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Introduction

TRAVELS, TRANSITIONS, AND LEADERSHIP

Courtney Adams Wooten and Jacob Babb

This is a book about the transitions writing program administrators (WPAs) experience in numerous iterations, whether it's a junior faculty member taking over as director of composition for the first time or a senior scholar passing along the role to someone else and contemplating what's next. Our contributors provide narratives and frameworks useful for others transitioning into or out of roles as WPAs, or even for those whose transitions are more lateral, as they take on new tasks within their existing WPA positions.

In some ways, this collection is also about metaphors and the hard work of making meaning with language. Some of the authors in the collection, such as Jennifer Campbell and Richard Colby in "Servers, Cooks, and the Inadequacy of Metaphor" and Rebecca Jackson, Jackie Grutsch McKinney, and Nicole I. Caswell in "Metaphors We Work By," explicitly contemplate the role of metaphors in articulating or clarifying their transitions. Other contributors seek terms to elucidate concepts of transition otherwise difficult to capture, such as Liliana M. Naydan in "Transitioning from Contingent to Tenure-Track-Faculty Status as a WPA" and Talinn Phillips, Paul Shovlin, and Megan Titus in "An Exercise in Cognitive Dissonance," all working to articulate the difficulties of being WPAs as contingent faculty members, graduate students, or somewhere between those positions and more stable full-time positions. With this emphasis on metaphor and language in mind, we offer our own metaphor for WPA transitions: travel.

Traveling is never easy. Trips often involve sweat, tears, crying children, barking dogs and meowing cats, moving trucks, crowded airplanes, and cheap food. However, trips also open up new lives, lead to laughter and memories, and hold the promise of the unimagined and exciting. As Harold Ramis and John Hughes's 1983 classic travel film

Vacation demonstrates, travel changes people even when the destination—Walley World, in this case—ends up not being what they expected. We offer travel as a metaphor for the kinds of transitions individuals make when they take on or step out of roles as WPAs, such as directors of first-year writing programs, writing centers, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, and undergraduate writing majors. This is the metaphor that shapes our own understanding of WPA transitions, likely because our own experiences as WPAs involve a great deal of travel.

In the summer of 2014, when we began having the conversations that inspired this collection, we were in the middle of several different “trips” emanating from the same graduate program in North Carolina, where we all completed our PhDs in rhetoric and composition. Courtney had just accepted a tenure-track position as a WPA at Stephen F. Austin State University, a regional university in Texas. Jacob had accepted a tenure-track position at Indiana University Southeast, a regional commuter university, the year before, and had just transitioned into the role of WPA at the end of his first year. And Brian had accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Nebraska at Kearney two years before; like Jacob, he became a WPA during his first year at his institution. (Brian has since accepted a position at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to serve as WPA—another journey, another transition.) Counting all the flights for campus visits and all the driving to transplant ourselves and our families to new places, we accumulated thousands of miles of travel. It’s no wonder travel and transition culminated in our particular metaphorical lens.

As we all dispersed across the United States to assume these positions, we were struck by the physical and emotional tolls transitions can take on any person but especially on those who are moving into leadership positions. Making such huge moves while simultaneously having to act like and become leaders—fake it ’til you make it, as the popular mantra goes—of a sometimes unknown group of people is a daunting proposition. Many in the field of rhetoric and composition experience transitions into and out of leadership positions during their careers. We wondered how these transitions impact us as people, partners, parents, friends, scholars, leaders, and, most pertinent to this collection, WPAs. How does this *amount* of movement, both literal in terms of geography and figurative in terms of career tracks, positively and negatively affect our professional and personal lives? How can we develop frameworks to better understand and productively move through these changes?

It seems we were not the only ones contemplating similar questions. When Courtney issued a call on the WPA listserv for participants to

assemble a panel about the transitions WPAs in different institutions and at different stages of their careers face, to be presented at the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) conference in 2014, more WPAs than the panel could accept replied, their responses demonstrating a vast array of responses to the notion of transition. This overwhelming reaction prompted our realization that the field needed to engage in a larger discussion regarding the impact of leadership transitions on scholars' lives, especially since so many in the field of writing studies go through such transitions routinely (not the least when brand-new PhDs move into new positions). Drawing on their own experiences moving into and out of WPA positions, authors in this collection offer some answers to questions about WPA transitions and develop frames through which all leaders—whether WPAs or not—can reenvision their experiences. Some authors discuss the influence of transitions on their persons; some discuss the influence of transitions on their careers; others discuss the influence of transitions on their institutions, programs, and the field. All draw attention to the often tumultuous times when leaders find the road, retread the road, or clear the road so as we pass similar milestones, we can learn how to make the trip more reflexively and clearly, if not more easily.

Before discussing some of the ways this collection contributes to our current understandings of WPA transitions, we must note the way in which we have approached the first two parts, *writing program*, of this administrative title. The debate about definitions of *writing program* on the WPA-L in summer 2015 sparked our own awareness about the ways different people continue to think about what a writing program is and what this definition means both theoretically and practically. From the CFP for the 2014 CWPA panel to the CFP for this collection, we have sought to keep the meaning of *writing program* as broad as possible, seeking individuals who administer sites of writing of all types to apply, and we have maintained this inclusivity in our selections for this collection (seen in the WPAs, assistant WPAs, WCPs, and National Writing Program site directors who have contributed). Further, we have deliberately avoided separating the collection into parts governed by these position types, which would, we think, potentially prohibit some of us from identifying, connecting with, and using frameworks that can be useful to all of us as we experience different transitions. In other words, we believe the collection and our field both are strengthened when we seek out the similarities and overlaps in our experiences as WPAs.

Despite the rich scholarship on writing program administration, which is so often attentive to issues of labor and equity (Bousquet, Scott,

Parascondola 2004; Strickland 2011), cultural/political and institutional forces that shape the teaching of composition (Adler-Kassner 2008; Goldblatt 2007; Rose and Weiser 2010), and assessment (Inoue 2015; O'Neill, Moore, and Huot 2009; White, Elliot, and Peckham 2015), scholars have yet to examine in a systematic way how transitioning into and out of administrative roles impacts people's careers and their scholarly and personal identities. Others have already begun analyzing leadership transitions in ways rhetoric and composition—and English studies in general—has yet to do in scholarship. One clear finding that directly relates to the field is the growing emphasis on asking “less experienced leaders from lower levels in the organization . . . to make tremendous leaps upward in leadership scope and into unfamiliar territory” (Paese and Wellins 2007, 3). The field of writing program administration has itself debated the growth of the untenured or untenured WPA position that asks those with limited experience and not much institutional power to assume leadership positions in writing programs (see Charlton et al. 2011; Horning and Dew 2007).

Despite such debates, job ads continue to call for applicants to fill such positions, partially in response to the same economic forces Paese and Wellins (2007) point to as the root cause of the influx of younger leaders in business fields and partially in response to the rapid growth of jobs for WPAs that has not yet been accompanied with a corresponding growth in those who are qualified to take on these positions. For example, a brief examination of the Academic Jobs Wiki for jobs in rhetoric and composition during the 2014–2015 year shows 57 of 242 advertisements for full-time positions sought candidates who would engage in some form of writing program administration, including directing first-year writing programs, writing centers, and writing-across-the-curriculum programs. Of those fifty-seven advertisements, twenty-eight were for tenure-track assistant professors, with another six billed as assistant/associate searches and four that were fully open rank. The remaining advertisements for WPAs sought associate/full professors (nine) or non-tenure-track instructors (ten). Therefore, two-thirds of the positions were open to tenure-track assistant professors, while almost half specifically called for assistant professors. These trends illustrate how prevalent WPA positions are in the field (around one-quarter of the 2014–2015 jobs listed on the wiki) and the many transitions that take place as people move into and out of the positions, most notably among early-career scholars filling assistant-professor positions. As so many in our field make personal and professional adjustments during these times of movement both into and out of administrative positions,

it is imperative that we better understand what these adjustments are and how they affect our lives.

Lack of scholarship about administrative transitions in our own field does not, however, indicate a complete dearth of frameworks to guide our travels. One of the most obvious sites where leadership transitions have been discussed is in relation to corporations and businesses. This information is written from the ultimate perspective of helping businesses expand—with the aim of growing their bottom lines—by helping leaders form, develop, and succeed. Such texts, typically written as advice manuals by business leaders to other business leaders, often include heuristics for planning and surviving transitions from both company and personal positions. For example, Richard Elsner and Bridget Farrands posit that transitions occur in three phases (arriving, surviving, thriving), that each stage has its own obstacles, and that there are certain techniques new leaders can implement to avoid failure (Elsner and Farrands 2012). David L. Dotlich, James L. Noel, and Norman Walker offer a slightly different tactic, outlining thirteen common “leadership passages,” both in work and home life, leaders need to be prepared for (Dotlich, Noel, and Walker 2004). Both provide a look at different stages that can occur during a leadership transition and how individuals can prepare for and survive these. Kevin Eikenberry and Guy Harris take on a different kind of project: defining a specific type of transition and how to handle its particular issues. They focus on those who are transitioning into their first leadership positions and on the resulting issues, including how to lead those who were previously one’s colleagues (Eikenberry and Harris 2011). The rhetoric of these books often resembles that of a motivational speaker: Eikenberry and Harris’s book begins “Congratulations! You are now the supervisor. The manager. The foreman. The boss. Your role has changed and you are asked to be a leader. There is no better word than to say ‘Congratulations!’” (1). Such a voice isn’t the measured, methodical, analytical tone we value in academia, and it feeds into the hierarchies that often govern businesses and increasingly influence higher education contexts. Although the business model is one faculty often explicitly resist, some of these concepts are useful to consider in relation to our work as leaders in our field, institutions, and programs. In other words, we should not let our resistance to the commodification of education blind us to the useful insights to be gained about leadership transitions from the business world.

Other fields such as nursing, information technology, and education have also scrutinized leadership transitions from the perspective of

helping those in the field acclimate to new leadership positions. In nursing, Schumacher and Meleis (1994) wrote a review of literature focused around the concept of transitions and how they have been approached in the field of nursing, including “situational transitions” when nurses move into and out of particular positions (120). Their review of 124 articles from 1986 to 1992 found three conditions necessary to successful transitions: subjective well-being, role mastery, and well-being of relationships (124). Such extensive research indicates the level of scrutiny other fields have already given to transitions. In the field of information technology, Marilu Goodyear and Cynthia Golden specifically speak about leadership transitions in the context of high turnover in the field (Goodyear and Golden 2008). They identify four “areas of interaction between leaders and followers” they claim are “critical for success during a transition: Partnering in decision making; Focusing on the successful implementation of new directions; Challenging the new leader as appropriate; Understanding and providing the unique support the new leader requires” (53). Their goal is to give IT professionals who often face transitions between positions some guidance, even if brief, about how to manage the interpersonal relationships that often determine the failure or success in leadership. A little closer to home, though far above the typical WPA’s tax bracket, books intended to help top-level education administrators transition have become more common. One example is James Martin and James E. Samels’s collection *Presidential Transition in Higher Education: Managing Leadership Change*, which addresses the growing number of presidential transitions at colleges and universities (Martin and Samels 2004). The authors in this volume speak to a variety of stakeholders involved in these types of transitions and tactics for handling them. The ultimate aims of these texts are often more in line with our own goals than with the goals of business models (despite the growing attention in higher education to recruitment, retention, and similar corporate-like practices): to help people become better leaders and be successful without necessarily worrying about a company’s profitability.

Apart from these somewhat expected areas in which leadership transitions might gain attention, the issues and problems that often arise from any type of leadership transition have led to increased attention to many different sorts of transitions not typically accounted for in previous work. For example, Tom Dale Mullins (2015) discusses religious-leadership transitions in *Passing the Leadership Baton*. Further, organizations have been built to help those in different types of positions acclimate to new or exit previous positions. The Leadership Transition Institute offers academics and business leaders focused attention to leadership transitions.¹

With the proliferation of writing programs across and outside the United States and the many types of WPA positions being created, filled, and refilled, WPAs cannot afford to ignore the insights needed to help them through their own leadership transitions that can be generated not just from other scholarship but from our own lived experiences. These various scholarly and popular perspectives not only offer us a starting point through which to consider our own work but also highlight the importance of creating our own frameworks through which to theorize and prepare for transitions into and out of administrative positions. In the remainder of the introduction, we discuss specific concepts we have found useful in adapting to leadership transitions, particularly as WPAs, and we conclude by providing an overview of the chapters that comprise this book.

TRACING THE ROAD ALREADY TRAVELED: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN WPA TRANSITIONS

Although English studies in general, rhetoric and composition as a field, and writing program administration as a related field have explored leadership transitions very little, scholarship has indirectly focused on similar issues, particularly when scholars explore the connections between their professional and personal lives. Diana George's collection *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers and Troubadours* served as an initial inspiration for this collection in its focus on lived experience as an important site of knowledge making (George 1999). While those authors did not particularly look at moments in their lives as transitional, many of them were talking about transitions of different kinds; for example, in "The WPA as Father, Husband, Ex," Doug Hesse discusses his transitions into and out of familial roles while serving as a WPA (Hesse 1999). Similarly drawing on narrative as knowledge making, Peggy O'Neill, Angela Crow, and Larry W. Burton's collection *A Field of Dreams* provides programmatic narratives of independent writing programs that often involve transitions of entire programs, particularly in the movement of writing programs out of English departments (O'Neill, Crow, and Burton 2002). Two of the most explicit contributions about WPA leadership transitions are David E. Schwalm's "Writing Program Administration as Preparation for an Administrative Career" (Schwalm 2002) and Susan McLeod's "Moving Up the Administrative Ladder" (McLeod 2002), both reflecting the familiar road some WPAs take from WPA to other administrative positions. However, these pieces have not been recently taken up to consider the work WPAs engage in. We encouraged authors in our

collection to similarly relate and reflect on their own experiences as they sparked conversations about how WPAs transition into and out of positions and how we can better understand these transitions. Lived experience serves as the central hallmark of these chapters around which authors have thoughtfully constructed frameworks to help us all better understand their own and similar situations.

Despite the lack of scholarship about leadership transitions in writing studies, the many responses to our call for proposals for this collection illustrate the need to consider times of leadership transitions and how they affect our lives, those around us, and the institutions and programs we are part of. Paese and Wellins (2007) found that many leaders, especially those at the midlevel or midcareer, place “making a transition at work” as the second most challenging event in their lives, second only to separation or divorce (6). Anecdotally, transition points are similarly disruptive and stressful for WPAs, whether we are moving to new locations to take charge of new programs or moving into new positions at the same institutions. Rather than having to develop concepts from scratch through which to theorize and reconsider our practices during transitions, there are already some available frameworks that, when adapted to our specific locations, can be useful.

Two texts, both of which deserve more attention from rhetoric and composition scholars and WPAs, discuss transitions particular to faculty in higher education. Ronald J. Henry’s *Transitions between Faculty and Administrative Careers* provides a variety of perspectives from faculty who became administrators (Henry 2006). One of the chief differences between these experiences and those of newer-generation WPAs is that WPA training has recently become a formal part of many rhetoric and composition programs, with questions and information about graduate courses in writing program administration often appearing during conferences and on the WPA listserv. Therefore, graduate students with such training often see WPA work and, consequently, university leadership as important aspects of their professional identities from the time they become faculty members, unlike many of those in this collection whose paths to leadership, as Henry puts it, were “somewhat serendipitous” and “not deliberate” (1). Nevertheless, this collection provides useful perspectives for all faculty to consider as they move into administrative roles. Focusing on the end-of-career timeline, Claire A. Van Ummersen, Jean M. McLaughlin, and Lauren J. Duranleau’s collection *Faculty Retirement: Best Practices for Navigating the Transition* explores issues related to faculty retirement, including psychological effects of retirement and institutional support for retirees (Van Ummersen,

McLaughlin, and Duranleau 2014). Although they address faculty at large and not academic leaders or WPAs in particular, Van Ummersen, McLaughlin, and Duranleau's collection reflects recent discussions at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (including the establishment of a special-interest group for senior, late-career, and retired professionals) and at the Conference for Writing Program Administrators, as well as discussion on the WPA listserv about the role of retirees in the profession. WPAs are particularly invested in the issue of retirement, as they must simultaneously transition out of academic life and out of leadership positions through which they have helped build and sustain programs. (As a retiring faculty member and former WPA at Jacob's institution noted, only half joking, "I'm probably going to hate any changes you make to my program.") This book, like Henry's, provides some general information about transitions WPAs and other rhetoric and composition faculty who have moved into leadership positions may find useful.

Pushing against our tendency to resist concepts useful in corporate America fruitfully provides more specific road signs to help us mark, plan for, and successfully navigate routes through administrative transitions. The Corporate Executive Board Company (CEB), a corporation focused on business management, is influential as a sponsor of information about leadership transitions. In "High-Impact Leadership Transitions," the CEB calls on organizations and leaders to think in terms of what *type* of transition is occurring and how they can best prepare for that kind of transition rather than in hierarchical (someone moving up or down) or entry-point (someone moving into or out of the company) terms (Corporate Executive Board Company 2012). Claiming that "these approaches both fail to account for differences in the circumstances that each transitioning leader must face" (4), it hypothesizes that there are five transition types that account for 97 percent of all leadership transitions: smooth sailing, replacing an icon, following a train wreck, jump starting, and breaking ground (4). Their descriptions of each transition type, with definitions of important priorities in each situation, can help those entering new leadership positions, such as new WPAs or WPAs moving into different administrative positions, to better understand what type of situation they are entering and how they can best approach it. For example, of the breaking-ground transition, where someone steps into a newly created position, they claim, "To succeed in this transition it is critical to clearly define the responsibilities and objectives of the role and gain a better understanding of the stakeholder universe" (13). Translated to WPAs, this recommendation asks us to make

sure it is clear what work expectations are, particularly when work must be justified for course releases, additional pay, or other compensation, and to pay attention to the many stakeholders involved in the work of writing programs, including students, other faculty, upper administration, parents, and the culture at large, not to mention tenure and promotion committees who must weigh our work as WPAs. Focusing on each type of transition is useful in directing our attention to different priorities depending on the kind of transition we are a part of. Further, the CEB's information about how often the different types of transition occur in organizations (smooth sailing: 3 percent; replacing an icon: 18 percent; following a train wreck: 27 percent; jump starting: 19 percent; breaking ground: 31 percent) encourages WPAs to consider what transition types typically occur for us and how we can differently approach various kinds of transitions.

Focusing more specifically on how new leaders can prove themselves and garner respect and support, Mark E. Van Buren and Todd Safferstone outline the concept of the "collective quick win" they argue is common among strong new leaders (Van Buren and Safferstone 2009). A collective quick win is "a new and visible contribution to the success of the business made early in [a new leader's] tenure" (56), something that requires the effort of a group of people, doesn't require additional resources, and gets noticed by others (Van Buren and Safferstone specify "by people two levels above the new leader" [57]). The effect of collective quick wins, they claim, is "a crucial form of reassurance to the leaders' bosses, who hope they have made the right promotion decision; to team members deciding whether to place confidence in their new manager; and to peers trying to determine whether an equal has joined their ranks" (57). Although Van Buren and Safferstone strangely don't indicate how quickly this action should take place (perhaps an acknowledgment that the time frame is contingent on the workplace), they do provide a set of questions, or a diagnostic, to help leaders determine which opportunity might work as a collective quick win. In the case of WPAs, such action could involve setting up workshops led by faculty in the writing program in order to create digital assignments or collaboratively writing or revising student learning outcomes (see Babb and Wooten 2016). The idea of the collective quick win points out the strengths of working with others once in a new position to build something the group takes pride in and that others can recognize as having a positive impact on the program.

Speaking about movement into leadership positions generally, Paese and Wellins found that dealing with internal politics was a significant

challenge for the six hundred managers from around the world that they surveyed: “At first and mid levels, politics is the top challenge, with almost half of first-level leaders and one third at level two [of three] saying that they have been unable to address this challenge effectively. Senior leaders rate politics as the fourth most difficult challenge” (Paese and Wellins 2007, 10). WPAs are not naïve about the many political entanglements they may face, particularly if they are nontenured. Paese and Wellins don’t offer particular advice about this problem, but they note, “It’s worth reflecting on the amount of organisational time and effort managing these conflicting interests must inevitably consume” (10). As any WPA who has spent hours agonizing over one e-mail knows, internal politics can consume much of our time.

Perhaps a more helpful note in Paese and Mitchell’s related article is their finding that survey respondents said it was difficult to establish “a new network appropriate to their level,” and they recommend that organizations help “facilitate peer-to-peer support networks for newly promoted managers” (Paese and Mitchell 2007, 11) that might minimize politics. The need to help new leaders network is one echoed by Van Buren and Safferstone, who encourage companies to “engage the support network” of the new leader’s “manager, peers, and direct reports” (Van Buren and Safferstone 2009, 61). The importance of networking across campus and what campuses could do to facilitate this process must be emphasized. As new WPAs, we have often expressed our frustrations to one another that there is no clear way to meet others across campus besides approaching them whenever we need to communicate with them about a particular project or issue, which are times when pre-existing relationships would facilitate our communication. Developing more ways to network or encouraging institutions to help new faculty members in general to network not just with other faculty—and not with just new faculty, as often happens in orientation sessions—would establish useful inroads for WPAs navigating some of the politics involved in their positions.

This brief trip through some of the scholarship available is certainly not exhaustive. Instead, it is intended to earmark some of the information already available about leadership transitions WPAs might find useful to tap into and consider in relation to our administrative positions. Even if scholars resist or outright reject the business- and profit-oriented terminology and rhetorical strategies employed in some of these texts, the authors still offer us valuable ways through which to examine our own lived experiences and on which to begin building our own theories about transitioning into and out of WPA and other administrative positions.

Thus, these texts serve as trails we can trace and outline even as we forge our own. We hope more WPAs will travel these roads and produce scholarship to enrich and build more frameworks to facilitate our transitions.

THE TRAVELER'S ROAD MAP

Because of the diversity of perspectives offered by the contributors to this collection, we could have used any number of different organizational strategies. However, our focus on not just the narratives but also on the frameworks authors construct to understand the transitions they faced as WPAs—and our desire for others to interact with, question, push against, and employ these frameworks—led us to organize the chapters based on the overall focus authors presented as they talked about the transitions they had gone through. Thus, we have created four sections that address overarching issues in WPA scholarship, rhetoric and composition as a field, and the wider higher education community. It is our hope that readers will find all these perspectives useful for examining their own experiences and developing their own frameworks for understanding professional transitions.

Power and Agency

In one of the most often-cited articles on WPAs and power, Edward M. White (1991) asserts that “administrators, including WPAs, cannot afford the luxury of powerlessness. The only way to do the job of a WPA is to be aware of the power relationships we necessarily conduct, and to use the considerable power we have for the good of our program” (White 1991, 12). The opening section of this collection contains four chapters that contemplate the amount of power WPAs actually have, the role that power plays in their efforts to support and develop their programs, and the agency they have as WPAs.

First, Karen Keaton Jackson, in “A State of Permanent Transition: Strategies for Surviving in an Ever-Present Marginal Space,” deconstructs the ideas of leader and manager often inherent in WPA positions to argue that the interplay between these roles can help those WPAs, such as herself, who find themselves in nearly constant states of transition. Next, in his chapter about job-position negotiations, “Suddenly WPA: Lessons from an Early and Unexpected Transition,” Chris Blankenship explores the limits of the time and energy we should be willing to give up to become WPAs even as he notes the power of privilege he may have had as a white male to negotiate for time and space to assume

this position. Jennifer Riley Campbell and Richard Colby's "Servers, Cooks, and the Inadequacy of Metaphor" asks us to question the limits of the metaphors we use to describe our work and argues that assistant directors in writing programs must carefully consider their institutional power and agency as they assume and carry out their work, especially as they balance their workloads and take on leadership positions with those who were formerly their colleagues.

The concluding chapter for this section, "An Exercise in Cognitive Dissonance": Liminal WPA Transitions" by Talinn Phillips, Paul Showlin, and Megan L. Titus, draws attention to an unrecognized or temporary WPA position, the liminal WPA who often performs the tasks of a WPA but does not have institutional status as a WPA. Through their interviews with four liminal WPAs who were transitioning into and out of their roles, they explore the positive and negative aspects of these positions and how departments and programs can help those in these positions, arguing that these positions may not be preferable but that they are not disappearing.

Identities and Subjectivities

One of the large questions driving this collection is one about how our work as WPAs impacts our professional and personal identities and how our subjectivity shapes and is shaped by our role as administrators. The six essays that comprise this section take on some of these issues, particularly drawing our attention to the subjectivities we inhabit and what these mean as we transition into WPA positions. They serve as road signs directing us to possible paths and offering us choices about the journeys we wish to make and how we think of these journeys. Andrea Scott's "Defining Disciplinary at Moments of Transition: The Dappled Expertise of the Multidisciplinary WPA" begins this section with a broad call for WPA scholarship to better account for the productive connections between literary studies and composition as she discusses her transition from one job to another very different job. Her tracing of the overlaps and differences in these fields, which productively helped her transition as a WPA, asks readers to consider what it means if we extend our disciplinary roots to include all those who engage in WPA work.

The next chapter draws attention to what it means to inhabit particular bodies in particular places and times. "The Joys of WPAhood: Embracing Interruption in the Personal and the Professional" by Kate Pantelides explores the personal interweaving of parental identities with WPA work. She argues that conceptualizing WPA work through the

lenses of adaptation and interruption can help us see how disruptions to the status quo can be beneficial and how our personal and professional identities can productively speak to each other. Focusing on new WPAs, “Metaphors We Work By: New Writing Center Directors’ Labor and Identities” by Rebecca Jackson, Jackie Grutsch McKinney, and Nicole I. Caswell, draws on interviews with nine writing center directors during their first year on the job, focusing on the metaphors these WCDs use to describe their work as “perilous and tenuous” while also building a sense of “excitement and pride.” Jackson, McKinney, and Caswell emphasize the on-the-job nature of much of the training these WCPs went through and call for institutions to set up more realistic expectations for WCP workloads.

In “Get Offa My Lawn!: Generational Challenges of WPAs in Transition,” Beth Huber offers the stories of four generational shifts in one writing program. Huber addresses the challenges of leaving WPA positions and watching new WPAs shift the priorities of writing programs, claiming such changes occur naturally over time and must happen incrementally. Exploring a topic many WPAs avoid—failure—Steven J. Corbett’s “Processes of Administrative (Un)Becoming: Learning to Fail While Trying to Fly” extends the field’s inquiry into failure in writing classes to WPAs, asking us what it means to learn to fail in our work as we transition into new positions and places and, ultimately, as we leave them.

Finally, Amy Rupiper Taggart’s “Re-seeing the WPA Skill Set: GenAdmins Transitioning from WPA to University Pedagogical Leadership” calls on WPAs to consider what happens when we move through GenAdmin identities as WPAs into other administrative positions on campus. She argues that we need to identify other options for work besides WPA positions and that we need to be more aware of the skills we possess and how these may translate to other kinds of work.

Collaborations and Dialogues

Just as in road trips for which we often plan the routes and read maps together, WPA work frequently involves collaborations between programs, WPAs, other administrators, teachers, students, staff, and so forth. The chapters in this section explicitly present situations in which collaborations occurred during WPA transitions and what we can glean about our own work from these experiences and the conversations that took place around them. Letizia Guglielmo and Beth Daniell’s chapter, “‘You Say Goodbye, I Say Hello’: Transitions as Two Programs

Consolidate,” recounts their experiences of transitioning into and out of a WPA position on the same campus while this campus simultaneously merged with another institution at the behest of the board of regents at the University of Georgia. Their chapter exposes the subject positions they found themselves in during this time and how they continue to negotiate these based on a shared commitment to the writing program.

Examining the leadership strategies needed during transitions into WPA positions, Laura J. Davies’s “Command and Collaboration: Leading as a New WPA” turns attention to power structures that exist in WPA work, arguing that command and collaboration are complementary leadership theories that must be further considered as she recounts her time as a jWPA at the United States Air Force Academy. In the next chapter, Tereza Joy Kramer, Jaquelyn Davis, Holland Enke, and Reyna Olegario speak to the importance of working with those around us, including students, who are vital parts of our writing programs. In “Integrating Approach and Ethos: Creating a Writing Center/WAC Program through Collaborative Leadership,” they argue that dialogue and collaboration are essential to leadership growth, recounting how these relationships have fostered unique opportunities for faculty and student collaboration in their Center for Writing Across the Curriculum.

In the concluding chapter for this section, “There and Back Again, Sort of: The WPA as Literacy Broker,” Chris Warnick builds on Deborah Brandt’s theory of literacy brokers to analyze his return to a WPA position after an eight-year hiatus; he offers this theory as useful for WPAs because it helped him embrace the “creativity and imagination” and reflection needed in order to collaborate with others in his program for the second time. Taken together, the chapters in this section highlight some of the ways in which collaboration during WPA transitions can enrich the work we do and strengthen our programs and their reach across campuses.

Disruption and Activism

The final section of the book includes chapters that describe how WPA transitions may tap into the potentially creative energy of disruption. For some of the authors, such disruptions lead to new perspectives on their career paths or directions for their programs. For others, disruption takes the form of activism, particularly regarding questions of labor. The section’s opening chapter, Sarah Stanley’s “Revolving Doors and Settled Locks: Staying Put in an Undesirable Place,” questions the dominant narrative of GenAdmin, exploring

her own identity outside this group and arguing that “staying put” in a particular place rather than moving often between positions affords more opportunities to contribute to both writing programs and the communities we live in. Speaking in the context of community colleges in “Connection, Community, and Identity: Writing Programs and WPAs at the Community College,” Mark Blaauw-Hara and Cheri Lemieux Spiegel argue that connections to the larger WPA community are essential to addressing feelings of loneliness and isolation, particularly in institutions where writing programs and WPA positions are relatively unfamiliar territory, and to creating a holistic approach to writing-program decisions.

Perhaps one of the most difficult transitions involves passing the torch on to someone else. Employing the metaphors of space/rooms and travelers, Bradley Smith and Kerri K. Morris, in “Fostering Ethical Transitions: Creating Community as Writing Program Administrators,” recount the creation of a writing program from the ground up. They discuss how these metaphors help them see the community of writing teachers they are in the process of creating and argue that such frameworks can serve as useful ways for a current WPA and a next-in-line WPA who is still a faculty member to negotiate their relationship with each other while they are both working with the same writing program. Complicating the ways in which different positions are seen in our field, Molly Tetreault’s “Reconsidering Marginalization: One Writing Center Director’s Perspective” questions the privileging of faculty writing center director positions over staff positions and asks us to consider what it would mean to stop focusing on job status as a measure of marginalization and to recognize instead the solidarity among all of us. In discussing moving from a contingent WPA position (which might be seen as liminal) to a tenure-track WPA position, Liliana M. Naydan argues, in “Transitioning from Contingent to Tenure-Track Faculty Status As a WPA: Working toward Solidarity and Academic Labor Justice through Hybridity,” that in order to enact labor activism, those such as herself who have transitioned from contingent to tenure-track status must listen to other contingent faculty members’ stories, exchange stories with them, and seek to unearth solidarity among all faculty as the basis on which labor reform can occur. Taken together, these chapters offer three new landmarks to guide our discussion about labor and marginalization as they affect WPA identities and the future of our field.

Conclusion

Successful transition requires awareness and reflection about the interstitial realms of our work, something we hope our collection inspires in readers. Our own experiences have taught us that the few months at the beginning, end, or between jobs are hardly dead time. These are periods of intense transformation, in both positive and negative ways. They are filled with new expectations, learning curves, and anxiety. Their importance necessitates the kind of in-depth exploration given here. All the narratives may not apply to our immediate contexts, but they offer strategies and tools for our use when we do encounter similar circumstances. In turn, they should also prompt us to think about our own positions and programs from different perspectives. They may bring to light challenges and resources we have yet to consider.

As all three of us continue to face transitions both large and small, professional and personal, we keep looking around as we make our journey, consulting maps, planning trips, reading road signs, finding landmarks, making rest stops, and exiting and entering the highway. Since human beings are in a constant state of flux, we don't anticipate these transitions ending; we only hope we learn as we go and become better at handling them. These chapters offer all WPAs as well as others in and out of our field who find themselves in leadership positions some starting points for considering what it means to be a "leader" and how we move into, through, and out of these positions.

Note

1. See the Leadership Transition Institute's website at <http://www.executiveboard.com/exbd/leadership-transition/index.page>.

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