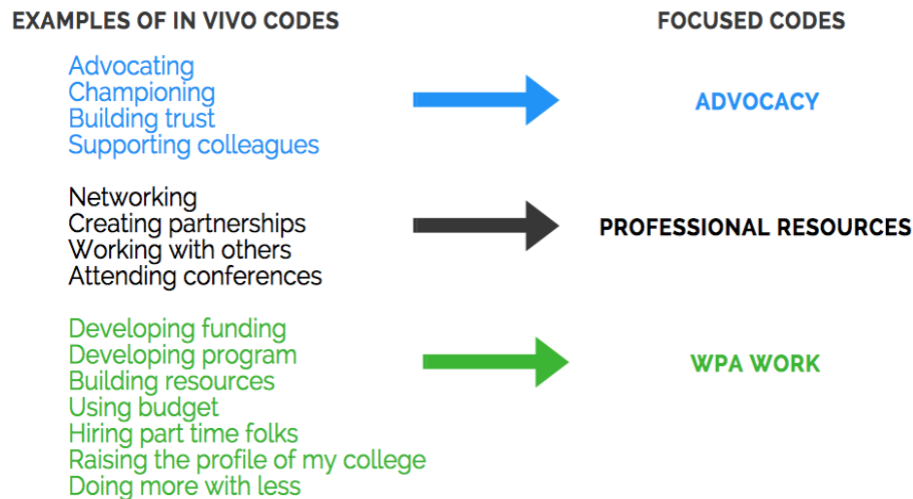


Figure 1: In Vivo Codes to Focused Codes

I looked at the various data collected to see how each community college WPA talked about their work experiences. I compared what each said, and this resulted in focused codes.

### CONSTANT COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Because using grounded theory for data analysis is a recursive process, constant comparative analysis is used to establish analytic distinctions among the codes and categories that emerge. The process of constant comparison required that I constantly compare the data in order to establish and compare emerging concepts. For example, I first compared what participants stated in the survey with what was stated in the interviews. Then, I compared statements across the different participants.

## **RESEARCHER'S MEMOS**

Throughout the entire duration of data collection, I kept memos. During the survey and participants' interviews, I took notes of emerging themes and reactions I had to the data. Memo writing is a pivotal step in grounded theory as it gives the researcher a space to stop and analyze their ideas about the data. In accordance with constructivist grounded theory, I wrote memos to record my thoughts, reactions, and interpretations of the data (Birks and Mills, 2015, p. 40). Furthermore, Charmaz explains that "Memo-writing creates an interactive space for conversing with yourself about the data, codes, ideas, and hunches. Questions arise" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 162). All of the memos I wrote were in the form of freewriting. Writing memos, at first, was a tedious task and something that I had difficulty doing. To get myself to write, I had to give myself a minimum of five minutes to write what came to mind after each time I sat down to analyze the surveys and after each interview was conducted. These five minutes of freewriting continued as I coded the data. Sorting and reviewing memos allowed me to generate ideas about the theoretical framework for this dissertation.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

For the purpose of this study, Bourdieu's theory of social practice was applied to examine the experiences of community college WPAs. Specifically, this study uses Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field to explore how each of these play a role in the work of WPAs at community colleges. Bourdieu depicted the relationship between these concepts with the equation  $[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$ . Maton (2012) explains this equation by writing that "one's practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of the social arena (field)" (p. 50). Bourdieu's equation implies that habitus, capital, and field are all equally important, which are crucial to

understanding practice. Thus, all of these concepts will be important in understanding the practices of WPAs at community colleges.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is his most influential yet most complex concept. Bourdieu defines habitus as "a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Habitus is the physical embodiment of how structures are embedded within individuals or a collective consciousness. Habitus consists of, according to Maton,

our ways of acting, feeling, thinking, and being. It captures how we carry our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others. This is an ongoing and active process--we are engaged in a continuous process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our making (p. 51)

Furthermore, habitus is constantly being evolved and adjusted to current contexts.

Habitus is the result of social structures and how the rules of certain fields have been internalized. This study uses the concept of habitus to explore how community colleges WPAs perceive their own social agency and how those perceptions allow for certain courses of actions.

Another essential part of Bourdieu's equation is the concept of capital. Capital, according to Bourdieu, are resources that provide advantageous positioning in social spaces. Bourdieu describes two forms of capital, economic capital and symbolic capital (Moore, 2012, p. 100). Economic capital is monetary assets, where symbolic capital is "types of assets that bring social and cultural advantage and disadvantage (p. 104). Symbolic capital can further be divided into subfields, such as cultural capital, linguistic capital, scientific and literary capital. However,

symbolic capital is greatly influenced by economic capital. For this study, symbolic capital, more specifically cultural capital, will be of most value.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital exists in three forms, embodied, objectified, and institutional states, as explained by Moore (2012). The embodied state is the physical features, such as body language, stances, intonation and lifestyle choices, one assimilates for a particular field. The objectified state refers to the access of objects, such as paintings or instruments, that add to the symbolic value of a person. The institutionalized form of capital refers to education and academic qualifications acquired by a person that add to their symbolic capital within a particular field. The more scarce the credential, the more cultural capital associated with that credential. The concept of capital is crucial to this study because each participant will have different forms of capital that influence their interactions with others within particular fields. The power, or lack thereof, is determined by the level of cultural capital each community college WPA possesses relative to others in the field. The various forms of capital can explain how some community college WPAs accumulate and possess, while others are deprived of, advocacy resources. Capital rich WPAs at community colleges will have advantageous positioning, better access, and potentially more influence in advocating issues.

For Bourdieu, the social world is divided into various fields. Each field has unique sets of rules, practices, knowledges, and forms of capitals. Bourdieu often used the sport of football to explain his ideas. The rules of the field, what players can and cannot do, depend on the players' positions. According to Bourdieu, people, or agents, use different strategies to maintain or improve their position (Thomson, 2012, p. 67). Ultimately, fields produce effects on agents. Whatever the field, whether scientific, academic, or political, each has its own structure of internal power relations which are defined and maintained by habitus from individuals or

collectively. For this project, higher education is a field, which can further be divided into various fields, four-year universities, community colleges, technical colleges, etc. In this study, I consider community colleges as a field. The history that community colleges carry in this country inherently affect the habitus of the people within this field.

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field have not previously been used in analyzing WPA work at community colleges. These concepts allow me to analyze how the histories of each participant and their various forms of capital, in action within the fields they navigate, affect and inform their job. Ultimately, analyzing habitus, capital, and field gives me an opportunity to add and further expand the definition of the work performed by writing program administrators, especially those working inside the field of community colleges that often does not get discussed in WPA scholarship.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of this study, which were collected through a survey and one-on-one interviews. The data collected gives significant insight into the work performed by community college WPAs on a regular basis.

## **Chapter 4: Findings from Community College Writing Program Administrators**

This chapter presents the findings of my study. Through a survey and semi-structured interviews, participants provided insight into the principle research questions that guided this study:

- How do Writing Program Administrators at community colleges describe their work?
- What resources do WPAs at community colleges draw on to support their work?
- What challenges do WPAs face at community colleges?
- How is the work of a Writing Program Administrator defined at community colleges?

The following chapter is organized by the two methods used for collecting data. The first section reports the survey results, and the second section reports the data collected from the interviews. The survey results give a broad picture of WPA work across the country, while the interviews allow us to see this work more contextualized. Together, the results illustrate the complexities of the work performed by community college WPAs.

### **OVERVIEW OF SURVEY**

The survey for this study was sent out to the WPA-listserv and the TYCA-listserv. The survey was available from May 2017 to September 2017 so community college WPAs would have time to take the survey during the summer. In total, 53 faculty from community colleges across the country responded to the 22-question survey. The close-ended questions provide the reader with background information of the people surveyed and give us a better understanding of who community college WPAs are. Participants were not required to answer all questions. Some of the questions asked respondents to select “all that apply” while other questions were open-ended. The open-ended questions gave the survey respondents an opportunity respond in their own words.

## **General Demographics**

As mentioned above, respondents had the ability to skip questions they did not want to answer; as a result, 24 identified as female and six identified as male. Forty respondents identified their age. The range of ages varied from 31-65 years, with the majority, nine respondents, responding that they were between 31-35 years of age. In terms of ethnicity, a total of 31 respondents responded. Twenty-eight identified as White, two identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, and one preferred not to answer.

Participants were asked to identify the average enrollment at their community college. There was a total of 39 responses. Nine participants identified their community college as having 1,000-5,000 students. Ten respondents stated 11,000-15,000 and ten other respondents responded with 16,000-20,000. There were two responses where the enrollment was over 31,000. Participants were also asked to describe their institution and were given the option to select more than one answer. Twenty-five respondents identified their community college as urban, 15 as rural, seven as Hispanic-Serving College, zero as Historically Black College, and one as Tribal College. Other respondents also described their community colleges as suburban or state wide multi-campus. In addition, participants were asked if their department referred to its writing courses as a writing program. There were 40 responses to this question, with 25 no and 15 yes.

Furthermore, participants were asked to identify their job title, and click all that apply. A total of 43 respondents responded to this question. 17 respondents answered the questions with more than one response. The majority of respondents identified as Professors, while only four selected Writing Program Administrator. The following figure (see Figure 2) shows the distribution of results:



**Q1 - WHAT IS YOUR JOB TITLE?**  
(CLICK ALL THAT APPLY)

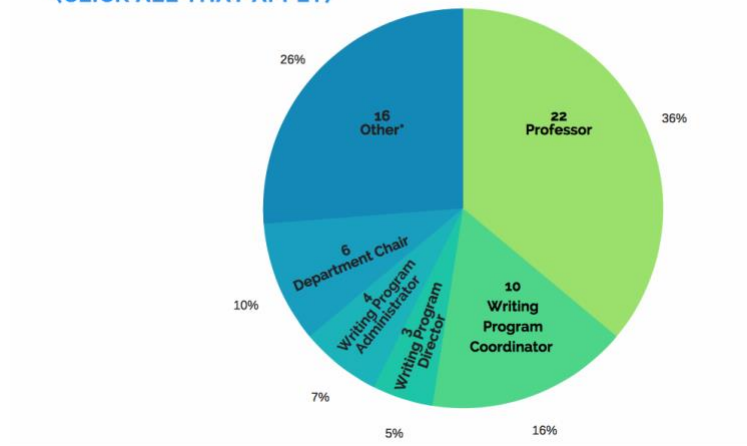


Figure 2: Job Titles

As the figure shows, 16 participants did not identify with the answer choices but provided a wide range of responses: Adjunct Faculty Coordinator, Developmental Program Coordinator, Academic Program Coordinator, Composition Coordinator, Writing Center Director, Instructor with Writing Program coordination duties, English Department Coordinator, Writing Center Coordinator and English Department Coordinator, Assistant Department Chair, Assistant Dean of Composition, and Faculty (there are no faculty ranks at the institution).

Participants were also asked to list how long they have worked at their community college. A total of 44 respondents responded to this question. One year was the least amount of time a survey respondent had been a part of his or her community college, and the longest amount of time was 34 years. The median was nine years.

In terms of degree attainment by participants, a total of 44 respondents responded to this question.

### Q3 - What is your highest degree attained?

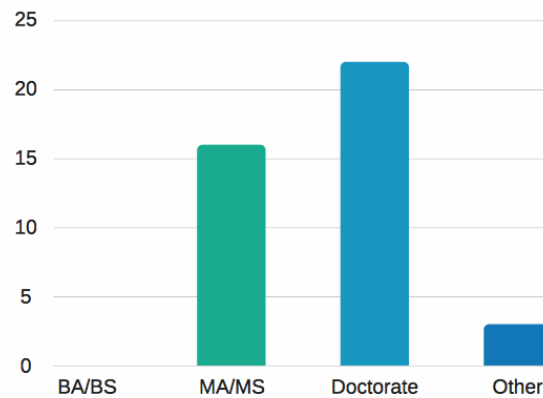


Figure 3: Degrees Attained

As presented in the figure above (see Figure 3), 22 respondents identified as having a Doctorate, 16 selected MA/MS, and three selected none of the above. Of the three that selected none of the above, two stated they had MFAs and one a M.Ed. Respondents were also asked to identify the field of their highest degree (see Figure 4), and a total of 44 respondents responded.

### Q4 - In which field is your highest degree?

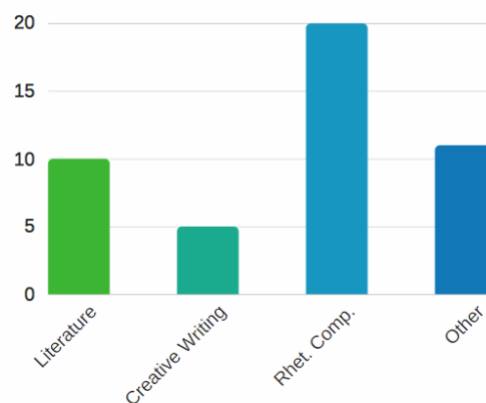


Figure 4: Discipline of highest degree

Of the 44 respondents, 21 identified Rhetoric and Composition as their field of study. Nine respondents identified Literature and 4 identified Creative Writing as their main areas of study. Eleven respondents did not identify with the choices provided and listed degrees in Cinema Studies; TESOL; English Education; New Media Studies; Cultural Studies; Speech, Reading, and Education; and Film Studies.

Survey participants were also asked to identify the courses they had taught in the last year. Because participants were asked to click all that apply, there were a total of 103 responses. The majority of responses, 40 total, were transfer-level literature, followed by 22 responses as one level below transfer level writing. There were 19 responses for transfer level literature and 10 responses for two levels below transfer level writing. In addition, there were eight responses for developmental reading, and some respondents stated they also teach transfer level pop culture, professional writing, and cinema studies.

Survey respondents were also asked whether or not they received course release time for directing their writing program, and a total of 39 survey respondents responded. A total of 29 stated they receive course release time while 10 did not. The time of course release varied. One participant described having as many as 15-credit hours of release per year, while some participants stated receiving six credit hours of reassignment time for the year. Other participants mentioned receiving one course release per year.

Some questions on the survey were opened-ended, allowing the participants to write down their responses using their own words. One of the open-ended questions asked respondents to describe their job responsibilities. The responses to this question were varied, but many responses started with descriptors, such as “They are huge,” “So many!,” and “Where do I

begin?,” followed by a long list of tasks. A response outlining the job responsibilities that is representative of responses given by others is below:

Coordinating basic writing, developmental reading, ESL, and writing center programs. Working with an additional writing program coordinator who focuses on first-year writing. Credentialing instructors (both external applicants and continuing instructors). Mentoring and training instructors. Maintaining a website. Developing curricular resources for developmental courses and first-year writing. Organizing face-to-face and online workshops. Coordinating a multiple measures placement process. Training placement teams and advisors on placement issues. Conducting annual assessments. Coordinating grant projects. Working on projects at the request of the Provost. Coordinating departmental committees. Coordinating class visits. Addressing problems with instruction and problems with students. Developing online writing courses. Mentoring and supporting online instructors. Supporting writing center directors. Working with international student coordinators on ESL issues.

Verbs such as coordinating, working, developing, conducting, mentoring, and supervising appeared in many of the responses. However, “advocate” was also a word used by many of the respondents. Some respondents described their work as “advocating for our students,” “advocating for our writing program,” and “being an advocate for adjunct faculty.” This emphasis on advocacy will be further described later in this chapter.

Although plenty of the survey respondents articulated their job responsibilities, several respondents noted that their job responsibilities were not clearly outlined in their job description or by their department. For example, one respondent wrote, “Not entirely clear at many times but

includes participating on statewide advisory program, overseeing/developing: acceleration model for students one level below transfer, assessment model, and models for placement.” Another similar response stated, “I have simply continued the tasks that were created under a former dean, and it is out of sheer personal interest that this college should have a writing program.” There were also a number of respondents which mentioned that there was not an official document outlining their job responsibilities.

Two particular responses were of interest as the respondents noted external factors having an effect on their work. One respondent said that job responsibilities were “Changing in the face of statewide mandates,” and another survey participant noted that their job responsibilities were put on hold due to their community college going on strike in 2016. A more in-depth discussion of the effects from external factors on WPA work will be discussed in the significant themes section of this chapter.

Survey participants were also asked to describe the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks which inform their department’s writing curriculum. Twenty-eight participants responded to this question, and again, responses to this question varied. Seven respondents described adopting a version the CWPA Outcomes Statement: “We have aligned the outcomes of our Writing sequence with the CWPA's Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition including our WRT 100 (fundamentals) WRT 101 (rhetoric) and WRT 102 (writing about literature). We incorporate research into each level of our writing classes and emphasize revision.” Another survey respondent wrote, “Although faculty may employ pedagogical methods that fit their individual needs, our first-year composition courses are designed around the WPA Outcomes Statement. We created a version of the WPA Outcomes Statement to meet our own needs and revisit outcomes every three years if/when we select new textbooks.”

Several respondents described using other frameworks. Two respondents mentioned using Downs and Wardle's Writing About Writing approach. One respondent wrote that their program is "moving from a 'intro to academic discourse' model (Bartholomae and Petrosky) toward a 'flexible rhetoric/21st-century literacies' model (Yancey, Lunsford and Ede, etc.); piloting 'teaching for transfer curriculum' with threshold concepts and writing about writing (Yancey et al.; Downs and Wardle; Adler-Kassner and Wardle) in fall; process or post-process." Another survey respondent stated, "Our colleagues have been working hard to create a framework more centered on equity and diversity issues. Right now, actual pedagogical orientations are very mixed. Many of my colleagues embrace a Current-Traditional pedagogical frame. My co-WPA and I work with translanguaging and multiple literacies."

One respondent emphasized that the writing and pedagogical frameworks were informed by research conducted about their program and their student body population. This person stated, "Our curriculum is based on locally conducted research on student learning, institutional assessment data, and scholarship on teaching and learning. We train instructors in using evidence-based practices, adapted to locally situated needs. Our program integrates reading into writing courses because we serve a high percentage of students who are underprepared for college reading. We have eliminated multiple levels of developmental coursework, which means that instruction focuses on individual student needs and helping academically at-risk students prepare for credit-bearing courses within one semester and supporting students who are accelerated to degree-credit composition."

Although some respondents mention using frameworks that are informed by the field of Rhetoric and Composition, other respondents addressed that they did not have a defined framework for their courses. Some responses describe "we have less consistency/coherency than

is optimal,” “These are extremely varied and contentious,” “there is no defined framework,” and “Diverse.” Other respondents addressed that some faculty still taught with very current-traditional approaches. Some responses that are the most representative of this idea are “Most of the older faculty and part-time faculty come from traditional literature background and have little to no training in composition and rhetoric. These folks tend to teach a current traditional and/or processed based approach to writing, and some do not support the idea that explicit instruction in writing is useful” and “We are woefully out of date. Probably the only agreed upon practices are process writing and research as inquiry. We are struggling to get faculty up-to-date around multimodal composing and genre theory.” The issue with not having a set framework is expressed in the following response:

There are faculty who forward a range of approaches couched in various strands of Comp/Rhet, from Writing about Writing to Teaching for Transfer to multimodal Writer/Designer approaches to portfolio and genre theory based curriculum. There are no shared texts and no curricular model; we work from shared outcomes adapted from WPA recommendations but otherwise have little coherence. While this provides a wide variety of experiences, it also creates some confusion for students navigating a two or three course series because they often encounter different vocabularies, values, and definitions of what "academic writing" is in their various writing courses.

Another question participants were asked was how their teaching informed their work as writing program administrators. Many respondents reflected on the fact that while being writing program administrators, they are still active teachers. For example, one respondent answered, “I regularly teach all of the courses in my program and use my own courses to pilot materials that I share with other instructors, along with feedback from other pilot instructors.” Two responses

reflect what the majority of survey respondents shared: “I am still a teacher while I administer, so it constantly informs what I do, especially what I consider to be needs for professional development” and “Because I am still in the classroom, I would like to think that I can not only empathize with faculty, but also sympathize with the challenges they encounter each semester, which further informs my approach as a leader.”

Two respondents of the survey addressed that their students have shaped their work as WPAs. One respondent wrote, “My students have of course helped me to become more sensitive to the real needs of people and individuals, and I think learning to effectively work with individuals as a WPA--in order to ultimately collaborate and function effectively as a department--has been a primary, ongoing concern for me.” The second respondent stated, “Our largely multilingual population compelled me to stop teaching from an American cultural studies perspective.”

One of the open-ended questions asked if there were other faculty or staff that shared the responsibilities of running the writing program. This question garnered 26 responses. Seven of the responses stated they did not share responsibilities with others. There were three respondents who responded with “somewhat” and “sort of” followed by an explanation. One respondent wrote, “Somewhat--we are hiring more comp-rhet people lately and so it is easier now to have others take on more leadership and development roles; e.g., we have several faculty heading up curriculum design for our ALP; two new hires are comp-rhet people (one with PhD) who have programmatic experience. Department chair keeps up on current trends and does a lot.” However, the majority of respondents mentioned that responsibilities are shared and work is done collaboratively. For example, “Yes. Our administrative assistants are frankly indispensable--we would collapse without them. We would also collapse without the real help



and hard work put forth by both full-time faculty, and quite a few adjunct faculty, who sincerely volunteer their time and efforts for us and our student body.”

Another response representative of many was, “Yes--Our department has a system of "course coordinators." I am course coordinator for ENG 102, working with other coordinators for ENG 101, ENG 100 (basic writing), ENG 200s (sophomore-level lit surveys), etc.” Another respondent wrote, “We have a collaboratively ran committee called the Composition Resource Committee that assesses departmental needs and develops professional programs in response. We have a faculty-driven departmental assessment chaired by faculty other than the WPA; part-time and full-time faculty participate in assessment and faculty development programs.”

The majority of respondents mentioned sharing work responsibilities with others, and one of the questions in the survey asked about the resources they used to support their work. Many of the respondents wrote that they draw from national organization such as Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), Two-Year College English Association (TYCA), Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), and Community College Research Center (CCRC), especially the journals published by these organization. Some also mentioned they followed threads on listservs such as CWPA, TYCA and Council on Basic Writing (CBW). Because of small budgets, numerous respondents described drawing from various online, open access journals. Many of the written responses also describe drawing from colleagues and peers. A response that best shows this is:

The best resources are the people around me--administrative assistants (who know everything, and are absolutely indispensable), former department chairs/WPAs, former professors and mentors, and my own colleagues. I was also fortunate that before

becoming chair, I was actually in a graduate level rhet-comp course that exclusively studied Writing Program Administration; the information and resources I encountered in that course have been profoundly helpful.

Another respondent wrote, “My most important resources are my colleagues. I regularly seek and value their feedback on my work, and I try to work collaboratively with others to the extent that I can.”

The last open-ended question asked survey participants to describe challenges or obstacles they face as the writing program administrators, if any. This question received 27 responses, and the responses were the longest. Some of the major themes in these responses were faculty buy-in from literature professors, relying on adjuncts, budgetary issues, and challenges with the WPA position. Some responses include, “Hostile faculty who want to teach literature, among other things,” “faculty who have little expertise in comp rhet pedagogies (some are actively hostile to C/R as a field)” and “Lit-centric faculty who truly do view teaching composition as a burden (or as something that anyone can do). Not to paint too broadly with the brush, but my experience is that older lit faculty are not very conversant with scholarship in composition studies and they balk at any call for consistency across sections or shared understanding of our outcomes and program.”

In addition, the many responses include that reliance on adjunct faculty and budgetary cuts cause many challenges. The following response is representative of the whole, “Another major challenge we face is heavy reliance on adjunct faculty at our college, adjuncts who are seriously underpaid and struggle to make a living wage by patching together jobs at various institutions locally.” Regarding funding, the majority of respondents wrote that small budgets were an issue. One respondent summarized this issue succinctly, “Community colleges across

the country are increasingly having their budgets stripped, and yet what is expected of us continues to escalate.” Some of the most alarming responses stated, “Our governor just cut ALL funding for our CC system, the largest in the state,” and “It is very, very difficult to run a statewide program with a very small budget.” In addition, adjunct issues are closely tied to funding: “I don't often have any money or way to pay adjuncts to attend any required meetings.”

Another major challenge described throughout the responses is that of the WPA position. Several respondents mentioned they were the first WPA at their campus: “I am the first WPA at the school, so I'm developing the position as I go. We do not have tenure, so it's difficult to make waves or complain about anything.” Several also described issues of authority tied to the position: “suspicion on the part of colleagues that a WPA is an "administrator,” and another survey respondent wrote, “I have no real authority--just the mythology of my experience and expertise. Even though I could use more money (of course), a title to go with this work would really help me by heard by faculty and even some staff that I interact with on issues of writing.”

### **SIGNIFICANT THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS**

In order to get a more in-depth understanding to the responses survey participants gave, the final question of the survey asked participants to provide their contact information if they were interested in participating in an interview. Fifteen participants included their contact information, so I contacted every one of them through email. Of the 15, a total of 9 participants agreed to participate in the interview phase. Below is a table illustrating information about each of the interview participants (see Table 2).

Table 2: List of Interview Participants

Name (pseudonyms)	Title	Highest Degree	Number of years at Institution	Course Release	Type of Institution	Average Enrollment
John	Professor and Writing Program Administrator	Ph.D.	20	1 course=6.25 quarterly credit hours	Urban	6,000-10,000
Michelle	Professor and Department Chair	Ph.D. in English	9.5	6 credits in Fall & Spring and 3 in Summer	Suburban	16,000-20,000
Carey	Coordinator of Academic Services and part-time instructor	M.A. in Literature	15	None	Rural	1,000-5,000
Elizabeth	Assistant Dean of Composition	Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition	9	15 credits per academic year	Urban	31,000+
Anne	Professor and Writing Program Coordinator	Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition	2	50% reassignment time	Rural/Urban	11,000-15,000
Mary	Professor and Writing Program Administrator	M.A. in Literature	10	None	Suburban	11,000-15,000
Jackie	Professor and Composition Coordinator	M. Ed	5	6 credits	Rural/Urban	21,000-25,000
Julia	Professor and Writing Program Administrator	M.A. in English	21	None	Suburban	11,000-15,000
Diana	Writing Program Administrator	Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition	1	6 credits	Urban and Hispanic-Serving College	6,000-10,000

After the semi-structure interviews were conducted, the responses went through initial coding. After the initial coding of the data was performed, all of the initial codes were synthesized into focused codes, which provided the significant themes for the following section. From the review of the data, the following themes emerged: description of WPA position, challenges, advocacy, and resources.

### **The WPA Position**

One topic of discussion conveyed by several of the interview participants was that they were not hired as a Writing Program Administrator but as a faculty member. Anne describes taking on a teaching position then transitioning into the WPA role:

The job I originally took here, however, was a teaching position, a full-time teaching position, and at the end of my first year in that position our Composition Coordinator left to take another position in California, and because I was the only other person here with a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition, I was asked to step into this position and so that's how I ended up in this chair.

Another participant's experience, Diana's, was fairly similar. Diana stated "They actually didn't hire me as WPA originally but it was with that intention that I kind of left the job interview thinking it was something along that line." Diana also describes that after being hired, she was told "'Well we have this position and it's going to come open in a few months and so we'd like you to take it.' There was one professor who had one rhet comp ... Or not rhet comp degree, one rhet comp class and they said, 'Well you're the most qualified so you're going to do this.' She goes on to describe, "My mentor that was assigned to me was the WPA and it was essentially we'd like you to kind of shadow this person and learn what they're doing so that you can take

over this role. I had the ability to say no to it but there wasn't really a reason to say no at the time.”

Several WPAs described doing WPA work without the title. For example, Carey conveyed: “Because we don't have the title or the formal status of it, I feel like in the list-servs and then everywhere, it's really not recognized at all. I always think maybe it's not real, we're just pretending, you know?” She goes on to describe that not having a title did not give her authority: “I don't really have the authority as far as title goes. I think that can make a difference when you're talking to a group of people who don't know you otherwise...because I don't have a title that's related to this work, if I go to a workshop or I'm talking to a group of faculty, I can't say, ‘As your writing program director’. I have to say, “Well, as the coordinator of blah blah blah”, and there's 20 different versions of me, but I'm the only one doing this work.”

Another participant, Elizabeth, discussed first being hired as a “corraler of adjuncts.” She expressed that for her there were a lot of problems with the position she originally took “because the adjuncts didn't have the kind of support they needed but they were teaching 70% or more of our composition classes.” As a result, this WPA came up with a proposal for a different position, which she called Assistant Dean of Composition. Once she got the position, she described communicating what she was doing as WPA work and started calling it WPA work to her colleagues. She described her work of creating a writing program as “Guerilla Administration”: “It falls under what I call guerrilla administration, which is how I came to form a writing program where there wasn't one.” She goes on to state:

The way that I had to go about getting that done had to be through faculty buy-in before the decision was made. The way that I started to approach that was through a lot of one-on-one conversations, and this, the guerrilla stuff is what comes back, this is all part of

guerrilla administration. Instead of top down mandating things I spent a lot of time talking one-on-one, and in small groups, and using moments within professional development pieces to talk about why we do the things we do and what's the value in certain things that we did.

Elizabeth took on more of a grassroots approach to developing the job position at her institution. Another interview participant, Mary, stated she wanted to build a WPA position that moved beyond the perceived notions of task-oriented tasks, although they are part of the job, but to move towards “the WPA position as being an equity focused position, not just a position about coordinating the writing program.”

Closely connected to the idea of doing WPA work without the title, many participants described the lack of authority associated with the work. Diana stated many people in her department viewed her as having the role of a supervisor. She pointed out, “Some of them may look at it as I'm somehow supervising them. My job isn't supposed to be supervisory in any sense though.” John also explained that his role as WPA is not to be a supervisor: “There's no supervisory roles here. Nobody answers to this position at all. And I'm not the only person that's had this position. Nobody answers to me. I don't supervise anybody. I don't hire anybody.” He also described having “no power, just persuasion.” John who describes having no power, but persuasion:

I can just call meetings and hope people show up and talk to people and see what's going on and what their concerns are. Meet them half way and bring data and persuasive arguments to try to get to do things. And most people do want to do things. Everybody genuinely cares about the success of the students, so as long as they see that the work

we're doing as a program leads to that, there's buy ins, but everybody's busy, so anything we try to get done has to be done with volunteers.

Working with or without the WPA title can cause issues related to authority. The WPA title creates the illusion of hierarchy among the faculty in the department but working without the title can also leave a WPA feeling in limbo.

Another important aspect of the WPA position described by many of the participants was the sense of professionalism. Mary conveys, “For the longest time I think, in the two-year college, there hasn't been a culture or an expectation that people would work in the way that we were describing. I think there was a high level of discomfort like ‘who are you?’, kind of a discomfort with the idea that we have loyalty to this larger discipline instead of loyalty to each other.” Another participant, John, points out that doing WPA work requires knowledge from different areas of writing:

We're supposed to be able to know something about everything. Placement on Monday, assessment on Tuesday, curriculum design on Wednesday, mixed language learners on Thursday, et cetera, et cetera. It just goes on and on. Can't possibly have time to know about this stuff. You just scramble to figure out what's going on and do your best to make some sense. That's a challenge I think. Just trying to know everything and close all the loops.

The WPAs in this study, whether or not hired as WPAs and with or without the title, are all performing WPA work that requires a lot and knowledge about the diverse student populations at community colleges and knowledge for persuading their faculty peers.



## Challenges

Working as a WPA can have many challenges, and one of those challenges is working against a deficit ideology surrounding community colleges and the students who attend these institutions. For example, one participant mentioned, “Nationwide most people believe community college students are not well prepared for higher education or the workforce. Even in my own department, there are people who work from a deficit ideology in teaching writing. It’s difficult to get people, even faculty, especially those teaching lit, to not see our students as needing remediation.” Mary shared a similar sentiment when she stated, “It’s probably true that most people here are coming from deficit ideology when they’re encountering students from multilingual backgrounds.”

Furthermore, another challenge expressed by some of the participants are some of the external pressures that are out of their control. Elizabeth described the obstacles created by the Affordable Care Act. She describes,

When I was first hired, adjuncts could teach up to 12 credits a semester. We could do this thing where we could get permission for them to do overloads where they could teach 15 credits in the fall and then teach fewer in the spring and that was okay. Well, when the Affordable Care Act went in, that was limited. In fact, at first, they were only allowed to teach up to nine credits a semester.

The changes created by the Affordable Care Act caused hiring issues for this WPA. All of a sudden, this WPA could not find enough adjuncts to cover all of the composition courses on the schedule.

Another challenge which occurred in this state was a mandated change in the placement test. Elizabeth describes this test as “basically designed to systematically place students higher than it did before because the argument was that they were spending too much time in remedial

education and it was delaying their time to degree. So, there's a lot of pressure within the state to reduce time to degree.” Although these changes were a struggle to deal with, they eventually led to changes in the writing program, which will be discussed in a later section.

A WPA from across the country, Mary, described a different external pressure, and this was that faculty went on strike in the Spring of 2016. Mary stated:

Our faculty went on strike in spring. We had a three-day strike. It's pretty unusual. Our school went on strike in the 1970s, I think maybe 72 or 74 or something like that. We just had a lot of disruption. Our vice president of instruction left the college. Our president resigned. There was just this turmoil in terms of labor and really in terms of what is happening with the budget and how that reflects on all these questions of what your programs and your department looks like.

As a result of the strike, Mary mentioned, “The strike had a huge impact on our thinking. It had a huge impact on the way that we interacted with the faculty Union and the administration. There were accusations thrown that we were colluding with the enemy because we were trying to get some work done during this period.” Furthermore, the strike had a huge impact on things the WPA and program were attempting to do. Mary added that during the spring semester, the writing program was unable to do much because when they planned something, there was a strike or a walkout.

Community colleges across the country vary from state to state. A WPA from a community college in the Northeast, Carey, described her biggest challenge as not having the ability to hire any full-time faculty because the state has never allowed them to do so. She states, “The way our system is set up is that we are a college that don't have any full-time faculty, so that's a note to make, and we are in 12 locations across the state.” Carey further describes,

“Basically the way it works with our faculty is our faculty are people who have full time jobs someplace else and they may be in a related business or some other kind of related experience to what they would teach, and then they come here and teach a class as an extra part-time thing.” For this WPA, this creates challenges because it is difficult to put together program meetings or to get people involved in anything. Additionally, Jackie mentioned, “We don't have tenure as an option here for anyone and, we are on year-to-year contracts, that's your full-time faculty ... nobody has more than one year of a contract at any time” You're simply more cautious about ... what you say and what you do, because I plan to be here for a very long time; I'm very invested in this school. But, I also don't know that for certain, and so I do try to think of things, closer to the three-year goal line, or maybe the one year goal of things that I can accomplish.”

For John, a challenge was getting people across the state to talk to colleagues at other institutions, this included those at community college and universities. For example, John describes having reciprocal placement throughout the state but campuses doing different things, so he states,

our placement processing should be relatively aligned if that's the case. Because of that, and because I know that English 101 is not aligned across the state, that what happens at a college in central Washington in rural area is probably very different from what happens at the Flagship University. I talked to a couple of people, in particular one at our state board, about finding a way to develop a dialogue among all the colleges, two-year and four-year, about what's happening in their first-year comp courses.

For John, creating dialogue across the state is crucial because it benefits the students.

Another challenge commonly discussed throughout the interviews was the lack of resources. Sentiments such as “the institution has not given me a lot of resources” or “I really

don't have a lot of tangible resources” was not uncommon. Elizabeth claims, “In terms of resources, we didn't have any so a lot of the resources that I had to rely on were human resources, the power of the people in my program. A lot of it is very much dependent on strong healthy relationships within my department, with my colleagues, and across campus with people in the library, people in the writing center.” She also describes lack of resources in terms of not having enough adjuncts, “One of the big challenges that I faced was, I didn't have enough adjuncts to cover the work that needed to be done, and we often would lose adjuncts.” At another institution, Michelle shares “Our institution has not given us a lot of money. In fact, it’s very, very small...the funding’s very, very minimal.” Not having enough resources makes WPA work difficult, but not impossible.

One of the biggest challenges described by many of the interview participants were budgetary challenges. Diana, for instance, did not have a budget: “I don't have a budget so I have to rely on other people for a budget. That is something that we're working on but as with many colleges and institutions at the moment we're faced with budget-cuts in the states so having money directed toward the program is somewhat difficult.” Another WPA, Carey, described how her state’s budget affects her program, “We're the last, I think second to last in the whole country as far as money being allotted to us from the state. I think New Hampshire comes after us. The state doesn't give us any money, so it's not like we have a pool of money sitting around waiting to be spent. It's not like I'm looking for that at all, I don't even know what I'm looking for, I just know that we're doing the work, and that’s what really matters.” Additionally, John described budget issues having an effect on professional development. He stated, “I have a very tiny amount of money I can pay them [adjuncts], which is about 26 dollars an hour to come to professional development meetings and do that kind of thing. But, they have to do that really out

of their own volition.” As a result, many WPAs just have to make do with the very little funding they receive.

By far, the biggest challenge described by almost every WPA was buy-in from both faculty and administration. Convincing administration to buy into the idea of having a WPA was difficult for many of the participants. For example, Jackie describes her college administration as resistant in creating the WPA position because they did not want to give faculty any release for any reason. She stated, “Our President has been vocal about wanting his faculty in the classroom, and so he did not, up until my position was created, did not approve any release except for the faculty Senate President...I'm sure there are documents that they use to argue for the position, but I haven't seen those.” Additionally, Carey mentions, “I think the fact that there isn't literature that we can draw from to make the case to the deans or to admin for this position result in not being able to even have a discussion with administration about the position.” Mary also describes having to talk to the division chair, then the Dean, and finally the Vice President of Instruction in order to establish the position. She stated, “At first he was like, ‘No, no, no, no,’ and finally he gave us this provisional approval that was basically more like a contract based, like you're going to do these three things kind of funding. It was a way for us to get our foot in the door I guess and get the position started. It was not ideal.” However, at the time of the interview, this WPA did not know if she would have a contract for the following academic year.

In conjunction with convincing administration, faculty buy-in is described as the biggest challenge for many of the participants. Many of the WPAs had to deal with faculty buy-in for the WPA position itself. Mary illustrates the issue with buy-in:

One of the objections that people had in our department was the A in the WPA. They didn't want someone called an administrator...I think probably our biggest challenge is

working to get colleagues who don't know or care what a WPA is and think why did you get this really jumped up title? It's not a language that's part of what they speak. It's not a tradition here. It's this cultural exterior intrusion into their space.

Similarly, Diana describes, “There’s a lot of misunderstanding about what I do or what I’m doing. I’ve had a couple people like ‘You don’t teach course like we do so you’re not even busy.’” Many community college faculty are hesitant to buying-in to the idea of having another administrator attempting to influence their work.

Some of the WPAs also expressed faculty were resistant to buy-in if it directly affected any of the faculty classroom practices. For example, Anne expressed, “There is a pretty round rejection of standardization so it's very difficult to get people on board with things like assessment, and evaluation, and shared textbooks, and that kind of thing, and so figuring out on the one hand how to support faculty who may really need those things while not offending faculty who don't value those things, it can be a challenge.” One reason why this buy-in difficult is “because faculty are free to approach the teaching however they want to,” as stated by Carey. According to Mary, the culture of community colleges allows faculty to have autonomy over their courses: “There's kind of a culture of you do your work, I'll do mine, leave me alone, in a nice way. People aren't unkind. There is sometimes a little bit of why would we collaborate on this stuff? What are you talking about? Dynamic what, you know? You can't blame people.” Furthermore, Elizabeth illustrated what faculty-buy approaches are like for her:

Full time faculty weren't required to teach that book, but I spent a lot of time going and talking to full time faculty about, ‘Have you tried this book?’ ‘Have you looked at it?’ ‘Let me show you some things that I think you're going to, that you're really going to like about it.’ In that respect, I think faculty buy-in for the WPA looks a lot like being the

evangelist for the program. You have to do a lot of one-on-one evangelical work to get people to understand why we're going this particular direction. So yeah, it's the hardest piece but it's also the most important

Buy-in from full-time faculty is difficult to attain for the majority of the WPAs.

Getting faculty-buy in appears to be a challenge, but this invisible work is a large part of WPA work. Elizabeth pointed this out when she stressed,

I think buy-in is probably the most important part of the WPA job. It's the least visible in a lot of ways because people don't know how you go about doing that. It's the most time-consuming in a lot of ways because, for me, buy-in has to happen on a very one-on-one level. Part of the way we're structured here, it would not be in my best interest to mandate many things just across the board, but there were a lot of changes I wanted to make at the same time.

Although buy-in is crucial when directing a writing program, there are times when faculty just do not buy-in. "You might not get it frankly. You might just have to go forward without it. I think that facing that is ... Maybe it doesn't feel great at times," stated Mary. Despite faculty-buy in being the greatest challenge for many WPAs, they continued to move their writing programs forward.

### **Advocacy**

WPA work can present many challenges, so WPAs engage in various forms of advocacy to affect change. Although advocacy is a complex process, WPAs described this work as championing, building trust, and fighting. For example, Julia stated, "The WPA position is something I've always been championing, you know I'm a champion from behind the scenes and also directly when I was Chair." Many WPAs described their work as building trust. Michelle

illustrated, “it has a lot to do with just one-on-one work and getting them to trust me, that I have good judgment and also that I’m there to help them.” She continues, “Most people kind of trust that I’m there to support them.” Additionally, Anne stated doing one-on-one work is crucial for building trust: “It’s a very high touch, building trust, sort of process of really spending time one-on-one talking to people and really trying to understand some of that institutional history that I stepped into, so that I could understand people’s perspectives better.” Mary described WPA work in terms of fighting, not fighting in a violent way, more of a constant struggle: “What we got was you guys do these projects and we’ll give you this compensation which is nice but this year it was a hard fight again to get the WPA position and to get it given to [the new WPA]. It was a really tough process frankly.” These brief instances show various ways to approach advocacy. This section will demonstrate how WPAs perform advocacy for themselves, faculty, and their writing programs.

### **SELF-ADVOCACY**

WPAs at community colleges engage in self-advocacy when attempting to establish a WPA position or something similar at their institutions. One of the most prominent ways in which self-advocacy manifests itself is encouraging and pushing to establish a WPA position. For example, John advocated for the position for many years, he stated

I advocated for it, about 10 years after I got here it finally became a reality. It became a reality because I advocated for it and I happened have a good relationship with our vice president. I advocated for it and you know I wrote about that basically arguing the importance of coherence in a writing program to student success. I think that, that was a little bit persuasive



Similarly, Julia mentioned using the people she knew in order to make the WPA position permanent at her institution. She claimed, “working my connections both at the state level and the college level here to try to get this to be integrated as a permanent line item position here was difficult to do.” Michelle, advocated for the position for several years. She stated, “The advocacy came for a couple of years of just working to create a position. What I started to do, because I started on my campus, then I had a lot of campuses consulting me and I was doing a lot of work, but it wasn't compensated, but I started calling it WPA work.” Michelle described going to her administration to get support for the WPA position. She describes “At least for us since we have scholarship, it doesn't necessarily totally change the administrators, but it's a lot easier to say, ‘Look. These other places have these WPAs.’ That was what we were able to say. It was like, ‘Look. Everybody else in our system has one, we don't have one.’ We have one of the biggest writing programs in the state.” Furthermore, Mary suggested advocating for the position by asking for it: “Ask for the position, ask for something permanent, ask for something well supported by the institution.” Michelle expressed that current WPAs needs to encourage others at two-year colleges “to invest in having a writing program administrator or just program coordinators, even for ESL programs or for developmental reading to professionalize that work.” Across the country, there are community college faculty working and advocating for WPA or WPA-like positions.

It is not uncommon throughout WPA literature to read that current and past WPAs constantly get overworked, sometimes without compensation. Several WPAs at community colleges developed the WPA position and with this they also made sure to outline job descriptions in order to protect themselves. Elizabeth shared, “I outlined the requirements for it

and I brought that to my boss and I said, 'This is what we need.' Diana described her experience in more detail,

The job description's ... It's very clear. Actually, that was one of the things that when I said that I would put in for the job that I sat down with the vice-president of the school and the chair at the time and incoming chair, because we just switched chairs as well. I sat down with them and the previous WPA and we went over everything in the job description to make sure it was clear. To make sure that it was outlined properly. To make sure that the time that was designated for each role was very clear. All that. My job description was pretty clear. We fine-tuned it some more.

Elizabeth also explained that throughout her time as WPA she was able to slowly but surely get her workload down: "It started at nine credits of release for the year, and then it went up to 12, and then by the time I handed over the position it was at 15. I was able to argue twice for additional release time." Compensation can be through course release, but for one WPA, the compensation came in form of a contract where she would get compensated for performing projects that were clearly outlined.

### **Peer Advocacy**

In addition to self-advocacy, WPAs also engage in peer advocacy. This type of advocacy is characterized as providing support for peers. Some of the interview participants describe their jobs in terms of being support for others in their writing programs. Diana conveyed,

My job as WPA is to act as a mentor to my colleagues to provide them with resources for teaching. To try and nudge the ones who are still a little skeptical over teaching composition instead of literature and explain why that matters. Provide them with research. That's one of the big things that's missing here. There are very few people who

are up-to-date on scholarship and research. That's kind of what I bring to the department.

It definitely has Rhetoric and Composition bent to it.

Michelle shared a similar narrative, “My role is just to help people, make sure they get a good evaluation, and then if their evaluations are poor, I work with them to try to demonstrate teaching effectiveness, and remedy whatever it is that they're having problems with. Going into their classroom and seeing what's happening and giving them some feedback. Showing them different guidelines.” Anne described attempting to create stasis when she listens to faculty who come from different angles, she stated: “I've really gone back and reread like Wayne Booths' *Rhetoric of Rhetoric* and been like okay how can I really listen for the places that what we have in common and I spent a year kind of doing a Hillary Clinton style listening tour.”

A major concern for the interview participants was to make sure adjunct faculty had much more visible input and that they felt valued. Gina approached this the following way:

I'm sure you're hearing at lots of places we have many more part time contingent faculty than we do full time faculty, and so last year I was working really hard to get buy in from full-time full faculty, and this year I have kind of had the realization that ... that my pool is bigger than that, and so I've started doing a lot more outreach to part time folks, and that's really helpful because you can sort of build a critical mass among those folks, and they want their resources, they want the support, and so I can reach out to them and say, ‘Hey what can I do for you?’ Again from that sort of service position saying, ‘What can I do, what would be helpful?’

Diana described, “One of the things I had to do was create an environment where part time faculty would come and would feel connected and valued enough to stay even though the

tangible benefits in terms of pay were really not so great.” One way in which Julia created environments which were welcoming for adjuncts was to establish peer programs:

The other thing we did is a peer partnership program. We paired all of our new adjuncts with full-time members, and again, it's completely volunteer and they are peer mentoring back and forth. We didn't want it to be ‘let the full-timers show you how to do your job.’ We wanted it to be a connection. You know how where we create cohorts for our students, we're creating cohorts with our new adjuncts. It's informative, instead of evaluative, so it's been really beneficial to both the full-time and the adjuncts who participated

Additionally, Julia mentioned,

I think we paid one adjunct member \$1000 stipend to kind of be my co-leader in a couple of the round table workshops, and that was amazing. It was really nice for adjuncts to have another adjunct who has been in the trenches for a while talking to them about jumping through the hoops as an adjunct, as opposed to me talking about it who hadn't been an adjunct for 20 something years.

In addition to mentoring support for adjuncts, some WPAs are also pushing for adjuncts to attend conferences. Michelle described, “We have some [adjuncts] that we're trying to work with to get in a part of Cs which we've done this year, to have them join our presentation.”

Advocating for adjuncts to feel welcomed in the workplace and to receive professional development support benefits the entire writing program. Additionally, advocating for adjuncts serves WPAs multiple purposes and one of them is to get faculty buy-in from full time faculty. Anne described, “It's much easier to go to my full-time faculty and say ‘Hey this is what I'm doing, and I'm doing it in response to a need articulated by our part time colleagues.’ Because this is a very union happy organization, because many of the full-time folks came up through the

ranks from part-time positions in past sort of decades, there is a lot more, all of a sudden even if people are not super bought in, in terms of wanting to do it themselves, there's a lot less resistance once I have built that mass of part time folks”

### **Programmatic Advocacy**

A form of advocacy illustrated in the data was when WPAs advocated for their writing programs. One manner in which this was expressed was by advocating for programmatic changes. For example, Michelle discussed how developing a sense of a writing program was important: “Instead of looking at each individual course as its own standalone thing, we looked to create a writing program. We did it by restructuring our courses. We created an accelerated developmental writing course to replace the multi-level developmental writing courses we had in place.” Several other WPAs mentioned their programs were moving towards an accelerated model. For example, Mary mentioned, “We attempted to recreate an acceleration model. We finally have it implemented this year. We're doing the acceleration model at the 101 level which is the co-requisite model 101 with the support class.” Julia also described the process of pushing the program into an accelerated model:

We actually made it an intentional goal to do something different than what was done in Baltimore, and that is we're going to do the acceleration...we're going to actually target the equity gap at our college, which we got data to show that there was an equity gap and we're actually focusing and actually recruiting, and opening spaces for students who are from under represented demographics. So, we're doing an active approach that's starting sort of cart before the horse. We're starting with the program and then we're going to scale it up, and we're using the data to start the program, but then the data also shows

how we need to revamp our whole composition series. So we're doing baby steps that are going to end up opening a door for looking at our full curriculum.

In addition to creating writing programs that use an accelerated model, Mary discussed bringing translanguaging into their courses. She explained,

We've used it in the design of our own course in decentering standard English as the goal of the course and asking students different kinds of questions. I would say that I'm not feeling like we're quite there yet. We hold these core values that all students are multi-literate. We hold the core values that having access to more than one language or discourse or register is a strength not a deficit, but I'd say that a lot of the conversations in our department, and a lot of other curriculums, still have a deficit ideology at its center. I would say that that's a space where we probably need to do more work as a department.

Another way in which WPAs are creating change in their programs is by updating mission statements and their hiring practices. Julia said she was embarrassed to tell me that her divisional goals and mission statements for her program are 15 years old and have not been revised. She claimed, "we're in the starting process of finding a pedagogical and philosophical basis that we all buy into sort of for our mission, but also for how much our field has changed in the last 5 to ten years. We really needed to completely revisit all of it." Many of the WPAs expressed that things were slowly starting to change in their programs because their hiring practices have changed in the last several years. Changing their job descriptions so they specify a certain amount of coursework in Rhetoric and Composition has had an impact on the direction of programs. For example, Anne described, "The job descriptions started getting much more detailed, specifying a certain amount of course work in Rhet/Comp, previously it had just been an English degree, but starting about I want to say five years ago they started asking for

experience in Rhet/Comp.” John described his department as having “seven people who identify themselves as comp-rhet people. And three of us got doctorates in comp-rhet. So we’re more of a comp-rhet heavy department and that’s because we’ve been hiring in that direction for quite a while. Whereas we really only have three people who are really lit people. And two people kind of go in both directions.” Creating these small, but important changes, can really impact the direction of a writing program.

### **Resources**

One of the research questions for this study is “What resources do WPAs at community colleges draw on to support their work?” With this question, I want to explore the various tools used by WPAs that have a direct impact on the way community college WPAs approach and conduct their work.

I think, often, there is a misconception that there are not many people in community colleges with doctorate degrees. Several of the interviewees discussed their educational background as an important influence on their work. Elizabeth describes working at the community college while working on her doctorate: “I worked here for about four years before I realized that, in order for me to get promoted to full professor, I would need the PhD. I really wanted to do certain kinds of research with my population here but my research methods background was really limited. I knew the PhD. would also help me do that so I actually went back and got the PhD. I’ve had it for two years now, so I did most of my work while I was here.” She mentioned taking a WPA class as an independent study course during her doctoral work, and explained, “Through that course I started re-imagining the scope of what my job could do and what it needed to do in order to really, you know, best support my adjuncts but also best support the students in the program.” Diana, who was ABD at the time of the interview, described having

“four classes in total in terms of WPA.” She worked as both an assistant writing-center director and assistant writing studies director in the past, which gave her a peek at what WPA work looked like.

A major resource discussed by many of the interview participants is creating partnerships across their campus. For example, working with other departments and other entities at their community college is helpful. Diana described this, “Creating those partnerships across campus was very important in terms of being able to .... I want to say justify the existence in some cases but also in terms of being able to get things done.” Diana describes building relationships with librarians and the Center for Teaching Effectiveness. She stated, “The Center for Teaching Effectiveness director will support me in terms of providing space for workshops. She'll even purchase food to try and draw people into workshops.” Furthermore, Jackie mentions that her writing program has created connections with the local state university: “I’ve been able to cooperate with, meet with, talk with their first-year writing director...I feel like that’s an invaluable resource we have, just, [state university], having them in the same town, and having them willing to invest in us, meet with us, write articles with us.” Collaboration and partnerships are not only being fostered within the community college context, but some WPAs are fostering relationships with other local institutions.

While developing relationships across campus, one major resources for community college WPAs are their colleagues. Michelle mentioned having Skype meeting with WPAs at the various other community college locations which are part of her college system. She stated, “We have Skype meetings at least twice a week, sometimes more, where we're actively working together on projects, and again, we're creating professional guidelines and updating them for associate deans who are doing position searches, to creating guidelines or resources for



instructors, to look at the curriculum, working with committees of people who are working on program development issues.” Other WPAs mentioned working with people who have been in their department longer. Diana explained, “So what I did was I brought the former chair in because he’s been at this institution for 20 years. He had background information that I didn’t necessarily have and he’s a very vocal supporter of the position [WPA position], writing-intensive curriculums, and the conflict of composition being taught by composition faculty instead of literature.” In addition, Anne described working with dual credit instructors from the local high school: “Recently I was working with my dual credit instructors at the high school here, and they had some concerns, and I was like okay I’m going to take this on, like let’s figure out what we’re doing, and so I reached out to my Dean and some other folks in the department who have done this job in the past.” Furthermore, Jackie mentioned reaching out to professional resources, such as the mentoring sessions at the CWPA conference. This WPA described attending a CWPA conference, where she met her mentor, “The CWPA mentors are a great resource. The WPA mentor assigned to me when I first started was invaluable.” Many WPAs follow professional listserv and other resources to keep up with the most current scholarship.

Community college WPAs not only find resources for themselves, but they also create and introduce resources for the faculty in their writing programs. For example, many WPAs create workshops to get others involved. Michelle described, “We have online workshops for instructors and we have face-to-face workshops that they can come and attend, too. We have reading circles where they can participate. We read rhetcomp scholarship and have lively discussions.” Mary and her writing program put together a symposium: “We gave a symposium. We held a symposium in fall 2015 in which we did a call for paper, a call for models, and asked

our colleagues to come and present their work.” One way in which WPAs create a learning environment for themselves and their faculty is to encourage others to get involved.

In order to develop projects for their writing programs, plenty of the participants described pursuing grant funding. Michelle mentioned “aggressively seeking grants.” She explained, “One of things that I have done, along with colleagues, is to aggressively go after grant funding, which has been able to fund program development work. It's funded more time in the summer to work on things.” Elizabeth applied for the WPA Research Grant: “I got two grants, one from the WPA and one from a local institution, like an internal grant. That helped with the work that we needed to do.” Two other WPAs mentioned receiving internal grant funding from the college. Diana’s community college was awarded the Title V Grant for Hispanic-Serving Institutions. She explained, “With that came, I think it was a directive through the grant that the WPAs position be formed and what they did is they didn't have the ability to hire somebody new so they took the only person who'd had a rhetcomp degree, which was me, to fill the position.” Julia described applying to receive a grant from her college’s Innovation Fund: “Right now we're actually going to be applying part of the innovation fund, and I'm going to try and wrap some of the WPA into that innovation fund, not to pay me, but to pay faculty and adjuncts to attend professional development workshops.” Lack of funding appeared to be one of the greatest challenges for many of the WPAs; however, they actively pursued funding through different avenues.

## **CONCLUSION**

The community college WPAs in the study provided insight into the experiences that allowed them to navigate through and around issues of directing a writing program. The WPAs revealed issues that hampered their work on a regular basis. They described their struggles with

limited funding, adjunct issues, and sometimes revamping their entire program. Conversely, the participants also illustrated how resourceful they are in order to continue developing a writing program that is welcoming to faculty and promotes student success. A discussion of the findings, in particular the significant themes, will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications**

Chapter 5 presents the discussions and conclusions related to the findings in the study.

The purpose of this study was to examine the work of WPAs at community colleges using a critical theory perspective. Through the lived experiences and narratives of the community college WPAs that participated in this study, there is the opportunity to learn of the many barriers they face and overcome within their workplace environment. This final chapter focuses on what has been found as a result of the study and how the findings are relevant to the research of writing program administration. Using Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus, I use the narratives described by community college WPAs to develop an understanding of the work they do, which can help other WPAs, administrators, and researchers.

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A FIELD**

Applying Bourdieu's concept of field as discussed in chapter 2, the field of higher education can be broken down based on institution types. For Bourdieu (1993), higher education is structured in a hierarchical manner with agents and institutions occupying dominant and subordinate roles. This is why four-year universities and community colleges can be considered different fields within the larger field of higher education. The capital operating within the field of a community college or university is a form of institutionalized capital. Separating community colleges from the larger field of higher education is essential since the habitus and capital of community colleges is different than those of four-year universities. The various forms of capital associated with community colleges and universities help shape the culture of each institution type. The cultural capital associated with a community college, such as their open admission, the number of remedial course taught, and student demographics, create a different culture compared to four-year institutions. Community colleges are often perceived as remedial or vocational, so

the field in which community colleges usually function is often thought of having less capital than four-year universities. The geographical contexts of community colleges can create variability, but the findings of this study suggest they have many common challenges. Based on the survey and interview data, several significant themes in regards to challenges were extracted. A discussion of the themes is summarized in the sections that follow.

### **Deficit Ideology**

A challenge that constantly plagues community colleges is a long-standing deficit ideology associated with two-year institutions. Much of the deficit discussions about community colleges are in regards to their open admission, which means the admission process is non-selective and non-competitive. Many students who enroll in community college are sometimes required to take developmental or remedial courses. According to Bailey (2009), about 60% of community college students are required to take at least one developmental course, whether it be math or English. Furthermore, Chen (2016) stated “on average, remedial students at 2-year institutions took about three remedial courses (vs. two courses at public 4-year institutions)” (pp. v). What is alarming is that about half the number of students enrolled in remedial course did not pass them” (Chen, 2016, pp. v). As a result, one of the larger challenges brought up by the participants interviewed was that a lot of faculty, especially those with literature backgrounds are working from a deficit perspective when it comes to teaching multilingual and developmental students.

### **Buy-in**

Another major challenge faced by community college WPAs is faculty-buy in to make programmatic changes, such as changing to more current composition-based curriculums or updated textbooks. Faculty buy-in can often be difficult when faculty have various academic

backgrounds and experiences and when labor inequities are an issue. Although most instructors teaching writing have at least a Master's degree, faculty have a diverse range of degrees with varying knowledge of writing pedagogy. One of the biggest challenges expressed in the interviews was working with hostile literature-centric faculty who have little to no background in composition and getting this faculty to teach their courses based on current composition theory and pedagogy instead of from a literary angle. Furthermore, community college WPAs also struggle with faculty buy-in because there are faculty members that perceive the WPA position as a form of surveillance. Faculty think WPAs will constantly be overseeing everything they are doing. Some of these faculty members are resistant to giving up their autonomy and academic freedom, so issues of buy-in occur when faculty members do not want to incorporate new curricular changes, such as teaching with specific textbooks or teaching particular assignments, into their own course.

Buy-in is also an issue with administration who might not see the value of a WPA position. For example, administration sometimes does not understand that a WPA can bring cohesion to an English department through curriculum development, assessment, and other forms of data. According to Klausman (2013), administration likes to see measurable outcomes. Klausman illustrates that administration wants to compare the outcomes from their institution to other programs that are often considered "underdeveloped" in order to justify the need for a WPA position. In this regard, it is important for a community college WPA to collect and assess data about their program in order to convince administration and other faculty when changes need to occur.

## **Labor Conditions**

Community college WPAs often times have the responsibility of hiring faculty. However, this varies from state to state. For example, one participant mentioned her state community college system, which is located in the Northeast, is the second to last state in the country in regards to the amount of funding they receive from their state. As a result of this, the community colleges in this state only hire adjuncts because the state does not have the funding to hire full-time professors; however, the participant mentioned the only full-time employees are administrators. As a result of this policy as well as other conditions, community colleges have the highest percentage of adjuncts compared to four-year institutions, where they teach about 58% of courses (Center for Community College Engagement, 2014). The American Association of Community Colleges (2015) defines an adjunct faculty member as someone who teaches nine or fewer credit hours on a per-semester basis with no benefits. According to the Center for Community College Engagement (2014), adjuncts are paid much less than full-time faculty and receive minimal benefits. It is not uncommon for a community college WPA to offer classes to adjuncts weeks or even days before a semester begins. In addition, resources for adjunct faculty are often limited in terms of professional development, administrative support, and office space. Furthermore, adjunct faculty are almost never included in important campus decisions nor do most have a vote in changes. Depending on contingent faculty and the labor inequities associated with adjunct faculty pose many challenges for community college WPAs attempts at creating a cohesive writing program.

## **External Pressures**

The theme of external demands and pressures was described by the participants as being out of their control. One of these external pressures is how legislative changes have directly impacted the various community colleges in this study and their faculty, such as the Affordable

Care Act. One WPA described that before the Act went into place, she would get permission for adjuncts to do overloads in the fall since they would teach fewer courses in the spring. But when the Affordable Care Act was put into place, there were limitations put into effect that influenced how many courses an adjunct could teach before qualifying for full-time benefits. Due to the Act, this WPA's institution did not allow adjuncts to qualify for full-time benefits, as a result, this had an effect on the number of courses adjuncts could teach. And for the WPA, this also resulted in not having enough adjuncts to teaching composition courses.

Another external pressure discussed by the interviewees is that of placement. One WPA describes changes mandated by the state in regards to placement, which systemically allow students to place in higher writing course than before. Although this is designed for students to spend less time in remedial coursework, these changes have been a struggle but also beneficial to community college WPAs. In the survey, some WPAs describe "training placement teams and advisors on placement issues" as part of their work. Student placement is a large portion of the work community college WPAs do, but when changes are mandated by the state, the community college WPAs in this study used all of their knowledge and resources to create changes within their writing program. For example, some community college WPAs mention changes regarding placement led to creating accelerated developmental writing courses. Influenced by the Community College of Baltimore County's Accelerated Learning Program, some of the WPAs in this study have adapted a similar model that takes into account their students and institutional context. Making sure students are placed in the appropriate courses is a large part of community college WPA work, and many WPAs at two-year colleges are constantly working on training faculty at their campus on placement. As a result, state mandated placement issues have led community college WPAs to rethink and restructure their writing programs.



## **Access to Resources**

Many participants in this study mention their biggest challenge is access to resources, such as funding to pay faculty for professional development and programmatic projects. Most describe having very small budgets, while others describe having no budgets at all. With limited budgets, community college WPAs have to be rhetorically savvy in order to get the resources needed to perform their work and keep their writing programs running. When resources were not available to them, the community college WPAs were often performing more work to argue for resources. Budgetary issues have led many community college WPAs to apply for grants. One participant describes aggressively seeking grant funding in order to help fund program development. Limited budgets have enabled community college WPAs to seek grants within their institutions, from professional organizations, and from the U.S. Department of Education such as Title V grants. Even with little to no budgets, community college WPAs are finding ways to funnel money into their programs.

Although the sections above mention some of the common challenges discussed by participants of this study, a lot of these challenges are interrelated and are difficult to discuss separately from one another. The challenges identified by current community college WPAs can let future WPAs get a glimpse of what this work entails within the context of community colleges, and how the discourse around these challenges needs to change. For example, Hassel and Giordano (2015) explain how remediation and placement negatively affects the discipline of writing and composition. They “argue for a placement process that respects and reflects all of our nation’s students’ rights to be treated with potentiality that uses assessment measures that recognize that potential” (pp. 77). Hassel and Giordano offer four recommendations for placement, including the use of multiple measures and the use of assessment data to design curriculum that meets the actual needs of students. Additionally, community college WPAs can

take steps to change the discourse around faculty buy-in. Changing the language from “buy-in” to faculty-support or faculty-engagement can potentially create a more positive environment for community college WPAs to have their colleagues see each other as working towards a common goal instead of the WPA as an administrator enforcing changes from the top down. These are just some ways in which community college WPAs can advocate for changes in the deficit discourses surrounding community colleges. A more in-depth discussion of WPAs as advocates will be discussed further in this chapter.

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGE WPAS’ CAPITAL**

Bourdieu (1984; 2001) uses a broad conception of capital that is distinct from economic or monetary exchanges. For Bourdieu, capital involves power in forms of materials and symbolic resources. Although economic capital is important, it is only one form of other varieties of capital described by Bourdieu. Other forms of capital identified by Bourdieu are academic, educational, intellectual, linguistic, literary, artistic, scientific, political, and judicial (Bourdieu 1988; 199; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In this section, Bourdieu’s concept of capital helps interpret how community college WPAs make use of various forms of capital in order to perform their work. In this section, I discuss how community college WPAs have and make use of various forms of capital in order to perform their work.

In higher education, degree types carry various forms of capital associated to them. Educational degrees possess a significant amount of symbolic capital, through titles such as professor or doctor, and the institutions affiliated with these degree titles. Although community colleges do not require faculty to have a PhD, some participants in this study had significant educational and symbolic capital by having master’s and doctoral degrees. Often times, there is misconception that people with PhDs do not want to work at community colleges, but all of the

participants with doctoral degrees in this study actively chose to work at a community college because that is where they desired to work for both professional or personal reasons, such as being close to family. Community colleges typically have instructors with MAs and PhDs teaching composition courses, while four-year universities often depend on graduate students who may not have yet attained an MA degree. This shift in more writing professors at community colleges with masters and doctoral degrees in rhetoric and composition is significant because these faculty are ready to contribute to knowledge making at the local and disciplinary levels. Additionally, we are starting to see how WPAs at community colleges are using their academic symbolic capital to create change within their institutions and changes to disciplinary conversations about composition.

While all community college WPAs who participated in the survey have immense symbolic capital through their degrees, some of them also have various forms of educational capital through WPA coursework and training they had during graduate school. Only two participants in this study stated that they took graduate coursework in Writing Program Administration. One participant said her course was an independent study course, but it gave her the opportunity to get an idea of what the job would look like and what she needed to do in order to do the type of research she was interested in. Additionally, another community college WPA explained taking a total of four classes that focused on writing program administration and writing center administration. She also had the opportunity to work as assistant writing center director and assistant writing studies director. The value placed on graduate coursework and training in writing program administration was immense for these participants. It should be encouraged for graduate programs to offer coursework in writing program administration, or at least give students the opportunity to do an independent study if this field is of interest to them. Although

many graduate programs give students the opportunity to be assistant directors, the access graduate WPAs have to pertinent WPA work, is sometimes limited.

Another form of capital often discussed by Bourdieu is social capital. Social capital often refers to resources that are available to an individual through their social networks, group memberships, and connections to other people who have access to other forms of capital. The discussion in this section explores how community college WPAs use a large network of capital to facilitate the work they do.

The various community college WPAs in this study had a number of resources to help them conduct their work. Community college WPAs mention participating in professional organizations, such as Two-Year College English Association (TYCA), Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), and drawing on the capital from their network of peers; however, several participants mention not being able to attend conferences due to lack of funding. Even though funding for professional development is scarce, participants of this study describe subscribing to listservs and reading scholarship published in journals. Furthermore, one participant mentioned the CWPA mentors being an important resource when she started her work as WPA.

Furthermore, there were plenty of participants who had numerous years of experience doing WPA work and working within their community college, which adds to their network of social capital. Participants described ways in which professional organizations are helpful to the work they are doing, but they describe their colleagues as the most helpful resource. Creating partnerships within their own department, with librarians, and with other entities across their institution is critical. One WPA describes it best: “The best resources are the people around me--

administrative assistants (who know everything, and are absolutely indispensable), former department chairs/WPAs, former professors and mentors, and my own colleagues.” Calhoon-Dillhunt (2011) describes community college WPA work as collaborative since often times there is not enough course release time or compensation. Furthermore, my findings also correlate with those of Toth et al. (2017) where participants of their study “perceive more informal and natural connections with colleagues to be much more beneficial” (p. 612). Although the WPA position is often times held by one individual, many participants in the study describe working collaboratively with their peers. Community college WPAs memberships to professional organizations in the field and connecting with resources on their own campus gave them support in terms of a social network. The WPAs involved in this study brought the social capital derived from these various interactions with professional organizations to institute change within their writing program.

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGE WPAS’ HABITUS**

Bourdieu stresses the interrelationship of habitus, capital, and field. For Bourdieu, habitus is created and molded through an individual’s experiences and possession of capital within a field. Habitus, according to Bourdieu (1989), are a set of social dispositions that influence a person’s thought and behavior. People adapt their social dispositions, such as world views, power relations, and knowledge, according to what is accepted and adopted in the fields in which they live. Habitus, along with capital and field, shape how community college WPAs inform the decisions they make in the workplace.

In general, community college WPAs must have a wide array of knowledge and skill sets. During the interview portion of this study, one community college WPA summarized the pressure of being expected to have a wide range of professional knowledge: “Placement on

Monday, assessment on Tuesday, curriculum design on Wednesday, mixed language learners on Thursday, et cetera, et cetera.” Having knowledge in all of these areas is important for WPAs, and if they were not very knowledgeable in an area, the habitus developed over the years allowed them to find various means for the information needed.

Through the capital acquired by their education and social interactions, some participants in this study are attempting to change their habitus and the way this position is perceived. One change that many are taking on is calling the work that they are doing WPA work. Through the survey and interviews, this study confirms findings that are commonly addressed in the literature that WPAs at community colleges use a variety of titles. This study confirms various titles used, such as Writing Program Coordinator, Writing Program Director, Composition Coordinator, Developmental Program Coordinator, Assistant Department Chair, Department Chair, and Assistant Dean of Composition to list a few. Only four participants in this study used the Writing Program Administrator title, some officially while others unofficially. Regardless of the title used, these community college WPAs all made their work visible within their department and institutions. However, the symbolic capital associated with using the title of Writing Program Administrator, for some community college WPAs, also posed some challenges. Some of the interview participants describe their colleagues being weary about the power associated with the title. Regardless, by calling and drawing attention to the work they are doing, these community college WPAs are making their work a visible asset to their institutions.

Another major theme shaped by the habitus of the individuals who participated in this study is that many of the WPAs described their work as a form of advocacy. It is not uncommon for advocacy and activism to be coupled when describing actions by individuals to create change. In this study, advocacy can best be described by how community college WPAs engage

within departmental and institutional constraints through the process of negotiation and collaboration to affect change. The concepts of mediating and negotiating are closely associated with advocacy, which is what many of the participants in this study describe as doing when attempting to create their position, outlining their job descriptions and negotiating compensation, and developing stronger support for adjunct faculty.

Scholars such as Andelora (2008) and Sullivan (2015) have called for instructors at community colleges to view themselves as “teacher-scholar-activists.” In addition, Sullivan (2015) urges two-year college WPAs to “deliberately frame [their] professional identity, in part, as activists” (p. 327). However, without a network of capital it can be difficult to create change. In order for structural change to occur, community college WPAs should start by working on advocacy. Once programmatic changes have been negotiated and instituted, and community college WPAs advocate for their work at the professional level, community college WPAs can start affecting change through a larger collective form of activism. For example, many of the community college WPAs interviewed in this study have all been performing degrees of advocacy on their campuses, and a large number of them are also involved in research and publishing scholarship, which is instituting change at the professional level.

The first form of advocacy extracted from the data is self-advocacy. Many times, community college WPAs engage in self-advocacy by speaking out for themselves. For example, this form of advocacy manifests itself by advocating for their work and creating a WPA position for themselves. Because it is not uncommon for WPAs to take on more tasks than they can possibly do, many WPAs in this study created the WPA position at their institution. One participant advocated for the WPA position for about 10 years. Furthermore, in order to create the WPA position, WPAs were very aware of the network of capital that would be necessary for

the position. Participants used their connections, such as other administrators on their campus, in support of the position, while some used their connections at the state level. Knowing the importance of the work they are doing, community college WPAs use all of the rhetorical tools available to them in order to develop a WPA position.

Additionally, community college WPAs also engaged in self-advocacy by making sure that their job responsibilities were clearly outlined and they received compensation for their work. They were all aware of their expertise and the tools they had available to them in order to initiate the WPA position. Holmsten (2002) writes, “the written record of the WPA in the community college appears to be virtually nonexistent” (p. 101). Some WPAs described clearly outlining job responsibilities and projects they would perform for the duration of their contact. Most WPAs in this study got compensated through course release time or some had an additional contact with compensation associated to it. One participant explained that the job descriptions were clearly outlined for her, but she still sat down with the Vice-President at her institution to make sure there were no surprises. Regardless, community college WPAs should encourage each other to share what these contracts look like. Creating a collection, repository, or publishing this information is very much needed in the field so other community college WPAs can advocate for themselves.

Another major theme uncovered in this study is how community college WPAs advocate for their faculty, in particular adjunct faculty. In many cases, community college WPAs had capital that allowed them to support their peers and address the need of their peers. An aspect of successful advocacy is that many community college WPAs are in positions that can ensure inclusion and connections between different people within their writing programs. The idea of inclusion is particularly of importance to WPAs in regards to adjunct faculty. In order to



advocate for adjuncts, many of the community college WPAs noted the importance of understanding the roles and perspectives of adjunct faculty. Many of the WPAs in this study were aware of the challenges faced by adjunct faculty, so they advocated for more collaborative endeavors, such as professional development workshops, reading groups, conference presentations, to ensure that the diverse perspectives of adjunct faculty were included. The understanding of the struggles faced by adjuncts enriched the outcomes of the collaborative work and contributed to creatively thinking about various ways in which adjuncts work was valued and compensated. The collaborative work also became a means of providing resources and opportunities to help the adjunct communities build on their social capital through programmatic engagement and participation.

Unique to this study is also how community college WPAs strategically gathered support from adjunct faculty in order to advocate for change within their program. In this context, the concept of social capital associated with the number of adjunct faculty is important because it gives some WPAs the ability to use those numbers and support to convince full-time faculty that there are many adjunct colleagues who want change. Community college WPAs use the awareness and importance of adjunct faculty to promote change within their writing programs. Strategically gathering the support of adjunct faculty became a powerful tool for community college WPAs to reinforce shared goals and encourage building critical and sustainable collaboration among everyone involved in the writing programs. When community college WPAs are able to work successfully with the support of adjunct and full-time faculty, they are able to move their writing program forward.

The last form of advocacy that presented itself in this study is what I'm referring to as programmatic advocacy. By using programmatic advocacy, the community college WPAs is able

to start creating systemic change, which directly affects the students. Many of the WPAs in this study are attempting to create curricula changes at their institutions. Some are trying to implement certain theoretical approaches to the way course are taught. However, the biggest form of programmatic advocacy is the elimination of multiple levels of developmental course work that is not credit bearing. By advocating for this programmatic change in coursework, some participants are pushing for students to receive credit in all of the courses they enroll in. Furthermore, this programmatic change also changes the stigma of community colleges teaching remedial courses.

The intersection between habitus, capital, and field have important implications for change. As community college WPAs evolve to create small changes to the field of community colleges, the habitus of those working at these institutions will tend to adapt to new conditions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the data collected, the following recommendations are suggested for more pedagogy and scholarship that intersects community colleges and writing program administration.

The first recommendation is that professional guidelines for the preparation of community college faculty need to be revised. The TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College (2016) are recommendations for the preparation of future faculty. However, these guidelines are generalized for faculty and not for the work performed by WPAs at community colleges. TYCA and CWPA could work together to put together guidelines for community college WPA work. Most of the community college WPAs who participated in this study are already part of disciplinary conversations about WPA work and have published scholarship. For the majority of the participants in this study, using scholarship and the

knowledge of colleagues to create guidelines for their work gave them more credibility among administrators and colleagues within their institutions. Guidelines would benefit the community college WPA community and position them to articulate their work and shared experiences in a professional manner. Documents like these can help future community college WPAs advocate for their positions and assert their professional authority within their institutions.

The second recommendation addresses the issue of access to professional conferences and professional development workshops held at conferences. My research suggests that although participants in this study mostly collaborated and learned from their peers, conferences held by professional organizations in the field, such as CWPA, CCCC, and NCTE, were sometimes difficult to attend. Due to the limited budgets at community colleges, it is not surprising that those working at community colleges do not have the funding to attend conferences. Regional TYCA conferences, for many, served as some of the conferences WPAs at two-year colleges could attend. Professional organizations should work on supporting community college WPAs and faculty working at two-year colleges. Often times, conferences have lower registration rates or travel awards for part-time and adjunct faculty, but this does not include faculty working full-time at community colleges. For example, the conference registration for CWPA 2017 went up from the previous year to \$410, for early registration. Furthermore, the registration cost for workshops is \$775. (CWPA, 2017) The conference theme for the 2018 CWPA conference is “What if We Tried This?” With this theme in mind, what if the CWPA conference made conference registration and workshops more affordable for those working at community colleges. Professional organizations need to find ways in which to be affordable, not just for graduate students and adjuncts, but for those working at institutions where funding is almost never available. If our professional organizations in writing studies want to be

more inclusive, we need to need to find innovate ways to include those who work at two-year institutions.

Additionally, it is important to advocate for graduate education to prepare graduate students to work at two-year institutions. Graduate course work in Writing Program Administration could allow graduate students the opportunity to explore the rhetoric of writing programs. Throughout WPA scholarship, it is not uncommon to find narratives of WPAs taking on this position and learning how navigate directing a writing program on the spot. WPA courses allow students to recognize that not all universities and community colleges are the same, so the concept of administration and leadership is discussed more broadly. Additionally, WPA courses could be designed to serve new teachers of rhetoric and writing develop professional careers in writing program administration. As my data illuminates, community college WPAs perform a broad range of activities in the workplace so there is a need for multifaceted professional development that discusses the many aspects of this work.

Throughout most of my graduate education, there was very little discussion in my graduate coursework that focused on teaching composition at community colleges. However, there are some universities across the country, such as Sacramento State University, Seattle University, University of Utah, and University of Memphis, among others, that offer graduate certificates in community college faculty preparation or community college teaching and leadership. These certificates usually give graduate students the opportunity to learn about the characteristics of community college students. Students also learn about the history, purpose, and aim of community colleges within their respective states. And most importantly, these certificate programs have internships, which give students hands-on experience in a community college setting. Most of these courses and certificates are in education program, not rhetoric and

composition, but if graduate students are interested in community college work, working on graduate certificates like these can allow for interdisciplinary work.

Furthermore, many of the participants in this study describe writing grants as means to fund projects and professional development workshops. Community college WPAs and graduate students interested in WPA work could benefit from training in grant writing. Developing effective grant writing skills are essential for community college WPAs to acquire competitive funding from government agencies or their own institutions to fund writing program activities. Providing community college WPAs and graduate students workshops and training in strategies for identifying potential funding sources and developing grant proposals could benefit community college writing programs with little to no budgets.

Lastly, I want to focus on advocacy and activism within writing program administration. It is important that as a discipline we focus on what is meant when we use certain terms. It is not uncommon at national conferences to hear scholars use “activism” to describe their work or mention they “advocate” for their students, but what do we mean when using such terms? Does participating in activist work outside of the workplace make someone a scholar-activist? Can a WPA truly be an activist when they are scrambling to hire adjuncts before the beginning of a semester and participating in labor inequities? Kahn and Lee’s (2011) book, *Activism and Rhetoric*, shares essays by scholars who engage in local and global activism. In this collection, Braun (2011) discussed activism in a university setting through her attempt of supporting adjunct faculty but getting shut down by administration. “It is fine, in other words, to profess democratic rhetoric as long as you don’t practice it” (pp. 144), Braun shares. Furthermore, Adler-Kassner’s *Activist WPA* is a text that lays foundational understandings for viewing WPA work as activist work. However, I would argue that within institutions of higher education, a WPA cannot enact

activist work without first performing groundwork as an advocate. In an administrative role, activism and attempting to create change is almost nearly impossible without community support from administration and colleagues.

Many of the WPAs in this study perform work that is not largely visible across their institution. As a result, many of these WPAs made a conscious effort to give visibility to this work. The community college WPAs that participated in this study were well aware of how much power they had, if any, and where they were located institutionally. They wanted to do what was best for their faculty and their program but could rarely do so autonomously without regard to administration above them. WPA work is difficult because some WPAs functioned as supervisors but were also supervised. Often times, community college WPAs felt their work was misunderstood, but they had to advocate for ongoing discussions about their responsibilities and expectations in order to make their work attainable.

The WPAs in this study found ways in which to frame their advocacy efforts so that they could make small differences without obvious challenges to the status quo. What this study had uncovered is that community college WPAs are working within their institutional contexts to get things done and to create change. They are advocating for the importance of a writing program administrator, they are making sure their job responsibilities are clearly outlined so they do not get over worked without the appropriate compensation, they are creating mentorship for adjuncts, they are adding to their work by applying for grants to support faculty, they are challenging curriculum that has been in place for years without much revision, they are working to change hiring practices—these are leaders in community colleges advocating for and getting things done. Advocacy can take a much quieter role in higher education, especially because those who challenge existing structures and culture within institutions can be subject to professional

risks depending on the institutions. Future scholarship needs to interrogate how community college WPAs and those at four-year universities truly enact advocacy and activist work.

Examining the practices of community college WPAs and preparing graduate students for future community college WPAs is not only important for community colleges but also for four-year universities. With more students entering these open access institutions, it is crucial for WPAs at four-year institutions to know the rhetorical and writing skills students are learning and potentially transferring from community colleges to four-year universities, but it is also important for those at four-year institutions to find ways to advocate for and collaborate with faculty at their nearby community college.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

This section discusses avenues I would consider as I continue this research in the future. First, I would rethink would be the research methodology applied. The objective of this study was to provide an understanding and description of the experiences of writing program administrators working at community colleges, so I used a qualitative grounded theory methodology to focus on what is discovered from the data. However, because there are over 1,000 community colleges and I only collected data from 53 different community colleges, findings from my study may only be specific to the participants in my study and the results may not generalizable or reflective of the experiences of other community college WPAs.

In reflecting on the methodology used, a similar study can be conducted using a case study approach, which would provide a more in-depth study of individual participants. With more time and resources, ethnographies of participants could also be another way to gather data. Ethnographic work would allow for more visits with each participant, collection of artifacts, and observations in the workplace. More importantly, my goal is to advocate for community college

WPAs to tell their stories through scholarship, so participatory research is necessary to engage community college WPAs as active contributors and researchers in the process so this work is done collaboratively. Further studies, using various methodologies, can advance this topic by collecting and analyzing more quantitative and qualitative data as a means to better understand the work of community college WPAs.

In future studies, I would also need to collect data using other venues. I only sent out the survey for my study to two professional listservs, WPA and TYCA. Community college WPAs that do not participate in these listservs were completely left out of the study. Another listserv I could have sent out the survey to could have been the Council of Basic Writing. In addition, after conducting this study, I learned that community college faculty also participate in the National Association for Developmental Education, so distributing the survey to this group's listserv or Facebook page could yield more responses.

The experiences of each participant in this study cannot be indicative of the experience of community college WPAs across the country. Each community college system has its own structure of administration, so the role of the community college WPA functions differently within each institution. As a result, the experiences of community college WPAs in this study are context specific.

## **CONCLUSION**

One of my research questions for this project was “how is the work of writing program administrators defined at community colleges?” In sum, because this work is so complex and contextually based, I found several tasks most WPAs did, many tasks only a few did, and some tasks individual writing program administrators describe doing. WPA work is difficult, even for those who have experience doing this work and those with graduate coursework in writing



program administration. Though no two positions were the same, most of the participants had other responsibilities, like teaching, in addition to their WPA work. The complexities of this work suggest that there is no way of defining or truly preparing future community college WPAs for all the possible work they might encounter on the job, though they can most certainly prepare to be surprised by the unexpected sometimes.

Through this project, my goal was to contribute to field of writing program administration. Just like community colleges vary from one another, the role of the WPA at these institutions also varies. The findings of this study suggest that community college WPAs are constantly faced with challenges but also find ways to advocate for themselves, their faculty, and their programs. Community college WPAs use the rhetorical tools available to them to create change and speak for themselves and make their work visible at their institution and in professional scholarship. Several community college WPAs are documenting their work and publishing, but more scholarship on community college writing programs is necessary in order for others to use this scholarship to shape policies and create action within their institution. Through my research, I wanted to know more about directing a writing program at a community college, the work community college WPAs perform every day, their labor, their struggles and challenges, and how they overcome these. But more importantly, I wanted to hear about all of this from the community college WPAs themselves. I wanted to hear how these experiences play out in different contexts. My hope is that through this project and future research I can continue advocating for more scholarship in this area and incorporating more narratives of community college WPAs.

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## **Appendix A: Participation Email**

Hello everyone,

This is my first time posting!

I would like to invite any Community College Writing Program Administrators (please note the term writing program administrator, for this study, is used interchangeably with writing coordinator and writing program director) to take a brief survey (no longer than 20-30 minutes). This study seeks to learn more about the work and experiences of WPAs at Community Colleges. If possible, please forward this email on to any Community College WPA that you may know is not a part of this group.

Results of your participation may help to better understand the work of Writing Program Administrators at Community Colleges and help contribute to the scholarship of Writing Program Administration specifically focused on Community Colleges.

Link to survey: [https://utep.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_eLrT7ENxIgSZWn3](https://utep.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eLrT7ENxIgSZWn3)

This survey is IRB-approved (# 879661-1) through the University of Texas at El Paso. The first page of the survey will ask for your consent to participate. If possible, please forward this email on to any Community College WPA that you may know is not a part of this group.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me off list at [Ltinoco2@miners.utep.edu](mailto:Ltinoco2@miners.utep.edu)

Thank you,

Lizbett Tinoco  
PhD Candidate, Rhetoric and Writing Studies  
University of Texas at El Paso

## **Appendix B: Survey**

### **“Writing Program Administration at Community Colleges”**

University of Texas at El Paso

#### **Purpose of the Study**

You are invited to take part in a research survey about Writing Program Administrators at Community Colleges. This research study seeks to learn more about the work and experiences of Writing Program Administrators at Community Colleges. Your participation will require approximately 30 minutes of your time.

#### **Procedures**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to complete the online survey.

#### **Potential Benefits to Subjects**

You may have the opportunity to reflect on your current academic and employment experiences as you complete the survey, which may enhance self-understanding. Results of your participation may help to better understand the work and experiences of Writing Program Administrators at Community Colleges and help contribute to the limited scholarship of Writing Program Administration work specifically focused on Community Colleges.

#### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

There could be survey items that you are uncomfortable answering or to which you would simply prefer not to respond. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you will be under no obligation whatsoever to answer any questions that you are not inclined to answer. You may choose not to answer any specific questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

#### **Confidentiality**

Please note that your responses will be used for research purposes only and will be strictly confidential. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential.

#### **For More Information**

If you volunteer to participate by taking this survey, you may decide not to complete the survey for any reason at any time without consequence of any kind. Your completion and submission of this online survey questionnaire indicates your consent to participate in this study.

#### **Identification of investigators**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact the PI, Lizbett Tinoco at [ltinoco2@miners.utep.edu](mailto:ltinoco2@miners.utep.edu).

#### **Rights of Research Subjects**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915)-747-8841 or [irb.orsp@utep.edu](mailto:irb.orsp@utep.edu).

**Do you consent to participate in this study?**

- ☐ Yes, take me to the survey
- ☐ No, I wish to opt out
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**Q1 What is your job title? (click all that apply)**

- ☐ Professor
- ☐ Writing Program Coordinator
- ☐ Writing Program Director
- ☐ Writing Program Administrator
- ☐ Department Chair
- ☐ If none of the above, please specify
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Please note: Throughout the survey, the term writing program administrator will be used interchangeably with writing coordinator and writing program director.

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**Q2 How many years have you worked at your current community college?**

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Q3 What is your highest degree attained?

☐ BA/BS

☐ MA/MS

☐ Doctorate

☐ If none of the above, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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Q4 In which field is your highest degree?

☐ Literature

☐ Creative Writing

☐ Rhetoric and Composition

☐ If none of the above, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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Q5 What courses have you taught in the last academic year? (click all that apply)

- ☐ Transfer level literature
  - ☐ Transfer level writing
  - ☐ One level below transfer level writing
  - ☐ Two levels below transfer level writing
  - ☐ Three or more levels below transfer level writing
  - ☐ Developmental reading
  - ☐ If none of the above, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q10 Does your department refer to its writing courses as a writing program?

- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 

Q6 Do you get course release time for directing the writing program? If yes, please indicate course release time.

- ☐ Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No



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Q7 Which of the following describe your institution? (click all that apply)

- ☐ Rural
  - ☐ Urban
  - ☐ Hispanic-Serving College
  - ☐ Historically Black College
  - ☐ Tribal College
  - ☐ If none of the above, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
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Q23 What is the average enrollment at your community college?

- ☐ 1,000-5,000
  - ☐ 6,000-10,000
  - ☐ 11,000-15,000
  - ☐ 16,000-20,000
  - ☐ 21,000-25,000
  - ☐ 26,000-30,000
  - ☐ 31,000+
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Q8 Please describe your student body population.

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Q9 Please describe your job responsibilities as the writing program administrator.

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Q11 Please describe the theoretical and pedagogical framework(s) which inform your department's writing curriculum.

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Q12 Were you a part of developing the current curriculum?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Q13 Has your teaching experience informed your work as the writing program administrator? If yes, please describe.

☐ Yes \_\_\_\_\_

☐ No

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Q14 What resources do you draw from to support your work?

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Q15 Do other faculty and staff at your institution share the responsibilities of running the writing program? Please describe.

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Q16 Are there any challenges or obstacles you face as the writing program administrator? Please describe.

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Q19 What is your age?

- ☐ 21-25
  - ☐ 26-30
  - ☐ 31-35
  - ☐ 36-40
  - ☐ 41-45
  - ☐ 46-50
  - ☐ 51-55
  - ☐ 56-60
  - ☐ 61-65
  - ☐ 66+
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
-

Q18 To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ If none of the above, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 

Q20 To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?

- ☐ White
  - ☐ Latino or Hispanic
  - ☐ Black or African American
  - ☐ Asian
  - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
  - ☐ If none of the above, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
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Q17 If you are interested in participating in a Skype interview regarding your work, please provide your name and email address.

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## **Appendix C: Interview Questions**

- 1.** Can you tell me how you ended up at a two-year college? At your institution?
- 2.** Can you describe how you ended up in your position?
- 3.** What resources did you use to support your work as WPA?
- 4.** How did you become aware of these resources?
- 5.** In the survey you identified [this will vary from participant to participant] as one of your biggest challenges? Can you explain what you mean by this? Other challenges?
- 6.** In the survey, you mention that your student body population is diverse. Does your curriculum and/or faculty training take into account this student diversity? If so how?
- 7.** Is there anything else you would like to share about your work as a WPA?

## Vita

Lizbett Tinoco is a doctoral candidate in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Texas at El Paso, where she researches the intersection of composition studies, writing program administration, and community colleges. She completed her M.A. in English from California State University, Bakersfield and her B.A. in English from the University of California, Los Angeles. At UTEP, Dr. Tinoco has taught a variety of courses in Rhetoric and Composition, including First-Year Composition, Technical Writing, and Professional Writing. Currently, she serves as the Assistant Director of the UTEP Writing Center. She has also worked at the Rio Grande Writing Center at El Paso Community College. Before moving to El Paso, Dr. Tinoco worked at Bakersfield Community College and Porterville Community College in California.

Dr. Tinoco's research has led her to collaborate and co-author a chapter, titled "Dismantling writing assessment: towards collaborative rubrics," which will be incorporated in an edited collection titled *Beyond the Frontier: Innovations in First Year Composition*. She has presented her research at international and national conferences, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the International Writing Centers Association, the Latin American Writing Center Conference, and the Two-Year College English Association.

Dr. Tinoco's dissertation, titled *Community College WPAs: Implementing Change Through Advocacy*, which was supervised by Dr. Beth Brunk-Chavez, examines the work of writing program administrators/directors/coordinators at community colleges across the United States. Her dissertation was awarded the 2018 Council of Writing Program Administrators Award for Graduate Writing in WPA Studies. Dr. Tinoco will be joining Texas A&M University-San Antonio as an Assistant Professor of English in the Fall of 2018.