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Book Review

Writing Studio Pedagogy: Space, Place, and Rhetoric in Collaborative Environments

JENNIFER P. GRAY

Review:

Geller, Anne Ellen and Michele Eodice, eds. *Working with Faculty Writers*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2013.

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Placeholder:

The current era in higher education values scholarly production over teaching and service, and “measuring scholarly output remains a staple of the academic marketplace” (6). With that in mind, editors Anne Ellen Geller and Michele Eodice compiled a 16-chapter collection presenting practical and thoughtful guidance regarding writing support for faculty. This collection of diverse and experienced voices offers proven suggestions for administrators and faculty who are considering different writing

support programs or who wish to overhaul or assess their current writing support programs. In addition, the collection expands our thinking about current faculty writing support, moving from support as punishment to support as enhancing a thriving and varied community of writers on campus.

The collection involves 44 authors across the 16 chapters. This diversity helps readers find a common point of entry, whether the reader is an adjunct faculty member, a WPA, a Center for Teaching and Learning director, or a junior tenure-track faculty member. The text begins with a Foreword by Robert Boice that emphasizes the strengths of this collection as it provides “real-life accounts” of the difficulties faced by faculty writers (vii). Geller moves on to provide the introductory matter, which lays out the plan of the book and highlights the editors’ goals of sharing proven varieties of best practices for developing, maintaining, and assessing faculty writing support programs to create a positive and productive campus culture of writing. Geller explains the collection’s hopes and goals: “...we hope this book will help more institutions imagine how to develop writing support for their faculty, many of whom might feel they would be stigmatized locally if they were to ask for such support without being able to provide models of how it can work effectively and why it is important for all faculty” (5).

The bulk of the text is divided into three segments, grouped thematically. The first section, “Leadership and Locations,” includes four chapters that focus on crafting, leading, and structuring different types of faculty writing support options. Readers who are beginning to defend and develop writing support on their campus may find this section particularly helpful.

Chris Anson starts this section by providing some background on the history of faculty writing groups. The legacy of faculty workshops, stretching back to the 1970s, is explored more in the second chapter by Brian Baldi, Mary Deane Sorcinelli, and Jung H. Yun, as the authors highlight multiple writing support programs that could be “customized” to different campuses or initiatives (39). This chapter is especially important for faculty working on starting writing support programs, as the authors defend the reasons why such support is necessary and beneficial to a university. Lori Salem and Jennifer Follett focus the third chapter on the common misconception that faculty writing support is needed for deficient faculty members or those struggling with publication. Instead of focusing only on publications as the motivation for support, the authors explore the idea of a center focused on literacy development and literacy communities. The first section concludes with a unique fourth chapter by Gertrude Fraser and Deandra Little that uses a dialogical approach to enact and illustrate the type of critical reflection advocated in their faculty writing program at the University of Virginia: Professors as Writers (PAW).

The second section, “Writing Groups/Retreats/Residencies,” provides readers with specific examples of current writing support programs. This section will be helpful for readers who are considering what programs could be offered at their campuses. Chapter five by Tara Gray, A. Jane Birch, and Laura Madson, focuses on thirteen years of successful writing support options across two institutions: New Mexico State University and Brigham Young University. The authors believe that a teaching center can provide the best location for support options, as faculty writing support is closely tied to effective writing instruction. The sixth

chapter, by Angela Clark-Oates and Lisa Cahill, utilizes the concept of third space to highlight a way to centralize writing support outside of the classroom, writing center, or teaching/learning center, and chapter seven, by Jessie L. Moore, Peter Felten, and Michael Strickland, focuses on the successful summer writing residencies offered at Elon University. The eighth chapter moves from the concept of residencies to retreats. Ellen Schendel, Susan Callaway, Violet Dutcher, and Claudine Griggs are writing center directors at four different institutions, and they collaborated to assess how participants received the retreat activities (such as goal setting) and outcomes (such as a sense of community between writers). They also examined how these results impacted faculty writers in the long term after the retreat and used their assessments not only to improve the retreat experience but also to “generate ideas” and “shape” further “writing support programming” at their campuses (143). Chapter nine, by Virginia Fajt, Fran I. Gelwick, Verónica Loureiro-Rodríguez, Prudence Merton, Georgianne Moore, María Irene Moyna, and Jill Zarestky, presents a multi-voiced discussion about how interdisciplinary writing groups created “collaboration and professional growth for its members” (163). The chapter identifies the successes of the groups, such as being more productive as writers and having a safe and supportive haven for their writing. Finally, Chapter ten, by Trixie G. Smith, Janice C. Molloy, Eva Kassens-Noor, Wen Li, and Manuel Colunga-Garcia, concludes this section by zooming in on a successful writing support group at a Research I university to highlight the successful reading and responding techniques used in this high-pressure environment.

Section three, “Issues and Authors,” expands the discussion to spaces that are often omitted from consideration in scholarly

publication. This section shows readers proven samples of writing support initiatives, such as writing retreats and faculty writing groups, including assessment results and even schedules for activities from events. In chapter eleven, by Michelle Cox and Ann Brunjes, the authors focus on community colleges and teaching institutions that privilege service and teaching over publications. They identify some of the pitfalls faced by faculty writers at these institutions, such as time constraints, and chapter twelve, by Letizia Guglielmo and Lynée Lewis Gaillet, furthers the discussion by examining ways to support contingent faculty who face publication demands in order to move into more secure academic positions. Chapter thirteen, by William P. Banks and Kerri B. Flinchbaugh, focuses on the need to rethink writing support programming and questions if faculty “really see themselves as writers” (228). They suggest that writing behaviors, such as writing for a certain time period a day, are not sufficient for change; instead, writers must adopt the ethos and identity of a writer. William Duffy and John Pell in chapter fourteen focus on the differences between collaboration and coauthorship in the faculty writing process. Coauthorship can be isolating, as writers often work separately on individual sections, but collaboration can be more reflective in nature as it meshes the two minds into one document with a “new shared voice” (251). Chapter fifteen, by Elena Marie-Adkins Garcia, Seung hee Eum, and Lorna Watt, illustrates how graduate writing groups can provide a space for graduate students to practice being experts in their disciplines with “safe” mentoring based around peers (264). These scholars show specific examples of the activities conducted during their writing groups and explain how their experiences in the group impacted their future work in writing instruction. Finally, chapter

sixteen by Carmen Werder, explores the idea of self-authorship and how the three dimensions of this theory (cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) can be applied to move faculty writers from short-term goals to longer lasting goals.

Eodice provides a conclusion to the collection with an Afterword, which stresses the need to “turn toward each other” (297) when thinking about and implementing faculty writing support initiatives. She highlights the ever-increasing solitary nature brought about by screen time rather than face-to-face time that can cripple a campus writing community, especially when the pressure to produce further isolates writers. Her call to action states that “it will be more and more imperative for faculty to turn toward each other—not inward, not isolated with a screen and device. In turning toward and forming communities, faculty of all types can together consider some of the pressing questions” of our future, such as labor relations and intellectual properties (297).

The collection is a worthy resource for WAC program directors, WPAs, writing center directors, and staff working in Centers for Teaching and Learning. The strength of the text is its diversity. Readers from institutions ranging from community colleges to Research I universities will find options for faculty writing support programs that will fit their institutions and constraints. Some of the programs have no cost, so even the most financially restricted readers will have options. Finally, if readers find themselves in a situation of having to justify support initiatives, this text provides plenty of proven programs, complete with assessment data and actual activities, to defend the benefits of faculty writing support.

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