



13th Annual SLAC-WPA 2020 Conference

Difficult Questions:

The Role of Writing and Writing Programs at Small Liberal Arts Colleges

January 10-11, 2020 | Franklin & Marshall College | Lancaster, PA

Friday, January 10 | All Events at the Lancaster Holiday Inn

Registration desk opens at noon in the Atrium. Come by to pick up your badge and program. Your badge will indicate your workshop attendance.

1:30 – 2:00 pm: Welcome by Dr. Alan S. Caniglia, Vice President for Planning, Franklin & Marshall College, and SLAC-WPA President’s Remarks

2:00 – 3:50 pm: Speedshares (2 rounds, 25 minutes each)

Speedsharing includes ten-minute presentations that preview a new strategy, technique, or arrangement in tutoring, teaching, or administering writing. The subject of the presentations may not focus on the conference theme of difficult questions. Speed sharing keeps us informed of new developments in the field, novel administrative arrangements, ideas for assessment, strategies for staffing, skills for stretching tight budgets, thoughts about faculty development, etc.

Speedshare Round 1 — 2:00 – 2:50 pm -- Imperial Suite

A. Hannah Bellwoar (Juniata College) “Developing a Writing Associates Program”

For this speed sharing presentation, we will talk about our new Writing Associates program for the newly-revised first year writing sequence at Juniata College. Our program includes a Writing Associate for each section of first year composition in the fall and first year seminar in the spring. This program was designed to replace our year-long developmental course since all students are now taking two semesters of writing in their first year. For this first speed share, Hannah Bellwoar, the Director of Writing, will provide a brief overview of the revised curriculum and assessment of the program based on the habits of mind of engagement, persistence, responsibility, and metacognition. This speed share aims both to share Juniata’s approach to a Writing Associates program and solicit feedback as to others’ experience with implementation and assessment of new writing program initiatives.

B. Anne Berry (St. Olaf College) “Encouraging Critical Self-Awareness in 1st-year Multilingual Writers”

The decision to place incoming international students in a “sheltered” first-year writing course is not straightforward and even controversial, but once the decision has been made, there exists an opportunity, a dedicated time and space in which to guide this unique and diverse population of students through the fundamentals of critical thinking, reading, and writing and to help them begin to find their voice in the college context. Since international students arrive with a spectrum of skills, strengths, and challenges, a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. This presentation shares a variety of metacognitive exercises, through which students come to understand their own needs and goals, personalize the course content and the intended outcomes, and take charge of their own learning.

2:50 pm – 3:00 pm: Break

Speedshare Round 2 — 3:00 – 3:50 pm -- Imperial Suite

A. Carol Peters, Laura Feibush (Juniata College), “Developing a Writing Associates Program”

For this speed sharing presentation, we will talk about our new Writing Associates program for the newly-revised first year writing sequence at Juniata College. Our program includes a Writing Associate for each section of first year composition in the fall and first year seminar in the spring. This program was designed to replace our year-long developmental course since all students are now taking two semesters of writing in their first year. For this second speed share, Carol Peters, the Director of the Writing Center, will discuss training the Writing Associates to incorporate practices that help students develop the habits of mind of engagement, persistence, responsibility, and metacognition. Then, Laura Feibush will talk about working with her first year composition students and the Writing Associate to develop these habits of mind. This speed share aims both to share Juniata’s approach to a Writing Associates program and solicit feedback as to others’ experience with implementation and assessment of new writing program initiatives.

B. Genie Giaimo (Middlebury College), “Engaging Students in Conducting Writing Research”

I will share a longitudinal assessment project that I have done at other institutions and have also implemented at Middlebury College, just this past term. The assessment, which loops in student researchers into a survey study on the perceptions and attitudes that students have towards writing and writing centers, demonstrates how attitudes towards writing center attendance might be correlated with the knowledge subjects have regarding writing center praxis, or their personal attitudes towards writing/writing confidence. While this study is still in a data collection period at Middlebury, findings from a land-grant institution as well as a community college yielded diverse findings among student attitudes and engagement with institutional writing centers. Thus, while uniqueness of institution tends to be something that scholars in writing centers shy away from highlighting in RAD scholarship, there may, in fact, be a uniqueness factor that affects how different student populations interact with, or fail to interact with, a writing center. Research at Middlebury is ongoing and supported by a student researcher. I will share initial findings from Middlebury, as well as some findings from other institutions, as well as discuss the study design and the student-driven creation of this project, all of which I have published on in *Praxis* and *TETYC*.

C. Meredith McCarroll (Bowdoin College), “Extending the Curriculum and Supporting the Student”

In this speed-sharing session, I would like to share the evolving pilot project at Bowdoin College for a half-credit course called Writing Studio. Taken in conjunction with a First-Year Seminar, this course works to model and reward good practices without the burden of additional assignments. The course requires students to log one hour/week in the Writing Center, to attend weekly lab sections on Writing Intensive topics, to meet 4 times with a Writing Assistant, and to

produce a reflective portfolio at the end of the semester. I will be excited to share both the successes as well as the challenges of this support model. In collaboration with the Office of Inclusion and Diversity, this course was an effort to combat implicit bias, to acknowledge gaps in the students we support, and to attend to reported discrepancies in preparation.

3:50 – 4:00 pm: Break

4:00 – 4:30 pm: SLAC-WPA Members Business Meeting – Imperial Suite

5:00 – 6:00 pm: Reception

6:00 pm: Dinner in the Imperial Blue Ballroom

Saturday, January 11 | All events at Franklin & Marshall

Shuttles will run between the hotel and F&M. Gather in the hotel lobby no later than 8 a.m. to ensure ontime arrival at F&M. All sessions held in Ann and Richard Barshinger Life Sciences & Philosophy (LSP) Building

8:45 a.m.: Welcome and Brief Announcements. LSP Atrium. Light refreshments will be available.

9 am – noon: Workshops (2 concurrent)

Workshops are a new SLAC-WPA conference format. These three-hour workshops will be hands-on and interactive and should result in a developed take-home idea or project. Attendees will find their workshop assignment on their conference badges.

Workshop 1. “The Difficult Question of Writing Assessment Practices” – LSP 138

Workshop leader: Megan O’Neill (Stetson University)

Questions around writing assessment pose particular challenges. Who should do the assessment? How can results be reported effectively? Who has access to the data? What are strong “closing the loop” strategies? How shall assessment initiatives be resourced? In this 3-hour, hands-on workshop, participants will share their own institutional practices, challenges, and results around writing assessment (sites including writing centers, writing programs, first year writing, WAC/WID/WEC writing structures, and other instructional forms). Following a frank and open discussion around the difficult questions of assessment, the workshop will help participants understand a SLAC-based set of best practices. Finally, the workshop will create opportunities for participants to develop effective processes for assessment at their home institutions. Participants will take away helpful documents, plans, and next steps. While participants with all levels of familiarity with assessment practices can benefit from the workshop, it will be most useful for participants who are relatively new to their positions or relatively new to assessment, planning, and reporting.

Workshop 2. “Ethical Quandaries and Promising Practices in Working with International and Domestic Multilingual Writers” -- LSP 257

Workshop leaders: Shawna Shapiro (Middlebury College) and Rebeca Fernández (Davidson College)

Working with multilingual writers at times raises difficult ethical questions: What do we owe students, in terms of support and advocacy? How do we “level the playing field” without “lowering the bar”? How can we promote a progressive orientation to language difference, while still preparing students for the (linguistically unjust) world as it is?

In this 2.5 hour workshop, we will explore the above questions, providing concrete strategies and scenarios to ground the discussion. We begin with a conversation about issues related to recruitment, placement, and adjustment. Next, we review institutional strategies and resources for supporting international and other multilingual students. We then shift to curriculum and instruction, looking at ways to promote Critical Language Awareness in writing courses, tutor training, and conversations with faculty and staff colleagues. We conclude with some lingering questions to consider as we seek to promote a sense of belonging and tap into the assets of both international and domestic multilingual writers. The remaining half-hour of the 3-hour block will be available for extended discussion.

12:00 – 1:30 pm: Lunch -- Drucker Humanities Commons, 1st Floor LSP. Writing Center Tour will follow

1:30 – 4:20 pm: Roundtables (2 concurrent sessions)

Roundtables provide the opportunity for discussion of multiple perspectives around a common question, theme, or shared institutional practice. Facilitators will provide a framing presentation and then will offer motivating questions related to one or more of the “difficult questions” connected to the theme of the conference to spark discussion.

Roundtable Session 1 — 1:30 -2:50 pm

A: “Placement Practices for Multilingual Writers at Small Liberal Arts Colleges,” Ghada Gerwash (Colby College); Natalie Mera Ford (Swarthmore College); and Barbara Hall (Haverford College) LSP 130

Research in the field of second language writing suggests that providing multilingual writers (MLWs) with adequate placement options is crucial to their success in writing courses (Silva, 1994). Most of the current research focuses on first-year composition placement at medium-to-large universities (e.g., Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; Rucker, 2011) as well as the promotion of student agency through increased placement options (Saenkhum, 2016). However, there is little available research on placement practices for multilingual students in composition courses at small liberal arts colleges, which are less likely to have the infrastructure to provide various placement options for MLWs, especially international students. In this roundtable, we will explore placement best practices, describe the placement options that two SLACs offer their MLWs, and invite attendees to share how their institutions approach placement for MLWs.

Through discussion, we aim to reflect together on how we could improve placement policies and stimulate further dialogue on this topic among WPAs across SLACs.

B: “Deliberation, Democracy and First-Year Writing,” Van E. Hillard (Davidson College) – LSP 256

Instead of reasonable and respectful argument, our contemporary political landscape is mostly punctuated by bluster, badgering, and bargaining. In this hostile environment, our students tend to conceptualize disagreement as an inevitably uncomfortable and ultimately defensive engagement. First-year students are perhaps most familiar with debate, but the genre has its limits as a form for productive disagreement. Deliberation offers us an alternative for introducing first-year students to inquiry-driven exchange of the sort typically practiced in scholarly settings, where disagreement, though at times sharp and principled, is an expected catalyst for reasoning together, an essential social rhetoric for academic and civic life. I will report on Davidson College’s Deliberative Citizenship Initiative, a campus-wide project focused on modeling and enhancing conversation about difficult issues that demand fulsome multi-perspectival attention.

C: “From Individual Thoughts to Institutional Actions: Navigating Curricular Reform and Organizational Change from a 3rd Space,” Katrina Bell and Aaron Stoller (Colorado College) – LSP 258

In this roundtable facilitated by two non-faculty WPAs, who also hold other academic administrative positions, discussion will center around the politics and possibilities of promoting curricular reform from a 3rd space. After sharing their own context and experiences to frame the discussion, presenters will open the conversation to a number of key questions (listed below) many of us face as we work to support student thinking, writing, and knowledge production through curricular and pedagogical changes. The goal of this session is to deconstruct the process of navigating change on small liberal arts campuses that may suffer from “we’ve always done it this way,” and to advance an ongoing dialogue of the ways that marginalized positions and people can have significant impacts on the quality of student learning.

Key Questions:

- What’s the relationship between curricular (general education) reform and organizational change, specifically in terms of the role of the WPA?
- What are the political, conceptual, and organizational structures at stake?
- How do we learn about our campus needs? How do we move towards reaching those when we have such complex structures?
- Who are your allies in the process? What are your strategies for organizational change and getting buy-in from excited and resistant stakeholders?
- How do you educate the stakeholders of the aims of curricular reform, particularly when speaking from a marginalized position/3rd space?

2:50 – 3:00 pm: Break

3:00 – 4:20 pm -- Roundtables

Roundtable Session 2

- A.** “Activity Theory as Tool for SLAC Writing Program Development and Assessment,” Chris Hassay, Meg Mikovits, and Crystal Fodrey (Moravian College) – LSP 130

Our roundtable will explore the ways activity theory can inform the development of a WAC program. Using the Writing at Moravian program as an example, we will focus on three distinct but equally important applications of an activity system heuristic within a larger WAC effort: 1) identifying what your program has, 2) refining what you want for your program, and 3) ultimately recognizing what your program needs and what is feasible.

- B.** “The Essay Wheel: Creating a Common Lexicon,” Christine Perrin, Kerry Hasler-Brooks, and Lucas Sheaffer (Messiah College) – LSP 256

In this session we will share a tool we have developed to name the parts of an academic essay in an attempt to create a common lexicon across campus among faculty members and on behalf of students.

This tool bridges different writing situations for students and thus contributes to the ongoing work of synthesizing the skills and ideas students experience in liberal arts curriculum. We will talk about the various applications that we are in the midst of imperfectly implementing: in first year courses, with faculty in the disciplines, and as a bridge between the two. We are particularly interested in establishing categories that are transferable but also in encouraging students to get and test ideas.

- C.** “Training Undergraduate Peer Tutors as Part of a Liberal Arts Curriculum,” Marion Wolfe (Kenyon College) – LSP 258

This roundtable contribution will discuss some of the difficulties of planning and implementing a training course for undergraduate peer writing center tutors in the SLAC setting, including:

- How do we balance the practical/instrumental nature of tutor training with a liberal arts mandate that resists vocationalism?
- How might such a course be integrated into the existing curriculum, particularly within a literature-focused English department?
- How can teachers of such a course respond to, and productively grapple with, resistance from students, who might not see tutor training as an important or useful part of their liberal arts degree?

4:20 – 4:45 pm: Closing

Dinner on own. Conference host will be making reservations at a number of restaurants for 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sign up sheets will be available at the registration table.

List of Conference Presenters

Katrina Bell, Colorado College
Hannah Bellwoar, Juniata College
Anne Berry, St. Olaf College
Laura Feibush, Juniata College
Rebeca Fernández, Davidson College
Crystal Fodrey, Moravian College
Natalie Mera Ford, Swarthmore College
Ghada Gerwash, Colby College
Genie Giaimo, Middlebury College
Barbara Hall, Haverford College
Kerry Hasler-Brooks, Messiah College
Chris Hassay, Moravian College
Van E. Hillard, Davidson College
Meg Mikovits, Moravian College
Megan O'Neill, Stetson University
Christine Perrin, Messiah College
Carol Peters, Juniata College
Shawna Shapiro, Middlebury College
Lucas Sheaffer, Messiah College
Aaron Stoller, Colorado College
Marion Wolfe, Kenyon College

Participating Institutions

Colby College
Colorado College
Davidson College
Haverford College
Juniata College
Kenyon College
Moravian College
Messiah College
Middlebury College
St. Olaf College
Stetson University
Swarthmore College

Membership in SLAC-WPA is available to individuals associated with those colleges and universities who meet the following criteria:

- 1) have a student body of no more than 3,500 students*
- 2) are independently supported as a private entity*
- 3) have a primarily residential arrangement for students*
- 4) are dedicated to a liberal arts mission*

Notes for Conference Participants

Cloud Storage/Internet Access while at Franklin & Marshall

F&M will still be on their winter break during our meeting and so the appropriate technology experts will not be available to troubleshoot should there be any glitches. Should the occasion arise when you want to share files, we ask that you assume the Cloud will not be available and make appropriate preparations (for example, thumb drives, handouts, and so forth).

Preserving and Sharing Materials

In the interests of making materials shared at the conference accessible to those who could not attend, the Executive Board has agreed to establish a shared Google drive, which will allow those with the links to upload documents for sharing. These documents will be sorted by folders to enable easy searching. Details will be shared during the Business Meeting.

Types of Sessions

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Executive Board Members

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Past President: Brenda Boyle, Denison University

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Interim Treasurer: Wendy Menefee-Libey, Harvey Mudd College

Representative at Large: Megan O’Neill, Stetson University

2020 Conference Host: Daniel Frick, Franklin & Marshall College

Getting to the Franklin & Marshall College Campus

Saturday's conference events will begin and end in the Barshinger Life Sciences and Philosophy (LSP) building on the F&M campus.

Transportation will be provided to and from F&M and the Holiday Inn Lancaster (the site of Friday's conference events).

For those driving to campus, the LSP building is best approached from the Harrisburg Pike entrance to F&M's Williamson parking lot. LSP will be the second building on your right.

Parking is plentiful and located directly in front of the building.

To find the Life Sciences and Philosophy building using your GPS, enter the address for the Iron Hill Restaurant (781 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17603). The Williamson parking lot is directly across the street from Iron Hill.

