THE PHENOMENON OF ACADEMIC LABOR IN 21ST CENTURY COMPOSITION: A HEURISTIC FOR TEXTUAL STUDY

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A Dissertation
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This dissertation constructs a heuristic for textual analysis and uses a Heidegger-based hermeneutical phenomenology to extrapolate some contributing factors in managing academic labor that moved three nationally recognized writing program contexts toward a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor.

This project asks what can be learned from examining an artifact record composed of scholarship and transactional documents produced in and around these writing program contexts. Under study here are the following three nationally recognized leaders and their writing programs: Elizabeth Wardle and her program at the University of Central Florida, Louise Wetherbee Phelps and the writing program at Syracuse University, and Doug Hesse’s writing program at the University of Denver. A heuristic, constructed in this project within Chapter 2, is applied to a body of writing-program-specific texts, in Chapter 3, to discern essential, context-specific, information about how labor affects each of the three programs. This resultant data are then interpreted for potential meanings in Chapter 4. The information gathered assesses who the stakeholders were, the definition and evidence of success, what were the changes that brought success, where did the exigency for change arise, and what were the steps toward success in each writing program context over time.

This dissertation also examines some of the many effects that programmatic changes bring to the various writing program stakeholders. The project discusses the ways in which context specific definitions of success, and paths toward achieving that success, are not universal
to all writing programs but may prove valuable as inspiration to other writing programs as they work to improve the quality of working and learning conditions that they offer.

The heuristic questions in this project are constructed from literature in the field of Composition and a consideration of the rhetorical concept of Stasis. That heuristic is then systematically applied to a second dataset consisting of scholarship and public documents that arose from each of the three contexts mentioned by the writers of the Indianapolis Resolution: namely University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and the University of Denver. The text set from each context yields the answers that the heuristic asks of it resulting in a third dataset. Hermeneutic phenomenology is then employed to locate meaning in that third dataset, as interpreted by the researcher’s experiences in academia.

The findings of the project take note of the patterns of similar activity that met the needs of the various stakeholders within their contexts that might be transferable across writing program contexts. Among other things, these data suggest that the quality of education rises, research in writing proliferates, and stakeholders experience a higher return on their risk investments as reliance on contingent labor in writing programs decreases. Among the contributions this project makes to the field of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition are: First, a heuristic for textual analysis that may be used by other researchers and administrators; Second, the identification of some possible steps toward an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor, and finally, additions to the conversation over contingency and its place and scope in composition studies.
This work is dedicated to my parents
Raymond T. and Sharon L. Robertshaw
and to my loving wife, Marlana.
Only with your support was this work possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are a great many people I would like to thank for many varied reasons. I am sure to leave some out if I try to name them all, and so, I will keep to just a select few whose direct contributions to this project were invaluable.

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Additionally I would like to thank Richard Colby, Seth Kahn, and Amy Lynch-Biniek for various Tweets and e-mails that helped me navigate websites and learn of new sources during the initial Lit Review. Likewise, I would like to thank Richard Ohmann, whose English in America helped me see the big picture once my feet were set on this path, and whose willingness to read my interpretation of that text proved to be very helpful.

Again I thank Seth Kahn and Amy Lynch-Biniek, this time along with Anicca Cox, Timothy R. Dougherty, Michelle LaFrance, and the other unnamed framers of the “Indianapolis Resolution”, for carrying that neglected mission forward, and for providing the exigence for this project. I would also like to thank NCTE and CCCC for providing the adjunct grant that made
my trip to the 2014 CCCC in Indianapolis possible. I could not have been inspired by those presentations without that financial aid.

I would like to acknowledge and thank two friends who read over drafts for me, and with me, when I needed a fresh eye: Danielle Donelson and Larry Hatch. The encouragements and troubling questions are very much appreciated.

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I would like to thank Lee Nickoson for her time, talent and insider perspective that persuaded me to think about how WPAs must hold multiple perspectives simultaneously. Thank you as well for all those random words of encouragement and moments of positivity you somehow always found time to offer.

I would also like to thank Kris Blair here for her kind support and foundational direction early on in this project and I offer a special thanks to Dan Bommarito for stepping in and helping me out, on the fly. I am sure it must have been something akin to hopping onto a moving train and I thank you for taking that risk when you really didn’t have to. Your guidance has been significant and instructive. I also want to thank my entire committee for asking me to refocus and reframe this entire project early on in the process. While it may have been a painful process, I feel like I have learned and discovered more in this project because of that request. That limitation has become an affordance without a doubt.

Finally I would like to thank Sue Carter Wood for the long and frequent office talks that covered so much more ground than just the content of this project. Thank you for seeing me
through a time that was filled with difficulties, setbacks, and even emergencies, and still pointing out that there were also triumphs in the tribulations, rewards amid the costs, and chances to care at each disappointment. Thank you for trying to understand the way my mind works and letting me fall down when necessary. Thank you for carrying on four conversations with me at once (on several occasions). Thank you for your expertise and your willingness to share knowledge, time, and occasionally a box of tissues with me. Thank you, most of all, for your mentorship, not only through this project but also in the Ph.D. program and beyond. It has been my distinct privilege to get to know you over these last four years. Thank you for that opportunity.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE ECOLOGY OF ACADEMIC LABOR IN WRITING PROGRAMS

In order to better understand the successes and failures of academic labor in writing programs in context it seems prudent to make a survey of the ecology of academic labor as we find it in the writing programs of American Academia as a whole. This first chapter begins with such an examination drawing on literature in the field of Rhetoric and Composition to paint a sketch of the diversity in the programs of the discipline. From that sketch this project looks to draw attention to three specific successful contexts in the area of writing program leadership to see what can be learned from them based on study of published texts.

Acknowledging the Inequities in Academic Labor Systems

Not only are adjuncts ineligible for tenure, but 85 percent of them are hired on contracts of a year or less in duration. They are usually employed on a part-time basis, which means that they are also ineligible for benefits such as health insurance and 403b retirement plans. They are typically paid by the course and earn as little as $1,000 per class taught. Their part time status often forces them to work simultaneously at more than one university and to commute between jobs. Twelve percent of them work at least three jobs. They rarely have a voice in departmental meetings, especially the important deliberations about hiring, tenure, and salaries. In fact, they rarely have adequate office space, if they have any at all. Taking into account the job-to-job commute, one adjunct calculated her salary in 2001 as an hourly wage of $2.12, without benefits (Donoghue, 2008, p. 56).
My project arises from the problems that have been identified in labor and staffing in the academy. Frank Donoghue in the paragraph above was referring to the working conditions across the academy for those who are hired into temporary and contingent positions. These contingent faculty are frequently hired in to departments in perpetually rotating vacancies sometimes known as pool positions, sometimes with the misconception that, once they prove themselves, if they work hard enough, or complain least, that they too will one day be hired in as full time faculty members. Our labor system in Academia however doesn’t work like that. Instead we have something closer to what Noam Chomsky described in 2014 to a union assembly of adjunct faculty in Pittsburgh. Of hiring faculty off the tenure line, Chomsky, one of the harshest critics of the capitalist system, said,

It’s the same as hiring temps in industry or what they call “associates” at Wal-Mart, employees that aren’t owed benefits. It’s a part of a corporate business model designed to reduce labor costs and to increase labor servility. When universities become corporatized, as has been happening quite systematically over the last generation as part of the general neoliberal assault on the population, their business model means that what matters is the bottom line.
(Counterpunch, 2014)

Even if one takes a less oppositional view we must still note that the temporary positions that contingent faculty are hired to fill are there by design, for a multitudes of reasons, and that those positions will remain in place until a better way to fill class sections in the academy is made more widely known.

Among the areas of academia that are most affected by supporting this contingent system of labor are the “so called” general studies areas of education. These are the subjects that allow students to build a firm base of knowledge from which to begin pursuing their chosen fields of
study. Since so many students take these courses in subjects like Math, English, Psychology, Communications and General Sciences a greater number of instructors are needed to fill these sections. In these sorts of high volume enterprises the fluctuations in enrollment, caused by changes in the national economy and many other factors, have a more noticeable visibility as entire sections of a course must be added, or cut, to meet the variable demand levels.

Despite dissatisfaction with the “general education” label by many of the practitioners that work under that umbrella, the normal sequence for the majority of writing programs across the United States is a two course sequence that introduces the processes of writing in academic settings to the new first year students at the university. Sometimes there are other writing requirements as well when a student achieves upper division status but this is not the case in all universities. This sequence of courses however is commonly referred to as First Year Composition (FYC), First Year Writing (FYW) or a First Year Writing Experience (FYWE). It varies from institution to institution what sort of faculty teach these FYC courses but in a vast segment in higher education these courses are staffed by contingent faculty who toil in conditions similar to those described by Donoghue. Since as has been stated a great many times, by people as diverse as teachers (Toledo Federation of Teachers, 2016), expert compositionists (Adler-Kassner, et al., 2013), and those elected to Congress (Osborn, 2012), that teaching conditions are learning conditions, the study of those working conditions should open paths to better learning conditions. Since the working conditions have been documented in fine detail, as I will explain later in this chapter, this project has aimed at exploring the moves in FYC programs that lead us away from those problematic labor conditions to better, more equitable and more sustainable, labor conditions in FYC programs.
This project is a close study of the rhetorical situations surrounding three writing programs that have been named as exemplary in their treatment of academic labor issues through an examination of published texts. While this may sound like a simplistic project, I would hope that the reader’s initial view of this project will change and deepen as they read this work. Using texts from the writing programs in an effort to discern the rhetorical contexts of those writings and locate the factors that led to their publicized success we see that the complex web of motivations, actions, affordances, limitations, participants, and results in each context are layered beyond the rational possibility of complete discovery. It seems, however, that through phenomenology, enough can be discovered about the three writing program contexts chosen for this study—University of Central Florida, Syracuse, and University of Denver—that we might compare our own contexts to the three writing programs, chosen solely for their exemplary treatment of academic labor issues, as we plot our own paths toward success as we see it. If only, one might lament, there were some list of solid criteria to use or a list of questions to ask as we evaluate the labor practices of our programs and the programs we are told are successful. It just so happens that a valuable contribution of this project is a set of heuristics by which we might gauge the success of the publicized models and thereby locate our own practices and their effects. This heuristic can also be used to guide further research into a specific writing program context, using methods like surveys, observations, and interviews of various stakeholders, from students and teachers to WPAs and deans. Ideally this close examination of texts from three writing program contexts will lead to follow-up research with stakeholders in specific contexts. Such research is beyond the scope of this project.

I feel the need to note here that in this project, and in the exigence for such a project, it seems that there are many underlying assumptions. The one most in need of discussion here is
the assumption that it is indeed beneficial for FYC programs and, by extension, desirable for universities to reduce their reliance on contingent labor. While I believe that, for many writing programs, strength and stability could be gained by adopting such practices, I must also concede that the benefits may not hold true for all writing program contexts. It has been noted however that the move from contingency, to more stable practices of full employment, has been declared successful by prominent voices in the field of Composition (Adler-Kassner, et al., 2013) (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, & Lynch-Biniek, 2016, p. 52) (Wyche, 2017, p. 11). It is within the examination of the contexts and situations in which successes have been noted that the work of this project takes place.

This project is intended instead to be a study of how others, who have acted upon their own perceived needs in their own rhetorical contexts, have found advantages and limitations amid the declarations of success. In this investigation I have decided to use Hermeneutical Phenomenology to examine various texts that are relevant to, and flow from, three writing program contexts named earlier—The University of Denver, Syracuse, & Central Florida— in an attempt to develop a heuristic that can be useful in interpreting the rhetorical situation of these texts and perhaps, in some cases, be generally applicable to help interpret the rhetorical contexts in our own writing programs.

**Significance of this Project**

This is a project whose time is long overdue. By this I do not mean that it was late to the printer or to the committee for consideration but rather I mean that the spirit of Kairos is upon us now for this work to be thrust into the spotlight. As I worked through this project on contingency in academic labor, and our dependency upon it as a discipline, I continue to receive comments from professionals in the field that encourage the work to deepen and continue. In a recent email
I received in conjunction with an award for scholarship, Dr. Karen Lentz Madison said, “once you have been contingent, you realize that we in academia are all contingent, whether we know it or not.” (personal communication, April 5 2017). I agree with this sentiment as I have been contingent faculty before and now, having served among the university governance community, I can see the precarious position that we as a discipline are in, in that we are truly only one law adoption away from being stripped of tenure and academic freedom and falling into ranks of the contingent majority who serve purely at the pleasure of the university administration (Flaherty, 2017). I do not wish to raise undue alarm or seem like the boy who cried wolf but the importance of this project is predicated upon the knowledge of what it is to be contingent, observation of a nation-wide trend toward contingency, and the felt need to re-establish the importance of the public good as central to the mission of Composition. While this project cannot hope to right all wrongs and usher in an era of world peace, it can draw attention to those conditions under which writing programs can strengthen their effectiveness and focus their commitment to their academic mission.

While it may be good for the contingent laborers to see FYC programs hire more of their number as Full Time Non Tenure Track (FTNTT) and Full Time Tenure Track (FTTT) faculty, in that, contingent faculty may, in many cases, improve their situations and reduce their suffering; it remains to be seen however, if there are also positive effects, and what those might be, acting upon the other stakeholders in FYC studies. Additionally the inverse of the same question should be explored to see if there are potentially also some negative effects for those same stakeholders and for the contingent faculty as well, in mimicking the moves witnessed in these three contexts. That is the public aim of this project: to contribute my small part to the robust discipline of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition by presenting a tool to monitor and
maintain the health of the labor practices we enact. The personal part of the aim of this project is
to sort through my known biases, and to discover new ones, as I situate myself in the field of
Rhetoric and Writing and aspire to the enterprise of WPA work. To fully gauge the origin and
impact of such admitted bias it is necessary to know a little about this researcher’s professional
history with the topic. This familiarity may help explain why a newly minted PhD in Rhetoric
and Writing would even have contingent labor listed as an item of concern for the profession of
Higher Education or the field of Writing/Composition.

**Exigence for this Project**

The 2014 Indianapolis CCC Conference was an awakening for me. Aside from the
hugeness of it all and that being my first CCCC’s, I was working as an adjunct and was able to
attend only because of a scholarship offered by NCTE. It was there that I met others like myself
and attended sessions to hear speakers, whose names I did not know at the time, talking about the
plight of the adjunct. I became interested in that discourse because it was the first time I had ever
heard professors with tenure speaking about my problems as a contingent faculty member. I
began to watch for articles about adjunct labor and contingent faculty and I read the stories and
narratives from around the discipline when I could find them but, as I soon discovered, it has
often been accurately lamented that these stories did little except make us feel miserable and just
a little guilty, but they never seemed to solve anything (Kahn, 2013).

Eventually, in the fall of 2016, the Indianapolis Resolution was released in *CCC* and
called for more attention and scholarship into writing faculty labor issues. The Indianapolis
Resolution (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, & Lynch-Biniek, 2016) issued a call, in section C
of the, *be it therefore resolved* sections, to fill the field with research on contingency. I feel that I
must answer that call. The relevant section of Cox et. al. reads:
At the level of research, we call on our disciplinary and professional organizations to support efforts to:

1. Offer more material and professional support and opportunity for the creation, publication, and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative research into the impacts of the labor system on the teaching and learning of writing.

2. Consider research into labor and its effects on teaching and learning with the same intellectual weight and scholarly respect as other subjects in our field. (p. 41)

Amid this call for scholarship I also found an answer to a question that I had started to ask myself: with all of this suffering among contingent faculty were there any success stories in which we, the contingents, could find hope? The authors of the Indianapolis Resolution did not disappoint, for within their expository pages, directly following the text of the resolution, there were three names: Elizabeth Wardle, Louise Phelps and Doug Hesse. Through additional research I discovered that Elizabeth Wardle was mentioned in the Indianapolis Resolution for her work at the University of Central Florida while Louise Wetherbee Phelps and Doug Hesse were noted for their work at Syracuse University and the University of Denver respectively. Each of them had found a different way to meet with success in providing alternative structures to supplant the profit-and-efficiency-centric model of academic labor often used in the corporatized university that makes such extensive use of contingent appointments. This project, through an analysis of written accounts of actual contexts and events, looks closely at the how’s and why’s surrounding those human interactions because it was this sort of guidance I sought but could not find when considering what conditions in writing programs are conducive to labor successes. In asking these questions and learning the answers I have helped myself. In recording my findings I hope I have offered help to others.
The remainder of this chapter offers several sections as I endeavor to set the stage for understanding the work that follows in the subsequent chapters. The sections are: a definition of terms used in this project, a view of how compositionists have been deskillled and de-professionalized, and are being slowly replaced with contingent faculty, and some of the solutions that are being enacted at all levels of Composition, as well as a summary of the methodologies and methods of this project.

**Defining Some Key Terms**

Before beginning the description of the historical situation I must identify some key terms that I will use to describe the elements of this rhetorical situation. The readers I envision that may be interested in this project may come from different fields such as History, Sociology, Higher Education Administration Studies, English, Composition and perhaps, Anthropology, Working Class Studies or Labor studies. This wide audience means that I cannot please all ears with the terms they might prefer but must instead create some more general ones for use here.

I would like to make clear that I, as an educator, see the role of instructor as a professional one in which time spent toward fulfillment of that role is not easily quantified much like a lawyer or doctor who’s billing statements we often question. This elusive description of duties and actions, and the pervasiveness of the vocation into the personal life of the practitioner, serve as testimony of a professional endeavor. And yet because a prevailing attitude in the labor system of higher education refuses, or cannot -as the case may be, to treat these professionals as such for clarity I must, at times, employ terms to discuss the intellectual labor that the professionals perform as a synecdoche to represent their professional personas. These terms are in no way intended to disparage or debase the professionals that they name; the representations are necessary to draw attention to the problems incurred with contingency. The terms I have
chosen might reflect a Feminist or Critical stance but could easily find cognates in other fields. For example what I have termed here as De-professionalizing and Deskilling might be called *proletarianization* in Marxist terminology, or corporatization in Economic Studies. It is precisely the natural confluence of disciplines in the subject of study, the labor used and desired in FYC programs that asks me to use the most general terms possible in an effort toward interdisciplinary inclusivity. This also moves me to speak of professional educators as a work force albeit an intellectual one.

**Contingency.**

The two most central terms in this project I define here as Joe Berry (2005) has done. For this project I will be using the terms *contingent faculty* and *contingent labor* to describe the class of academic practitioner who does not hold a contract of longer than one year. The terms used to describe this class of educator vary widely and are often used to accentuate the differences in the constituents of that class and thereby foment division. I am using these two terms in an attempt to unify those who count themselves among this class of academic laborers. In this project more similarities will be discussed as well but the general terms *contingent labor* and *contingent faculty* are meant to unify the terms including but not limited to: Adjunct, Part Time, Visiting, non-ranked, non-voting, occasional, instructor, casual, lecturer and many, many, more (Berry, 2005, p. XI). Often contingent faculty work from academic term to academic term with no assurance of continued employment, are offered few, if any, of the standard affordances that come with professorial work, frequently they are limited to part time status and must teach at multiple institutions to cobble together a living.

It must be noted as well that the time frame of a one year contract is not arbitrary at all but rather it is an interval understood by the contingent as a deadline or even a small professional
death. It is a time that administrators use to re-evaluate enrollments and staffing needs and therefore make decisions about who will be offered further employment. These decisions take time to make and enrollment data take time to process and, without a contract that extends into the next academic year, the contingent is vulnerable to job loss. This often euphemized termination may come with or without cause depending on the laws of the state in which the faculty member works. Regardless of the state of residence or employment the lack of job security becomes the state of existence for the contingent professor and can easily become the focus of the contingent’s life as they must devote time and energy to building a network of safety measures to protect against sudden poverty.

One might compare this pattern to a chief complaint in politics; if a politician spends too much time in a bid for re-election then they can distract themselves from the work they were elected to do. Likewise when there is no guarantee of employment into the next term or academic year a professor might be forced to devote already scarce time and resources that could have been used for planning, teaching and scholarship to locating and securing new courses. The contingent may also begin to wonder what sorts of behaviors are rewarded with continued employment and which are cause for a failure to offer a contract or course next term. The gambit of reasons may extend from enrollment counts to budget constraints and beyond and to compliance with an agenda or perfect attendance through illnesses, but certainly these “reasons” will vary from program to program. Serving a program in a profession that is often viewed as a supplemental service to the university provokes constant insecurity in the mind of the contingent faculty member in our current system of academic labor. As a contingent faculty member I often wondered if the system was always as it is now or if there was some other way it was supposed to function.
Deskilling and de-professionalizing.

Other terms that require definition here include *deskilling* and *de-professionalizing*; by those terms I intend the processes by which less and less autonomy is given to a professional in any field with the ultimate end result being low cost labor paid to a person who has little responsibility, and less autonomy than a true professional. A perfect analogy for this process is the history of the development of mass production in the Ford Motor company. At first it took only one or two professionals who were adept at many things to build a complete automobile but, over time those professionals were deskilled, often teaching portions of their jobs to different helpers and assistants until their high skilled-labor costs were supplanted by assembly line workers. The auto companies continued to drain any good idea from those workers as well and eventually bought them out when their unions secured too high a wage and they developed a two tier wage system. In this analogy the professionals are the professors and their assistants are the more contingent faculty who specialize in portions of the work but are not asked to do more making it possible to produce maximum efficiency. For contingents this means high course loads and class sizes without the bother of research or assessments; those concerns, managerial concerns, imply agency and rest in more powerful hands.

Equitable and sustainable.

I frequently, in this project, revisit a metaphor offered by natural science using the terms equitable and sustainable. It is in fact the theme of my long term research trajectory. *Sustainability* and *equity* are self explanatory terms but I can see that together they may create a new and nuanced meaning and I see that I should define this condition. This term: *sustainable and equitable* speaks to the balance that exists in a system when it works well for all of its constituents and maintains some modicum of balance to ensure a status quo that can continue to
yield that state of mutual advantage. I see this as a valuable way to view our academic labor system as it presents to the reader the possibility of seeing a collapse in the future of that system if changes to right its balance are not made. Using the metaphor of a natural ecosystem is highly conducive to the entangled nature of this project. As noted by Fleckenstein, Spinuzzi, Rickly, & Papper (2008) “This ecological orientation enables us to research rhetorically: to devise and argue for a systematic account of reality in ways that others find persuasive, useful, and widely applicable while remaining sensitive to the incompleteness and the distortions of a single account” (p. 389). The value of sustainability can be seen and transferred in an ecological metaphor when the reader begins to see their own role, not as a leading character, but as one constituent part of a larger system.

As with all systems, just because a system reproduces itself that is not to say that it is a fair and just system. While survivability may qualify as sustainable, creating a system that unduly privileges some of its constituents cannot be considered fair and just, despite its sustainability and therefore it is not equitable. Conversely, a system that is fair and just to all of its constituents but cannot maintain its own harmonious conditions is also useless, for it will cascade into failure as soon as its powers of adaptability are tested. To extend this natural science analogy, the term sustainable and equitable might find its closest parallel expression in the word homeostasis. Some may counter that there is a danger of stagnation that must be guarded against and I do not wish to ignore that valid point. We must however use good judgment to gauge how much stimulation is needed to avoid stagnation in just the same way we must protect the system from wholesale destruction. Using the human body as an object lesson, if we want to guard against a communicable disease what should we do?
a) Live in a plastic bubble  
b) Forsake our home in favor of living among the sick  
c) Develop healthy habits and get a flu shot  
d) Some other combination of actions

**Macro, mezzo, micro.**

Another set of terms that need some explanation are some organizational terms borrowed from Activity Theory (AT): Macro, Mezzo and Micro. I am using them only in the general sense to denote the scope of influence the actions seek to pervade and not the number of levels of an organization that participate in the activity. These terms do not connote an adoption of Activity Theory methodology in this project but are borrowed from (AT) because of their extremely useful descriptive qualities. In discovering some of the actions that professionals in the field of composition - contingent, full time, and tenured - it became evident that some kind of organizing principle would be needed in order to better understand the widely varied scope of those realignments with, remedies for, and reactions to the perceived problem of academic labor in writing programs. In noticing that there seemed to be activities on many fronts and many levels I determined that size seemed to be a good organizing principle for this discussion and so I have borrowed that frame from AT for this survey. Again these terms do not denote importance but rather their range of influence, and the terms macro, mezzo, and micro, are only used here to provide a frame with which to think about the many and varied attempts to mitigate the negative effects of contingent labor in the field of composition.

**Macro.**

*Macro* actions are described for this project as activity that transcend the Writing Program level of organization and take place or originate in the larger framework of hierarchies in which the Writing Program is nested. For the purposes of this study, this is most frequently
intended to mean the Department, School, College, and University and on through the local, state and federal government structures with varying degrees of deference depending on whether the university is a public or a private institution. One notable exception to this structure is the Independent Writing Program that is not housed in a department but functions directly under a College or School.

**Mezzo.**

*Mezzo* level actions enfold activity at the program and sometimes department levels of organization. This is the area in which I am most interested as it is the area in which the direct instructor-to-student contact takes place thus naming it the space of both labor and learning. It is here that we can best ask the questions of this study, identify primary stakeholders, and evaluate the practices both administrative and pedagogical that would best serve those stakeholders.

**Micro.**

I am envisioning *micro* actions, for discussion in this project, as actions taken by individual professionals as attempts to mitigate, minimize or moderate the negatives that arise from current labor practices in writing programs. I also characterize individual personal actions meant to improve the conditions of labor or the professional atmosphere in a program as micro level activity.

**Literature in the Field**

In the literature survey that follows I have included many texts that show a trend toward the deskilling of academic professionals to create a decidedly gendered (Schell, 1998), more contingent (Fulwiler & Marlow, 2014), and less expensive (Ginsberg, 2011) pool of labor in the writing programs of FYC. While some of these texts may cast blame upon an ideology or upon other entities, it is not my intention to find a resting place for blame. The reader may decide what
to do with those feelings of injustice on their own. The next sections of this chapter are meant as observations of the current state in which we find ourselves in FYC programs. It shows a kind of conglomerated lived experience for composition faculty. The themes of those observations appear in many texts over an extended period of time and come from well respected authors. They are employed to serve as description of what here looks like and explain how we got here. After all sometimes the way forward is to go backward and retrace our steps.

**The de-professionalization of the profession.**

Tracing the origin of contingent faculty and arriving at our current state is a necessary journey if one hopes to understand the forces that shaped the current context of academic labor issues in writing programs. I began my journey with Richard Ohmann and his *English in America* as he presents a wide historical view of the birth of composition. Ohmann was known for his bold and incisive appraisals of capitalism and the way in which he saw other subservient systems like academic labor as products of that ideological frame. He is still widely read and well respected among scholars who study this phenomenon of academic labor today. Richard Ohmann’s (1976) presentation of one of the many origins of Composition Studies distills, from a critically diverse position, an increasingly Marxist critique of the stratification of the classes he saw developing in the middle of the twentieth century. When he took on the larger issue of what is wrong in composition as a field, I would even say that he touched the central question that began my inquiry: *how can we enact a sustainable and equitable model of labor in a first year writing program?*

Even in 1976, when Ohmann addresses the way that society treats—and mistreats—knowledge in the American university system, he effectively uses a woven nexus of seemingly disparate threads, which contribute to a description of systematic dysfunction. Part of that overall
dysfunction in the system of higher education, and specifically, in the teaching of Writing, Composition, and English, entails the inequitable treatment of the laborers that perform the pedagogies of the field.

Ohmann (1976) indicates that, when it comes to humanities activity, which includes teaching and research, we have been working counterproductively for a long time because, “our activities of research and publication imitate those of the sciences, whose effort is toward the abstract and impersonal” (p. 17). This seems to mirror the assembly line models of mass production that society has seen extensively applied and works against the English mission of promoting humanity. He goes on to say that this inhumane model is one that should not be continued as it debases our humanity rather than cultivates it through the constantly widening separation of findings and subjects from morals and human persons. And all this stated before the push to corporatize the university began. Ohmann also says to his contemporaries that while professors have some influence over the profession, “we cannot think seriously about the actions open to us without reference to what society wants of us and what knowledge is now doing for and to society (p. 303). This moral argument to favor humanity over logic and efficiency to protect society from itself has been echoed but has met with little sustained success (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, & Lynch-Biniek, 2016, p. 42).

Surely then this problem visible to Ohmann existed and had its origins prior to that observation. This origin of the contingent faculty in Composition Studies, is noted by James Berlin (1990) and attributed to Harvard and the birth of their English Studies program. These initial remedial courses in writing were commissioned by a Charles Elliot, George Kitteredge, and Samuel Thurber and the rest of the Committee of Ten (p. 187). They decided that the state of the student’s entrance exams had fallen into such deficiency that something had to be done. They
gave a new professor, A.S. Hill, and a few transient teachers of writing the task of improving writing for the new students (Brereton, 1995, p. 29). Even though more professors were later added to the unit, and some professional status was earned, the frame of writing as secondary service to the college’s other areas of study took hold and pervades to this day.

Berlin shows his readers that polemics in pedagogy seemed to emerge between Harvard and Yale. He also notes that John Dewey-minded professors like Fred Newton Scott of Michigan, Ohio State’s Joseph Denney and many others worked with a more democratic and less instrumental model in which the rhetorical foundation of writing was considered epistemic rather than servile (Berlin, 1990, p. 198). That pervasive subservience that robs a professional of status even invades these progressive halls of education however, and prompts Fred Newton Scott to write,

I fear that under the spell of the old ideal, teachers of composition are sometimes ashamed of their work and sometimes weary of it. It seems to them perhaps less dignified than the teaching of English literature or of Latin. They speak of it, or allow others to speak of it, as drudgery, or at best as work that has less scope and uplift than that of some other subjects. (Two Ideals of Composition Teaching, 1911)

And while Scott offers what seems like genuine concern to teachers of Composition in “The Two Ideals of Composition Teaching”, who he describes as depressed and beset by drudgery (Stewart & Stewart, 1997, p. 132). They are never called professors but always teachers and instructors, a fact noted as well by Brereton (1995, pp. 37-44) about Harvard’s course offerings. It could be inferred that although the philosophies of instruction had very different aims from the New Traditional Rhetorics in Massachusetts textbooks the methods of providing instructors to those classes varied little at the Midwestern universities like Michigan.
This single origin of Composition at Harvard is a misconception that seems to have appeared in a number of sources like Brereton (1995) has been refuted recently in the work of Patricia Donahue and Bianca Falbo (2007) and the findings of their archival work at Lafayette College that shows a writing program which predates the Harvard origin. Donahue and Falbo’s work brought attention to a figure at the margins: Francis A. March. They found that the school catalogs provided a valuable record of what was happening in reading and writing at LaFayette and showed that, by any reasonable definition, this philologist was educating undergraduates in rhetoric and composition from as early as 1860.

The single origin of composition cited by Brereton (1995, p. 26), as a concept, also often leaves Harvard and the writing program there, undervalued for what it did accomplish, and at times, vilified by those that would use them as a foil, or straw man, for their own ideologies. Despite other origin records “the course is often discussed in histories of the period a central force in the formulation of current-traditional rhetoric, because of the prominence of Harvard in educational reform and because of the popularity of writing textbooks by A. S. Hill and [Barrett] Wendell” (Simmons, 1995, p. 328). These textbooks and the standardization of the curriculum, contributed in some ways to the development of a mindset of Composition as a second class discipline in service to loftier pursuits, and therefore the second class professor, receiving lower pay and less respect. As the curriculum became more rigid it did not require full professors to teach the course in service of the “real” university which makes it morally expedient to staff those courses with less professional personnel. This division was not wholly responsible for the digression toward the contingent faculty situation of today but logically it has to be considered a contributing factor to the demi-professional status contingent faculty “enjoy” today. To see the
persistence of that second class condition we need only look to Sue Doe and company (2011) as they write in “Discourse of the Firetenders”,

Despite playing a role that is in no way "contingent" to the mission and day-to-day operations of the university, adjunct instructors are still treated institution-wide like wandering day-laborers who have or expect very little power to advance themselves within the university or college where they teach. (p. 429)

More recently Seth Kahn (2013) issued a charge that we, as a discipline should move into a phase of action as he comments that he constantly hears,

colleagues bemoan the exploitation of contingent faculty while making professional choices that directly feed that exploitation. While there’s an element of calling out that’s inevitable in the arguments I’m about to make, more important to me is that we senior faculty, collectively, start doing at least the easy things that move us towards equitable labor conditions in our own institutions (p. A13).

Frank Donoghue also lends a feeling of immediacy to the problems when he notes that “tenured and tenure-track professors currently constitute only 35 percent of college teaching personnel and that this number is steadily falling” (The Last Professors, 2008, p. 56). If a main avenue for change should be that tenured professors begin to demand change, but their numbers, and subsequently their power and influence, are waning, this gradual movement hints at a tipping point. We may be looking at a waiting game. It is clear who loses when the last grains run out of the hourglass. Rather than leave the reader to fill in that blank, from the interpretation of this literature, logic would suggest filling those blanks with some of the stakeholders who stand to lose something in an administratively run, contingent faculty taught system as:
The university as their reputation for rigor fades
The bargaining units who will hold no power or mission in the absence of membership
The contingent faculty who will become agents of a system that oppresses them
The discipline of composition as the organizations become less sustainable for contingent laborers who haven’t the time for leadership or training
The economy as more students graduate college without the best education in composition as the disciplinary status wanes
Most importantly the students who come to Composition for education that is integral to their academic and professional aspirations.

Those are some of the groups and individuals that stand to lose if the trend toward contingency in academic labor remains unchecked. Understanding the gravity of what is at stake in a problem that may seem insignificant on the surface can compel us to look deeper into the historical trends and present predicament with renewed interest.

There are no easy blames to be levied here or fingers to be pointed that will improve the current academic labor landscape. While I posit that the ideology of capitalism-run-wild must also be held as one reason for the inequities inherent in the societal context that spawned the inequities involved in this conversation I must also admit that those ideologies cannot be listed as the sole factors responsible. In The Humanities, Higher Education, & Academic Freedom: Three Necessary Arguments Michael Bérubé and Jenifer Ruth begin their argument by dispelling the myths and rumors of where the casualization of academic work started. They note that a massive decrease in enrollment in English majors after 1966 is often blamed for the downturn in demand for tenure line faculty in the field of English but they then debunk that assumption with additional math that shows the pre-1966 precipice as a high water mark rather than the beginning of a decline (Bérubé & Ruth, 2015, p. 6). Additionally the myth that contingents are happy contributing their expertise to the field as supplementary altruistic philanthropy for about a third of the recommended monetary compensation that the MLA suggests (Kahn, p. A13) – with zero academic freedom and no professional standing to speak of– is debunked and the plight of the current system of academic labor, over-reliant on de-professionalized labor, is starkly revealed.
While the original intent of hiring the adjunct, continually revisited by administrators and tenured faculty alike, was for the adjunct to come from a field of practice and interject current practical knowledge into the disciplinary field, that noble frame is more often as far from reality as theory has ever been from practice. The interesting addition to the conversation here with Bérubé & Ruth is the acknowledgement that despite the trends they encourage of providing paths for contingents toward tenure, or at least more solid professional footing, there are countercurrents to the solutions that they propose to re-professionalize the contingent labor. They also credit Marc Bousquet for raising the major issue of what will become of the legions of instructors who do not hold terminal degrees and would be displaced by a tenuring of the tenurable (Bérubé & Ruth, 2015, p. 20).

Bousquet, Scott and Parascondola in *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers: Writing instruction in the managed university* describe the administration system of composition further as they have assembled quite a collection of essays from activists in the field of composition. The authors included, from Ohmann to Hendricks, Schell, Rhodes, and Carter, reflect the high quality of research and scholarship in the volume. Through varied approaches, this collection highlights details not normally discussed in the overview other works have offered. These essays get into the systematic issues and many nuances of the hegemonic dilemma and truly implicate everyone as contributors (Bousquet, Scott, & Parascondola, 2004). Bousquet and Cary Nelson (2008) go even further in his collaboration with Cary Nelson, *How the University Works*, to acknowledge the gender factor in this discriminatory system of oppression when he says “Like Wal-Mart employees, the majority female contingent academic workforce relies on a patchwork of other sources of income, including such forms of public assistance as food stamps and unemployment compensation” (Nelson & Bousquet, 2008, p. 3). This agrees with Eileen Schell
who noted this gender discrimination in 1998 due to the system of hiring increased percentages of part-time and non-tenured faculty who can afford to accept insufficient pay and no benefits and still return to work each class session. Women fall into this category for, among other reasons, their frequent inability to relocate for employment owing to a desire to maintain family and social ties (Schell, 1998, p. 48). Susan Miller even uses this apparent discriminatory moniker of woman as a parallel for compositionist and suggests that assistance and intervention for compositionists [into which I read contingent faculty] should be encouraged just as earlier activism sought social services for women who were marginalized for being “single, divorced, or lesbian” (Textual Carnivals, p. 134). The parallel is an apt one as the contingent faculty are marked on their very vitas by their employment histories and relegated to the subservient tier of employment when they attempt to seek permanence in the academy.

There are others who, like Schell, would also admit that the de-professionalized labor condition within the field of Composition and Writing Instruction, seen as existing largely in service to the real disciplines of academic inquiry, is a systemic symptom of a much larger problem in academia. It becomes increasingly clear, when we read these accounts, that one of the ways to counter these inter-related symptoms is to adopt a holistic view of the entire system as the defective entity rather than those constituent parts directly connected to the flashpoint of the symptom. Benjamin Ginsberg (2011) notes that the self-governing faculty are being supplanted by an army of administrators bent upon squeezing the university, not for creative innovation among the researchers, nor for academic rigor among the professoriate but rather, these administrators are squeezing the university for financial efficiency touting profit as a primary consideration. This is evident when he states:
Since adjuncts are much cheaper than tenure-track or tenured faculty, as well as more fully subject to administrative supervision, there is every reason to believe that adjuncts will continue to replace full-time faculty at most of America’s colleges and universities. Within a few decades, it is likely that only a very small percentage of faculty members, mainly at elite schools, will hold tenured or tenure-track appointments. (The Fall of the Faculty, p. 136)

Joe Berry (2005) makes a brilliant case in his book, Reclaiming the Ivory Tower, that the problems that the adjuncts face collectively must be faced collectively if any hope of success in gaining fair treatment is to be attained. Berry astutely points out that the current situation did not arise overnight nor did it result from some great battle that the academics lost to the administration in the recent past but rather has come about over time through small seemingly necessary moves. Berry notes that, “driven by both the desire for flexibility and tightening economics, administrators have transformed the teaching force since the 1970s” (p. 5).

Berry also relates the irony of the process of marginalization and de-skilling, as he sees it, when a profession like teaching, with the protection of tenure, allows itself to be slowly replaced by a labor force which has neither security nor fair compensation. The real sting of this irony sets in when Berry shows that, in many cases, the professoriate has been co-opted by administration to implement this transformation on behalf of the institution in the name of financial solvency. This irony stretches to our current state of affairs in which the contingent faculty laborer has become the majority in the realm of academia and the subjugation of the academic shows no signs of moderation. Berry (2005) explains this trend when he writes,

Just as we have become the majority of the faculty our conditions have worsened; as a further irony most of us now depend upon our contingent faculty work as an essential
part of our total income. These trends have created a new class line within higher education. This class line is not between contingent and regular faculty—though the difference between them has increased in some ways— but rather, as contingent faculty have become the norm for faculty, between contingent faculty and those who own, control, and manage institutions of higher learning in the United States. (p. 12)

With this statement, and others like it, Berry cites the conditions contingent faculty face today and draws parallels to the conditions that the Working Class has faced in the past with implications that hearken back to the eras of the steel barons and railroad tycoons and even to plight of modern day transient agricultural workers. To be clear, Berry does not claim that the labor is the same or that the working conditions are equivalent but rather that the hegemonic power structures that maintain the systematic enforcement of the ideologies behind the attack on tenure are very similar to the ones that ran roughshod over the workers in those eras. The power structures are similar in the respect that they aim to exact profit for a few select individuals through exploitation of an unprotected, flexible, and sometimes even transient labor force. The power structures that oppressed the laborers of old and the circumstances of the new contingency of academic labor also share another attribute that is quite insidious: a kind invisibility, wrapped in the cloak of the status quo they are often accepted as a new normal.

Two films can also be counted among the literature of the field as they help to describe the current situation in academic labor. The films each describe the topic from slightly different moments in time and from slightly different perspectives. Degrees of Shame by Barbara Woolf (1997) uses the themes from Edward R. Murrow’s film, Harvest of Shame, about exploited agricultural labor in the 1960s. Adjuncts, Tenured Professors, Department Chairs and other Administrators are interviewed and offer assessments based on the experiences that they have
lived and the observations they have made. The interviewees in the film show clearly that the theorists who warn of impending doom for the tenure system are observing real trends and that their jeremiad is justified.

The second film Con Job: Stories of Adjunct & Contingent Labor by Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow (2014) brings together experts on, and activists in, the contingent faculty unionization movement such as Sue Doe, the late Steve Street, and Marc Bousquet and publishes their insights on the effects of Contingent faculty on the stakeholders of composition. The film shows that, in the interim between the two films, the Administration has co-opted some English departments and faculty to dominate the contingent faculty on behalf of the administration but many stand willing to assist in the fight for contingent equality (Fulwiler & Marlow, 2014).

While the problems in academic labor ecology are indeed serious we can see from this literature that each environment is different and has different problems, different structures, and will require different treatment to achieve equitability and sustainability. Since the shortcomings and difficulties are well documented in the literature it only stands to reason that some successes will be found in the literature as well. Now that we have an idea about what the problems look like the successes may be easier to spot.

**What is being done about this de-professionalization?**

The solutions to this de-professionalizing trend, that I am seeing attempted in the literature of the field, are fairly few but several fronts can be identified. They could be classified into three main types based upon the scope of the solutions enacted. There are National level or disciplinary level efforts which, in this short historical discussion, I label macro actions. There are efforts that take place on the program or department level, which I am calling mezzo level actions and other efforts that involve mainly individual, or micro, action. As defined earlier in
this chapter these attempted solutions are arranged under these terms as an organizing structure to help delineate their constituent places in the broader landscape of academic labor. In understanding that macro and micro actions exist, it is hopefully easier for the reader to consider, in a broader context, the mezzo actions that this project shortly explores in greater depth.

**Macro actions.**

The several different types of large-scale actions include the idea of contingent faculty unionization: the dream of a strong union that mitigates the abuses of management upon the oppressed is not however a guaranteed solution. Unionization has many paths to failure and we can see this even in the hard won, historically established, auto industry where all of the workers with seniority were bought out in the mid 2000’s and then the government assisted the corporation management in dismantling the old UAW and establishing a “new union” and a two tier wage system that eroded union support. Bruce Horner (2007) cautions the reader that “the history of unions in the U.S. is replete with false starts, missteps, cooptation, divisiveness, and corruption as well as radical successes in democratizing workplaces and society, improving the lives and working conditions of workers, and educating the public” (p. 177). Even more specifically, the history of Anson and Jewel (2001) offered in an essay called “Shadows of the Mountain” details their experiences from opposite sides of the managerial line in the field of composition and highlight the differences in vision and perceived importance that the many aspects of this contingent labor problem present for the various stakeholders involved. It details the creation of tenure-like positions as an alternative to unionization.

Another more localized avenue I have seen in the literature involves the tenured professoriate rising to the defense of the downtrodden and thereby preserving their own security as they help universities to see that professionalism is an intrinsic part of the value of the
university for those who attend its programs. Joel Westheimer is an example of the sort of price untenured professors can pay for assisting the contingent faculty labor to organize. Although “his bid for tenure received unanimous support from his department, and from seven outside experts, it was finally rejected by the university’s upper administration” (Carter, 2002, p. 12). Those with the shield must defend those with the sword.

Also worthy of inclusion in this large-scale sort of solution, there is a brand of political activism which uses the government and organizational influence to break the hold on power that the last forty-five years of unchecked distillation has accomplished. Steve Lamos (2016) writes: “We who comprise NCTE, CCCC, WPA, MLA, AAUP, NFM, and others must begin to think more explicitly (and hopefully in concert) about the role of affective-labor-in-space within things like mission statements, websites, press releases, and the like, as well as about how such labor can and should be construed across our various subdisciplines and sites” (Toward Job Security, 2016, p. 382). These solutions must not become competing causes but rather unified efforts to harbor the best chance for success in a movement toward an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor.

Another complicated wrinkle, lately introduced to this already complicated bevy of obstacles for the composition instructor, is the Affordable Care Act which in 2010 set limitations on the amount of abuse institutions could inflict by attempting to force employers to offer healthcare to employees that work a certain number of hours. In most universities that number was around seven semester hours per term which, through secret formulae, equaled about twenty-nine hours of labor per week.

The universities simply used the thirty hour limit as a cutoff at which no contingents could be offered more classes. This exacerbated the problem further for the contingent faculty
forcing many who had worked on an at will basis taking three or four classes per term into becoming *Freeway Flyers* seeking courses at other institutions or increasing their loads at other institutions. There may be a flaw here to exploit however as this has inadvertently caused a greater commingling of contingents that may not have known one another previously and thus affords a better chance to organize themselves. In an article that discusses the sources of funding for the legislation that is costing contingent faculty so much money, time, and stress Young and Schwartz (2014) concluded that when faced with all the corporate stakeholders clamoring for a say in the bill’s language “the Obama administration sought to answer the pressing concerns of each, arriving, in the end, with legislation that served the collective interest of the capitalist class” (Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise, p. 33). These interests include, in general terms, all employers who have capitalist concerns as the central goal of their business endeavors.

Historically speaking, at this broadest view of the academic labor system in Composition Studies and English we have seen multiple attempts to enact policy that would preserve academic freedom and establish fair pay and equitable treatment of academics in FYC programs. These are often thought of as separate from practice and are often thought of as actions of the profession’s governance. The account of the drafting of the first modern NCTE proposal to grant professional status to instructors and professors of composition, the *Wyoming Resolution*, is filled with a certain fevered hope.

The first section of the *Wyoming Resolution* (Trimbur & Cambridge, 1988) with its lofty ideals demanded attention but, as James Sledd (1991) indicated, the second and third sections sought to establish a voice for the exploited compositionists and a mechanism for actual punishments, sanctions, and censure for perpetrating the conduct that the administrators and the professoriate had come to rely upon to keep the profits rolling in or, often just to keep the
institution in the black, as the case may be. The ideals of the *Wyoming Resolution* fell into obscurity for a time, at least in the public scene, once the teeth of the document were pulled.

“Why the *Wyoming Resolution* Had To Be Emasculated” reveals a shocking bit of news. The problem of staffing instructors for programs of writing has been around since at least 1939. James Sledd (1991) quotes O.J. Campbell who lamented the plight of these instructors who seemed to have the tendency to become “infected with contagious disappointment and rebelliousness” (p. 269). Even then, at the outset of FYC programs, Sledd incisively indicates that Campbell foresaw the creation of a permanent underclass in the discipline of English studies; one that the established professoriate was more than willing to take advantage of as it separated them from the unwashed freshmen that turned up at the university and freed them to spend their time in more lofty pursuits like “autotelic research and unread publication” (Sledd, 1991, p. 270).

Sledd goes on to explain how the rhetoric of the *Wyoming Resolution* failed to produce results, asserting that the declarations of injustice can do nothing unless a remedy is demanded by those that empower the perpetrators of the infraction in question. Since no groundswell had been felt from the masses to join the passionate Convention attendees, as of 1991 the status quo of underpaid contingent labor remained intact serving those in power. As stated in “Discourse of the Firetenders” so eloquently, “Perhaps it can be acknowledged that what was once a stopgap response to a short-term labor problem is now a fully entrenched system of multi-tier faculty roles” (Doe, et al., 2011, p. 429). Sledd mentions that he had hoped that some of the groups of the exploited would join together and finally overthrow this inequity with activism and real remedies. He seems to view this as inevitable when he writes, “Nobody profits from the maintenance of a permanent ghetto, and there would be no real gain from the gentrification of
English departments by the banishment of the slum-dwellers to a new slum in another academic neighborhood” (Sledd, 1991, p. 279). It seems however that what was begun by the professoriate in the 1930s had been taken up by the business-minded administration in the 1970s and would, soon after Sledd’s writing, make clear who could profit from the casualization of the teaching of writing. From the written accounts, like that of Susan Wyche (2017), it seems the sentiment pervading the discipline in the 1980s was much like the feeling prevalent in the field of Rhetoric and Composition now, except that now the hope and determination have been replaced with and anger and mistrust from new working class academics. The failure of the professional associations in the field of English to act upon disciplinary-level actions did not cause, but has contributed to, further stratification of the field.

Even as Sledd (1991) was writing his revision of “Why the Wyoming Resolution Had To Be Emasculated: A History and a Quixotism” Christine Hult, David Joliffe, Kathleen Kelly, Dana Mead, and Charles Schuster were busy taking a new tactic. The “Portland Resolution” was the second major disciplinary level professional document aimed at professionalizing Composition and providing some job security, directly for the Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and indirectly for the instructors of composition courses by establishing limited control over FYC and placing it in the hands of compositionists. The Resolution of the CCC was named for the conference location at which its ideas were assembled and it attempted to get the universities and administrators to negotiate fair pay, status, and established authority for the supervisors of composition programs as they were trained in rhetoric and were more qualified to supervise and to lead and instruct the teachers of composition than the professors that were

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1 This last line seems to be a direct reference to the trend of separating Writing programs from English Departments to form their own autonomous programs without a department home. In many cases this move eased the pressures on the composition teachers and drifted toward more permanent positions, though still underpaid.
trained in other specialties. Appealing to the establishment’s sense of prestige, the Portland Resolution offered up the most qualified people to oversee one of the most problematic and profitable endeavors in higher education.

The Portland Resolution document is seen by some as a list of duties and responsibilities for Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) to live up to, but I prefer to see this document—perhaps another bias—as a step toward validation and equitable footing for professional and ethical treatment of WPAs. “This final version of the Portland Resolution, accepted by the Executive Committee at their 1992 CCCC meeting, is intended to help both Writing Program Administrators and those with whom they work and to whom they report develop quality writing programs in their institutions” (Hult, Joliffe, Kelly, Meade, & Schuster, 1992). The lists in this document, rather than being demands or proposals, as was the case with the Wyoming Resolution, are lists of tasks and areas of responsibility that describe the work already being performed by WPAs across higher education. The delineation of these tasks and areas of special knowledge present a basis for a declaration of value and limits to the service that WPAs can be expected to perform in that job specification. This is immeasurably important for contract negotiation. The new approach met with some success around the discipline of Composition and this also begs the question what were the differences in presentation and content that succeeded whereas the moral arguments and demands of the Wyoming Resolution found limitations.

More recently in 2014 the CCCC convention in Indianapolis has yielded another Macro level move in the form of the third major resolution on academic labor (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, & Lynch-Biniek, 2016). It was this article, and resolution, that brought me to this topic of study. For, as noted previously, within the discussion of the resolution, successes in labor equity at the program level were honored nationally which offered examples for other
writing programs and questions for me to answer. It also reminded the readers that national success requires local action and demands and policies alone won’t do enough.

As we consider the whole context of the phenomenon of academic labor we must also consider actions at the state and regional level such as measures and responses to Governor Scott Walker’s anti-labor “Right to Work” legislation in Wisconsin and threats to withhold funding as a leverage tool to demand tuition cuts (Savidge & DeFour, 2017). Actions such as this exist at the largest level as the pressures that spawn them come from outside the program and often from outside the profession. Other legislation such as Ohio’s SB5 and the popular vote rescinding its provisions must also be discussed as activities, and the responses to them, that shape the context of academic labor. These conditions may encourage trends that create an all administrative power structure in the university, through the financial pressures they exert. This sort of power structure outlined by Benjamin Ginsberg (2011) and Noam Chomsky (2016) strips the faculty of power even as it creates a new higher education system: one without tenure, without academic freedom, and without resistance. A university under such laws could be staffed entirely by contingent labor eventually as the tenured faculty retire and pass away. It is in the responses to these state and regional assaults that I hope to locate and describe responses that work to strengthen the faculty position and create paths toward employment security for the contingent laborers who are affected by them.

_Mezzo actions._

The intermediate or mezzo level of activity, which I am envisioning as the program and department levels, highlights the naked ways that the higher education system is being de-professionalized and corporatized in a way that might not be as visible at the larger disciplinary or the smaller individual levels of activity. The effects might be visible in different ways at those
macro levels than at this mezzo level. It is at this mezzo level where the concentration of my work takes place in this project as I look at the evidence, through written texts, that document the various program level moves that led to nationally recognized success for three writing programs. These structures are echoed elsewhere in the literature but more must be known of stories like those shared by Chris Anson (Anson & Jewell, 2001) Louise Phelps (Phelps & Ackerman, 2010) and Doug Hesse (Hesse, Sustainable Expectations?, 2017) if other programs hope to follow those models toward higher ground.

The contexts of writing program contexts mentioned in Cox et al. offer many moves toward equity and sustainability for academic laborers, which will be discussed more deeply in later chapters. The Elizabeth Wardle led writing program at the University of Central Florida (UCF) which has one of the largest enrollments in the world faced a very interesting problem of size when they began making moves to improve the situation there. Examples of this level of action have been documented in “Intractable Writing Program Problems, Kairos, and Writing about Writing: A Profile of the University of Central Florida's First-Year Composition Program” (2013). This is a narrative of the events of a FYC program and what it took to remedy the inequities of the reliance on contingent labor, the increasing demand for class size increases and the problems of teaching transferable writing skills to FYC students.

Louise Phelps has a very different story of change spanning almost thirty years in the Syracuse FYC program. Hers is a story filled with struggles and small victories and features other authors, both contingent and tenured, that lived those experiences with her. Persistence in the professionalization of a program seems to be the theme of her narrative, as I will share in subsequent chapters.
Doug Hesse at the University of Denver (DU) never intentionally wrote about the moves he made in his program that led to a mention in the Indianapolis Resolution (personal communication, 2017). In DU’s case there are other narratives that surround the changes made there that created a contract based lecturer standing and some documents that tell the story of improvement in the quality of the program that can be attributed to the same timeframe as the shift away from the culture of contingent labor practices. Hesse’s story is told through clues in seemingly unrelated writing and in instrumental documents and studies.

Another example of a programmatic action taken to remedy similar perceived limitations was creating Independent Writing Programs. This is a move so popular that it has developed an affiliate group within the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) (2017). They list twenty-eight affiliates on their website, and I was surprised to find my own university’s writing program among them. This is a move that may explain how the GSW program (equivalent to FYC) is now receiving awards for excellence and is staffed, in a very large part, by full time NTTF instead of the standard contingent majority staffing configurations that seem to pervade the field at the time of this writing.

*Micro actions.*

It must also be noted that many have turned toward solutions to the perceived need, based in personal actions. This level of action is populated mostly from three sources: personal experience, from the answers gained in the survey instrument, and subsequent interviews and observations. It is in fact the area about which the least is publicly known and so merits mention here as we move toward a full contextual picture of the phenomenon of academic labor. Although not a major focus here, perhaps this project will provide future paths of understanding into those activities as well. One such story of individual personal actions used to mitigate the
perceived labor inequities is from Michele LaFrance (2017). In her book chapter with Anicca Cox for *Contingency, Exploitation, and Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition* she notes that personal actions of bridging the gaps between contingent and TTF are integral to the resistance of those forces which “would seemingly pull apart civil institutions to make way for the privatized, the militarized, and global capital” (Brutal(ist) Meditations: Space and Labor-Movement in a Writing Program, 2017). It seems that such a complex systematic creation as the current state of academic labor—a system that favors greater consideration toward monetary cost and profit making, like a bank or brokerage house—will take complex solutions leveled at that imbalanced system from many angles, at many levels, and for many cycles of praxis if considerations like the *public good*, *academic rigor*, and *academic freedom* are ever to be re-inscribed at the center of the discipline. We fool ourselves if we reduce the inequities of the phenomenon academic labor, or the scope of viable remedies, to any one of these levels of scrutiny or action. The system is just as out of sorts as our environment is, and for many of the same reasons: oversight, neglect, shortsightedness, greed. While this is a harsh claim that cannot be substantiated in any one work of literature in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, I feel that it is my duty through this project to bear out that claim in the stories of others who have acted in these levels of framing and met with success because they have been compelled by this same exigence that now moves me. Now that it is clear that the phenomenon is layered, complex, and interconnected the danger of losing sight of the larger picture is reduced. Although this project concentrates the examination at the programmatic level of action in the academic labor system it is clear that this focus need not necessarily be myopic.
Summary of survey.

So in this review the reader has seen that contingent laborers often suffer in the current system and that there are many sources of blame to name but to affix that blame is also to abandon the ethical responsibility to continue to move toward an ideal of an equitable and sustainable ecology of labor in writing programs. The literature also shows that there are a number of context specific paths toward this destination. It suggests that in working with other stakeholders positive and praiseworthy change can take, has taken, and is taking place. The questions we are often left with after reading such a body of literature might take any one of a great many forms. Here are some of those questions that presented themselves for consideration:

- Introspective: Is my program causing or alleviating suffering?
- Theoretical: can the balance of equitability and sustainability even be achieved?
- Ethical: what are my responsibilities in this situation?
- Practical: Where do we go from here?

The Questions I Investigated

I have identified three researchable questions based upon the many questions I asked of myself as I assembled this review. I see them as valuable not because they solve the dilemma when they are answered but because they move us in the direction of an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in our writing programs if we understand the answers to these questions.

1. How can a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs teach us about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor in writing programs?

2. What are the specific contexts that existed, the strategies that were employed, and the measures of success used in the writing programs at the University of Central Florida,
Syracuse University, and the University of Denver, as it relates to developing a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor?

3. What can be learned about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor from a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs?

Explained in greater detail in the next chapter, these three research questions constitute the nexus of my inquiry. These questions summarized below are the original points of inquiry that sent me delving into the many narratives of composition studies and writing program management in search of answers; but they were wide questions.

I soon realized that, in attempting to answer these three questions, I would need some system of analysis that could interrogate the published documents and scholarship. No such guide existed and so I followed the advice of Galileo. In his book *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, Galileo speaks through his character Salviati:

> I see we are once more going to engulf ourselves in a boundless sea from which there is no getting out, ever. This is navigating without compass, stars, oars, or rudder, in which we must needs either pass from bank to bank or run aground, or sail forever lost. If, as you suggested, we are to get on with our main subject, it is necessary for the present to put aside the general question […] and proceed to demonstrations, observations, and particular experiments. (Galilei, 1632)

Rather than risk shipwreck or drown floundering about with nothing but a vague direction in mind I thought I should make assailable the larger questions through use of a set of heuristics that could be applied to a writing program context the same way that Galileo proposed to measure what could be measured and then, in the sum of those parts, perhaps see a picture of
the whole that was very different than the one commonly seen. As I will explain in greater detail in the methods section, the heuristic questions are meant to extrapolate the state, particulars, stakeholders, and remedies from each context to which they are applied.

**Methodologies.**

In this project I use hermeneutic phenomenology to interpret the data I collected through textual analysis—with the aid of a self-developed set of heuristic questions—in an effort to understand how writing programs can move toward an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor and what that might mean for Composition Studies. I provide a more complete definition in chapter 2 but for now Hermeneutical Phenomenology can be thought of as a search for meaning in interpretations of the human lived experience. I use Hermeneutic Phenomenology to analyze the publicly available texts produced by the three success stories named in the Indianapolis resolution. These scholarly articles, public documents and other texts associated with those writing programs contain the evidence of the lived experience of the participants in each context respectively. I use the scholarship of Heidegger, Gadamer and others that have developed this methodology to help develop a heuristic that will help to interpret the meaning in those texts. The methods of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, especially Ricoeur’s ideas about the narrative function of language and Gadamer’s frame of subjectivity within rhetorical contexts, I am able to seek the answers to the questions I have generated in the published narratives of the contexts mentioned by the Indianapolis Resolution framers. This heuristic-friendly framework of Hermeneutical Phenomenology helps to interpret the meaning and effects of the important human action located in those texts, specifically in helping to interpret the writing as evidential records of the rhetorical contexts and the successful actions that were well suited to those contexts. Other scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition that examines the idea
of moving toward an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor form the knowledge base to draw upon for construction of a heuristic as they can show what is valued in our profession and what that equitable and sustainable ecology might look like in the world.

Other texts, existing in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, which discuss other contexts, may, through this effort, become easier to unlock, and interpret, to allow compositionists to negotiate meaning with those texts, in their contexts. The meaning may be transferable or generalizable in some cases but will always provide suggestions for compositionists about to where to look for meaning in their present context. The heuristic set I have developed through this phenomenological framework may even prove useful for professionals like Directors, Department Chairs, and Deans in the field of Composition who are considering actions to take in their own areas of responsibility, by offering insight into these examples of proven successful moves and thereby widening the range of available possibilities. In some cases it may even be possible for them to match their present contexts to those analyzed in this project and help locate the paths toward the success those leaders are seeking.

**Methods.**

Since “Phenomenological inquiry methods cannot be formalized into a series of technical procedures” (van Manen, 2011) I have developed my own activities, both empirical and reflective, that could thoroughly examine the texts and contexts present in texts. These

![Figure 1. Visual representation of the project process](image-url)
methods, discussed further in chapter 2, potentially allow for understanding of similar texts and, by extension, similar contexts but they also work to answer the research questions noted earlier: What can be learned from systematic reading and analysis; is there a relationship between the context and the actions in the rhetorical context; and can we learn to read new contexts by understanding the ones that have been documented in descriptive narratives and other published texts?

The methods of this project require that I:
1. Draw upon scholarship in Rhetoric and Compositions Studies to construct a heuristic.
2. Select appropriate, relevant texts that accurately represent each context.
3. Apply the heuristic to each context in turn, asking each context the full battery of heuristics questions and analyzing each text in the selected set to respond before moving on to the next context.
4. Using my insider positions as a compositionist, adjunct, participant in university governance, to help interpret the meaning in the answers that the text sets have provided.

Data Collection

This section explains how I collected data from the texts I examined.

Types of data.

All data will be collected through texts consisting of published documents, scholarly articles, correspondence, studies, and other public documents that describe the lived experiences or reflections on the lived experiences, of educators, students, administrators or other stakeholders in each of the three specific writing program contexts of focus and through reflections upon those texts.

Number of data sets.

There are 3 data sets in this project.

- Data set 1 = A selection of scholarship from across Rhetoric and Composition Studies for use in the construction of a heuristic.
• Data set 2 consists of texts that describe 3 contexts: the Writing programs at University of Central Florida, Syracuse, and University of Denver.
• Data set 3 consists of the answers to the heuristic questions constructed with data set 1 and applied to data set 2.

**Size of the data set.**

Data set 1 which is used to create the heuristic contains at least 10 but will not exceed 20 scholarly articles in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Data set 2 consists of three contexts each comprising no more than 6 texts each. Data set 3 is the answers to the heuristic questions times the number of contexts or 5*3=15 answers.

**Relevance of data.**

For data set 1 all articles should bear some relevance to academic labor or closely relates topics in writing programs. In data set 2 the texts should discuss, explicate, describe, confirm, contravene or elucidate the lived experiences of the stakeholders of each specific writing program context to be considered relevant to this study. If sets 1 and 2 are focused then data set 3 will naturally be relevant.

**Currency of data.**

Data set 1 comprises selected articles written from 1988- the year of the Wyoming Resolution- to present with more weight given to articles written in the 21st century. Data set 2 contains only texts directly related to the contexts of the writing programs named in the Cox et al article that introduced the “Indianapolis Resolution”. Data set 3 will be current as it originates in this project. Table 1 shows the mechanics of how I intent to get at the answers posed by the larger study questions through the particular heuristics I have developed which will be discussed in detail in chapter two.
Table 1: How the data works to answer the research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Required</th>
<th>Method of collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How can a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs teach us about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor in writing programs?</td>
<td>Data set 1: A selection of scholarship from across Rhetoric and Composition Studies that discusses the stakeholders, needs, purposes, aims, uses, and operations of writing programs.</td>
<td>Selecting relevant scholarship in Rhetoric and Writing from 1988 until the present that can inform the heuristic construction through deep reading and value judgments on the part of the researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Being the focus of Chapter 2.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What are the specific contexts that existed, the strategies that were employed, and the measures of success used in the writing programs at the University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and the University of Denver, as it relates to developing a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor?</td>
<td>Data Set 2: Texts consisting of published documents, scholarly articles, correspondence, studies, and other public documents that describe the lived experiences or reflections on the lived experiences, of educators, students, administrators or other stakeholders in the Writing programs at University of Central Florida, Syracuse, and University of Denver, comprising no more than 6 texts each.</td>
<td>Reading for relevance without interpretation within the aforementioned parameters to select texts that describe the contexts of study during the tenure of the WPA’s mentioned in the Indianapolis Resolution article (Cox et al.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Being the focus of Chapter 3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What can be learned about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor from a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs?</td>
<td>The answers to the heuristic questions constructed with data set 1 and applied to data set 2</td>
<td>Allowing the heuristic, constructed with data set 1, to interrogate each of the text sets in data set 2 in turn by context and recording the answers found in the text sets yields data set 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 Being the focus of Chapter 4.</td>
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</tbody>
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The Preview of this Project

The following is a breakdown of the chapters in the Dissertation:
Chapter 1 has been a clear articulation of the exigence I have for this project coupled with an overview of the phenomenon of academic labor in the field of composition. I have also offered the research questions that led to this exploration and a summary of the methods and methodology of this project as well as a layout of organization of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 is a chapter with three sections: a) a survey of the literature that informs the development of a heuristic that is later used to analyze the selected texts and contexts that they inhabited, and in which they were articulated. The chapter moves from methodology that informs my heuristic into b) heuristic construction methods and discussion of that heuristic as a tool of inquiry. This chapter also ends with c) an identification of the selected documents from the three named writing program contexts: The University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and The University of Denver. These documents comprise published scholarship, book chapters, scholarly articles, public records and similar texts that directly relate to the particular context which gave rise to them in each of three contexts. It is at this time that any contextualizing commentary that explains the text’s position in the text set will be included in the rationale for each text.

Chapter 3 applies the heuristic, question by question, to each writing program context in turn and discusses, in depth, the findings generated by applying the heuristic to the body of texts from contexts of University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and the University of Denver.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the previous chapter as a data set and the last section of this chapter attempts to summarize the similarities and highlight the differences in the findings from each writing program context.
Chapter 5 discusses the limitations and gaps in my work on this project and suggests areas for further development. In that curve I openly suggest a survey instrument, based upon the developed heuristic, that will lead to similar contexts that are, as of yet, unpublished. Both the development of the heuristic and survey, as well as the heuristic and survey constructs themselves, are the contributions that I hope will become useful to the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, the heuristic helping to read the published narratives of success that exist and helping to read the state of academic labor ecologies in contexts of writing programs in the field. This heuristic may even help to generate more narratives from writing programs as WPAs use it to locate themselves in relationship to successes in the field of Rhetoric and Composition.

Closing Statement for Chapter 1

Through this project I believe that I have gathered deeper understandings, not only of the actions and interactions I have studied, but also understandings of the language and the rhetorical situations, moves, and motives that prompted, facilitated and guided the participants in the contexts. I also hope I have contributed something useful to those who wish to work toward a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in Composition.
CHAPTER 2: THE METHODS, HEURISTICS, AND DATA SETS, FOR
INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC LABOR IN THREE NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED
WRITING PROGRAM CONTEXTS THROUGH TEXTUAL STUDY

This chapter reminds the reader of the questions of this study, explains the methods that are used to answer them, and introduces the data sets of this project. Since the construction of a heuristic set of questions, and the application of those questions to published texts, are part of the methods for this project, the construction of both the heuristic questions and the representative text sets to which the questions will be applied will also be discussed in this chapter for each of three nationally recognized writing program contexts.

The Research Questions

In situating labor issues within the very brief overview of how professional practice became historically treated as labor in composition, offered in chapter 1, the entangled complexity of our actions, taken as administrators and educators alike, becomes more evident. The importance of gaining an understanding of the moves that have already been made in composition over the course of the twentieth century, and the affordances and consequences that flow from those moves, also becomes evident when the evidence left behind is examined. Looking at documentation surrounding the phenomenon of academic labor as a sort of written record of those moves and the effects of those moves is one rational way to gain useable insight. Such knowledge can be used for programmatic planning and move-making purposes as instructors, WPAs, and other compositionists study and enact writing program policies and pedagogies across the discipline in the twenty-first century. In this examination of selected documents and published materials surrounding, and flowing from, three specific writing program contexts I have found some answers to the following exploratory questions:
1. How can a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs be made to teach us about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor in writing programs?

2. What are the specific contexts that existed, the strategies that were employed, and the measures of success used in the writing programs at the University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and the University of Denver, as it relates to developing a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor?

3. What can be learned about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor from a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs?

The first of these exploratory questions contains many sub-questions and perhaps one of the most important of these is the inverse arrangement. What is not seen in the question might help to define some limitations, specifically, in this case, discovering what cannot be learned from a close study of these same documents. The documents are not a limitless fount of information, and their intent, in many cases, was never to delineate the academic labor successes of the writing program that spawned them. They are simply a residual record of the contexts that spawned them. For this reason it is of grave importance that readers, and researchers alike, not read too much into those writings which were often crafted with intents entirely different from offering descriptions of their source programs and the academic labor practices they used.

Another way to serve the first question is to ask about how those texts can be made to teach the inquisitive reader. What must be done in order to prepare to learn from them? To answer this first question I have examined some of these texts in the next chapter, with the use of a heuristic, and to inform later discussion of their implications, but here, in this chapter I explore
how the scholarship in the review of literature from the field of rhetoric and writing informs the construction of the questions in the heuristic set.

The second study question grew from a desire to discover commonalities amongst the successes of the three programs that might be transferable or adaptable from one context to another. In order to establish what the contexts may have had in common however, the particulars of each context, including the stakeholders, must first be revealed. While some aspects of each writing program’s success may be transferrable to similar contexts it has become quite clear that every writing program context exists in its own local environment, has its own climate, and responds differently to various stimuli. In one context, for example one might see a particular action, like peer mentoring for instance, enacted with results analogous to a reforestation effort in the natural biological world whereas in another context the very same peer mentoring program might have results that more closely resemble the introduction of a new, invasive species that triggers a struggle for survival in a natural ecosystem. Asking how I might discover the practices and policies that can work well across multiple contexts, and yet balance that goal with observation of the nuance that exists in each program's history and mission, became a leading reason that I chose to examine each context independently with the same heuristic before I looked for the commonalities and transferable aspects of success amongst them.

The third guiding question offers its own point of inquiry. The knowledge gained from analysis of documents varies significantly compared to the knowledge gained from scholarship,
hence the inclusion of both. Scholarship may arise externally to the context of a writing program just as easily as it can begin internally and therefore the opportunity for different motives, purposes, audiences, and even definitions of success can be noted in scholarship from those found in other texts.

In this project, to help define the textual artifacts in the text sets, I use the term documents (as seen in Figure 2) to refer generally to a kind of texts that are often more instrumental than they are descriptive. Documents usually come into being internally, within the daily operations of a writing program, a department, or a university context and have primary purposes of supporting or maintaining the operations of the organizations that produce them.

The term scholarship, as a source type in this project, refers to texts that provide description, analysis, or explication of the contexts in and among writing programs. Generally scholarship exhibits in its pages the awareness of a window from the outside, a sense of observation and the observed, and a meta-awareness of the writing program context itself. The scholarship most often appeared in published books or peer reviewed journals while all scholarship and all documents chosen for text sets were publicly available.

Taken together, both types of texts, and their multiple perspectives on the same rhetorical contexts, have yielded a richer understanding of those contexts that spawned the scholarship and shaped the documents. The specific pieces of scholarship and the specific documents used in this project are identified in this chapter and discussed further in the next chapter. A third term, texts, includes both documents and scholarship but also other kinds of texts that are beyond the scope of this project: such as fictional accounts, creative responses, and other unpublished texts that arise from these same contexts and may require separate, dedicated attention to do them justice.
The most substantive difference in questions one and three is the nature of the answers they seek. Question one asks, “How can this be accomplished?”, “How can anything be learned from that particular text set?” or, “What steps will produce knowledge?” whereas after question one is answered question three then asks, “What is the nature of the knowledge that we discovered during that process?”.

Within this third question there is also an opening for inquiry into other programs not mentioned in the Cox et. al article into which the Indianapolis Resolution was embedded. For the knowledge gained during my analysis of the specified writing programs to hold the highest value for the field, the heuristic developed in this project must also be transferable: able to discover findings of similar quality across these three contexts and inductively then, in other writing program contexts, using the documents and scholarship that arise from those contexts. Only then can there be hope for application of this heuristic to a “live” writing program context to generate productive data for learning and planning purposes in that context. Analysis of the past is pointless excepting of course that the knowledge gained can then be applied toward phronesis (practical wisdom) to shape the future.

**Methodology**

In this section the discussion turns to defining my understanding of hermeneutical phenomenology for use in this project, explaining why the method is best suited to this project, and explaining how the methodology informs and constructs the methods of this project. Please see Figure 2 (found on p.10) for a visual representation of the methods of this project. It may offer some context that only an overview is capable of providing and frontload the reading for this chapter, and subsequent chapters.
**Hermeneutic phenomenology defined.**

Hermeneutic Phenomenology is a term that can be daunting. I don’t want to oversimplify this methodological framing here because there are a great many meanings, and nuanced iterations, of Hermeneutic Phenomenology in use in many fields of study today and for each of them a different perception of how it works. To break down the term for the purposes of this project, hermeneutics is, in short, the study of meaning and phenomenology is the study of lived experience as humans experience events in the world. Since humans can only live in the world, as disclosed by Martin Heidegger (1926) and some might say before Heidegger, by Plato (Phaedrus), it is from the context of experiences or phenomena- in the world- that humanity must draw meaning. While Heidegger attempts a more ontological description and Plato a poetic one, they both indicate that humans, often find themselves in the world and that they must use their senses, perceptions, and dispositions in an effort to understand the world, its events, and the meaning of the phenomena they encounter. Accepting the questions of origin and existence this view of being in the world establishes a forward looking stance that more confidently asks the hypothetical question, *now that we agree that we exist in space and time, now what?*

The question of experience and meaning becomes the focus of inquiry when beings accept existence and the meaning of their experience must be then figured using the information they gather through the senses and considered in relationship to the self, each other, and the world. This process of constant negotiation within the self, with their fellows and their world has been given many labels over the course of history. The most accessible phrase in the English language for this process is a person’s ways-of-being-in-the-world. The various interactions physical, communicative or otherwise are, for the purposes of this project, called *phenomena*. So according to Hermeneutic Phenomenology if we want to study moments of specific interactions...
in the world, and our responses to—and negotiations with—those phenomena to gain an understanding of those phenomena, then we must collect representations of sensory input, descriptions of the phenomena, or accounts of the experiences in question and then, as research instruments, interpret those accounts within our own situated-ness to determine what it all means. The researcher’s relationship to each context must be considered, of course, but, should not become the focus of this kind of inquiry. For this project the Hermeneutic Phenomenology asks about how the phenomena were viewed, interpreted and navigated by those persons within each context. It prompts me to ask how the participants encountered, understood and responded to the phenomenon of academic labor to achieve a discipline-wide recognition of success.

**Why hermeneutic phenomenology?**

In this study, and in my professional practice, I have noticed that some interactions produce favorable results, some produce unfavorable results, others null results, and some interactions are not even acknowledged at all. Specifically, in the narratives and stories about the conditions of labor for many instructors and professors in FYC programs, myself included, I have witnessed sufficient evidence, within specific contexts, that change is needed. And yet I have seen this same case presented in writing and in verbal communication to the persons in administration who are responsible for building the environments that are supposed to create an atmosphere conducive to research and learning and the outcome of that presentation is a negative one or a disinterested result.

When I began thinking about how to find out more about this seeming inconsistency, I started thinking about communication and miscommunication as a possible cause. I first framed this transactional communication in my thoughts as points of human interaction and the messages as arguments or requests that sought action as a response. The interpretation of
meaning has deepened from that initial framing into this project largely due to the methodology of Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

The framework of Hermeneutic Phenomenology allows the researcher to assemble communication sets and interpret what meaning exists in those communications that led to specific outcomes. It allows the researcher to ponder how those communications in those sets might have been perceived by their first audiences, what factors in them compelled action, and how the communications filled the needs of the arguers and their audiences.

I considered using Actor Network Theory (ANT) but my insider vantage point, as a teacher of composition and a participant in university governance, already affords me a generally accurate map of the relationships within university contexts. I wasn’t seeking to understand the relationships. I wanted to understand the ways-of-being that promoted action and the actions themselves that the actors employed to achieve results. Activity Theory (AT) was also considered because of the complexity of the subject but the use of AT in this study presents many other problems. AT would try to establish patterns within that activity system which could help with seeing key components of the activity system and breakdowns in its functionality but I was looking for something more. I needed to know how the practices in one system affected an overlapping system and why the goals and practices aligned and conflicted: in short I was looking for meaning. I didn’t want to know about how the systems themselves function but rather about what factors could allow the systems to stabilize and heal damage so that they could eventually become symbionts in a (social, professional, and institutional) labor ecology. Rather than studying the systems, or the components of systems I wanted to study the importance and impacts of the participants’ actions in a system and the importance and impact created as those actions and discourses affected other systems. In short with Hermeneutic Phenomenology I could
ask about what the actions of a participant in a system mean within the system of academic labor, to other sections of influence in that system, in writing programs and beyond writing programs. Hermeneutic Phenomenology allows, as an affordance, the interpretation of possible meanings that human experience can engender and encounter as well as for allowing multiple perceptions of the same experience to exist simultaneously. Seeking more than patterns in the chaos, and something less than [T]ruth, hermeneutical phenomenology allows the researcher to seek possible meanings and make use of those possible meanings to better understand the phenomenon under study, in this case academic labor in three 21st century writing programs. It also begins a process of inductive reasoning; once it analyzes these phenomena, then it can advance the application of the conclusions discovered. These findings discussed in chapter three should serve in this regard only as inspiration and not as templates for success.

**How hermeneutical phenomenology works in this study.**

In this study the collected data sets, in the form of published texts—both documents and scholarship—arising from, or in relation to, a specific writing program context. I refer to these groups of texts as *text sets*. I then scrutinize the *text sets* with the aid of a short string of heuristics designed to derive the possible meanings expressed in the texts and then the meanings are weighed against the condition of a national recognition of success. In this project Hermeneutic Phenomenology is used to discern those meanings and see what part they played in achieving success. This particular brand of success has been manifested in the praise from professional organizations of the discipline of composition for positive treatment of academic labor in writing programs. Other forms of success seemed co-located and connected to this triumph and so some of these collateral successes are noted in subsequent chapters as well.
Methods

Remembering Peter Smagorinsky’s (2008) call for more robust methods sections in scholarship I have endeavored here to show the processes involved in arriving at each data set to offer a base for extensions and deeper explorations of this work to future scholars. As mentioned earlier, the data needed to answer the research questions I have posed is organized into three data sets.

**Where the Data of This Project Comes From**

**Data Set 1**
A Set of Heuristic Questions derived from a survey of literature in the field of Rhetoric and Composition

**Data Set 2**
- Text set 2a: A group of representative texts selected from publicly available functional documents and published scholarship produced within, about, and arising from the writing program at The University of Central Florida produced between 2005 and 2015.
- Text set 2b: A group of representative texts selected from publicly available functional documents and published scholarship produced within, about, and arising from the writing program at Syracuse University produced between 1996 and 2017.
- Text set 2c: A group of representative texts selected from publicly available functional documents and published scholarship produced within, about, and arising from the writing program at The University of Denver produced between 2010 and 2017.

**Data Set 3**
- The answers to the Heuristic questions of data set 1 when they are applied to Text set 2a
- The answers to the Heuristic questions of data set 1 when they are applied to Text set 2b
- The answers to the Heuristic questions of data set 1 when they are applied to Text set 2c

**The Conclusion:** The conclusions of this project are drawn from Data Set 3. Through the use of Hermeneutical Phenomenology, with the researcher as the interpretive instrument, the meaning of the human interactions surrounding academic labor are understood for the specific writing program contexts of this study, and relative meaning for the field of composition is established.

Figure 3. Where the data of this project comes from
The data sets are sequential in that they are ordered the way that they are ordered because each successive dataset cannot be constructed properly without the previous set. The data sets will be discussed as follows:

**The Gathering of Data Sets**

Data set 1: *Texts to help construct the heuristic questions.*

Data set 2: *The texts chosen to represent a record of the writing program contexts at:*
- The University of Central Florida (UCF)
- Syracuse University
- University of Denver (DU)

*Data Set 3:* the answers to the heuristic questions

**Data Set 1: Developing the Heuristics**

In this section, about Data Set 1, I discuss some of the concerns that arose from my readings in this project as they have helped to inform the heuristic questions set. I then list the questions after that framing has been laid. After listing the questions of the heuristic together, this section will also discuss each question individually, noting the reasoning behind each question and some of the scholarship that informed the construction of each question. In the subsection for Data Set 2, I have also included a chart to show how the questions help to answer the original research questions by making them assailable through the heuristic.

**Additional considerations for the heuristic set.**

In addition to the inclusion of Stasis and the ideas it unlocks for groups of problem solvers, three additional intentions of this researcher need also to be discussed in the following section.

*I hold some insider status perspective.* The experiences that I have gained over the last few years at Bowling Green State University, as a member of the Graduate Student Senate, Faculty Senate, and the executive committees of both senates—as well as from sitting on
academic policy committees at the Graduate College and the University levels—have afforded me a special kind of insight into the way that policy is made and executed. Watching the policies concerning our writing program circulate and hearing the debate surrounding those initiatives has offered me a view of how different levels of the university from student to faculty to administrators frame the concerns they have that correspond to their own duties, visions and pressures. In short, I have memory of the kinds of concerns raised in my institution and can look for similar concerns through my heuristic questions that were formed with that special knowledge and memory. The second insider identity I have in this context is as an instructor in FYC programs. I have been a Graduate Teaching Associate as well as an Adjunct Instructor and in those positions I have experienced the effects of policies, managerial decisions, and other various initiatives in writing programs. Some might label this experience as a bias but, when considering the perspectives of these identities and the ways in which they can conflict and harmonize, I see this dual adoption of perspectives as less biased than others who experience only one perspective. I would compare this dualist perspective to one that a WPA might have, knowing what it means to teach and maintain employment while assuming certain institutional leadership roles.

I want to emphasize audience empathy. Anticipating the makeup of a potential readership was of high importance to me in choosing the texts to inform the heuristic questions of this project. The idea behind this consideration was that keeping the questions relevant to my audience would also produce findings that had the potential to be of interest to that audience. The audience for this project was envisioned as instructors of composition, writing program administrators, directors of graduate programs that often see their students go on to eventually fill composition teaching roles, department administrators roles (chairs), college administrator
roles (deans), and university level administrator positions (provosts and presidents). An additional pair of audience considerations that were added later in this project were the union or collective bargaining unit leadership, and union organizers.

_I felt an incredible responsibility in choosing the questions._ Although meant for textual analysis, the possibility existed that someone might eventually attempt to apply them to a living context of an active writing program as a kind of academic labor barometer. I had to make this instrument both thorough yet not unwieldy. I found myself turning back to my knowledge of stasis theory to help craft the heuristic set fit into those two parameters. I took those basic concepts and also added my insider perspective and a sense of empathy for the audience to come up with the final set. Now in that sentence are several complex considerations like stasis, insider positioning, and audience empathy which merit examination independently.

**Importance of stasis theory.**

The uses of Stasis Theory are well known from Aristotle and the Stoics to Michel Foucault and Kenneth Burke. The four stages of stasis help people see other perspectives in a situation and thereby help the participants in, and observers of, a situation see more equitable solutions that serve more stakeholders in the end. Seeing this, I wanted to be sure that my heuristic included stasis concepts in its formulation. To be clear this project is not a stasis exercise but rather stasis informs this project. The uses and results surrounding stasis ask many of the questions that I presume my reader may ask. The influence of stasis is present in my heuristic while not reducing the heuristic to merely an exercise in stasis theory.

**Fact- Can the issue be changed?**

After the survey of literature in this project I am comfortable declaring that an issue exists. But was change possible? I needed to be sure that my question set would seek evidence
that change was even possible and, if it was possible, change from what-to what? I needed to craft a heuristic that considered generally the conditions of the programs in question and the then conditions after change and made this connection within the frame of academic labor and ecological equity. This specifically asks can the type of movement that I am envisioning (i.e. movement toward a sustainable and equitable ecology) actually happen.

**Definition- What are the issue’s parts, and how are they related?**

I also needed to craft questions that invited the possibility that the difficulties in writing program labor were sustained, supported, and remediable through actions that come from, or extend beyond, the writing programs themselves. I needed to gauge the scope of the types of effects of labor decisions across the stakeholder groups before attempting to consider the intensity of the varied effects on certain stakeholders.

**Quality- Who might the issue affect?**

To sufficiently describe the effects of problems, and the effects of their resolutions, it is necessary look at the stakeholders in a context and to gage what effect, if any, the difficulties, successes, and other actions had on them with regard to labor but not exclusively so. For this project this means naming the stakeholders in the contexts specifically and then generally across contexts. Questions in the heuristic should get at the contextual experience of stakeholders and, as is often said, since teacher labor conditions are student learning conditions (*Miller R. E., 2004*) (*Emerick, Hirsch, & Berry, 2005*) (*Hirsch, Emerick, Church, & Fuller, 2006*), several kinds of conditions may affect, and be affected by, labor conditions. Those effects may vary by stakeholder perception and by condition considered such as pedagogical effectiveness, status of instructors, power dynamic in offices and classrooms, etc.
In this project forensics plays a role as the evidence is all based on written records of past experiences. It is entirely possible that each stakeholder type and even non-traditional stakeholders might play a role in the positive changes observed in these writing programs. The heuristic question set should therefore include inquiry into who did what and when, and by extension map opportunities and actions taken in the three contexts in response to those opportunities. It may be that some contexts would allow constructed alignments of participant types that have worked together to achieve success whereas these alignments are not feasible. Nonetheless, the identification of those alignments of participation may help explain the nature and extent of successes in those contexts and the relationship of academic labor to those successes and alignments.

The specifics of the heuristics.

In this section I list the heuristic questions as a group and then discuss each one individually including in that discussion the texts that helped to shape each question.

1. What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?
2. Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?
3. Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?
4. Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?
5. How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?

Heuristic question 1. What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?
This question allows a naming of the stakeholders and an inspection of their perspectives on academic labor. The ways in which they support, interact with, and depend upon the system are very important in shaping their perceptions of the value of a program. What each stakeholders entrusts to the program, the reasons that they trust the program, and the benefits that they reap from the program can all be drawn into discussion here as supported, or overlooked, by the texts in data set 2.

In addition to personal professional experience “The New Faculty Majority In Writing Programs: Organizing For Change”, the foreword that Eileen Schell (2017) wrote for Contingency, Exploitation, and Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition helps us name the stakeholders of FYC list many of them and provides discussion on each.

Perhaps not an approach that many advocates would take but the following College English article presents an argument that considers a different group of stakeholders. If one is genuinely interested in improving both the working conditions of writing teachers and the quality of instruction undergraduates receive, it’s important to ask where the money will come from to support such improvements. It’s also important to know who is in a position to make the decisions that will actually bring about such changes. Who are the stakeholders? Who are the agents of change? Who are the allies that matter? Who can help with the problems that exist right here, right now? (Miller R. E., 2004)

Joe Berry, in Reclaiming the Ivory Tower (2005), notes that there are bigger “losers” when contingent labor becomes the standard method of staffing courses. These include the students and society, to which I add, every level of the university structure feels some risk, reward, and repercussion from the current practices of academic labor.
Each of the stakeholders has a different engagement with risk and reward based upon what they have invested in the writing program. Many have named some but McBeth & McCormack (2017) also include a trajectory, in a sort of backhanded way, when they state,

We realized, somewhat intuitively, that the stakeholders (i.e., the writing program, the department, the college administration, the union, and the university’s central offices) could all achieve their seemingly disparate goals, and with added full-time faculty for our new curriculum, we would make an immediate and dramatic impact on student learning.

(p. 47)

Although not named within the parenthetical listing of stakeholders the end of the sentence, as well as the rest of the chapter, shows that the instructors and students are heavily weighted factors in this set of stakeholders. Wardle & Roozen (Addressing the Complexity, 2012) further augment this list with parents, community partners, employers, and accrediting bodies (p. 107). While accrediting bodies are without a doubt important stakeholders I see their concerns with respect to academic labor as bound up with those of the university and so any mention of them will come under that item in my list. I also see the parents and students having risks and rewards that overlap to such a degree that the parents’ concerns will be included under the student item. Community partners and employers then must be added to my list as stakeholders. The list then that I will use for question 1 will include: The students, the instructors, the writing program, the department, the college administration, the union, the university, community partners, and employers.

Heuristic question 2. Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?
This question allows me to ask what degree of importance status holds for each stakeholder. I can use the texts in data set 2 to look at how stakeholders view each other’s roles in the programs both in word and deed. Are the inconsistencies in what programs say they value and how they demonstrate that value present in the successful programs?

Chapter 3 of Susan Miller’s *Textual Carnivals* (1993, pp. 84-120) examines the construction of composition and also discusses many of the attitudes toward the subject. Additionally, Eileen Schell (1998, p. 55) writes in *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers* about a “reserve labor status” that composition instructors, and particularly the women who teach composition endure as a holdover from the writing-as-a-service-to-the-academy attitudes of the recent past. It stands to reason that the status of the occupation may be transferred to the self image of the practitioner. “Someone with a terminal degree who is never allowed to teach any courses but introductory ones, never allowed to participate in curriculum decisions or any other policymaking, and never allowed to be a faculty advisor or committee member, is surely above the station she occupies” (Wiegard, 2013, p. 225).

**Heuristic question 3.** *Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?*

This question allows a researcher to seek a comparative value of labor conditions within the landscape of other concerns like disciplinary and program status, university prestige, service to the community, student success, and academic rigor. The question helps to locate the value and importance of the stakeholders to one another.

In *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource* John Shilb (2002) discusses the many demands for success, some of them reasonable and some unreasonable, placed on the WPA as well as the way that material conditions of labor can be sabotaged or neglected. *Open Voices*
carried an article by Sara Webb-Sunderhaus (“It’s Me and the Adjuncts”, 2012, p. 25) that shows that even successes in one sense may not translate throughout the context to all stakeholders. In this case it is shown that money alone may not fix staffing problems. Then there is The Portland Resolution (Hult, Joliffe, Kelly, Meade, & Schuster, 1992) which lays out the expectations for success for WPAs and what counts as successful WPA work.

**Heuristic question 4. Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?**

This question allows me to catalog some of the successful and unsuccessful argumentative strategies and interpret in the context the reasons and factors they interacted with to achieve their results. It also allows the researcher to see which arguments best reach which stakeholder groups in each context. This in turn can inform the researcher about which arguments make good bedfellows and therefore which stakeholder concerns align to form potential allies.

In *The Humanities, Higher Education, & Academic Freedom: Three Necessary Arguments* Bérubé & Ruth (2015) discuss, especially the first chapter, the value of the humanities in general as a theme by which to target the inconsistencies in what a program declares it values value and what it actually supports. In another focus of argumentation A report from NEPC called “Research-Based Options for Education Policymaking: The Effectiveness of Class Size Reduction”, by William J. Mathis (2016) presents a compelling quantitative argument for class size reduction, a measure that would ease high workloads for contingent faculty. The study is intended for secondary education however the lines between higher education and high school grow more blurred each year with College Credit Plus and other similar programs taking increasingly larger bites out of the student population that will enroll in FYC. This case has been
made in other documents as well and will help me to ask about that line of argumentation in my second data set. Again I see Seth Kahn’s (2013) “Never Take More than You Need” as a call for new arguments because of the frustration evident in the text. The arguments that have been made are not being taken seriously says Kahn. This is a reason to track the various foci of argumentation and augment or eliminate failing lines of argumentation.

**Heuristic question 5. How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?**

The Greek term kairos is meant to mean, in this question and this project, the moment in time when the contributing circumstances align to present a window of opportunity. This window opens and can last for a longer period of time but more frequently is quite fleeting and kairos refers to the length of time that window is traversable. It is not the window itself but rather the moment at which a clear path to the target is available. It is helpful to have a target, a flight path, and some potential energy on standby just in case kairos opens that path.

In asking about kairos, this question allows the researcher, through examination the text sets from each context, to identify some of the persons, stakeholders, and conditions present that allowed each program to seek, see, and grasp their particular paths toward academic labor success. In asking about the kairos of the context I am able to see which moving parts needed to align for each brand of success to become attainable. This question may even support future discussion of preparation for the appearance of kairos or discussion of other related concepts like tuchê (luck), phronesis (wisdom), and métis (cunning).

In *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers: Writing instruction in the managed university* (Bousquet, Scott, & Parascondola, 2004) have assembled a host of chapters from
prominent voices in the field of labor in composition and much of it looks prophetic now 15 years later. The urgency expressed then has only swung further toward frenzy. When is the opportune moment for change? It seems that sometimes, if pendulum of Kairos swings into position unseen actors can miss their chance. But then there are other times, when the same alignments occur, that participants are pulled through the window, willing or not.

Cary Nelson (2010) in *No University is an Island*, Marc Bousquet (2008) in *How the University Works*, and Benjamin Ginsburg (2011) in *The Fall of the Faculty* all point out for tenured faculty that the profession is approaching a tipping point at which academic freedom will be dead and tenure nonexistant. The effects upon society as a whole far supercede the ramification of that condition for faculty and yet the faculty are in a position to change the trends. There is a window, theoretically at least. Does this window exist in my second data set texts?

At Duke for instance I noticed that a change in leadership was the spark needed for change:

This new emphasis on writing as a mode of learning and inquiry was spearheaded by the dean of Trinity College, Robert Thompson, who made professionalizing the first-year writing course one of his priorities. Under his leadership, Duke decided to invest in a new postdoctoral faculty to teach an ambitously re-imagined first-year writing course.

(Hillard, 2003)

I wanted to be sure to ask about this kairotic motion and opportunity in the second data set. In asking about kairos in different tenses one might discover when actions that bear immediate results that also open up the window of opportunity for further actions.
Data Set 2:

The first step in assembling text sets for Data set 2 was to read as much literature that shared connections with the contexts in question as possible. My own experience at Bowling Green State University serving on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee led me to seek evidential texts among faculty governance documents, faculty handbooks, writing program websites, recruitment documents, news, scholarly articles, and other documents, for each of the three contexts: UCF, Syracuse, and DU. Those documents are named and described later in this chapter in greater detail.

There were three primary difficulties in selecting these texts. First, I did not want to select only the documents that contained the answers to my heuristics that I might find favorable for fear of unintentionally silencing voices that had important points to make within their given contexts. Having been a contingent instructor, a group that is often excluded from the decision-making processes of writing programs and university governance, this is the last thing I would want to do even if it meant I had to include dissenting opinions or problematic discoveries in my text sets. Second, the conflicting problem of not being selective enough: I did not want to select texts that were irrelevant or only tangentially related to the subject of my study. Third, there are a great many documents and scholarship examples to choose from. The space in this project being somewhat limited, I decided to limit the number of texts in each text set to a manageable number: between 5 and 7. I also decided to balance the set’s composition between published scholarship and other kinds of publicly available documents given the different kinds if insights provided by each.

In order to balance these two considerations I limited my initial readings of potential materials to simply looking for relevant data embedded within the texts. Normally when I
encounter a text I pursue it with a critical eye, engaging with it on multiple levels and rereading passages as many times as necessary to develop a deeper familiarity or as Dewey and Bentley (1975) might call it, stronger knowledge with the text. I decided to forego my normal reading style until a later time and simply search for relevance in the early stages of my data collection. One key marker of this pattern of reading was that, when I read for relevance I would find myself—the instrument of this research project—thinking, “This means something!”, a thought that is normally a signal for me to begin deeper reading, and so I used it, in this instance, as a marker of relevance discovery. In this way searching for relevance first, rather than for meaning in the texts that would become part of Data Set 2, helped to reduce bias in the selection of texts to which I would apply the heuristic questions. This attention to detail afforded a more diverse dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Heuristic Questions</th>
<th>Relationship of heuristic to the research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How can a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs be made to teach us about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor in writing programs?</td>
<td>(a) What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?</td>
<td>The risks and rewards of opportunities are strong motivators for the participants. Some motives may be discernible through written records.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?</td>
<td>Identification of a pre success state and a post success state of the view of composition in the context seems important in planning and as an indicator of lasting success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?</td>
<td>Related to (b) this question gets at the expectations and assumptions that the various stakeholders in a given context might have. Discovering these assumptions can be accomplished in close analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that</td>
<td>In the analysis of the text sets noting what arguments for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?</td>
<td>had been attempted, who made those cases and what the results were could prove to be a very important finding when considering which arguments to construct.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?</td>
<td>Identifying Kairos is not always easy and so identifying it in the records can offer examples of what it might look like in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. What are the specific contexts that existed, the strategies that were employed, and the measures of success used in the writing programs at the University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and the University of Denver, as it relates to developing a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?</th>
<th>Noting within each context, the stakeholders can show how ecologies differ and how they resemble one another as well.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?</td>
<td>Noting the starting state of the perception of the writing program in each context and how that perception shows up in the evidence can add to our sense of disciplinarily and perhaps provide a list of ideas that altered that perception in each context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?</td>
<td>The size and mission of each context weighs heavily into what counts as success academically but perhaps this question can link academic, scholarly and professional success to the idea of academic labor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?</td>
<td>In contrast to the relationship that (d) bears to question 1, in the (d) of question 2, I seek specific conditions, actions, and results that were situated in contexts rather than considering the foci together. This question may help isolate the “why” of successful action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| (e) How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context? | In each context the idea of Kairos might be co-located with actors that moved with the open...
Table 2: Making Measurable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?</th>
<th>Opportunities in each context.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> What can be learned about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor from a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs?</td>
<td><strong>(a)</strong> What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(b)</strong> Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(c)</strong> Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(d)</strong> Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>(e)</strong> How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The three contexts of data set 2.**

It is necessary to introduce the selected contexts at this juncture. In a later chapter the findings and interpretations resulting from the application of the heuristic to each of the three
contextual subsets in data set 2 will make deeper discussion of the texts. It seems appropriate to offer a brief overview of the contexts and their representative text sets before applying the heuristic to their respective data sets. The discussion of the selected texts and scholarship in this chapter is limited to summaries and contextual discussions of the nature of the documents and reasons for inclusion in the interpretive sets. In this sequence the introduction will hopefully allow the reader to see the selections first without any attempt to interpret them and thereby limit undue framing and bias that could occur should the introduction and analysis be conducted all in one move. Hermeneutic Phenomenology expects of the researcher an acknowledgement of inescapable biases and an attempt to learn what we can from them and with them as we name them. I do not however expect my reader to share the embedded nature of my perspective and chose to present the text sets as collected artifacts, the meaning of which having yet to be ascertained.

The order of the contexts here does not imply primacy or hierarchy. The three contexts are instead listed in the same order that I found them in the CCC Scholarship of the framers of The Indianapolis Resolution: “University of Central Florida and Elizabeth Wardle; Syracuse and Louise Phelps; University of Denver and Doug Hesse” (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, & Lynch-Biniek, 2016, p. 52).

**The University of Central Florida.**

The UCF context, lead by Elizabeth Wardle beginning in 2008, produced a surprising amount of scholarship and public documents in a relatively short time. Many of these texts openly discuss the ecology of labor in the writing program. Some of the texts were written before 2008 and show some of the conditions and energies within the context that help the reader to better understand the 2008- present timeframe within the writing program.
The UCF scholarship.

The first piece mentioned here is among the first that I read in my search for information on the topic of academic labor in writing programs and the length of its introduction, couched in that search, runs a little longer than those that follow. The Scholarship I found surrounding the Central Florida context were

- “Intractable Problems”

This scholarly text is arguably one of the most explicit of all of the texts that this project will interrogate. It was written as a program profile by Elizabeth Wardle to document and explain the experiences during the transformation of a writing program at University of Central Florida from an average writing program into one that innovates, wins awards and distinctions, and improves the material conditions of the faculty that teach there. The full title of the article is “Intractable Writing Program Problems, Kairos, and Writing about Writing: A Profile of the University of Central Florida's First-Year Composition” (2013). I will refer to this article by a shortened name of “Intractable Problems”. In the article Wardle writes about changes in the program that were very abrupt, sweeping, and even painful for some while also characterizing the effects of the transformation as effective, positive, and empowering. Many of the challenges the program faced were cataloged and spoken to specifically, making this article very straightforward in its intentions and purpose.

While not solely a treatise on academic labor, within the structure of the narrative that details successful moves Wardle made toward targeted goals like student retention and student completion, Wardle annotates how and where many of the contributing factors that both enabled
and impeded her course of action overlapped. This overt discussion places academic labor squarely in the center of those factors that affect student outcomes, program stability, and interdepartmental relations.

This sort of useful scholarship can help not only to decipher the program contexts but also to establish inter-textual relationships that can help confirm or deny the other documents in the text set. Scholarship such as this is rare when compared to the volume of scholarship produced each year in the field of composition let alone the wider umbrella of English Studies. Even among Academic labor scholarship the article is rare in that it was written by a sitting Writing Program Administrator which provides unparalleled insight into the motivations and reasoning behind each move and provides some justification for those moves by revealing the purposes she intended. Other fine scholarship often comes from the perspective of the adjunct or the teacher and offers the bottom up perspective. The top-down view, especially one so meticulous and carefully transparent, is a much more infrequently found perspective.

- “Addressing Assessment”

Elizabeth Wardle and Kevin Roozen discuss the timeframe of transition at UCF in terms of the changes in assessment however this scholarship also has a lot to say about the phenomenon of academic labor in that writing program context. This scholarship was cited in the article, “Intractable Problems”, by Wardle as an explanation of many of the limitations, affordances, and complexities intertwined in simply changing the way programs think about assessment in writing programs. This scholarship seats continuity and quality of academic labor as underlying components that help to maintain the current systems of education and assessment.
“Teaching About Writing”

This scholarship was produced before the actual context of the UCF transitions but the observation of the complex problems that beset writing, and the academic labor involved in the teaching of writing, are not new and the ideas that developed as moves to test at UCF did not come into existence overnight. Here is “the elephant in the room” (p. 575) unveiled as a key contributor to the current disposition of Writing as a service, as an inoculation against bad grammar, or as remediation for poor writing practices. The current labor system in Writing and Composition are named here as a key factor that, at best uphold the status quo and at worst form the hegemonic insulation for out of control corporate style capitalist ideologies. The analysis in the next chapter discusses this scholarship at length as a formative thought pattern used to target positive change in the UCF writing program context.

The UCF documents.

“UCF’s writing Program Home Page and its videos”

http://writingandrhetoric.cah.ucf.edu

Included in this entry are the reports and videos that link into the home page. The introductory webpage displays videos and write-ups of some of the accolades that the Writing Program has received, the dates they received them, and the engagement levels of the faculty and students. This home page links to many documents and so it is a little imprecise to list only the home page.

“Faculty Handbook and Hiring Guides”

The expected practices of hiring faculty are contained within this text. Simply desiring change isn’t enough to make change possible. This document shows aspects of the complex nature of supporting changes to academic labor.

- “The UCF Faculty Senate Resolutions”
  
  

The record of moves can also be seen through the Faculty Senate as the university makes moves that prepare the way for success in the writing program. Exigence can often be seen in these documents if there is a felt need for change that arises from some deficiency or problem.

**Syracuse University.**

The scholarship I found surrounding the Syracuse context was plentiful and from multiple well known authors. The texts in this set were also very hard to choose from as there have been many articles written about this context over the 30+ years that the Syracuse Writing program worked steadily toward a more equitable and sustainable ecology in the Syracuse writing program’s staffing practices.

**The Syracuse scholarship.**

- “Becoming a Warrior”

This is a chapter from an edited collection that speaks directly to the experiences that Louise Phelps had at Syracuse during the transformation from the treatment of contingent that was present in was to what now exists and addresses some of the steps on this long road.

- **“Between Smoke And Crystal”**


  This chapter, also written by Phelps, is a direct discussion of a kind of phenomenon within the phenomenon of academic labor: Independent Writing Programs. The chapter offers insight into the effects independence might have on the ecology of academic labor. The removal of levels of academic administration has effects on writing programs but I am specifically interested in whether this move effects the instructors and by extension the students in any meaningful way.

- **“Not Just Teachers”**


  This scholarly chapter from the same edited collection that bears Phelps’ “Between Smoke and Crystal” details a clear overview of the history of the writing program and how it traveled from its tenuous beginnings to its national recognition as a success in academic labor management. The perspective is interesting too as Davies was a teaching Assistant at Syracuse during her PhD program years and has since become a WPA in other universities.

The Syracuse documents.

- **“Report and Recommendation: Improving Policy on Timing of Tenure Review”**

This document is a report from the Academic Affairs Committee at Syracuse University and the timing of the document seems noteworthy as does the content as it deals with what happens if a proletariat labor force finds a path to tenure. The complication is yet another detail in the multitude of details that the participants have experienced on this long road since 1986.

- “Motion Regarding Non-Tenure Track, Full-time Faculty Positions as amended and approved on March 30, 2016”


This is another Academic Affairs Committee document that shows the differences in atmosphere 11 years after the 2005 document.

The University of Denver.

The texts I found surrounding the University of Denver context were hard to whittle down to this number: I have five scholarship pieces and three other documents from the program. Since some of the scholarship pieces were rather short I felt the need to add another piece as I worked through the application of the heuristic in Chapter 3. I have marked that piece with an ** symbol.

The Denver scholarship.

- “Who Speaks for Writing?”

“Who Speaks for Writing? Expertise, Ownership and Stewardship” is the first chapter of *Who Speaks for Writing: Stewardship in Writing Studies in the 21st Century*, an edited collection from Jennifer Rich and Ethna D. Lay. This scholarship makes some general recommendations for the field of Rhetoric and Composition and describes something about the precipice of change upon which the discipline is perched. The state and status of the profession and its ecology of labor are referenced in unique ways that bind the practices of labor to the practices of teaching and research.

- **“What is A Personal Life?”**
  
  This scholarship in unusual in that it is not dripping heavily with citations and facts and figures but rather captures the mindset of a prominent WPA with a focus on what life is like in academia. It tackles a few myths as seen from the outside and offers advice to others who may hold the WPA position. As the title suggests it touches on what work life balance means both generally and specifically for the author.

- **“Real Faculty But Not”**
  
  This scholarship is written by two of the inaugural Full-Time-Non-Tenure-Track Faculty (FTNTTF) position holders at the University Denver (DU). In this piece the affordances and the limitations of the FTNTTF positions are discussed by the holders of those positions. The insights into what it means to be in such a position, what the positions does for the program and where the status of FTNTTF lays in the landscape of academic labor are present and prescient in the description of the ecology of academic labor in situ.
Sustainable Expectations.


This narrative scholarship is short but incisive. It is written as an aside when colleagues present the author with questions about the structure of academic labor in the program at DU. Hesse turns the question over and exposes its underbelly for inspection. There are several implications that solicit interpretation in this piece.

The Denver documents.

The Faculty Handbook – [http://portfolio.du.edu/downloadItem/339426](http://portfolio.du.edu/downloadItem/339426)

*The Faculty Handbook from DU* was recommended by Douglass Hesse as a locus of work surrounding academic labor. It frames the current situation and explains something about what moves were made and from what state to what new state.

**Notes For Instructors of First year English 2004-2005** (Bland, Prall, & Martin, 2004)


This document came from the University of Denver Special Collections and Archives. In a box of archived folders. I requested this document from the archive after my analysis had begun because I noticed a gap in my knowledge for the UD text set. For parity I requested this document to gain some sort of idea about what the FYC program was before the changeover to an independent writing program in 2006. It should help answer the stasis concerns of “from what to what embedded in my heuristic questions by providing one view of that history.

University Writing Program – Program Features ([https://www.du.edu/writing/features.html](https://www.du.edu/writing/features.html))

This website is aimed largely to speak to students but it is for general audiences as well. The page described the scope and sequence of the FYC program. The arrangement and
content of the page as well as the language it uses to describe instructors is of interest to this study.

- University Writing Program - Research and Other Initiatives
  
  (https://www.du.edu/writing/research.html)
  
  This page from the DU website shows the value placed on research and the content of the studies may even open avenues into what the researcher’s value, who they are, and how they are regarded within the institution and the program.

**Summary of Methodology, Methods, and Text Sets**

Using inductive reasoning one may look at the success in these three writing programs at CFU, Syracuse, and DU, and extrapolate where those moves that led to success in those context may exist. Discovering those moves one may then quite naturally also ask which moves or conditions are generalizable enough to be adaptable to other contexts. So reader beware: once one sees the moves that lead to success in writing programs, one might feel compelled to employ them in one’s own writing program. Seeing that eventuality, it is my duty to caution restraint in that line of reasoning as this study concentrates on moves made *in the setting of specific contexts*. It is supremely evident to this researcher that each writing program context is unique and must fashion its own ways of being within its own context if true ecological balance is sought.

Copying wholesale, or in part, a selection of moves lifted from other contexts can be compared to a blood transfusion; it may keep the patient alive in the short term but that patient’s body must also heal any damage it has sustained if true health is to be regained. So bearing in mind that contexts and environments matter very much in the discussions of ecologies, even in socially constructed ecologies, the astute reader can proceed to look at the third dataset, which comprises the answers to each of the heuristic questions from data set 1 for each of the three text
sets from dataset 2. The organizing principle is the writing program context creating three main sections for the next chapter. The internal discourse in each section is conducted by the numbers as I applied the full battery of heuristic questions to each writing program context’s representative text set in turn creating in each of the three sections five subsections. Later, in chapter four, chapter three’s dataset 3 becomes the basis for the discussion of my interpretive findings in this project.

In the next chapter the heuristic questions developed in this chapter are applied to the texts I have named here and evidence toward answering the heuristic questions is gathered and situated. Then in chapter 4 those data are interpreted in a search for meaning.
CHAPTER 3: APPLYING THE HEURISTIC QUESTIONS TO THE WRITING PROGRAM TEXT SETS

The following is an account of how I arrived at data set 3 by using the heuristic questions to interrogate the text sets from the writing programs from Central Florida, Syracuse, and Denver.

The Heuristic and the Text Sets

This data set 3 is not the final product of this project and that must be made quite clear. Data set 3 is only the set of responses that the text sets of data set 2 produce when they are held up to the heuristic questions from data set 1. The discussion in chapter four works to interpret the meanings contained within data set 3, with this researcher as the interpretive instrument. While some observations are noted in data set 3 they are observations and not the interpreted meaning that this project seeks. These data should be read as facts and observations rather than being read as arguments and conclusions.

Another note about this data set is that, while not every text in every text set speaks directly to every single heuristic question, the majority of the texts in each text set has something to say in response to each heuristic question. That is to say that perhaps only four of six texts respond to question 2 leaving two texts removed from that response. Then in question 3 the unused texts do respond to the question and another text has no response. One could look at the abstinences like one looks at blank responses in a questionnaire. This was anticipated as a possibility as the heuristic questions examine many aspects of the ecology of academic labor. As these scholarship texts and functional documents have not been written to answer my questions it would be unrealistic to expect that every text would speak to every question.
Finally, to assist the reader in the making of knowledge from this chapter I feel the need to divulge one of my findings from this project in a preliminary announcement: I have found that the risks and rewards among the stakeholders are inextricably bound in such a way that even a concentrated discussion of one stakeholder must naturally include discussion of others. This is not unexpected because, at its core, the ecology of academic labor is made primarily of humans and their interactions. Below I list the questions as a convenient reference and then in subsequent sections I apply them to each representative text set, one writing program context at a time.

The list of heuristic questions.

1. What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?
2. Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?
3. Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?
4. Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?
5. How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?

Data Set 2a- University of Central Florida (UCF).

Introduction to the context. This UCF writing program context is described in great detail in Elizabeth Wardle’s (Intractable Problems, 2013) work. The size of the program and the length of service of the WPA are among the many important factors that describe for the public the state of affairs the program was experiencing. By way of description I include an edited version of Wardle’s appraisal of the context when she arrived at UCF in the following bulleted outline.

- Institution
  - UCF is the second largest university in the country
UCF is listed as an “R1” status indicating the highest research activity class in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

- over 45,000 undergraduate students and
- 60,000 students overall
- Roughly 4,000 first-time-in-college (FTIC) composition students each semester
  - large number of transfer students

- Composition sections were capped at 27 students
- Program housed in the Department of English
- WPA Structure
  - Three different tenured or tenure-track Directors over a ten-year period.
  - Typically one or two instructor-line (permanent, non-tenure track) Composition Coordinators
  - One administrative assistant.

- Composition teaching faculty
  - 15% permanent, non-tenure-line instructors;
  - 19% visiting instructors (full-time, limited contract non-renewable after four years);
  - 19% graduate student instructors (mostly MA students); and
  - 47% adjunct instructors (part-time, one-semester contract with no benefits).

- tenure-line faculty taught honors composition

- Program Curricular Content
  - Two-course program course sequence
  - Process-focused and assignment-based
  - Typical genres taught were:
    - memoir, a political or social commentary, a review, and a public argument
    (Wardle, Intractable Problems, 2013, pp. 6-7)

**Heuristic question 1.**

What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?

This section discusses the following stakeholders associated with the writing program at UCF: the students, the instructors, the writing program, the department, the college administration, the union, the university, community partners, and employers.

**a. The Students.**

While the content and additional requirements are radically different from typical FYC fare UCF first year students enter a writing sequence that appears, organizationally, much like writing programs of other universities: a required two course sequence which many students can
see as a barrier. The student risks much. I would argue that in FYC programs the student has the
greatest perceived personal risk out of all the stakeholders. In my experience, they are asked to
bring their writing practices to college, often from an environment of testing in k-12 education
and with a mindset of submitting to judgment brought about by the pressures of getting admitted
to college and trying to secure scholarships and loans to pay for it all. They are then asked to lay
their writing practices out on an operating table of sorts in full view of their instructors and peers,
at a time when they are very vulnerable personally. These vulnerable feelings are amplified, or at
least added to, in many instances by a sense of abandonment, when they discover that their
instructor isn’t a professor and that they have placed their trust in an educator perceived as
second rate when their entire future may hinge, in their view, on what they learn in college.

There may be some substantiation to this concern. Even UCF President John Hitt (UCF,
2013) states in a video on the Writing and Rhetoric website that, in this future these students are
so concerned about, potential employers often express a desire for better writing and speaking
skills in college graduates. In the same video several students expressed elements of these
concerns as well.

In the changeover to a new curriculum- as noted in “Intractable Problems” (Wardle,
2013)- students benefit in specific ways that are tied to instructor expertise. First, since labor and
instruction are inextricable from one another (p. 5), the quality of classroom instruction would
rise with the quality of working conditions. Students would reap this benefit in addition to many
more. With time to spend engaged in professional development, the instructors can bring a more
solid framework of expertise into the classroom.

The students at UCF saw a benefit from attending classes that were smaller than they had
previously been. This class size issue bears an implication as a factor in material working
conditions for the instructors and in reducing that workload UCF students saw a quantifiable improvement in meeting learning objectives (Intractable Problems, p. 20).

The issue of transferring knowledge acquired in FYC at UCF to new contexts is also a reward that students reap (UCF Composition Program, 2015) as they continue forward with a new understanding about the nature of writing as an adaptable activity. This new understanding was a major point of change under the transformation of labor and curriculum, in the UCF FYC program. The Wardle & Roozen (2012) article “Addressing the complexity of writing development: Toward an ecological model of assessment” proposes a new model of assessment that confirms some of the rewards that WPAs at UCF and other colleges have intended for their students. “The basic goal of an ecological model of writing assessment is to offer students, teachers, departments, institutions and other stakeholders a fuller, richer account of the kinds of experiences with writing that are informing students’ growth as writers throughout the undergraduate years” (2012, p. 107). UCF is named in this article as a working example of the concepts of this vertical instruction model. Later the article urges a self awareness for the students, such that they are able to see themselves as writers. Developing such a platform for the writer-student to begin an active process of improvement and a working knowledge of the activity of writing is a reward that is surely worth the changes in labor practices and curriculum expectations necessary to facilitate it.

Douglas Downs & Elizabeth Wardle (2007) write in “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies’” that, in thinking about writing as a discipline, there are three noteworthy benefits for the students.

First, the students gain the true expertise of their instructors–assuming that the instructors experience material working conditions that allow them to grow rhetorical knowledge–
teaching about the content of “writing studies, writing instructors are concretely enabled to fill that expert reader role” (p. 159). This development reduces instructor mental labor levels as they do not have to stop grading as often to look up some of the finer points of the law of entropy or the sixth century Spanish architecture, or list of precedent bearing cases in the constitutional interpretation paper the student has chosen to pursue.

Second, in an equitable and sustainable environment of academic labor students have a better opportunity to “leave the course with increased awareness of writing studies as a discipline, as well as [with] a new outlook on writing as a researchable activity rather than a mysterious talent” (p. 560). Spending time on the content and theory of the processes of writing affords opportunities to watch theory connect with practice: a fine juncture for reflection, research and praxis revision for the students and the instructors if they have time to pursue that occasion.

And finally Downs and Wardle write that “respect” (p. 560) is given in a FYC program operating in a Writing About Writing (WAW) curriculum that goes far beyond praise but actually fosters self knowledge in the student writer. The respect for the discipline, modeled by the instructor, and the respect for the student-writer’s experiences as a full person translate into self-respect and high expectations for the student-writer. How much more does that self esteem rise when the instructor also receives the respect of the institution in which they teach? These are rewards that one may hope are worth the risks.

b. The Instructors.

Before 2008 UCF instructors endured a high level of contingency, a condition shared with other instructors across the discipline. From myriad commonly known sources, and from my own experience and conversations with other instructors, I can safely say that one of the risks
that instructors submit to when accepting work is the hope that there are avenues for advancement present in that workplace. Before 2008 at UCF these avenues for advancement were difficult to come by, as evidenced by the in a UCF Faculty Senate Resolution from 2009-2010: “Whereas, instructors and lecturers currently have no formal promotion stream at the university” (Promotion Stream for Instructors/Lecturers). Among other things, professional reputation, achieving fulfillment, and even the instructor’s livelihood all depend upon the ability to advance and grow in a career. The resolution shows, especially when considered with other resolutions mentioned later in this chapter, that the UCF Faculty Senate saw the risks such as this as barriers to recruiting and retaining the best possible candidates when hiring faculty. This step to create a schedule for advancement shows that the risk is real and that the Faculty Senate was aware of its predominance.

Other risks, like being overworked, faced by the instructors at UCF are noted in Wardle’s “Intractable Problems” (2013) when the author notes that “Often these courses are far larger than the class size suggested by NCTE, likely because of the high cost of lowering class size” (p. 2). This problem of class size is but one factor in the larger predicament but one that the instructors must face nonetheless. For instructors a choice must be made whether or not to accept a position with an expectation of teaching a course with 35 or more students that may or may not come with assistance in grading and commenting on the multiple drafts of the 4-5 essay length manuscripts that students are expected to produce in a term. For adjuncts this choice can mean accepting such a course out of financial necessity whereas for a NTTF this choice can include the additional considerations of expected teaching load. Class size multiplies or mitigates the work involved in a 4-4 teaching load. Teaching four courses per term with 17-19 students per section is a far different proposition than teaching four courses per term with 32 students per section. Assuming five and at least two drafts per paper, in terms of papers to examine the numbers come to 170 papers in the smaller class and 320
papers in the larger. Multiplying by four courses, this arrives at a difference of about 608 papers per term versus 1280 papers. What seems like an insignificant detail to the outsider can have a profound impact upon instructor engagement with individual students. The instructor risks much if the ratios are too high and the prospect of being overworked exists. At UCF, many pre-2008 instructors worked across institutions to make a full-time wage from several part-time appointments some teaching more than 4 classes with the higher enrollment caps (Wardle, Intractable Problems, 2013, pp. 2-3).

Another risk taken by the instructors at UCF was volunteering to accept change when Wardle brought in the WAW curriculum paradigm. Changing teaching practices is a great risk; to step outside of a known territory and exchange a comfort level one has with the classroom environment for unfamiliar practices was a real risk in hope of better rewards. The chance to grow in the professional practice, to learn more about rhetoric and writing, as Downs & Wardle (2007) point out, was necessary to the success of the new curriculum. They even name it the “elephant in the room” (p. 575). Wardle (2013) confirms this risk/reward exchange and implies that this is a two-way street with the recognition that the instructors need to pay back the program upon gaining a deeper level of knowledge of writing and rhetoric, and experiencing a significant improvement in their material working conditions by becoming increasingly engaged in their own curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices (p. 6). The instructors reaped the rewards of improved material conditions and increased knowledge, but beyond those rewards they also gained a sense of professional standing and accomplishment when the program placed elevated trust in them as professional educators rather than viewing them simply as labor.

c. The Writing Program.

Wardle & Roozen (2012) reaffirm the opportunity for faculty training in teaching, theory and assessment was not only a reward for the instructors but also stood as both risk and reward for the writing program at UCF when, in a footnote, they write “However, writing program
development is often impeded by the labor issues with which our field has long grappled, including both the reliance on contingent labor as well as the reliance on faculty with little or no training in the teaching of writing” (Addressing Assessment, p. 112). When programs place their trust in instructors, to accept the changes, and improve their teaching practices, this is the other end of that same risk “because labor is unstable,” (Wardle, 2013, p. 4). The choice presents itself to hire expensive composition experts or invest in the training and development of the temporary faculty already present. In this one choice financial risks, risk of failure, risk to reputation, and the risk of inciting revolt are all inherent. Yet within those risks come rewards in equal if not more abundant measure.

The rewards for a writing program come in many forms not the least of which provided the impetus for this project: the praise located in the Indianapolis Resolution article. Prominently displayed at the head of the right hand navigation pane on the Writing and Rhetoric departmental website (as seen in figure 4) was the heading “Winner of the 2012-13 CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence”. The mention of the UCF writing program as a success, not only in labor practices but also in pedagogical innovation and excellence, by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the largest professional organization in the field of English Studies, and its affiliate organization the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), is no small reward. The Writing and Rhetoric web page at UCF houses a YouTube video (Writer Story 2013 revised) which is, in large part, a programmatic assessment report delivered by the UCF President John Hitt. Hitt explains in the video that he is very proud of the UCF writing
program because in his experience as an administrator, which he states began in 1972, the UCF program is the best he has ever seen in terms of enabling competent writers. He goes on to explain that two key changes that were instrumental in that effort have been the lowering of class sizes and the replacement of temporary contingent instructors in FYC with full time lecturers. This narrative binds together the concerted efforts of: teaching practices, curriculum planning, professional development, and solid leadership. It then binds the success earned directly to the labor management practices necessary to enact these high quality teaching practices. When Hitt packages all of these factors, and more, as elements that produce the favorable results of graduates who are confident writers he heaps further praise upon the students, instructors, program department and university and indicates a significant level of cooperation that had to take place for the results to be realized.

\textit{d. The Department.}

In this case the situation has two sets of answers for I must discuss two departments: the original English Department in which the writing program rested, and the newly founded Writing and Rhetoric department. Wardle (2013) indicates that after the first year of the curriculum pilot “the decision was made to invest in these writing initiatives outside of English, in a new Department of Writing and Rhetoric that would also include undergraduate and graduate writing degrees” (2013, p. 10). Wardle indicates specifically in “Intractable Problems” that she could not “speak to the reasons why we [FYC] were moved out of English” (p. 10). She chose instead to focus her description on the material effects those changes in organization have wrought.

The effect for each department was far reaching for, as the Writing and Rhetoric Department came into existence, funded and staffed with full-time faculty members, the English Department became more streamlined. Creative Writing and Technical Writing are currently housed under the English Department among programs like Linguistics, Literature and interestingly a minor in Digital Humanities. The Writing and Rhetoric Department gathered the
FYC program and developed minors and majors in Writing and Rhetoric, and Certificates in Professional Writing. Close affiliations grew between the Writing and Rhetoric Department, the Writing Center and the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) programs that also saw tenured faculty hired into their director positions. The Writing & Rhetoric Department and the English Department would also maintain some shared programs as well.

Another text that mentions departmental risks and rewards is “Teaching About Writing: Righting misconceptions” (Downs & Wardle, 2007) in which the authors admit “Our pedagogy is demanding, confusing to students early on, does not allow for ‘perfect’ student work, and—most obviously—cannot be taught by someone not trained in writing studies” (p. 574). One reward in forming the new department was opening slots for writing and composition specialists to be hired, and grown through professional development, so that the program could contribute to the work of reinforcing the status of Writing as a field of study, complete with its own content and beginning to move away from the view of writing as a service to academia. This status is a long sought after reward. The risks to achieve something valuable often bring dangers that correspond to the value of the reward. In this case the department might have failed, bringing shame to the department, the university, the discipline. Even the hard work invested in the WAW pedagogy was risked in “a very loose pilot staffed by willing teachers who ‘figured it out’ as they went” (Wardle, Intractable Problems, 2013, p. 12). Wardle could have chosen not to trust “the smartest, most enthusiastic, most flexible people we could find, none of whom had rhet/comp degrees” (p. 15). This sort of risk expands in all directions and stands linked across stakeholders as does the reward the action produces.

e. The College Administration.

The risks and rewards at the College level may be more difficult to locate than some of the other stakeholders in the selected texts. Most of the texts for this project seem to place a
focus on the program level and a secondary emphasis is placed on the University as these are the
sites more frequently associated with labor decisions and policies. In the Faculty Hiring Guide
for UCF however, we can read, “The first step in faculty recruitment and hiring for E&G
positions is to obtain budget authorization from your area VP or college dean’s office” (Office of
Academic Affairs Administration, UCF, 2017). In this discovery it is easy to pinpoint one risk.
But are there more kinds of risk and reward than the typical financial ones for the college?

In an annual report to the College of Arts and Humanities (UCF Department of Writing
and Rhetoric, 2013) some of the rhetorical choices of what is included in the report could suggest
the values that the College and its Dean had made known. A few of these highlights include
changes that align with the revised curriculum, program quality and the effectiveness of
leadership. The report notes the Award bestowed upon the FYC Program by CCCC as the
“Highest honor a writing program can receive” (Annual Report Five Goals, p. 1). This
annotation is quickly followed by listing awards and honors that frame the Department Chair,
Elizabeth Wardle, as a sought after authority in the discipline of Composition (p. 2) and then the
other programs under her leadership as externally recognized, successful, endeavors that are all
aligned toward the same goals of strengthening the academics of the department with the goal of
student centered success in mind. These listings of programmatic and individual achievements
justify my inference that the College of Arts and Humanities values academic rigor, cooperation,
and success, both publicly and internally.

A benefit that the college can reap from the risks they have undertaken is the
establishment of a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. The WAC Program report
from a slightly later time frame characterizes the WAC program as successful and improving
when the director of the WAC program at UCF, Pavel Zemliansky, states, in his annual report for 2014-2015,

Building on the success of the WAC efforts since the 2011-2012 academic year, this year the WAC program continued to build new relationships with various units on campus while deepening and expanding existing projects with academic departments, programs, and colleges across the university. (Zemliansky, 2015)

The mission of any college includes the harmonization of its various activities and the College of Arts and Humanities at UCF has aims along those lines as evidenced by their tagline/motto. Displayed prominently on the college’s website are the words “Creativity. Culture. Collaboration” and the second strategic goal they list in their mission is to “[f]oster an environment that encourages cross-disciplinary collaborations and activity” (College of Arts and Humanities, UCF, 2017). A program that brings collaboration and connection throughout the constituent parts of the college is perfectly aligned with the college’s mission. The WAC program, considered an integral part of the writing program and of the Department of Writing and Rhetoric at UCF, works to promote a good public image for the college and university even as it helps to address the stakeholder complaint of great turning out graduates with poor writing skills, which President John Hitt vocalized in the YouTube video (UCF, 2013) noted earlier in the “a. The Student” section of this multifaceted question.

Another potential benefit for the college level organization is noted when in “Addressing the complexity of writing development: Toward an ecological model of assessment” Wardle & Roozen (2012) write:

The greatest benefit of a loosely coordinated ecological assessment is likely to come from talking with faculty and program directors from across the college or university and over
time building assessment efforts that are both coordinated and somewhat autonomous, allowing for various programs to share information but take agency and responsibility for the aspects of writing that most interest or concern them. (Wardle & Roozen, 2012, p. 115)

Earlier in this same passage the authors indicate that thinking about writing ecologically is not an easy model of assessment to implement. It requires a departure from thinking in a time honored way. Any departure from a path of proven success, even limited success, is a risk. A willingness to risk the accepted tradition of assessment present in a college in favor of some new way of thinking about writing assessment shows the high value that the college places on the potential reward that might be attained in that new paradigm shift. This new method of assessment of student writing required the college to provide the funding for the full time faculty positions that would be integral in executing the writing assessment plan, for contingent, and part time faculty, could not be expected to engage with such demands given their material conditions of academic labor. As noted previously the adjuncts and part timers are not deficient intellectually or professionally as a class of laborers, but rather, the obstruction that stood between them and the ability to faithfully execute the demands of the new curriculum and the assessment shift was largely the material conditions of labor they inhabited: larger class sizes, heavy course loads across institutions, very low pay and little to no benefits (Wardle, 2013, p. 4). This intricately woven set of stakeholder risks and rewards seems to be contingent upon these conditions.

f. The Union.

An interesting stakeholder group to be certain! The texts that were selected for this project didn’t really account for a deep inquiry into the risks and rewards for the union. This stakeholder group was added after the reading began to widen the list of stakeholders associated
with FYC. At UCF these risks and rewards could be clearly seen in a close reading of the collective bargaining agreement; however an analysis of that document is external to this text set and, as this project seeks to more completely assess the writing program labor practices in this text set, that document is beyond the scope of this project with one exception. It is necessary to note that contingent labor is not covered by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) whereas the titles of instructor, lecturer, and gradients of those titles are protected under the CBA.

It is not stated, within this text set, what influence, if any, the Union had in the creation of the more stable FTTT lecturer and instructor positions at UCF at this time. This may be an issue for further study. It is known however, that the United Faculty of Florida (UFF), like all unions in so called “Right-to-Work” states, gains its strength from solidarity and bargaining power hence the greater the membership the greater the bargaining power. With the UCF writing program’s conversion to more stable positions for the instructors the union gained potential members and risked representing a class of academic laborer that might come with additional complications when compared to the Professor ranks. As seen in the next section some of those were discovered and addressed while others remain in progress.

**g. The University.**

In the 2008-2009, a UCF Faculty Senate Resolution (Budget Management (revised)) the following line appears “Faculty Senate encourages the administration to make every effort to lower student faculty ratios”. This is an interesting change, which bears further inquiry, from the previous version which mentions the problem of reputation in a more precise but more flattering way. The previous version of the resolution (Buget Management (not approved)) reads, “Whereas, the University of Central Florida has one of the worst student faculty ratios in the
nation” (2008). UCF like all Universities have needs as well and chief among those needs is the need of the university to maintain a good public image and academic reputation. The focus on the perceived problem in need of remedy was not deemed acceptable for endorsement, but worded differently, with the focus on the positive steps toward solutions; the need was acknowledged and addressed and the new resolution ratified by the university.

h. The Community Partners.

The risks and rewards for the community partners might, at first glance, mirror those of some of the other stakeholder groups. While this is not an incorrect assumption the risks and rewards of this stakeholder group will vary among its constituent members. The group comprises entities such as programs and departments across the campus and professional associations and businesses off campus. The communities of Orlando or of Central Florida can even be considered a community partner. Naturally the concerns of such a category encompass an ocean of needs. UCF Writing program was able to engage this group on many fronts as listed in Elizabeth Wardle’s 2012-2013 Annual Report. That report lists partners that collected benefits and made contributions to the writing program. The Atkins Foundation for instance is listed as contributing $30,000 toward the university Writing Center and the WAC program to support STEM Writing (2013). Echoing the words of President Hitt (Writer Story 2013 revised) this contribution seems like a good-faith risk by the Atkins Foundation in response to the initiatives the program had recently begun. Many other partners were served in different ways like in the collaborations with Florida’s colleges that took on a new shape even as the UCF Writing Program redefined itself. Far reaching ripple effects also came with the Symposium for Florida’s educators at all levels that UCF offered under the new organizational plan. Many of these partnerships may not have been as effective, or in some cases even possible at all, with an
isolated writing program staffed by contingents who lacked the time, training, and initiative to engage in them.

\textit{i. The Employers.}

As mentioned earlier in section \textit{a-students}, UCF President John Hitt states in the video (2013) that the potential employers have a serious addressable need. They have different risks than other stakeholders that often present themselves in questions like: Should we hire this applicant from x college? And, Should we build in location X or location Y? Tied up in those considerations is the need for a pool of high quality labor and staffing. In choosing a geographic area in which to do business the risks of any employer are made manifest and many of these choices have already been made so in expressing their needs to the universities that train their future employees and leaders this stakeholder group is essentially looking for improvement in their situation broadly. With a constant reiteration of a desire for better writers the stakeholder risks little in addition to risks already ventured but stands to reap a great benefit if their requests are honored.

\textit{j. The State Government.}

In this case it must be noted that the state government, through policies and legislation played a role in shaping this context. While the risks and benefits for the state are deeply integrated in a larger ecology that includes economic, social, political, and many other concerns it should not be overlooked that the university, and FYC, contributes to and is affected greatly by the local, state, and federal governments. Wardle (2013) notes this in “Intractable Problems” by stating that “[b]ecause the State of Florida had created specific guidelines about how the money ("tuition differential") should be used (primarily for undergraduate education and advising), composition and algebra were natural sites for early innovation” (Wardle, Intractable Problems,
Thus the policy put in place by the State of Florida directed funding and attention into FYC matters. The intent of the lawmakers could be imagined in a number of ways but it is easier, and perhaps more useful, to note the effect these policies had on FYC at UCF. This is discussed in question 5 in greater detail. Here however, a general effort—one can assume with intent to raise the education level of the public and to increase the quality of the college education—also had the synergistic outcome of changing the material conditions of labor for those responsible for the education in question.

**Heuristic question 2.**

Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?

The perception of the Writing Program at UCF in 2008 was that of writing as a service to other disciplines. In the article “Teaching about Writing” Downs & Wardle (2007) note that “First-year composition (FYC) is usually asked to prepare students to write across the university” (p. 552). This view of Composition was present at UCF as indicated by Wardle (2013) in “Intractable Problems” when she wrote that the FYC program at UCF “had problems fairly endemic to most large programs, including a large number of adjunct instructors, large class sizes, and no recent incarnation of a professional development program for teachers” (p. 10). These are the symptoms of a low status view of writing.

This sort of low status view of Composition is linked to very dubious ideas about what writing is. Many, instructors and professors alike, continue to function, often out of a perceived necessity, in writing programs that hold this view of writing as some sort of inoculation against bad grammar, or even as a torturous rite of passage for freshman, and “[w]e are, thus, complicit in reinforcing outsiders’ views of writing studies as a trivial, skill-teaching nondiscipline”
UCF’s FYC program had, for any number of reasons, become entrenched, as many programs do, in accepting that outsider view of Composition as a service rather than a discipline with a tradition and its own body of knowledge.

Wardle & Roozen (2012) however brought the concept of an ecological model for writing to the table. They cite a good deal of the body of composition research including Fleckenstein, Spinuzzi, Rickly, & Papper (2008) and their article “The Importance of Harmony: An Ecological Metaphor for Writing Research” for the terminology used to describe a deeper view of what writing could, and ought, to be.

It was obvious however that the current view of FYC’s status was a major barrier to enacting a vertical writing program with deeper assessments as the low status view had contributed to the insurmountable tangle problems with the material working conditions of the teachers who would be needed to enact the overhaul. A skimming of “Intractable Problems” tells the reader that,

composition had not been a priority[…] The Writing Program employed eighty teachers each semester to teach around 140 sections […] capped at 27 students […] approximately 15% permanent, non-tenure-line instructors; 19% visiting instructors […] 19% graduate student instructors […] and 47% adjunct instructors. (Wardle, 2013, p. 10).

This link between material conditions for the instructors of composition and the status that Composition holds in a given context contribute greatly toward one another.

The fact that more than half of the instructors of composition at UCF were contingent in 2008, and not afforded the protections of the collective bargaining agreement that protected the permanent in-unit faculty, also lends substance to a low status view of Composition. The very
language in the Adjunct Hiring Guide serves to distance a contingent faculty member from the unit in which they serve with such statements as, “Position numbers are not assigned to these types of appointments as they are considered OPS (Other Personnel Services)” (Office of Academic Affairs Administration, 2011, p. 3). Despite other improvements for the Writing program this language remains in the 2017 edition.

The regular Faculty Hiring Guide and the Adjunct Hiring Guide also make clear who is valued and who is not by indicating that the hiring of a Faculty member requires a formal search and college level budget approval (Faculty Hiring Guide, p. 4) while hiring an adjunct is the decision of the department designee (Adjunct Hiring Guide, p. 4). While understandably this is due to the financial commitments involved, the possibility exists that the status this difference highlights may echo the low status view of a discipline staffed largely by contingent faculty.

**Heuristic question 3.**

Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?

Again it must be noted that there was a watershed moment in the UCF writing program context that could be pinpointed and affixed to a number of moments in time. The impetus for the change is harder to pin down, probably because it was a collective effort. While it is important to see that the hiring of Elizabeth Wardle, the decision to hire a new WPA, the development of President Hitt’s strategic plan, the development of the vertical model of writing program curricula, and the ecological view of assessment are all contributors to this change, I am more interested to see, in this text set, the material conditions for instructors before the sea change and after. In this evidence one can see, not causality but rather the ordered process steps toward success for UCF and determine if the attitudes toward academic labor were reflected in
the before and after material conditions. Here I identify this textual evidence and prepare for the
discussion and interpretation of the next chapter of this manuscript.

The concerns are viewed as entrenched and contributing to a systematic problem in
“Intractable Problems” as seen when Wardle (2013) writes “How can we work against
entrenched labor practices and material conditions in order to make changes?” (p. 5). This
statement seems anticipatory but the question was asked in 2013 after having seen the inherited
conditions of UCF’s FYC program since taking the leadership post in 2008. This fair question
notes that the material conditions encountered were not considered part of the recipe for success
before Wardle’s arrival, or if it was among those factors, no way forward could be located or
enacted to bring change to the entrenched practices. If this sentence was not enough to situate the
material conditions of labor in 2008 at UCF as a barrier to the writing program’s success other
passages in the same profile article, some already cited in this project, also bear this out. Wardle
(2013) indicates that the previous coordinators of the FYC program were unable to devote the
time they wanted to devote to accomplish the real work of Composition because of the many
“crises that arise when so many people are teaching a course for so little compensation and with
no guarantee of future employment” (p. 11). Both conditions are among the highest number of
complaints a contingent faculty member has and here they are named as well as problematic for
the FYC leadership for their tendency to reduce effectiveness in the program as a whole.

These material conditions of labor are also noted in Downs & Wardle (2007) as well
when they acknowledge this labor-practices-elephant-in-the-room. They write that “Our field’s
current labor practices reinforce cultural misconceptions that anyone can teach writing because
there is nothing special to know about it” (p. 575). The education necessary to carry out a
curriculum based on up to date research in the field is predicated on the classroom instruction
having the time and opportunity to keep up on that research or to be instructed in it with professional development. Additionally, in a footnote from Wardle & Roozen (2012), it is explicitly stated that FYC “program development is often impeded by the labor issues with which our field has long grappled, including both the reliance on contingent labor as well as the reliance on faculty with little or no training in the teaching of writing” (p. 112). Not a simple problem to address.

These current academic labor practices, relying heavily on untrained rhetorically, contingent labor, were present at UCF in 2008 as indicated in “Intractable Problems” when Wardle (2013) writes of the changes necessary for the success of implementing the vertical writing program, “large groups of adjuncts can't be hired at the last minute and treated as expendable; rather, potential teachers must have some training (whether formal or informal) in rhetoric and composition” (p. 8).

After the sea change, the 2012 award for excellence from CCCC endorsed the changes in labor from contingent to professionalized permanent instructors as an effective step in developing a more successful writing program. President Hitt’s assessment of the success of the UCF writing program named the transition away from contingency as a major factor in the success of the program as well (UCF, 2013). Wardle’s (Intractable Problems, 2013) closing statements looking back on the successes can certainly be seen as a rhetorically dexterous assessment concerning labor and hegemony as well:

At UCF we have learned that when we can find ways to inform micro-level classroom practices with this macro-level disciplinary knowledge, we can change the structures that have for so long controlled us and our programs to the detriment of our students and teachers. (p. 29)
Heuristic question 4.

Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?

An obvious place to start here would be the example of a faculty senate document and its revision. The first version (Budget Management (not approved)) was proposed and passed but was not signed by the Provost because of the focus of the argument it made. The second item in the text in question reads: “Whereas, the University of Central Florida has one of the worst student faculty ratios in the nation” (2008). Included in the document is the note from the Provost Hickey in response which reads: “I agree that faculty and advisors are critical to the mission of the university, but I am unclear on the intent of this resolution” (Budget Management (not approved), 2008). Hickey offered to meet with the framers of the document to try to determine what the document was intended to do.

The language, which focuses on the negative, seems to paint the university in a poor position and perhaps even level accusations at the administration, while the writers may have only intended to focus on what they saw as a real and present problem. Upper administration, whose job it is to present the university to the public eye in the best possible light, would naturally become alarmed at such language. The resolution was revised, passed and signed relatively quickly once the passage was moved to later in the document and rewritten as:

Be it resolved that the University of Central Florida Faculty Senate encourages the administration to make every effort to lower student faculty ratios at the University of Central Florida, and to resist any external effort that may cause the student faculty ratios to increase. (Budget Management (revised), 2008)
This language emphasized the problems of class size and student to faculty ratio by moving it to the resolved section rather than listing it as a problem in the whereas factors. It allowed the administration and faculty to present a unified position without the implication of failure.

A researcher couldn’t hope to be more fortunate in finding such a rich description of the events they are studying than I am in Elizabeth Wardle’s “Intractable Problems”. As she petitions for further changes in the writing program Wardle (2013) makes the argument to her administration that “began by focusing broadly on the composition course itself -- what it is, why it exists, and why it is not sufficient to meet the needs of students” (Intractable Problems, p. 10). She educated her audience and then tied that statement back to the stakeholders; their primary concerns in the issue. Following this, Wardle writes, “I noted, the model had started to change at UCF, thanks to the president's funding, which enabled the work of our new instructors and led to the results of our portfolio assessment” (p. 10). In that line of reasoning Wardle went on to say,

I argued that the key to meaningful change in writing instruction, based on early results, seemed to be smaller class sizes, plus new curriculum, plus well trained and supported teachers. However, these changes, while important, would not be sufficient because one or two writing courses will never be enough to show measurable change in student writing. (2013, p. 10)

This element of the argument focus, and the subsequent proposed solution, will be discussed further in the next chapter but, for now, it is simply good to note that this argument also focused on the solution toward achieving a goal for the university stakeholders in a way that provided evidence of student success. The typical moral argument about contingent labor is not overtly mentioned; in fact, the labors themselves were not a focus of the argument. Instead the successes of teaching and learning took center stage, accented by empirical results.
Downs & Wardle (2007) formulated the essence of the structure the UCF writing program would embody with an argument made to the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric. They wrote:

Part of our purpose here is to insist on the deep disciplinary implications of FYC pedagogy; a pedagogical move whose intention is to help resituate an entire field within the academy demonstrates that pedagogy has impact beyond the daily teaching to-do list.

The focus of this argument was that the time had come to use Rhetoric and Composition’s disciplinary body of knowledge to improve on the tradition of the one-to-two course set that FYC had become. Wardle (2013) argued that “composition courses can only serve as entry points to writing in the university and the larger world and cannot serve as inoculations” against bad writing as it had been misunderstood to be by outsiders for over a century (p. 4). The view of FYC as a service to the other disciplines was being challenged in this argument. Plainly, Wardle said that what the university was doing, even with the piloted improvements would never be enough to achieve the results that the stakeholders were looking for, so it was time to try something new.

The argument that was made to the instructors of the UCF writing program was, in a sense, begun by Wardle when she called for volunteers to begin implementing the new curriculum but it was carried forward by the volunteers as they made an argument by demonstration and example. Of their argument by example Wardle writes:

These teachers read extensively, tried new things, critiqued their own practices, and took suggestions willingly. They laid bare their teaching practices for the possibility of structural improvement, and their willingness to do so can also (like the Dean of Undergraduate Studies’ advocacy) not be overestimated. Had they been less flexible, less open, or less willing to change practices, our experiment could have ended as quickly as it began. (Wardle, 2013, p. 8)
This argument made with action, intellect, and transparency served, by Wardle’s own appraisal, a vital role in bringing change to the material conditions of the writing program as they demonstrated what it meant to be dedicated teacher scholars capable of teaching rhetoric and composition concepts in a professionalized way that brought improved writing for the students.

Heuristic question 5.

How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?

This idea of kairos is overtly discussed in one of the documents in the UCF text set. In fact, having read the “Intractable Problems” profile piece before embarking upon this project I suspect that this question, in part, arose from that document. Elizabeth Wardle writes:

At UCF we encountered and were able to take advantage of a kairotic moment to use a writing-about-writing approach to address the set of problems I outlined earlier. Our experience demonstrates how a programmatic writing-about-writing approach with timed implementation and training improved professionalization, informed micro-level classrooms with macro-level disciplinary knowledge, and, through both of these, improved student outcomes. (Intractable Problems, 2013, p. 6)

The kairotic moment of which Wardle wrote is specifically described and documented in other documents in the text set as well. Many of the alignments without which the transformation of labor practices in the FYC program at UCF would not have been possible can be spotted in the moves of the Faculty Senate.

It can be seen that in contributing to the culture of change the Faculty Senate sought in subsequent years to also make changes to the positions of the instructors across the university. First in 2007-08 a motion was made to “make every effort to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty and staff at the University of Central Florida” (Buget Management (not approved), 2008). Although ratified by the senate, because of a number of factors including the
wording of the resolution the motion was not signed by the Provost. The Senate refocused the wording to be more positive and the resolution was passed and signed (Budget Management (revised), 2008). This measure passed in the same moment as Elizabeth Wardle was assessing the situation that the UCF Writing Program was in. The need for high quality faculty could be met in two ways; hiring internally and externally full time Instructors that could dedicate time to revise syllabi, implement new teaching methods, and participate in professional development. This senate action amounts to one of many moving targets that had to align for the effective transformation of the Writing program to even begin.

In concert with President Hitt’s Five Goals initiative came a “new tuition increase [which] provided some resources with which to innovate” (Wardle, 2013, p. 6). The increase was also mentioned in the Faculty Senate Resolutions along with a suggestion that UCF “make every effort to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty and staff at the University of Central Florida through, amongst other things, the use of future funds obtained from increases in tuition and differential tuition” (Budget Management (revised), 2008). The same language exited in previous versions of the resolution. The Senate’s earmarking of the funds made those finds accessible to the President for improving the quality of instruction at UCF. The President was positioned and disposed to give Wardle the FTNTT instructors who had the time and dedication to enact the WAW program and transform what was for students an obligatory two-course sequence into an introduction to the vibrant field of study that is Rhetoric and Composition.

Data Set 2b- Syracuse University.

Introduction to the context.

In the search for the paths to success within these writing programs I must include this disclaimer offered by Phelps (1995):
Success and failure are highly relative judgments made from different perspectives on the same event, both in comparing intention to outcome and in judging the ideal itself as appropriate; the contrast is especially sharp between the sweeping perspective of central planners and the ethos created by the ways that program life is particularized and read in corridors, basements, classrooms and offices, constantly diffusing images outward over student and faculty networks. (Becoming A Warrior, p. 301)

The writing program at Syracuse University is difficult to summarize and therefore the university itself is also resistant to description. This difficulty in describing the institution and the program is that the transformation of this context is not nearly as tightly focused as the programs or institutions at UCF and Denver. The transformation of the Syracuse writing program took about three decades to arrive at their current ecology of academic labor. For confirmation of this point the reader need only note the variation in the titles held by the FTNTT faculty later in this chapter. I shall here give a summary of the characteristics that Syracuse currently displays pulled from the Syracuse website (Syracuse University, 2018) with additions of conditions from the past as they are available.

- **Institution**
  - Syracuse is a private university which calls itself “Proudly Selective”
  - SU is “a university with the capacity to attract and engage the best scholars from around the world” (SU mission statement)
  - Noteworthy in its absence is any mention of *value, savings, or low cost*
  - In 2015 SU moved from “R2” to “R1” status indicating the highest research activity class in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education
  - In 2017 the SU endowment fund was listed at $1.2 Billion
  - over 15,000 undergraduate students and
    - 22,000 students overall
  - 60% of Syracuse University’s undergraduate classes have fewer than 20 students
    - Student to Faculty ratio university wide is approx. 15:1
    - Composition sections are capped at 22 students: oddly the cap in 1995 was 20 (Davies, Lightning in a Bottle, 2012)
- Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition houses the writing program (in 1986 the program was extracted from the department of English and placed as an “independent writing program”. The new department was formed some time later before the launch of the Ph.D. in 1997. The Minor was added in 2004 and the major in 2009).
- WPA Structure is typically one Director, and one or two assistants
- In 1987 when Louise Wetherbee Phelps took the role of WPA there were “approximately 100 non-tenure-track, part-time instructors and teaching assistants who worked in the independent Syracuse Writing Program” (Davies, Not Just Teachers, 2017).
- Present Day (2017) The Department of Rhetoric, Writing and Composition faculty not including administrators has the following composition;
  - 46% permanent, non-tenure-line full time-instructors
  - 41% graduate student instructors (mostly MA students)
  - 13% tenure-line faculty (Suracuse University, 2018)
- Program Curricular Content
  - Two-course Introductory writing course sequence
  - One upper-division writing intensive course (Syracuse University, 2018)

Louise Wetherbee Phelps (1995) considered the risks and rewards in the Syracuse University writing program’s systems of academic labor when she writes, “The chancellor greeted me warmly at the door during his party to welcome new faculty. He shook my hand enthusiastically: I understand that you’re the one who is going to guarantee that every graduate of this university is literate” (p. 296). Perhaps to the 2017 audience this attitude seems antiquated: the idea that one or two classes can magically inoculate students against poor writing or transform them into good readers and writers. This was a more common attitude in 1986 and there is a layered wall of assumption in the statement the chancellor made, in that he assumes that students are not literate when they come to college, that one person can guarantee such an outcome, that a one size fits all curriculum exists for this purpose, that writing programs exist to serve a skill-building function that serves the university and the students, and many more which I
will discuss more fully in the next chapter. In this section I work to identify passages in the Syracuse text set that hold responses to the heuristic questions produced in Data Set 1.

**Heuristic question 1.**

What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?

This section discusses the following stakeholders associated with the writing program at Syracuse University: the students, the instructors, the writing program, the department, the college administration, the union, the university, community partners, and employers.

*a. The Students.*

Laura Davies (2017) cites the risks for students in programs with imbalanced labor practices as having “considerable consequences for both the students taught in the independent writing program as well as the professional careers of the program’s tenure-track faculty and full-time administrators” (Not Just Teachers, p. 214). Davies does this in a way that suggests that this should be common knowledge by now, citing no less than five sources for her assertion. Davies also notes a semi hidden reward for the students after the switchover of curricula was opportunity. Davies lists the task of Louise Phelps as the new WPA at Syracuse was to “transform the antiquated Freshman English curriculum into a four-year vertical writing curriculum” (p. 220). This vertical curriculum move expanded the requirements for students at Syracuse but it also expanded the options available to them especially if their interests lay along the lines of writing; and that interest, as Davies articulates in her summary of the Gates Report, “extends beyond the jurisdiction of the English Department” (p. 219). While this new reward was presented to the students they had to risk attending a college that just increased its writing requirement from two courses to four. For many students this had to be a risk that increased their
chance to fail if they weren’t confident writers. Ultimately, Davies (2017) writes, “The choice to include part-time teachers in the heart of the new writing program created a dynamic teaching community that positively influenced the program’s other faculty and students” (p. 239). The students gained from the experience of working with more experienced and capable faculty.

b. The Instructors.

“In its first full academic year, 1986–1987, the Syracuse Writing Program had three full-time faculty (Phelps, Lipson, and Himley) and 86 part-time instructors who were teaching between one and three sections of first-year writing each semester” (Davies, Not Just Teachers, 2017, p. 220). In addition to these there were a dozen or so of graduate teaching assistants as well. Davies (2017) also lists an investment that instructors made in the form of time and intellectual effort to participate in coordinating groups. The instructors had to enter and operate in some rather uncomfortable spaces as they were faced with collectively making a new curriculum that used the Composition theories provided by Phelps and other Writing Program faculty and integrating it into what they knew about teaching. This was no small change for a group described as trained mostly in literature studies (Davies, Not Just Teachers, 2017).

“Much of the coordinating groups’ activities were grounded in the reading and discussion of current composition theory, and so the coordinating groups served as important sites for the part-time instructors’ and teaching assistants’ own individual professional development” (Not Just Teachers, p. 223). However, the instructors who became quasi-administrators risked even more. Disclosing the status of these precarious faculty members, Davies goes on to say,

The coordinators, who were called upon to help the new program write and solidify the new curriculum as well as mentor and evaluate their peers, were also vulnerable from an
institutional perspective: though the coordinators were highly valued within the Syracuse Writing Program, they still, on paper, were easily disposable contingent faculty. (p. 228)

So, along with the benefit of status at Syracuse also came the responsibility of maintaining that status and increasing that knowledge. This begs a question for this researcher, which will come up again in greater depth in the next chapter: if the requirements of participation in service and scholarship, and pedagogy are all present for an NTT faculty member, just as they are present for Tenured and TT faculty, why should we maintain such a gulf between the two classifications?

Phelps (1995) seems slightly remorseful when she writes, “In treating teachers as moral agents – adults – and providing opportunities for curricular control and leadership, I exposed them, perhaps involuntarily, to new risks and pressures while possibly exploiting their capabilities and energy without adequate reward” (Becoming A Warrior, p. 313). Phelps confides in the reader that while the abuse of authority is indeed detestable, the authority of leadership itself is necessary to enact and maintain a writing program.

c. The Writing Program.

Davies (2017) states very straightforwardly in “Not Just Teachers” the essence of the Syracuse success. “The Syracuse Writing Program thrived because it had its own space” (p. 220). There were definite risks involved in occupying that space, out there on the edge, “not quite an independent department, but also not controlled by the larger English Department” (p. 219). The program could conceivably have become worse off if the instructors would have allowed the “homeless” label to pervade their practices and classrooms. The rewards for that risk involved autonomy and the concerted attention of an administrator who was focused on writing rather than an administrator who had to deal with the wider palate of concerns that departments face.
Davies (2017) also cites a Phelps 1987 memo which discusses another source of risk the program engaged when she writes, “The Syracuse Writing Program’s investment in the coordinator position was substantial: it dedicated a large portion of its budget (over $44,000) to fund the administrative coordinating sections” (p. 224). Davies later explains that this risk of “creating administrative positions like the coordinator role for the instructors was one way the Writing Program’s faculty directors advocated, in labor terms, for the instructors” (p. 230).

“Agency does not imply absolute power or freedom to do anything you please” writes Phelps in “Becoming a Warrior”, explaining that freedom and obligation are a matched set. In explaining that one is impossible to have without the other Phelps continues, “I discovered, there is a ratio between power and discipline: the greater your authority, the more visible and multiple the disciplines (rules, orders, structures) you must both accept for yourself and impose on others” (1995, p. 311). As head of the activity of FYC at Syracuse Phelps crystallizes the programmatic dichotomy that the rewards of autonomy, freedom, and independence come saddled with an equal portion of responsibility, limitations and internalized reliance.

d. The Department.

There are two ways the departmental organizational level here must be considered since the writing program was separated from its place in the organizational chain of command under the English Department in 1986. One could consider the Writing Program as one would normally consider a department because according to Davies (2017), Dr. Phelps “led the program as if it were an independent academic department, even it was not officially recognized as such by Syracuse University until years later” (Not Just Teachers, p. 219). Davies also notes that “through a series of strategic administrative moves, the Syracuse Writing Program evolved slowly into establishing itself as a stand-alone, vertical writing department” (p. 217). This
implies a more civil separation from the English Department when compared to other writing programs. While that point is debatable it largely begs for the assignment of blame; and while this project does have a forensic element, a frequent epideictic end to judicial exposition, the purpose of this project is hopefully more deliberative, seeking to understand what happened with an eye toward planning the future. Therefore dwelling on the assignment of blame, as a result of this history, is outside the scope of this project.

If one chooses to think of the Writing Program as a department, as is common when discussing independent writing programs (Phelps, 2017), then the writing program must be considered as *English Department* in this context as a stakeholder. More on this seeming paradox of independent writing programs takes place in chapter 4 of this project.

If one chooses to see the English department in this stakeholder position there are different risks and rewards to locate. The tenured faculty in the English Department “actively resisted greater agency for contingent faculty who primarily taught composition courses, arguing that increasing the voice of contingent faculty would threaten the authority of tenure-track faculty” (Davies, *Not Just Teachers*, 2017, p. 231). So, on the one side there was a program of professionalization taking place at the program level and, on the other, resistance to the program’s movement away from the department. Both forces had a definite impact on the success of the Writing Program at Syracuse.

Even 30 years later, Phelps’ experiences at Syracuse still prompt her to ask, “What makes different elements cohere sufficiently to call them a campus (or intercampus) writing ‘program’? What distinguishes a writing ‘program’ from a writing ‘department’? And what are the criteria for ‘independence’?” (Phelps, 2017, p. 321). These are salient territories of inquiry; ever emerging, never complete, and thankfully so. Inculcation of authority is often the beginning of
the end for academic pursuits as it is inevitably eventually followed stagnation and disciplinary death unless infused with new ideas.

e. The College Administration

The Syracuse Writing Program slowly left the English Department as it developed its own vertical curricula. In granting this realignment of resources the program risked becoming spread too thin as it took on other interests and tasks. The college shared in those risks as it had to rework its funding model and then trust that the program could maintain its successes while strengthening the offerings of the college. Even before the writing program accepted the designation of department in name it demonstrated the marks of the organizational position. Davies (2017) indicates that there was a bit of a trade off in focus for the department when she writes:

Instead of focusing a large part of their effort on teacher development and evaluation, including investing time and money on administrative roles for instructors like the coordinator position, the Writing Program’s faculty and administration were pulled in many directions, needing to construct courses, curricula, internships, and service opportunities suited for their own undergraduate major and graduate students. (p. 236).

f. The Union.

The “part-time faculty at Syracuse University unionized in 2008” (Davies, 2017, p. 229). The subsequently effect on the program was that “the union changed the Writing Program’s administrative structure” (p. 237). Unlike previous changes that moved administrative positions around or reduced the number of coordinators, this change removed the coordinating group structure completely and changed the culture of professionalization. The necessity to remove the contracted requirement of professional development, in favor of a recommendation for
professional development, among the writing program faculty resulted in “the loss of regular
time for teachers to come together and talk about their teaching” (p. 237). In their bid to
represent the part time faculty well the union many have inadvertently removed one of the
Writing Program’s greatest assets: guaranteed time and space for professional development of its
faculty.

g. The University.

From the perspective of the WPA the University holds the keys to the sustainability and
equity of academic labor in most writing programs. Davies (2017) writes that:

At some stand-alone writing programs [. . .] only one or two full-time faculty or
administrators oversee a large number of fellows, lecturers, or instructors who teach the
vast majority of required writing courses. This demographic imbalance within
independent writing programs is often a consequence of the politics of university
budgets, as required writing and other introductory courses have been staffed historically
by relatively cheap contingent faculty. (p. 213)

The risk for the university to change and grow is not a small risk but the rewards can be
tremendous. To risk greater monetary resources in the service of a component that seems to be,
from many vantage points, functioning adequately can seem like a recipe for folly. The rewards
for looking under the surface however would include a true diagnosis of the system of academic
labor. “In 1984, the Syracuse University Faculty Senate [...] commissioned a study and
evaluation of both the writing and mathematics instruction at Syracuse University” (Davies, Not
Just Teachers, 2017, p. 218). Detailed in Davies’ chapter, the Gates Report was a product of a
faculty senate organized committee and an independent study of the writing program conducted
in part by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). The report made definitive
suggestions and the university allowed for the reorganization of the command structure that would have the Writing Program report to the “Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs” (p. 219). They listened to the report’s suggestions at the university level and expanded the writing program to a four course sequence, and asked the director to report to the Dean of Arts and Sciences but the university stopped short of another of the Gates Report’s suggestions. According to the direct quote Davies (p. 218) provides from that report, the suggestion explains that “Syracuse University ‘cannot, either morally or intellectually, defend building such an ambitious program on the backs of grossly underpaid part-timers,’” acknowledging that the part-time writing instructors will be responsible for the majority of the writing instruction” (Not Just Teachers, 2017, p. 218). The idea that the university was willing to allow others to take risks while remaining secure in their relative safety is not without merit. Like a person testing the ice on a frozen lake, the long, slow, often torturous, soft-stepping of the university simply delayed the inevitable. As of this research the “department has finally won fulltime salaried positions for these professionalized teachers after 29 years of pressing for them, requiring a policy change affecting the whole institution” (Phelps, 2017, p. 343).

h. The Community Partners.

The community may experience a deficiency of affordances if located near a writing program that cannot engage the community. The benefits of such engagement are widely documented (see CCCC Statement on Community-Engaged Projects) but if potential partners are deprived of the opportunity to risk engagement, because the writing program does not value the practice, they suffer without the choice to risk. Phelps (2017) discusses the tendency for academics to follow social norms as an inhibitor of projects that engage community partners. One main reason Phelps discusses is exemplified by the duplicitous treatment if norms
embedded in this specific case: “In the case of labor, relying on a mix of constituencies for staffing instruction in English-dependent writing programs violates the academic norm of a tenure-track faculty with doctoral training in the discipline” (Between Smoke and Crystal, p. 328). Having seen this in her own program, and in the programs of other universities, Phelps implies that the risk of community engagement is similar to the risk of mixed status labor forces. When teaching and engaged scholarship are considered less valuable for tenure and promotion, the trend for those on the tenure track is to eschew both in favor of research and a more traditional form of scholarship. This vacancy in teaching at the undergrad level adds to the growing pool of reasons that writing programs like Syracuse, focused on teaching and service, have come to rely on contingent labor.

\( i. \text{ The Employers.} \)

This text set as constructed hasn’t yielded much information about the relationship of the writing program and the employers that seek college educated employees who can write well. With Syracuse serving a different student population base than a state university such as UCF serves, it isn’t as easy to locate this stakeholder in the literature. The orientation toward the employers that the students will seek after graduation is less localized and decidedly more global in focus. The SU About Us page places the university’s vision as focused on leadership, entrepreneurship, and scholarly pursuits.

\( \text{Heuristic question 2.} \)

Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?

Davies (2017) writes about the beginning of the writing program and the results of a professional assessment that was conducted in 1985:
In their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the writing curriculum at Syracuse, McQuade and Slevin lambast the English Department and university administration for its negligence of the Freshman English program—for having no professional, intellectual, or collegial contact with the non-tenure-track, part-time instructors who taught in the program—and for its ignorance of contemporary composition theory and pedagogy. (Not Just Teachers, p. 218)

This passage shows that through research into the history of the writing program it was revealed that, in the professional opinion of two preeminent Rhetoric and Writing scholars, the Syracuse administration did not look upon the writing program as an area of investigation, a professional practice, nor as a valuable activity. It was a space of de-professionalized activity. By extension then, the English department, in those days, also did not count the professionals who taught and guided that writing program among their peers. These conditions stand in stark contrast to the culture present in the program after 1986 and the arrival of Louise Wetherbee Phelps as the first Writing Program Director at Syracuse. Davies (2017) notes the changes that came with the hiring of Phelps and the recommendations of the Gates Report—which recognized the peer status of the composition instructors—when she writes:

From the beginning, Phelps, Lipson, and Himley resisted creating a top-down, rigid writing curriculum. Instead, they made a conscientious decision to draw on the pedagogical experience of the teachers, who were familiar with the institutional context and the students at Syracuse University. (Not Just Teachers, p. 220)

The new culture seemed to recognize the status of the instructors as valued professionals even if it couldn’t immediately address the other material conditions of labor present at Syracuse in 1986. Davies suggests further that the culture was not simply changed but it was built upon
“Phelps’ understanding of the composing process and her commitment to the professionalism and expertise of the teacher-practitioner” (2017, p. 221). This reaffirms that the changes were not simply structural but also founded in a shift in status for the instructors.

Phelps (2017) also quotes another author in the 2017 Minefield collection, Bill Lalicker, and agrees with his assessment that a vital concern of Rhetoric and Composition is teaching. As a teaching oriented discipline, Rhetoric and Composition would naturally find abrasive traditional academe’s propensity toward the “valorization of research and the relative disrespect for teaching as a central academic priority” (2017, p. 330). This valorization creates limitations and causes problems for many people in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. Evidence can be seen of this limiting action in the Syracuse Senate Academic Affairs Committee report of November 9, 2005. In the report the committee discusses problems of treating FTNTTF as TT faculty when a faculty member converts from non-tenure onto a tenure line.

First, the credentials needed for a successful tenure review at SU may not be compatible with the professional expectations for these faculty in their prior positions. Second, the two groups are treated potentially quite differently; those from SU must credit their years here toward their tenure clock while those from other institutions have the choice of crediting those years or not. (2005, p. 2)

Embedded in the argument for treating faculty equally, no matter whether they come from a NTT role at SU or from a similar role external to SU, is a hidden commentary on the state of the non-tenured as teacher and the tenured as researching scholar. While it may be necessary to handle the ratio of TT faculty and FTNTT faculty differently from context to context, this apparent inequity in responsibility is also mirrored by inequity in job security, salary, and status. To be clear, in this context of Syracuse I am talking about a program that has met with marked success
in the area of material conditions of labor and equitable treatment of composition instructors, and yet the evidence shows that the problem of inequality resides in a system beyond the program level of the organization and runs much deeper than merely money.

**Heuristic question 3.**

Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?

1986 marks the beginning of the independent writing program era at Syracuse. The very fact that the program was separated from its institutional home in an English Department that held a low status view of the composition instructors, and the writing courses that they taught, shows that some in the university have counted labor conditions as part of what counts as success and some have not. Those in the university who did believe that the program had real value helped relocate the program to a new institutional space but even this move, seemingly forward, further complicated the labor situation in Syracuse.

After the separation from the English Department, even as some of the material conditions of labor began to improve—like the status of Composition, the engagement with the work as a site of inquiry, and professionalization for the writing instructors—the moral weight of began to shift to the shoulder of the WPA and the program assistants. Deeply related to the effort and expertise with which the instructors imbued their practices was the compensation to which they felt entitled. Davies (2017) cites a letter to Phelps written by some of the instructors in December of 1986 that expressed in no uncertain terms that the instructors were “expecting forthcoming assurance that, as Part-Time Instructors, most of whom are already serving the University beyond the provisions of our contracts, we will receive appropriate recognition and compensation for this investment of our professional time and effort” (p. 224). Clearly the
instructors felt stretched but, in examining the request closely, I also note that they had already performed the requested tasks and engaged in the processes that Phelps had asked of them. They had felt the change between what Phelps expected as the practice of Composition and the practice in which they had been engaging in previous years- years in which the previous landlords had voiced no displeasure at the instructors’ performance. This inconsistency denotes a clear difference in how a compositionist saw the discipline from the inside and how the discipline was seen from a distance. Remembering the contents of the Gates report in conjunction with these other data provokes more questions than it answers. Some of them are addressed in chapter 4 but here there are more data to gather from the long history of transition that is the Syracuse Writing Program.

A new system of distributed authority also factored into the improvements in the material conditions of labor, some of those conditions being professional and social in nature. To support the distributed administrative system there were some creative bookkeeping practices involved in the early years of the program. Davies (2017) states that, “Phelps, Lipson, and Himley singled out certain teachers to serve in the newly-created coordinator position” (p. 222). Sections were filled to the maximum counts and empty sections were created to allow course releases to provide for professional development, and to fund the coordinator positions (Phelps, 1995). Phelps writes that the privileges of joining the faculty community through gaining status, rank, and the ability to conduct inquiry carry an irony that they “can amount to exploitation if they become a condition of employment” for contingent faculty (p. 312). The push became to transform the contingent faculty into a FTNTT faculty that could be leveraged “to develop a more traditional disciplinary identity through the vertical curriculum” and its majors, minors and graduate offerings (Phelps, 2017, p. 312).
After many years of requesting funding for FTNTT positions the program encountered a new complication when adjunct professors applied for, and converted to, FTNTT positions. By extension, FTNTT professors subsequently converting to tenure track professorships when possible and practical caused a problem with tenure review in that “the two groups [external hires and internal hires] are treated potentially quite differently” (Academic Affairs Committee of the University Senate, 2005, p. 2). This proposal, among other things, attempts to afford the newly converted tenure track professor the best timing possible for their tenure review. This Academic Affairs Committee report would indicate that labor practices do matter to the University and its faculty senate. The Academic Affairs Committee, once chaired by Phelps, represents this concern and recognizes the concern that matters concerning pay, tenure, promotion are a form of labor in and of themselves for the faculty. The tendency toward considerations of labor for tenure track could, in turn, incite sustained improvement over time in other areas of academic labor. As this problem of being fair toward the internal hires in allowing adequate time to prepare for tenure review is not one commonly faced and seems to apply mostly to former FTNTT faculty.

At the time of this writing the faculty web page for the SU Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition lists: 35 Teaching Assistants, 25 Professional Writing Instructors, 6 Lecturers, 3 Senior Lecturers, 6 Assistant Teaching Professors, 4 Assistant Professors, 5 Associate Professors, 2 Professors, 0 Professors of Practice, 0 Associate Teaching or Teaching Professors. The site also lists 8 directors, administrators, coordinators and staff (rank not indicated) (Writing Faculty, 2018). Granted, listing at least eleven tenured or tenure track in the program demonstrates a tremendous difference from the beginning because “in its first full academic year, 1986–1987, the Syracuse Writing Program had three full-time faculty (Phelps,
Lipson, and Himley) and 86 part-time instructors who were teaching between one and three sections of first-year writing each semester” (Davies, 2017, p. 220).

**Heuristic question 4.**

Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?

The first argument for change in the Syracuse Writing Program, that Davies (2017) mentions, was based in the deficiency of the students in the 1984 *Jones Report* at the Faculty Senate. Later that argument was deepened and clarified by James Slevin and Donald McQuade in their program assessment. That report attempted to explain why the students were deficient in their literacy and numeracy. The institutional data of the internal review was combined with the outside evaluation and the Gates report was born: an argument that laid out what should be done to fix the perceived problem. In this pattern one can see the stages of stasis progressing even if it wasn’t an intentional choice, with Jones handling the fact stage, Slevin and McQuade treating the definition and quality steps, and Gates the policy step of the argument.

In a tighter focus, Phelps offers another bit of solid advice in *Administration as design art* at the 2003 CWPA conference, and Davies (2017) quotes her in “Not Just Teachers”. Louise Wetherbee Phelps indicates that when planning and arguing for changes in Composition “This is the road I advocate for writing programs as transformers: design things that work, but are below the radar, friendly and sprawling, messy and temporary, constantly learning” (Davies, p. 219). This advice comes from experiences gained in the SU writing program. In an effort to empower the program Phelps (1995) devised a socially engineered structure of coordinators that helped to generate new power derived from the energy of instructors rather than accepting the traditional place of the writing program and accomplishing the tasks with existing allotment of power that
low status perceptions would allow (Becoming A Warrior, pp. 322-24). When interjecting professionally aligned and tested theory into the pedagogical environment, in keeping with Phelps water-and waves-analogy (1995, p. 323), the theory and professionalization served as a harmonic so that the waves the instructors made were ordered in the coordinator structure and amplified one another rather than cancelling each other out.

**Heuristic question 5.**

How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?

In describing the opportune moment when she arrived at Syracuse to lead the FYC program, Phelps comments that the program’s “charter, while setting in place ‘in-betweenness’ as a transitional arrangement, took an extraordinarily open position with respect to the program’s possible future location, structure, faculty appointments, and reporting relationships” (Between Smoke and Crystal, p. 335). This stage was set for innovation, research, and the establishment of a disciplinarily that might not have occurred in other times or circumstances.

Davies (2017) quotes the Faculty Senate documents of Jones from 1984 to say that the internal and external assessments that triggered the Gates Report, which informed the charter, were, “spurred by complaints of ‘problems of literacy and numeracy in the present student body,’ commissioned a study and evaluation of both the writing and mathematics instruction at Syracuse University” (Not Just Teachers, p. 218). It is interesting to note that these are age old complaints but at this time in 1984, the senate took action.

Kairos appears, as it often does, at other moments as well in the lengthy story of the Syracuse Writing Program. More recently for instance, there are two points of tension right now
that may open a new kairotic window, if they can be seduced or wrangled by the right actor. The tension of Tenure vs. NTFT seems to be on the surface with a recent rewriting of the faculty handbook (Syracuse University Senate, 2016) prompting a resolution in support of tenure and a suggestion that the majority of lines remain tenured lines (CAA, 2016).

Data Set 2c- The University of Denver (DU).

Introduction to the context.

DU’s writing program is an independent program that reports to the Provost of the University and is located in offices in the Anderson Academic Commons. Doug Hesse is Executive Director of Writing and Professor of English, Eliana Schonberg is Director of the University Writing Center, Jennifer Campbell and Juli Parrish are Assistant Directors, and Teresa Finn is the program’s office manager. The program has 26 lecturers, all with professional and academic expertise and experience in the teaching of writing. (The University of Denver, 2018)

The same webpage lists the major components of the program as:

- A First-Year Writing Sequence (typically FYW is one introductory writing course and two writing and rhetoric classes with a research component),
- A Writing Center,
- An Advanced Seminar Course (ASEM),
- A Writing in the Disciplines component, and
- Assessment and Research that contribute to the field of Rhetoric and Writing.

The current program was founded in 2006 as an independent writing program.

Institution

- The University of Denver is a private (non-profit) university which calls itself “community engaged”
- DU’s advertised mission is “we empower students who want to make a difference” (DU mission statement)
- DU is an “R2” indicating the higher research activity class in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education
Enrollments are between 11,000 and 12,000 students overall, about half undergraduate students and half graduate.

DU has an average class size of 20 university wide.

- Composition sections are capped at 15 students (Colby & Colby, 2017)

- The DU writing program was extracted from the department of English and renamed the University Writing Program in 2006. Since then they have developed a close relationship with the Writing Center and the WAC component of writing at DU.

- WPA Structure is 1 Director and 1 Assistant Director for the writing program and the same in the writing center.

- University Writing Program faculty including administrators
  - 29 permanent, non-tenure-line instructors (2017);
  - 7 adjuncts
  - 2 tenure-line faculty – 1 of those emeritus
  - Unclear/ none are listed- graduate student instructors (mostly MA students)

- Program Curricular Content-
  - Two studio course writing sequence

When seeking documents and articles for this project I wrote to Hesse and asked if he had written a centerpiece article like Wardle had done at UCF, or like Phelps had done at Syracuse. Hesse replied saying, “If you wanted to consider my most representative work in this broad area, then, it would probably be my program’s faculty handbook” (Personal Communication, 2017).

**Heuristic question 1.**

What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the stakeholders in this context?

This section discusses the following stakeholders associated with the writing program at The University of Denver: the students, the instructors, the writing program, the department, the college administration, the union, the university, community partners, and employers.

a. *The Students.*

In “Sustainable Expectations?” Doug Hesse (2017) writes: “The current version [of rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary self image] implies that people with PhDs in rhetoric and composition studies surely should do more than teach undergraduate writing” (p. 17). Wrapped
up in Hesse’s statement is the idea that the primary focus of Composition has somehow shifted, away from teaching and toward something else. Hesse, as Executive Director of Writing at the University of Denver, seems to be aware of the risks that students take when they enter a writing program. Hesse writes about a discipline that has placed their students largely in the hands of inexperienced students and second rate academics because the “real” professors are busy doing research or administering something. It is from this frame that I read Hesse’s (2016) *Faculty Handbook 3rd ed.* most productively. The handbook addresses the central mission of the program as students creating a

Robust culture of writing on campus; develop strong student abilities through multiple writing experiences, develop the complex rhetorical skills needed in academic, professional, and civic life; teach according to the best research and pedagogy; assess the results rigorously; and provide a national model for colleges and universities seeking exemplary practices in teaching writing. (p. 6)

In the section that begins to disclose what will be expected of new teaching professors in the program a definite emphasis is placed on teaching. Teaching is listed first and often (Hesse D., 2016, p. 15). The ranks for the FTNTT faculty are Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Associate Professor, and Teaching Professor. Promotion guidelines are also listed for the positions that provide a chance for advancement, even without tenure. The problems the students face when accepting, or rejecting, the ethos their professors supply are greatly mitigated in the care and preparations the system has learned to employ to support the FTNTT faculty in their primary mission. Professional development is also a resource that is in stock with several opportunities listed for each year since the program has existed and featured speakers to give talks that inform the teaching professors about critical issues in the field of Composition. Amid
such resources the risk of students being assigned an inept writing instructor is greatly reduced; an untrained composition teacher would be hard to find in such a program as this one.

The students often also sacrifice choice in most writing programs but not at DU. The teaching professors at DU write their own themed curricula and the program offers a wide variety of choice within the framework of writing as a human activity:

Some focus on genre theory and ask students to investigate the writing of their majors; others focus on service learning, even earning special recognition from our campus’s Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning. We ourselves have created a course that uses the computer game *World of Warcraft* as a space for research and writing across the curriculum. (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 60)

Such a wide set of offerings is a great way to stoke student interest. Transfer of writing knowledge and skills is also encouraged as student learn what their chosen disciplines ask of them through the writing across the curriculum. This is fostered through the practice of the program hosting campus wide workshops, symposia, and publications all of which support the faculty as they support their students. The Senate minutes of October 20 2006 even record that “Hesse has worked with the Core Curriculum Committee and has funds for working with faculty to identify what kinds of writing are important for their students” (Faculty Senate Minutes).

### b. *The Instructors.*

Hesse (2017) writes of his two colleagues who have FTNTT positions in the Writing Program at DU that they “discern now for themselves a flat horizon” (Sustainable Expectations?, p. 16). This is perhaps a risk that instructors might not recognize as they sit in their adjunct positions on the outside of a FTNTT based program like the one at the University of Denver. As adjuncts around the country eye the stability of a Denver, they may not guess that as a FTNTT
faculty member it is possible to risk stagnation and risk subjugating one’s self under a glass ceiling, one that rests on the top of the glass box that is the independent writing program. In winning more stable positions for their instructors when the independent writing program at DU was established in 2006 (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 60) the instructors may have risked much for a small reward. I am reminded of the illegal alien who has come to the USA seeking a better life but instead of gaining citizenship they are handed a green card. The reward of stability, at least for a year or two at a time, in the workplace is a development of value, certainly, but what of other concerns? In accepting FTNTT positions are the instructors sacrificing the time they might use to research and serve the unit in exchange for temporary stability?

Colby & Colby (2017) relate a similar risk and reward picture for the instructors at DU when they state: “Although in some circumstances these adverse consequences are realized, there is little doubt that shifting part-time, piecemeal faculty into FTNTT positions can improve the lives of the majority of faculty teaching writing and the education of their students” (Real Faculty But Not, p. 59). The reward of ending the often torturous existence as a freeway flyer to gain a secure space to practice the teaching of writing can seem like a triumph but there are limitations to these more secure positions as well. Colby & Colby go on to explain how some of the rewards were simply medication for the symptoms but not a cure when they write, “the positions were originally offered with nine-month, yearly renewable contracts. Consequently, we are guaranteed employment for a year, but contract renewal is still contingent upon program needs and the university’s budget” (p. 60). While the risk of unstable employment for the instructors was mitigated, it was not removed entirely. The true reward in this new labor arrangement then, for the instructors, was not stability in employment but reduced instability as seen from the instructor’s perspective. The contract length of a year is not even remotely the
same as tenure but in moving from a contingent adjunct existence into a FTNTT position reduces the instability in real ways and moves toward equity.

A longer view of budgetary planning may be implemented at some point if the university should choose to demonstrate further commitment toward the publicized institutional ideal of teaching as central to the university’s mission and function. The rewards for the instructor are real and tangible in the commitment the university has already shown, and as such, for many, worth the risk of accepting reduced precarity as a condition of labor. Certain obligations also come with that acceptance as Hesse (2012) indicates “professional writing teachers have the ability and responsibility to explain and justify their teaching practices, relying less on being managed or drifting with inherited practices because their employment status ‘allows’ only that” (p. 16). The increase in stability- as it may also be framed- provides some agency but even with that limited agency comes a sense of responsibility and thus movement toward deeper investment.

c. The Writing Program.

“In 2006, the University of Denver, a private university of about 11,600 students, inaugurated a writing program that would serve as both the home of first-year writing courses and a campus resource on writing” (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 60). In the Chapter “Real Faculty but Not” Colby & Colby explore the realities of how the moves away from contingency have managed to hold on to the core of contingency. The discretion that allows the program leadership to release any professor who teaches in the program attempts to walk a fine line between tenure and precarity. On one side, the one year contract means flexibility for a WPA to address enrollment levels, funding issues, and retain a focus on teaching: on the other side, tenure
represents academic freedom, higher research activity that contributes to the discipline and the perception of full partnership in the university.

The rewards stemming from the program’s organizational positioning are many, and disturbing them may not be prudent. The program is positioned within the University College at the University of Denver and this organizational structure affords frequent communication and contact with a much higher level of administrative authority than one could expect in a traditional English Department home.

The partial handbook from the 2004-2005 edition of the First Year English Program, found in the DU Libraries Special Collections portrays a very different focus in pedagogy than the current handbook envisions. One could safely assume that these differences in pedagogical focus were attributable to, among other things, differences in programmatic goals, divergent views of the writing activity, and differences in the management of the material conditions of academic labor in the program. When the faculty is contingent and the view of writing is writing as a skill, and the goal of the WPA is necessarily faculty maintenance, control, and the achievement of some semblance of normativity, those concerns tend to appear in the documents that surround the writing programs. On page 1 of the older program document the reasons for group grading of a “PRE-TEST” are listed as “our assessment and your awareness of how well your students write” (Notes For Instructors, 2004, p. 1). I note here the division of groups using our and your. It would not be a stretch to say a new contingent instructor could read into that statement -We the administrators do not trust your expertise and these students are your problem not ours. Even the typeface and font of the word PRE-TEST associated with writing seems telling.
The whole document reads like a series of pronouncements sent from a higher authority to a lower class, with civility and politeness being very sparse indeed. On page 5 the reader sees a conflation of the terms creative and the concept fiction showing a narrow view of creativity in addition to a section devoted to thwarting plagiarism. Later the writer cautions the reader that “The hardest thing of all in grading is to know what constitutes an ‘A’, a ‘B’, a ‘C’ paper and how to control grade inflation” (Notes For Instructors, 2004, p. 7). While important to record keeping and somewhat pertinent to assessment issues this hardly constitutes the *hardest thing* in the current disciplinary conversation about assessment and grading of writing. The inculcated matrix of the current traditional rhetoric reinforces the hegemony that keeps composition as an outcast menial-labor task of transferring skills from teacher to student modeling the very banking model of education that Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) called out in the first half of the last century. The risks for a program to move away from that model are dwarfed by comparison to the rewards that can already be seen in the post-2006 DU model.

Where the program retains flexibility in staffing with its yearly review of faculty, as a tradeoff, offering yearly contracts allows the program to reap the benefit of a group of faculty who are engaged and care about the programs goals of:

- Creating a robust culture of writing across campus
- Developing strong student writers through multiple writing experiences
- Developing necessary rhetorical skills
- Using the best available research and practices to inform teaching
- Using rigorous assessment
- Providing a model for other writing programs (Hesse D., Faculty Handbook, 2016, p. 6)

Setting such goals would be less than prudent in another atmosphere of labor, in which a heavily contingent composition faculty was not provided the limited stability to deliver the rewards bound up in these risks. The rewards the program collects by offering improved material conditions of labor are indeed plentiful. The risks that the program avoids are equally interesting.
\textit{d. The Department.}

In Denver the program is independent of any department and so the departmental concerns fall to the independent writing program. In the collection \textit{Who Speaks for Writing} Hesse (2012) puts forth an analogy when he writes, “It is better to be upstream than down, better to have an old water claim than a new” (p. 9). Hesse’s analogy explains that Colorado land owners don’t own the rain that falls on their roofs. Others have laid claim to it and it must be gathered and redistributed to resellers to enter the economy. If water symbolizes resources like money in this parable, then the strange water rights system of the high plains tends to make a good symbol for the funding patterns of the University. All the water runs into the streams and the river and is then redistributed to consumers. The location of the University Writing program at Denver, nested directly under the Provost, places the program upstream and despite the age of their claim this location has resulted in an eruption of life.

From this life springs benefits for many. To extend the metaphor of water as resources and funding, where the water falls much fruit is brought forth: knowledge, disciplinarity, and professionalism are but a few of its fruits. Hesse (2016) reports that the faculty in the writing program lead faculty development, solve problems, identify opportunities [...] hire colleagues, schedule them, evaluate them [...] work with layers of constituents and stakeholders at levels from the program to the college to the institution and beyond. A good deal of this work is intellectually stimulating and immediately rewarding. (p. 475)

These are all concerns one would expect departments to be concerned with but would not generally associate with the program level of administration.
e. The College Administration.

DU sits in a strange place in the organizational structure of its university when compared to other university organizational models. The University Writing Program resides directly under the supervision of the Office of the Provost and yet this is the same location as the University’s colleges occupy (University of Denver). College administration is not a significant factor in this writing program’s context because the proximity the program enjoys to the center of institutional power placed it apart from the department level and effectively bypasses the college as well. This allows for a visibly distributed activity in the writing program. The College is risking little in deferring to the university but reaps many benefits from an active and invested writing program, especially in the WAC outreach where the activities of writing and literacy that connect nearly every area of learning are given room to engage the university and community.

f. The Union.

The AAUP chapter at the University of Denver does not appear to be the same sort of union that I have in my etched into my memory having grown up in the Great Lakes region, the son of a General Motors employee during the 1970’s-2000’s. The union appears to be used as a resource in special cases like a consultant when the university or a college and a faculty member cannot reach an agreement. The union does offer input on various issues on campus including academic freedom and fair labor but does not facilitate a collective bargaining agreement, as unions do at many other universities, on behalf of and with collaboration from the faculty. This sort of nuanced relationship at DU leaves the AAUP out of consideration in my text set and largely out of the central stakeholder groups that must be considered in this project.
g. The University.

The risks involved in the decision of the university to shuffle its organizational structure were real, but they were framed in a way that included more than the financial ramifications of success or failure contained in the risk. DU has branded itself as a community-conscious institution of higher learning that helps students solve the problems in the world that they have a passion to address (Home Page, 2018). The support of its own faculty and the writing program can be seen as risks that brought the rewards of ethos. The support of the writing program led to engaged scholarship, and better student efficacy with writing, arguably an essential expertise in post college life, especially if one intends to solve the world’s problems. In an effort to better serve their students DU invested in its teachers and reaffirmed its commitment to teaching. As a side effect of this investment the material conditions of labor improved at DU and the writing program’s ecology seems to have exhibited movement toward a more equitable labor condition. The University Writing Program at DU must now take a longer view of funding planning to ensure the sustainability of that ecology into the future.

h. The Community Partners.

In the process of revising the curriculum in the writing program at DU many exciting possibilities surfaced including writing experiences in FYC. Colby and Colby (2017) write that some sections “focus on service learning, even earning special recognition from our campus’s Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning” (p. 60). DU in fact allocates more than $100,000 per year to encourage scholarship as can be seen on DU’s CCESL website. Those funds are open to the entire campus and awarded to the most rigorous and innovative community engagement projects each year. These service learning courses in the writing program touch the community but it seems that they provide a higher level of student engagement as well. This sort
of faculty engagement also would not be feasible for adjuncts spreading their time between institutions.

i. The Employers.

A possible sighting of the employers as a stakeholder occurs in Hesse’s book chapter “Who Speaks for Writing? Expertise, Ownership, and Stewardship”. I say possible because the implication exists but the direct mention does not. Hesse (2012) writes that some writing programs have “a service mission rather than a degree-granting one, but even these units are promoting significant changes in who teaches writing and the nature of their appointments, from part-time adjunct to fulltime benefitted staff.” (p. 15). Service mission here could imply several stakeholders but more likely it includes all of them. While the FYC programs do not grant credentials they do offer unique experiences that affect the students’ toolkit for life and the primary place that most students will use those tools is in the workplace. When the interwoven tapestry of the stakeholders of FYC is taken into account it is not surprising to see that every point of contact sends ripples throughout the entire stakeholder network.

In “Who Speaks for Writing” Hesse (2012) expresses his concern over a view of writing that was too reductionist. “I worried about the reduction of writing to job skills, represented by efforts such as the National Commission on Writing's Writing: A Ticket to Work, and I worried about our inability or shyness-to assert our expertise” (p. 10). It is clear in this work that Hesse does account for the concerns of the employers as a stakeholder group but it is also clear that he believes that employers, businesses and, economies can best be served and born by a writing program that helps students learn how to think and write with “civic, social, or aesthetic” (p. 11) purposes in mind rather than being depreciated to an employable skill.
Heuristic question 2.

Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?

Hesse indicates that the profession of Rhetoric and Composition has nearly abandoned the students when he writes: “A job that lacks something that needs directing now hints slacking, creates longing” (Sustainable Expectations?, 2017, p. 17). In this statement he hints, not so subtly, that the view of teaching in the academy and more specifically in Composition is undervalued. Doug Hesse (2012) indicates that even though the writing program functions more autonomously at UD their mission is generally seen as a service oriented mission (Who Speaks for Writing?, p. 15). The internal view of the program’s mission differs somewhat, in that they list on their home page the following as their mission:

Creating a robust culture of writing on the DU campus, the Writing Program helps students and faculty develop complex writing abilities needed in contemporary academic, professional, and civic life. The nationally recognized program provides a national model for colleges and universities seeking exemplary practices in teaching writing. (2018)

This description places less of an emphasis upon the service that writing instruction offers to other disciplines and more focus on what writing does for, and in, those who study writing. With that focus in mind writing becomes less a service to the academy and more a subject of study that provides direct benefit to its students. One might then argue that this position could be a contributing factor in programs that Hesse (2012) names as “promoting significant changes in who teaches writing and the nature of their appointments, from part-time adjuncts to full-time benefitted staff” (p. 15). The concept of writing as an integrated part of development in any student elevates the status of the content and the teacher. However in environments where
“budget and faculty availability dictate salaries and hiring such that, in tacit exchange for working conditions that shame us, we keep teaching either a private or a robotic practice” (Hesse D., 2012, p. 16). What status can exist in such an arrangement? What hope of lifting the status of the instructor can exist in such an isolated and mechanical existence, other than a false one?

Hesse (2012) supports the move from contingent staffing on many levels but, as far as the profession goes, he leaves it to hard work, time, and increased visibility projects to help raise the status of the FYC element of the Rhetoric and Writing/Composition profession from what he describes as something that was “heretofore understood as a universal vaccine or vitamin” (p. 17) to something more readily recognized as a field of “scholars of practice with research agendas that improve our teaching and understanding of writing and rhetoric” (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 68). In that elevated status view, a practice may become a profession with all the accoutrements customarily afforded to other professions.

**Heuristic question 3.**

Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?

Colby & Colby (2017) show a cognizant attitude toward labor and its connection to the teaching that goes on in the program when they write about the affordances and limitations of the FTNTT positions saying “these positions can provide faculty with oftentimes more manageable teaching loads, which lead to higher quality teaching” (p. 60). Citing a PC commercial at the source of an analogy, Hesse (2012) affirms Colby & Colby when he comments on the ways that labor has been considered in composition.

Historically, and with sad aptness, writing programs were fairly like feedlots led by wrangler WPAs working the English ranch. No doubt this continues in many places. But
the practice is being tempered especially in programs being filled largely with full-time lecturers or instructors, with respectable wages and benefits [. . .]. (Who Speaks for Writing?, p. 15)

With the knowledge that DU has a writing program “staffed by 26 full-time faculty members, an Executive Director, a Writing Center Director, an Assistant Director for First Year Writing, a Writing Center Assistant Director, an Office Manager, and four to seven adjunct faculty” (Hesse D. , 2016, p. 11), one can draw the conclusion logically that Hesse (2012) takes his charge of “improving and sustaining” (p. 10) the DU writing program very seriously, accomplishing that charge through stewardship that enacts material labor conditions that appear to yield greater equity for many stakeholders.

The differences between the two instructor manuals are also noteworthy in assessing whether the conditions of labor matter to the success of the program. In the first example from 2004 the focus of the text seems to accentuate the ideas of authority, maintenance, and compliance whereas the 2016 handbook dwells on the concepts of support, mission, and growth. The earlier 2004 handbook document has text such as “Please read these notes carefully, keep them handy, and refer to them from time to time throughout the year, for the routines and policies described will remain the same during the whole period” (Notes For Instructors, p. 1). The 2016 text opens with the mission of the organization rather than the pronouncement of a system.

The Mission of the University of Denver Writing Program is to create a robust culture of writing on campus; develop strong student abilities through multiple writing experiences, develop the complex rhetorical skills needed in academic, professional, and civic life; teach according to the best research and pedagogy; assess the results rigorously; and
provide a national model for colleges and universities seeking exemplary practices in teaching writing. (Faculty Handbook, 2016, p. 6)

The kind of goals listed in the 2016 text require a dedicated faculty that isn’t overworked and underappreciated whereas, protection of a status quo can be accomplished through dependence on a system as in 2004.

**Heuristic question 4.**

Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the need for change in the conditions of academic labor?

Hesse (2016) makes an argument that seems directed toward publics, and perhaps toward upper administration, which is based in logical claims. He is appealing to reason when he writes:

Many folks see only the nine or twelve or fifteen hours per week in the classroom, only the thirty to forty-five weeks of teaching per year, only the ample holidays and breaks, only lawns being mowed at 2:00 p.m. Tuesday or bread being bought in Safeway late mornings. They conclude we have things pretty comfy. And, to be sure, tenure-line faculty do, at least in terms of flexibility, autonomy, and self-direction. What the public doesn’t see, of course, are the hours of course preparation, of responding to student writing or projects, advising, working on committees, and conducting research. When numerous surveys have shown that these efforts work out to fifty to sixty hours per week, the public tends to reject the findings as inflated self-reports. Legislators and trustees have, thus, sought to substitute “productivity” for “time” as the measure of faculty efforts: students taught, grants won, papers published, technologies and other intellectual goods transferred into the civic or commercial realm. (What Is a Personal Life?, p. 473)
This argument holds that the public doesn’t understand what writing professors do and especially doesn’t understand how much writing professors do or what they receive in compensation for it. The argument attempts to explain that most of our work is done behind the scenes and, as in other of Hesse’s writings, laments that we haven’t done a good job of reaching the public with these facts in the past. This logical argument also has a somewhat resigned tone that begs a couple of questions which I address in the next chapter.

Colby & Colby (2017) take a very logical approach in their declaration that The FTNTT position, as created in the DU Writing Program, is “a positive response to the exploitation of adjunct, part-time faculty; however, such positions are still contingent labor, often reliant on a director or administrator and strategic decisions from upper-level university administrations” (p. 67). Even though the true purpose of the chapter is to identify problems with the position and suggest action to remedy the problems, they are quick to point out that this step, hopefully the first in a series of steps, is a very positive one and should be praised. There is no shortage or rhetorical dexterity in that move but the logical way in which this point is supported deviates from the older arguments that appeal to a sense of morality, or pity or even, the drives of self preservation.

Hesse (2012) weaves many different appeals and strategies into a cohesive narrative argument. Several stories, organized facts, all three species of rhetoric- forensic, epideictic, and deliberative- as well as some exposition, identification and division, and more, are used to present an argument for continuing forward toward professionalism and self regulation as a discipline. This seems an appropriate message considering that the piece is derived from Hesse’s 2005 NCTE Chair’s Address. All of the Denver text set arguments however come after the transformation has begun. More work is needed to uncover the arguments that made those first
breakthroughs that helped the administrative decision makers change their perceptions of what Composition is, what it can do, and for whom it can do it. It is clear however that the arguments after the fact seem to agree that progress has been made and that new horizons have been glimpsed.

**Heuristic question 5.**

How can Kairos (the opportune moment) be seen as an aligning force in the past, present and future in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?

The Denver University text set has some markers for timing can be seen as the swinging pendulums of kairos but inferences are also needed to connect those dots. The time line located *Writing Program Faculty Handbook* (Hesse D., 2016, p. 91) is helpful in establishing the history of the program but not in divining what it took to bring the current form of the program into existence. One can see in these data that, with each new FTNTT faculty line added, the capability of the program to serve the institution, the students, and other stakeholders grows. The pattern is clear. With each investment in less contingent and more permanent labor in the writing program the value carries through to the stakeholder network. With each investment the window of opportunity opens briefly to allow development of new avenues of service, scholarship and community built upon what the DU program and Doug Hesse built when the door opened wide in 2005. As a chart of that progress, I can make very brief notes on moments that sustained the program growth and professionalization:

- **2006:**
  - 19 Lecturer Lines Created
  - Writing Center created
  - Support staff engaged
- **2010:** 1 new Lecturer Line added
- **2011:** 3 new Lecturer Line added
2012:
- 2 new Lecturer Lines
- Launched 1st WRIT Large
- Community-Engaged Department of the Year Award from the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL)

2013: Conversations in the Disciplines – new involvement across campus

2014: new initiatives begin to launch with amazing frequency at this point like:
- Writing in Public
- Writing the Range
- Composiums

2016 the Faculty handbook notes another FTNTT line added in 2016

It is important to remember also that 2008 was also the first year that the national economy began to feel the crunch of the recession from the housing bubble burst. In the face of that difficulty money was very scarce and yet the program was able to keep its lecturers and begin to grow its presence on the DU campus as a resource for all.

Summary

This concludes the data gathering portion of this project. In the next chapter I look to interpret these data to find meaning in the human experiences denoted in the text sets of this chapter by using my own insider positioning as a former adjunct, and a BGSU Faculty Senate member, alongside some of the relevant literature in the field of Rhetoric, Writing and Composition.
CHAPTER 4:

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXTUAL DATA

In this chapter I arrange the interpretation of the data, gathered in chapter 3, by heuristic question and discuss all three writing program contexts together in an effort to arrive at some of the varied and nuanced meanings the data has begun to suggest. In addition to using my own experience gained in my years working as an adjunct in several institutional settings, my recent experience at BGSU serving on academic and senate committees, and the contexts of the writing programs themselves, I also turn to other sources outside the text sets for aid in the interpretation process for the textual evidence of Data Set 3.

In the first question, I follow the same pattern of arrangement for the stakeholders as used in previous chapters for the sake of consistency. I must note however, that the stakeholder risks and rewards in such a complex enterprise as FYC are intertwined throughout the different stakeholder types, such that evidence of an interdependent community has emerged surrounding the activity of writing, and the teaching of writing. The common concern in this stakeholder community is success in the practice of writing instruction and ultimately student writer success. Absolute independent discussion of individual stakeholders is therefore not productive, if even possible, as it is the activity of writing around which they have become interdependent. As such the entire chain of stakeholders will share risks and rewards with those nearest them in the community and discussion of the risks and rewards in one stakeholder group will often touch on the risks and rewards of other stakeholder groups that are situated in the same community.

The discussion will move then from one stakeholder group to another quite fluidly within each subsection of question 1. That is not to say that each group doesn’t have their own specific risks and rewards; to the contrary they most certainly do. As I discuss below, the pattern evident
in the community of stakeholders would indicate that the most personal risks are taken closest to
the instruction and more public risks are taken further away from the classroom. In this
orientation I further observed a trend in the sharing of those risks and rewards that holds true
with my experience over time as a teacher of writing and as a voice in university governance.

The closer to the classroom and the actual instruction a group is located the less power
they have to change their circumstance despite bearing the highest personal risk. Those further
away from the classroom tend to have risks that are less personal and more organizational and
yet they carry the most influence and institutional power to initiate systematic change. The
greatest overlap of these two kinds of risks is, unsurprisingly, at the program level and resting
with the WPA who must consider the effects of instructional and financial systems, and changes
to those systems, in multiple risk paradigms. Those of us that experience the risks and rewards of
this system all share a part in supporting and maintaining that system, for better or for worse,
each time we make our risks and take our rewards.

Heuristic Question 1

*What are the risks and rewards associated with academic labor practices for each of the
stakeholders in this context?*

Why is this important? To develop an accurate understanding of the risks that members
of a stakeholder group take, and why they take them, is to begin to understand the motivations of
those stakeholders within a larger context. Psychologically speaking, this attempt at
understanding is a move toward demystifying the roles of our *othered* constituents and therefore
the beginning of empathy in a social context or the building of community. Philosophically
speaking this community feeling can be used to establish a common good and, rhetorically, these
understandings can be used to identify with an audience, formulate arguments that the audience can comprehend, and achieve common ground on issues of difference.

**The students.**

In all three contexts the students engage in similar risks and hope for similar rewards. The socioeconomic makeup of the three groups of students varies by institution—UCF having the highest rate of first generation college students—but they remain similar enough to note the majority of students seek degrees for the purpose of securing well paying and rewarding careers. While this may be true as well of the English Major at any of these universities it must be noted that FYC is not meant for English Majors. At all three Universities English Majors were offered different courses with which to fulfill the writing requirements of the states in which they operated. In this systematic separation, the most adept writing students—i.e. the English Majors who are predisposed to language, literacy and writing—were separated and usually taught by full-time tenured or tenure track professors. As a result the students of FYC often required more time and attention in learning about the activity of writing.

As instructors we are forced to make assumptions in a system that asks the most disposable and, in times past, the least trained teachers to instruct the students that will need the most help in learning to write with expertise. We must also then, as educators, ask if the students in FYC have detected this disparity before we can see the true risks and rewards students perceive and ask if this slight contributes to reduced effort in FYC classes or the perception of FYC as a requirement rather than an important area of study open to all. In contrast to the more common model of adjunct-staffed, service-oriented, FYC courses it is easy to see how the transformed labor practices of the three writing program contexts in this study reduce risks for students and maximize rewards.
At UCF the students themselves (UCF, 2013) showed interest in their work at the Knights Write Showcase and explained how excited they were when they executed research projects in FYC that actually reached conclusions and findings that they valued. They became engaged in the process of writing and saw the classes less as a needlessly high-stakes requirement and more as a site of exploration and practice. The Knights Write showcase and the active engagement from students were direct results of the Writing About Writing curriculum implemented by Wardle, and a product of the instructors’ commitment to the curriculum.

At Syracuse, Laura Davies (2012) indicates agreement with the text set when in her dissertation she indicates that the older incarnation of the FYC program “constituted a disservice to students, who were assessed based on their adherence to a specific form rather than how they could use writing to shape and explore their ideas” (p. 16). Davies also describes the program as one that was characterized by a “formulaic curriculum” in which there was an implicit “disregard for both the instructors and the students” (2012, p. 143). What reward could a student hope for in such a curriculum aside from another myopic benchmark or achievement requirement? The modern curriculum began its transformation at Syracuse in 1985 and is still making strides toward that ecology of sustainability and equity. In contrast to the previous FYC at Syracuse, “the choice to include part-time teachers in the heart of the new writing program created a dynamic teaching community that positively influenced the program’s other faculty and students” (Davies, Not Just Teachers, 2017, p. 239). While the rewards for the instructors were partially delayed, the students began to benefit much sooner. With “expert teachers with deepening knowledge of composition and rhetoric” (Davies, 2012, p. 115), the students were better able to respond to the demands the university placed upon them despite the increased numbers of first generation students.
The University of Denver FYC program also reports a decrease of risk and an increase in participation and rewards that came along with the new curriculum: a curriculum that was only possible through the change in labor staffing practices. The DU Faculty Handbook (Hesse D., 2016) lists the quality of student evaluations, interactions with students, classroom interactions, and responses to student writing as extremely important indicators of performance for Teaching Assistant Professors. These foci place the students’ needs, and thereby the students’ welfare, at the center of the practice in navigating the risks and rewards of the writing program. The pre-2006 writing program handbook placed more of an emphasis on compliance to the requirements, grade inflation concerns, and plagiarism prevention and made the student evaluations seem arbitrary and unimportant with advice like, “Only you know what to listen to and what to ignore” (Bland, Prall, & Martin, 2004, p. 2). The 2004 document reads like requirements for an exam with emphasis on correction of errors and rule violations. This was common at that time in other universities that practiced forms of instruction founded in Current Traditional Rhetoric (Hairston, 1982). No learning and growth is discussed in the document even though growth as a writer and learning how to write are the primary rewards that FYC has to offer.

Through the transformation of the curriculum in each case the student expectations were also altered. The movement from an emphasis on risk of failure, a primary fear students express as they enter college, to an emphasis on growth, agency and learning mark each of these programs. The transformation of the curricula however could not have been pulled off so well without the support of the contingent faculty. This transformational power was harnessed through the creation of FTNTT positions in all three cases albeit this creation took longer to achieve at Syracuse. There are two reasons for this seeming delay that are evident: first, Syracuse led the way beginning to make the changes in 1985 and did not have the benefit of as many
programmatic examples from which to draw their new structure like UCF had in 2008 and Denver had in 2006. Second, the capacity to enact the curricular changes was first gained through transformation of the faculty positions rather than through creation of new full-time ones. Of separating a new academic unit out of an older one Louise Phelps (2017) writes that “usually a great deal of what it had been is carried over and needs to be transformed, not created, as many point out with respect to labor, teaching responsibilities, funding sources, and so on” (p. 335). The long transformative process for the labor practices in the program was limited by funding but buoyed by demonstrated student success.

While this interpretation of labor practices, as a factor affecting the risks students take and the rewards they reap, seems to be better discussed as risk and reward of the department, or of the writing program, it is also a necessary condition of improving student writing. Without the transformation of the curricula the risk for students goes unmitigated and the rewards remain procedural way stations toward requirement fulfillment instead of increased agency, earned writing confidence, and reduced fear of failure; all of which are transferable assets. How can untrained, overworked, second-class educators presume to offer these rewards? Education, compensation and respect in these three contexts can be said, in accordance with these data, to translate directly into student success.

Another risk for students, as writing requirements expand is that the new curriculum may have seemed like a longer delay, for some students, to get at the core of their major subject of study while they waded through many general education courses. As I reflect upon my own experiences in the mid 1980s, amid the recovery from the first great recession, the sentiment of many young people nationwide, and especially in the Great Lakes and Midwest regions, was to get to work as quickly as possible. As the United States is still pulling itself out of the second
great recession of the late 2000’s this rush to enter the job market is a sentiment seen once more in universities and in my own students. Having lived through both periods I can identify with the risk expressed by my own students that they sacrifice earning potential while they languish in classes for which they do not see a practical use. The change in curricula noted in each writing program’s data set asks students to re-evaluate their position on what writing is and what it means to them. Adding to the risks they already take, under the new curriculum, students are asked to regard FYC as a valuable activity in which they can participate and contribute. I cite the UCF website and the Knights Write showcase (Writer Story, 2013) as evidence that the students will take this risk and do see the rewards of re-valuing writing and accepting a more difficult but more valuable curriculum.

**The instructors.**

Phelps (Davies, 2017, p. 221) reports that faculty members are the most valuable resource of a writing program and Wardle (2013) advises that instructors must be well trained in order to affect good teaching. Hesse (2016) also supports this notion of instructors as the central figures in writing programs by providing opportunities in the program for training and time to train. To assist the advancement of the knowledge of Rhetoric, and of Writing, and of Composition, as a discipline, these three WPAs, and many others, have come to the conclusion that respect and equitable treatment of the instructors is absolutely necessary to the sustainability of not only the program but also the autonomy of the disciplinary field. In seeking position funding slots, still referred to as *lines* in some circles, with reasonable compensation and professional development attached to those FTNTT instructors, these programs have been able to bolster their claims that Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition are full-fledged disciplines with unique expertise that can be employed to the benefit of the students and ultimately the university. They have cast doubt upon
the status of writing programs as a service by showing what a difference professionalized instructors can make in such programs. In being more fairly compensated, and having the contingent nature of their appointments mitigated to varying degrees, these instructors no longer resemble Miller’s (1993) “sad women in the basement” (p. 121) nor O.J. Campbell’s composition faculty, “infected with contagious disappointment and rebelliousness” (Sledd, 1991, p. 269). They instead more closely resemble professionals like one might find in professional practices like medicine or law: Self-motivated, engaged, self-regulating reflexive practitioners.

To become equal partners in reform rather than futile resisters or passive objects of it, faculty themselves must develop thoughtful programs to foster the development of leaders from their own ranks—programs designed to operate seamlessly throughout a faculty career from graduate school to senior leadership roles in higher education. (Phelps L. W., 2002, p. 4)

Especially when taken into consideration in this study Phelps’ imperative looks like prophecy fulfilled. At Denver Colby & Colby (2017), holding NTTF positions themselves, were able to conduct research and contribute to a growing knowledge base in Compositions Studies. In Florida the UCF writing program moved from conditions that were “paralyzing, preventing composition courses and programs from moving forward and acting on the knowledge of our field in both their curricula and their employment practices” (Wardle, Intractable Problems, 2013, p. 5), to environments where they were “hosting 6-8 workshops or reading groups each semester, many led by instructors and graduate students” (p. 23), conducting portfolio assessments, and publishing journals and creating venues for students to present their writing. And in Syracuse, these more secure positions were won as a result of the commitment and
dedication of the contingent faculty to commit to practices like peer review and professional
development that Phelps instituted there.

I do not wish to conflate these results with bootstrap philosophy platitudes suggesting
that the instructors did it all on their own. In a community of stakeholders, no one group alone
can be expected to create success. There is a difference between acting responsibly in good faith
and allowing unchecked exploitation. Whether the increase in workload and expertise comes
first, or if it occurs simultaneously with the improvement in material working conditions, the
risks are just as real. The sustainability of the success is predicated on the fair exchange of effort
and support.

It does seem that simultaneous labor practice changes and curricular changes—as was the
case in Denver and in Central Florida—produce less overall pain and suffering for stakeholders
in the long term than the thirty year struggle seen at Syracuse has produced. However, one could
just as easily make an argument that the changes at DU and UCF were condensed and therefore
more violent. In both time frames however, there was effort expended by, and rewards afforded
to, the instructors as they worked to professionalize their practices and became active
participants in their own futures and the future of the discipline. An exchange of investment and
a return in the cases of UCF and Denver and an exchange of increased effort from the faculty
preceded the monetary investment from administrative partners there but a capability to better
serve the students was the success achieved along both paths.

The writing program.

There are several commonalities in these three successful writing programs. While no two
programs went about achieving their success in exactly the same way, all were risking similar
hazards and seeking similar payoffs in exchange for that risk. The programs had different time
frames, which will be discussed in the section associated with question 5. Each gained autonomy in different ways. Each implemented different curricular philosophies and content as well, but all risked disrupting the established power structures, leaving places of relative comfort for possible failure, or loss of livelihood, among other things. The end product of those risks in all three cases involved improving the material working conditions as an integral step toward achieving the goals of improving writing instruction to help students become more confident, more prolific and more expert writers. The section associated with question 2 will discuss further the links between the resources devoted to the instructors and the professional expertise and knowledge that they returned to the practice of writing instruction and the discipline of Composition. The risks the programs and their WPAs took in trusting the instructors and committing time, attention, and resources to them in return looked a little different in each program but the results can be seen as highly successful in all three cases.

The new WPA at Syracuse, Louise Phelps, began a pattern of professionalization at the risk of alienating her fellow Feminist compositionists, to enable the instructors in the writing program to meet the task Administration had set before them of helping students write better and with authority. It took over thirty years to achieve the desired status and material working conditions for the instructors but the improvements began almost immediately in the excitement among the faculty and the engagement of the students.

At Denver the commitment to hire full-time instructors was made, and a new WPA hired, at the outset of the transformative period of the program’s history. These new professional full-time instructors contributed in many ways to the success of the writing program including performing and helping to design new curricula, delivering high quality instructional practices, and conducting research toward the improvement of their own practices, programs, and the
growth of the knowledge base in the field of Composition. These contributions may have been rewards for the instructors but they can also be seen as a positive return on the investments that the university, the college and the program made in those FTNTT instructors as they exchanged prescriptive pedagogies for generative ones.

At UCF some instructors risked their time and invested effort in the pilot of the WAW curriculum and Wardle, the new WPA. Wardle presented an argument to the Dean that showed the instability of labor as an important sticking point that prohibited programmatic success. The Dean continued making similar arguments at the College and University organizational levels to bring all parties into conversation. In launching the ad hoc pilot, Wardle ran the risk of making waves in a new position—a risk certainly mitigated somewhat by the presence of tenure in the WPA position— but the stability of the labor situation was changed to the instructors’ benefit when the UCF president and other instrumental administrators granted funding for four new FTNTT positions to the program. The writing program did not bootstrap itself to success but instead made a clear and thorough analysis of the impediments to success and presented that case to others in terms that resonated with them. Rather than creating an island of the program Wardle enlarged the support system for the program, reaching into the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition to gather theory and knowledge for the curriculum and into the university to gather operational resources to enact them. At UCF the program found some experts outside the contingent faculty, as Denver had done, and nurtured further expertise, as Syracuse had done, to create their avenues toward programmatic success.

In the intersection between program and department I bemoan the lack of programmatic histories. The risks made at the program level, though largely the same as in other writing programs, are perhaps a little different from the risks at other institutions. In the DU text set there
is a lack of history that one can see in other programs, namely in Wardle’s (2013) “Intractable Problems” and Davies’ (2017) “Not Just Teachers”. The state of existence of the writing program was not discoverable in the set of texts I originally chose to represent DU. In what I assumed to be an effort toward civility, the prior condition of the program was missing. I wondered if this were due to some agreement reached at the time of transition, or perhaps because of ideological or even social trauma from the separation. In seeking to plot a path one must know three things to establish a working platform. One must know where they have been, where they are, and how long it took to get from there to here. With these one has a sense of origin, direction and speed: all of these are necessary when plotting a course for the future and establishing goals to mark and evaluate progress. I turned to the DU library archives to locate another document to help establish what had come before, while trying to keep alignment with, what seemed to be, an effort to refrain from assigning blame for the decision to move the program. I was able to locate the older training manual at Denver in this way but the search for documents, and possibly interviews, to create complete histories of all three writing programs falls outside the scope of this study, which demanded an agile sampling of texts. Efforts to construct complete histories would likely be book length projects in their own right and could also be valuable contributions to the History, Composition, and Higher Education Studies as well as a gift to many other intersecting fields of study like Sociology, Labor Studies, and even Subaltern Studies.

The department.

The English Departments that had traditionally housed FYC programs in the universities at Central Florida, Syracuse, and Denver, they had, and have, a difficult role. Interpretively an apt metaphor might be the picture of a parent-child relationship. At some point the child is a
child no more and the parent and child must redefine the nature of their association. Many relationships are tested during the independence-seeking stage of maturation and some are broken; sometimes the separations can even be bitter affairs. To extend the metaphor, in healthy circumstances they evolve into a parent-adult child relationship, and reassessing what that means many times throughout life. Finding new ways to communicate, collaborate, and cohabitate are part of this process as well and it isn’t at all easy to let go of that parental authority in many cases. Not wanting to overextend this symbolism, it must be noted that sometimes, and in certain cultures, it is a better option to remain under the roof of the family manse and contribute to that larger good. In others, the child must leave home in order to become an adult. The writing programs at each of the institutions had grown beyond mere maintenance of a service and had begun to grow into their own endeavors with their own practices, knowledge, and aspirations. They grew up. Every situation is unique and must be evaluated independently, carefully, and mindfully if the best arrangement is to be found. UCF, Syracuse, and DU all left home but they have developed new relationships with their former parents. I will by necessity subdivide the discussion of Department-as-stakeholder into three subsections. The first will discuss the English Departments, the second the independent writing programs that acted as departments, and then finally the third subsection will discuss the evolution of the program into a department.

**English departments.**

For much of the twentieth century, English Departments in the USA have ubiquitously provided an institutional home for FYC programs, in addition to their other duties. English, being full of other concerns—like English Linguistics, Literature, Literary Analysis, Journalism, and Creative Writing—managed FYC but saw this largely as a service to the university rather than another intellectual pursuit. Over time research and inquiry has sprung up around the
activity of writing and the production of texts to the point where disciplinary alignment with English has become tenuous. This is analogous in the dichotomy of thinking about production compared to the different thought processes when thinking about analysis or appreciation. Add to this difference the development that status, usefulness, and funding are now often tied to the number of composition courses an English Department teaches and one can begin to understand the risks that the department encounters when faced with the prospect of letting go of a charge it didn’t want but upon which it has come to depend.

Some English Departments that are able to change and re-focus might find a separation beneficial for both parties, as was the case at UCF. It might allow a lighter more agile unit that can offer more varied options with much less management and administrative burden. Such a separation may result in new alignments with other endeavors like linguistics, World Languages and Cultures, or supply chances to expand Creative writing or New Media studies.

It does stand to reason that in some situations a break in organizational affiliation might not be the best course of action. Thinking of smaller universities and two-year colleges here, separation may make matters of labor, staffing, pedagogical policy, and other factors much, much worse. In those circumstances, I would suggest that power is what was resituated in the organizational realignments of the writing programs in this study and as such, there are other ways to realign power, even without a shift in organizational structure, including increased vertical communication and a distribution of authority as was the case with Syracuse in the early years of their transition. This might entail electing or appointing new leadership that can work more collaboratively; it may entail increased collegiality to spread around the risks and rewards more effectively. Even though all three experienced a separation from their English homes, it is possible to use what is seen in these three programs as inspiration to work together toward
similar results achieved in those programs: namely; labor, status, and a strengthening of the practice of valuing teaching without having to reorganize the administrative structure quite so severely.

**Independent writing programs.**

Another option when programs English Departments and Writing programs need to part ways might be to follow the example of Syracuse and Denver. Denver is an example of an Independent Writing Program that is doing quite well having been relocated into a different college altogether. Other independent writing programs, even successful ones, have come back under the control of English through political maneuvering. Chris Anson writes of the Minnesota case

> In the months and years that followed the takeover, investigations have concluded that the English department, in search of tuition revenues that would provide it with profit in a new university funding system known as “Responsibility Center Management” (RCM), wished to regain control of the independent program. RCM is based on the principle that every unit is responsible for generating its revenues and deciding how to spend them.

(2002, p. 160)

Denver found success as an independent program as did Syracuse. In the beginning of its relocation outside of English, before eventually evolving into a department, Syracuse was also an independent Writing Program although their positioning was very different organizationally. UD’s writing program was removed from the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and placed directly under the oversight of the University Provost. At the same time different funding was also arranged for the program and the new budget depended less on enrollments. Phelps, at Syracuse, used a recommendation in an outside assessment as a mandate to act as if it
was a department she was leading and eventually that became a reality. UCF is also considered an independent writing program although the designation of department is also theirs.

The Independent Writing Departments and Programs Association (IWDPA) lists both Syracuse and UCF on their rolls but DU, arguably equally independent, is not listed there. The IWDPA, which grew out of a special interest group, now has a standing group status at the CCCC each year; They provide support, collaboration and communication to, and for, other similar academic units and assist in the formation of such units at universities where they do not yet exist. While this is not the best move for all programs, IWDPA (2018) membership currently boasts fifteen units and thirty five diverse programs that benefit from the affiliation through the Conference for Writing Program Administrators (C-WPA). While an argument could be made that this affiliation only shifts risk and inequity, an equally strong case could be made that the move not only shifts but owns, distributes, and mitigates the risks inherent in FYC programs.

*The rhetoric, writing, and composition department.*

Traditionally departments can provide a home for tenure and tenure can provide a path to further the body of knowledge in a field of study through research. It may even be possible to develop new programs as collaborations between the English Department and the new Rhetoric and Writing or Composition unit, as is the case at UCF, with their Texts and Technology program. The department provides an institutional platform from which to do many things including, but not limited to:

- Establishing a vertical program with minors, majors, graduate certificates and degrees and even PhD programs.
- Autonomously managing the learning and labor conditions for the FYC program.
Providing a closer affiliation with, or even an institutional hope for, closely related activities like Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) efforts and Writing Center activities like support, outreach, and research.

Should a separation be deemed beneficial to all parties, it must be noted that a clean, fast separation may be more beneficial than a long drawn out one, in most cases. The levels of pain and suffering seen in the text sets seemed to be higher in the Syracuse program with its slow steady path to complete autonomy whereas the breaks from the English Departments at both UCF and DU were much faster and provided less opportunity to complicate matters. In this faster more complete separation however a question has surfaced. It is a question that was first raised in my mind as I read the work of Richard Ohmann (1976) and later found reiterations in Cary Nelson (2010), Marc Bousquet (2008), Bérubé & Ruth (2015). What becomes of the contingents in a programmatic conversion to FTNTT or to Tenure line positions? This is a question I can only echo here because I was only able to partially answer it with the text sets of this study.

Wardle (2013) reported that some contingent faculty left and others began adopting the new WAW curriculum as she held it up, rightly, as a tool with which to “facilitate a way for them to become familiar with Rhetoric and Composition scholarship” (p. 6). The provision of distributed authority at Syracuse lends itself to consideration as a path into the future of a professionalized writing program but the text sets did not explicitly state what happened to the staffing pools that went from numbering in the 80’s and 100’s of adjuncts to roughly 30% of that number FTNTTF positions at present day. This mystery I frame here as a site of future study: study that may uncover more effects, both positive and negative, associated with converting from overdependence on contingent faculty to a more full-time faculty. Prospects available for such
At Syracuse the administration was responding to concerns of the faculty representation in the senate in hiring Phelps so change could be implemented. The knowledge embedded in the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement already existed but the transformation from the literature based model of writing instruction to something more relevant to other disciplines needed to be endorsed by the seats of power to have any hope of success. At Syracuse, as it was also at Denver and Central Florida, the writing program administration realigned itself within the organizational hierarchy to provide more direct access to the upper administration. In Syracuse and Denver this meant creating an independent writing program and extracting that activity from the traditional home in the English Department. These writing programs reported to their colleges and functioned as departments might be expected to function, developing along the way minors and certificates for students who wanted concentrations that they could transfer into their majors and careers.

At UCF the step beyond a separation from English to create a department structure allowed even greater cooperation among writing activities like WAC, FYC, and the Writing Center, helped create the majors, minors and graduate paths that constitute a vertical model. The success of all three writing program contexts was contingent upon a knowledgeable, innovative, and professional sort of instructor that contingent labor models were not able to provide while viably maintaining any claim of fairness to the instructors and to the students. As stated in this project many times, with learning conditions inhabiting teaching conditions the treatment of instructors is in effect the treatment of students. Creating vastly increased expectations of the
instructors, in order to ostensibly better serve the students, without compensating those instructors is to establish a rent-seeking robber barony.

In acting to create these independent programs and departments, the administration also risked departing from a model that was working financially, to one that held greater promise academically and greater cost financially. Not forgetting that the direct work and primary responsibility lay at the program level and even in the classrooms themselves, one could easily make the case that the movement of the administration toward change in all three contexts, to remedy perceived deficiencies in the writing instruction, cleared the way for the already robust innovation of Rhetoric, Writing and Composition, as a field of study, to enter the scene and take center stage as a rallying point in the university.

**The union.**

Further study is needed to determine the particulars of how and why the unions at the three universities balked or delayed in welcoming the FTNTT instructors into their organizations and why many more refuse membership and voice to contingent faculty. Some changes are seen as threats until we better understand them and this change is surely no different. Even with limited information in the text sets of these three writing programs, some inferences are still possible when considering the other stakeholders’ risks and rewards against the union role of protecting and advancing the welfare of the faculty.

During the times of change union officials at each of the institutions had to work with faculty representation and administrators at all three of the studied universities to determine where the FTNTT faculty fit into the ecology. With the formation of new contingent faculty unions, and the widening of other education unions across the country, notably the AFT, NEA, and the AAUP, there is a concurrent realignment of thinking in state legislatures and in
universities that creates problematic situations for the union representation. Unions can risk rough negotiations if they open their membership to contingents like the ones that teach in writing programs even as they increase their collective bargaining power with the swelling rosters. This transformation of writing program staff constitution, from predominately contingent faculty to predominantly full-time union-represented faculty, seems a natural alignment of goals that could be encouraged by unions.

What does the union risk with such an arrangement? The constituent members do admittedly diminish their individual voting power as the membership increases and new concerns and needs are brought into the body of membership when contingent faculty are also represented by the same union as tenured faculty. But these issues are not without remedy, such as separate chapters and contracts for part time and full time. It would help the university by reducing the number of negotiations and bargaining partners they must interact with, afford the instructors, WPAs, and their programs, with greater stability, and ultimately help provide high quality instruction to the students that take the courses in the FYC programs.

In this activity of encouraging or facilitating these transitions in writing programs and in other areas of general education as well, the Union could reduce the level of risk they engage in when accepting contingent faculty as represented members, even though in many senses unions already represent, for free, the contingent faculty’s interests when unions represent the full-time faculty. This increased membership would also mean an increase in dues paying members. One may surmise then that union representation would be an active force in unifying the contingent and tenured faculty at universities across the nation but this is not always so. In many states, such as Ohio (ORC Ch 4117), there are laws that make collective bargaining for contingent faculty, like graduate student teachers and adjunct faculty, illegal. While efforts to
change these laws are frequently bandied about, “tenured faculty have often been ambivalent about efforts of graduate students to organize [. . .] and indifferent to the efforts of adjuncts and nontenure-track faculty to unionize” (Schwartz, 2014, p. 505), as has been the case with my experience in some faculty senates. The reasons for this withholding of support for the improvement of the contingent’s situation are, as is true of every other facet of the contingent labor quandary, extraordinarily complex and so those reasons merit some attention in their own right. The important item here to recognize for this study however is that, whatever the reasons for withholding support, this fracture in the profession serves only to divide, isolate, and insulate those with power and status from the lived experiences of those who lack status and power. This is a phenomenon that associations in other professions such as medicine and law—despite the divide between professional nursing and medical doctors—do not seem to experience as acutely.

One might say, in higher education, contingent labor is our peculiar institution. I ostensibly argue that unions seem to have an opportunity, if not an obligation, open to them to serve the profession in helping it through risking a little time, effort, and funding for a reward of preservation of academic freedom for its constituents, more robust curricula for the students they ultimately serve, and greater negotiating power for the union on the whole (Bérubé & Ruth, 2015). Progress toward this sort of equity and stability has been made now in all three writing program contexts as a result of an argument not founded in morality and humanitarianism but rather as a side effect of an argument based upon direct affordances for the students and indirect rewards throughout the stakeholder chain.

The university.

The risks of the university are further removed from but directly tied to the classroom practices of the programs and teachers on campuses. To ascertain how the university’s interests
can coincide with the instructor it is necessary to look at the larger picture. Are university plans
and actions designed to serve employers in the community, students, or the administration? The
simple answer is yes. Coleen Flaherty (2015) in an article for Inside Higher Ed quotes Douglas
Scrivner of the board of Trustees at the University of Denver when she writes. “‘Any ‘risk,’
Scrivner said, ‘can be managed and is dramatically outweighed by the benefits of engaged
faculty and our ability to attract great teachers through the new renewable series’” (More than
Adjuncts). When viewed as an opportunity to display honesty and integrity, and not only as a
potential financial risk, the statement of the DU Deans rings even more clearly. The task force
report opens with the following: “The importance of the University’s instructional aim is
prominent in its overall mission. Full realization of this aim relies on a university-wide culture of
teaching excellence” (Teaching Task Force Report, 2005).

The university must consider the needs of employers so that the students that they aim to
serve are employable when they graduate. This is not to say that university administrators do or
should fixate on job markets as the primary focus of education, but they must consider life after
school as an important factor in planning, as part of the demands of citizenship. Developing a
reputation for turning out graduates that are highly skilled and well equipped for careers feeds
directly into enrollments. Students want to attend a university whose graduates have a reputation
for finding successful careers after college. When employers or professional organizations begin
to question the quality of an institution’s graduates it won’t take long for word to spread and
enrollments to decline. Since enrollments are a key contributor, if not the primary factor, in
determining funding and driving finances, academic excellence is often among the highest level
of concerns. Shorter ranged budgetary thinking, like prioritizing university labor costs, does
sometimes win out in emergency situations or in times when the job market is healthy.
Governing boards, state regulations, funding cuts, or demands for increased efficiency can sometimes precipitate or exacerbate these financial crises and divert the focus from academics toward finance. While I only examined texts from writing programs at three universities in this study the many headlines in media and news suggest that one might be safe in the assumption that similar pressures are present in for-profit, non-profit, state and private institutions in varying degrees.

Understanding this external pressure from the governance and business minded culture of the USA as a justified force in the decision making considerations of university and college leadership is an essential element in forming and presenting an argument with which the powerful decision makers can identify. For the WPA, any argument toward improvement in programs and departments should consider, not only the personalities that sit in the chairs of the president, provost, and dean, but also understand the demands that are placed upon their shoulders. In this way we can better locate spaces where the needs of the students, instructors, and program, and the needs of the administration can commingle agreeably.

Success at UCF maps the aptness of this observation. When UCF President John Hitt, Vice- Provost Alison Morrison-Shetlar, and the senators and representatives in the Faculty Senate were all moving in the same direction, the provisions were made that could extract the intractability inherent in the confluence of problems that Wardle (2013) describes in her program profile. Improvements to the curriculum were already underway, and a valid argument could be made for how and why those changes could have succeeded without assistance, but the speed and scope of revision that the coalition of administrators and faculty formed was far more sweeping and effective than the programmatic pilot could have produced alone.
At Syracuse, in order to establish more direct communication administrators felt it prudent to move the writing activities to a sort of purgatory, creating a program without a department, which runs contrary to the traditional structural organization of the modern university (Davies, 2012). The evidence that the administration witnessed in that shorter circuit of information showed something other than, as a mythologized administrator put it, “... someone from the nearest street corner to do the job” (Phelps L. W., 1995, p. 310). Instead, the expertise of the professionalized instructors was recognized and rewarded with improved material conditions of labor, with respect, and, over time, with greater trust in the relationship with the university administration. The university had a vision of a writing program of distinction and felt the pressures from without and from within the campus to deliver it. Phelps (1995) writes, “A program distinguished by intellectual quality and teachers’ engagement should produce better instruction and outcomes for students. And of course it would enhance the prestige of my institution” (p. 307). In aligning the needs of various stakeholders Phelps’ vision realized the hopes of the administration.

At the University of Denver the change that brought success seems to have had a great deal of support from the Faculty Senate and upper administration. In sensing problems earlier than 2006 with the quality of writing at the University of Denver, plans were put into motion to change the perceived deficiencies in student writing. The faculty was very concerned with the possibility of grade inflation in the time leading up to the writing program launch and shortly thereafter but it cannot be overlooked that March 2007 was also the date of Michael Bérubé’s visit to the DU campus (Saitta, 2007). As a well-known public intellectual with, at that time, more than a decade’s worth of books that discuss deeply the issues associated with academic labor and academic freedom, Bérubé’s invitation to speak at DU infers at least some faculty who
were considering the state of labor on their own campus in addition to the student successes that are tied to them.

Colby & Colby (2017) also noted a source for the change when they write the University of Denver “responded to the realities of increased contingent labor within higher education by enacting the MLA recommendations through adding or shifting faculty to fixed contracts or full-time, non-tenure-track positions (FTNTT)” (p. 58). This shift toward FTNTT faculty also indicates a university that was aware of the MLA recommendations. Generally the MLA is associated with the areas of English Studies and language learning, and so it stands to reason that the matriculation of the MLA recommendations from those familiar with them to the upper levels of administration occurred, and when administrators were met with the choices to adopt or reject them the funds were allocated and the program was provisioned: an act that was signed off on by the provost who, at DU, is responsible for the budget.

Evidence of a desire of excellence is also found in other Senate Documents such as the “Teaching Task Force Report” of 2005. In the appendices of that document administrators weigh in with, “as the deans of various schools, colleges, and divisions, we want to raise the standards for teaching and reaffirm its importance to our collective mission at the University of Denver” (p. Appendix A). Even though no precise event was located that precipitated the radical shift from a culture of adjunct teaching, it is clear from the text set—or from other documents that the text set suggested in the Denver case—indicators of a desire to manage risk with researched and tested solutions that favor quality teaching can be seen as an essential component in that radical shift to a overhaul of the labor structure in the Writing program in 2006. It could be argued that the Provost model of financial accountability (Office of the Provost, 2018) at DU could be a major factor in the decision to redesign the writing program because it places the finances in the
chief academic officer rather than a CFO like the CEO model of business that so many other universities are using. It remains, however, that this model exists at DU and that the decision to rely less upon adjuncts and more upon FTNTT faculty was made in that model. This is a decision that favors the academic elements of the choice over the economic ones.

**The community partners.**

Community partnerships can be a great space to lend value to engaged scholarship and teaching. Through community partnerships local partners and their communities can reap a direct benefit and bolster the perception of value both of the program and by extension the university. As discussed by Phelps & Ackerman (2010), “External validation matters; disciplinary status can’t be willed from within, nor can it be solely written into existence” (p. 182). In an environment of rising public distrust wherein the Academy is “no longer trusted to serve the public good through the autonomous practice of its professional expertise, the professoriate is compelled to renegotiate its compact with society” (Phelps L. W., 2002, p. 4). In such circumstances as these, risking the effort to establish these partnerships can elicit the rewards of an educated public, a university perceived as enhancing a public good, and a more engaged vibrant faculty. The risk, however, of throwing open the doors of the “Ivory Tower” and exposing our practices to public scrutiny can often seem a daunting prospect at the best of times. It could change the comfortable status quo. It could allow in exploitation as well as fresh perspectives.

Again the question arises about how contingent faculty can be expected to participate, given that they often have little time and incentive to engage with such outreach. In the cases of UCF, Syracuse, and DU internal and external communities can be seen as contributors to, and beneficiaries of, the success of each program but the instructors and the students always risk
more of themselves than do other stakeholders. Seeking the needs of stakeholder members, and then ways in which FYC classrooms, teachers, and students can partner with members of both internal and external communities to fill those needs, seems to be a vibrant approach to creating new affiliations and successes. It is also time, and attention, intensive, commodities not easy to come by for contingent faculty.

At the level of community engagement, “once we leave the classroom, we're again in ivory tower isolation, unless we actively seek our students in other contexts—particularly the community context” (Cushman, 1996). Denver’s writing program has been marked by awards as a proponent of engaging the community and in turn the community there has benefited from that relationship. At UCF some external sources from the community off campus have offered funding to further the work from which they benefit. At Syracuse, with the discipline of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition evident in her work, Phelps engaged in the Visibility Project, an effort to redefine community work as work that counts as scholarship and not simply service (Phelps & Ackerman, 2010, p. 182). Recognizing the value of engaging the community in which we live—professional, cultural or political—is an expression of empathy and partnership and shows benefits throughout the stakeholder chain. The professional standing with which to engage in this sort of activity is generally not available to contingent faculty. This would explain the uptick in this activity after more of the positions in Composition were converted to FTNTTF.

**The employers.**

In the UCF context particularly, but in other contexts as well, the desire of the potential employer is visible in all of the text sets of this study. UCF President Hitt has stated on many occasions that part of the mission of UCF is to train up highly qualified graduates to that they can
find the careers that they seek. This is directly related to supplying the employers in selected locations and targeted fields with high quality candidates that meet the employer’s needs. In the world today communication, both written and spoken, is a talent very high on the lists of desired traits for employees at the AACU, OJN, and NACE.

At UCF the mission is more toward the Professional and Technical, which means a focus on employers that need Engineers and Programmers. At Syracuse the focus is more toward the Academic Professional life “preparing engaged citizens, scholars, and leaders” (Syracuse University, 2018), which can entail future entrepreneurs, professors, and politicians. At DU the mission tends toward community engagement and citizenship, which can mean working for non-profits, corporations or developing future consultants and business owners that solve the world’s many and varied problems. The differences in mission may account for the transparency, or lack thereof, with which each of the three contexts of this study frame the usefulness of these communication skills but the end result is that the employers are served by stronger more rigorous writing curricula, whether that employment means a corporation, a non-profit, or working for oneself. In some cases, employers are willing to engage with the university by making contributions or creating internships. With such a high value placed on communication, spoken and written, the advanced, current curricula became a necessity at all three institutions in this study. It is also apparent that these advanced curricula require more of the instructor than can be reasonably expected of highly contingent faculty, as suggested by Davies (2012, p. 19) when citing McQuade & Slevin from the Gates report, whereas more stable employment circumstance foster the conditions necessary to properly engage with such advanced curricula.
Heuristic Question 2

*Is the perception of the status of Composition (an art, a service, a skill, etc.) reflected in the labor practices of this context?*

It can be clearly seen that the view of Composition in all three cases is not static or fixed. The contexts are dynamic and so the view of the practice, and the practitioners, of writing instruction will vary and be influenced by factors from within and from without. There are some observable patterns however that are noteworthy in each of the cases with regard to the way the writing programs were viewed, treated, and managed. In all three cases, UCF in 2008, Syracuse in 1996, and Denver in 2006, when a new WPA arrived on the scene, the previous managerial style had a low status view of the activities of FYC and kept it somewhat isolated from other activities in the same larger discipline. Whether this low view and isolation was the result of intention or just following the hegemonic guides that had developed over time is really quite unimportant for the reader here and now. Something of greater importance to the reader now is that each new WPA, as an initial strategy, began immediately to alter the low status view of the FYC programs that they inherited.

At UCF, Elizabeth Wardle began a voluntary pilot to increase the complexity and value of the curriculum and thus began to deepen the knowledge base of the instructors in the program. A little over a year later Wardle explains to the administration that teaching writing isn’t just a service “by focusing broadly on the composition course itself -- what it is, why it exists, and why it is not sufficient to meet the needs of students” (2013, p. 10). This dual effort to raise the perception and value of the writing program internally and externally can be seen as an attempt to improve the perception of composition broadly.
Rank, as Richard Ohmann puts it, “is not power. It is status” (1976, p. 215). As such, in any effort to raise the status of a practice, the status of the practitioner must also be raised. Creating full-time positions that were conducive to attracting and growing instructors to the level of skill the *Writing About Writing* curriculum needed to function properly provided in return a mark of status and a sense of stability for the instructors. The same general pattern can be observed in Denver and in Syracuse.

At Syracuse, Louise Phelps saw the asset she had in the expertise of the instructors and tapped that pool of talent to help normalize the teaching in the writing program with current theory and practices from the discipline of Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing. These instructors trained in the topics of the day and then formed a community of practice even before the FTNTT positions were created. It is much easier to walk down a trail than it is to make one and so the transformation took longer at Syracuse. Having few financial resources to offer, Phelps offered status and power in return for professionalization. The status came in the form of coordinator rank, and the power was Phelps’ own that she delegated, along with responsibility, to those positions. Some of the positions even received release time for the administrative duties. While Phelps struggled within herself with the power structures this move created, the innovative approach allowed Phelps, Lipson, and Himley to materialize status, power, and respect out of a budget reallocation of $44,000 and some creative thinking. Reorganizing the way courses were filled provided the funding needed to begin the program moving toward a distributed model of status and responsibility.

In Denver the university moved enough funding to the writing program to employ nineteen FTNTT instructors with terminal degrees and gave them the title of Lecturer (Colby & Colby, 2017). Other hints could be seen in various documents that show how the status upgrade
began to change how other faculty thought about contingent faculty as well: all the way to a proposal to change the name of the “Adjunct Faculty Award” because, “part-time faculty contribute much to the academic mission, and we need an appropriately titled award that will honor their contributions” (Saitta, 2007). While ultimately, the title was not changed, the consideration of this concern in the Faculty Senate says that a new respect for part-time faculty was indeed brewing at DU. In having higher status the possibility for respect is amplified. For a contingent faculty member the stability that comes with a one year contract is the smallest sign of respect. It is not by any means like tenure, which supports academic freedom and can attract the finest of talent to a university, but it is a beginning that allows contingents to consolidate their diffused service into a career. For the writing program at the University of Denver it was the beginning of a move toward an active, competent, current faculty who value teaching and work to advance the idea of composition as a site of study and space for knowledge making rather than a service industry, a rite of passage, an inoculation against bad writing, or a hoop for students to navigate.

Jacob Babb (2017) writes in “America Is Facing A Literacy Crisis” that it is a long held myth about FYC courses that they are really just there as a remedial measure, to serve as an antidote to bad writing. This is a myth that can be traced back to, among other sites, Harvard and Professors Edward Channing and Adams Sherman Hill providing a remedy for their so-called illiterate freshman boys (Brereton, 1995). In this myth other misnomers are also proliferated and often drastic measures are taken in the face of a literacy crisis that may, or may not, actually exist. The main problem this myth poses for academic labor practices is that of low status.

Anyone can dispense a cure. In reality this remedial view ignores the content and research of an entire field of study and reduces writing instruction to a set of skills that can be
conveniently transmitted from a privileged keeper of knowledge to an empty vessel, as warned against by Paulo Freire (2007). In addition to that status of the profession there were other similarities in the three contexts that want further discussion.

When each of the three programs in this study switched to curricula that demanded expert teaching, whether they recruited from within the pool of contingents, as Syracuse did, or executed a mass hiring to fill the new positions, as DU did, or some combination of the two, all the programs were relocated outside their previous institutional homes. Syracuse was moved to an extra-departmental space that had unique affordances and limitations attached to it before finally ending up as the “Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition” as it is known today (About Us, 2018). Denver’s writing program was also relocated to become an independent writing program in another College (University Writing Program, 2018). UCF’s writing program was transplanted into a brand new “Department of Writing & Rhetoric” but remained in the College of Arts and Humanities (Rhetoric and Writing, 2017). Each move was decidedly different so that it could meet the needs and expectations of its particular university context; however, all of the moves placed the writing programs in a place of greater independence. The new homes and greater autonomy can also be seen as material signs of trust and respect. The autonomy translates to status for the program and for the practice in which it is engaged: Teaching specifically, teaching writing. This autonomy and independence, in turn, translate into a feeling of pride for the practice in which the instructors and lecturers are engaged and motivation to perform their roles at a higher level of energy.

**Heuristic Question 3**

*Is the concept of labor conditions included in the list of what counts as success for this writing program context?*
For UCF, Syracuse, and DU, the answer is yes, because, in the constellation of intertwined problems that were barriers to success, labor conditions seemed to be the one key strand in the metaphorical tangle of yarn that helped unravel the tangled mass that was the writing program into something that could be worked with, reorganized, and transformed into a centerpiece of value for the stakeholders. It is profitable to think of the system of academic labor in an ecological way because “an ecological metaphor provides a mechanism for understanding changes in established symbiotic clusters or the emergence of new symbiotic clusters” (Fleckenstein, Spinuzzi, Rickly, & Papper, 2008, p. 399). The overlapping and integrated goals in this stakeholder community are arranged in this project around the activity of writing program structure and management but the universities in this study have all made writing more available, central, and important by recognizing and promoting its interdisciplinary nature.

Previous labor conditions relegated the students who took FYC courses to teachers that were unfamiliar with current composition theory and practice: teachers that were often too pressed by the conditions of labor to keep up with current scholarship. The WAW curriculum that Wardle instituted to better serve the students required instructors who were well versed in current research and theory. These WAW curricula may “take many forms, but in every manifestation, writing is featured not only as a means of learning and communicating, but also as a field of study, effectively resolving the recurring question of what content belongs in the composition classroom” (McMillan, 2011). To teach writing as a field of study one must have assimilated much of the body of knowledge of the discipline. Wardle argued for a change in course staffing that would allow the new focus of pedagogy in the writing program but knew that this change wasn’t going to be cheap but the expense was a necessity. Of the two choices for building a faculty that was able to engage with the curriculum, Wardle (2013) chose the less
costly. Training up this sort of core staff however “requires changing some material conditions for teachers, so that they have time to engage in professional development and are rewarded appropriately for doing so” (p. 4). This arrangement of logic and ethos in the argument made a connection with her audience and change ensued.

The improved material working conditions, for which Elizabeth Wardle advocated, brought instructors that were at greater liberty to become invested in the university and to become better informed about the declarative knowledge of Rhetoric and Writing. That is not to say that the improvements were, immediate, easy or, foolproof as a result of the improved labor conditions; to the contrary. Most of the study, argumentation, and teaching and learning still lay in front of the program after the labor situation at UCF began to improve. The labor condition progress could be considered the stickiest of the sticking points however but it was reduced precarity through material improvements like added stability, increased pay, and health benefits that served as valuable locomotion for the improvements to the curriculum. This movement from devalued hiring and labor practices, to practices that recognize and reward the expertise that the writing program faculty can contribute, and, in many cases already bring, to the situation, can be marked clearly by the arrival of a new WPA: at UCF, Elizabeth Wardle.

Like UCF, the stories of Denver and Syracuse are before-and-after stories. In the before portion of all three scenes the social setting is a character. In a general way, the setting was a condition of devaluation that had become the standard operating procedure, oppressing a group of people and imprisoning them with the traditions of established behaviors and constraining them with financial fetters calling to mind, all too clearly, allusions to Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. At the turning point of the stories an advocate arrives and stirs the static environment into motion and often, some would argue, into chaos. I hesitate to focus too much on those advocates
for they have articulated, almost in one voice amid this study of their stories, that while they have done things, taken difficult steps, worked to protect their charges, they have not done so alone. In each of these circumstances, with the arrival of these advocates and the crucial expertise that they bring, also came communication with administrators, an awakening of the oppressed, and a culture change that was predicated on the knowledge that the disciplines of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition had developed.

Just a few short years earlier Doug Hesse took the reins of UD’s writing program and helped to rebuild its cogency and relevance by using much improved labor conditions to attract highly skilled instructors with terminal degrees who would be willing and able to share the vision of the writing program at DU as an embodiment of teaching excellence. This embodiment of teaching excellence was not the whole vision either. The program was also envisioned as a site for conducting research and making new knowledge, not only by the faculty but also with, and by, the students. A program like that must value its teachers and while Hesse never explicitly writes the story of this programmatic transformation, as Phelps and Wardle have done, the high value and status placed upon the instructors and the conditions of their labor are plainly written throughout the Writing Program Faculty Handbook Hesse crafted. Provisions for advancement, requirements of good program citizenship, and language reinforcing the culture of professionalism are all contained in the volume. Placed in the forefront on page 15, just after the introduction to the structure of the program which allows the new faculty member a space in the order of things, is a definition of the affordances and expectations of the FTNTT position-- now called Teaching Professor, yet another nod to the importance of status. Some institutions, for reasons not clear to me, cannot hear the term teacher without raising ire but Denver puts a value claim on teaching and so the term works well there. Perhaps the proximity to Professor as the
noun makes teaching as a verb more palatable: teaching Professor. The status Professor conveys seems like something a bit more than preceptor, lecturer, or instructor can imagine for themselves.

At Syracuse, Louise Wetherbee Phelps valued, and fought for, improvement in the material conditions of academic labor for decades. Her fight was sometimes public and at other times not publicized. In several of her writings, Phelps shows a history of creating resources where there seemed to be none available. Money wasn’t the only resource. This may seem shocking to some readers but there are more needs among communities than just financial ones. While admittedly very important, finances cannot stand alone as the answer to every problem. Financial resources tend to feed our individualist drives while Social capital feeds our drives toward collectivism. Social capital can present itself in many forms bearing names like community, equity, stability, peace, comfort, prestige, belonging, creativity, synergy and many other labels.

When she arrived at Syracuse, Phelps set about immediately trying to remedy two conditions related to the work environment that she saw as culturally corrosive. The first was isolation; the instructors didn’t communicate with one another and therefore the sense of community was lacking. Second was the continual subjugation of the faculty to a curriculum and its policy police. A standardized curriculum while easily measurable—but not always accurately so—cannot adapt to dynamic needs very well and, like the one Wardle described at UCF, these curricula become meta-narratives and tend toward stagnation. In response to these two problems Phelps asked the teachers to innovate, collaborate, and communicate to revise their curriculum and teaching practices rather than dropping some new set of regulations on them. This change was translatable to the ideas of choice, agency and ultimately freedom. The product of their labor
was a form of social capital. As the Syracuse composition instructors invested their contributions to the curriculum they were contributing to a vibrant community of teaching and learning. Herein a paradox arises and suggests a point of exploitation that could damage the relationships between faculty members on the tenure track and those who are not, between faculty and administration, and between contingent faculty and more secure faculty. Each member of our stakeholder community that surrounds FYC—by risking what each of us risks and taking the returns on those investments—contributes to a system that may be sustainable but is demonstrably not equitable for all of its stakeholders. The deficiencies of the system of academic labor can, and I claim observably do, limit the returns on our risk-investment for all stakeholders, but the limitations and inequities are felt most acutely nearest the classroom where the highest personal investment takes place. As seen at UCF in this study, the instructors were limited by their material conditions of labor and their perceived second class status and these restrictions directly affect the quality of instruction: which in turn contributed to the limitations on student growth in the discipline of writing. The inequities send ripples out into the chain of stakeholders and they are absorbed incrementally until the effect is nominal, at least on the surface, at the outer edges of the stakeholder circle. Each and every stakeholder contributes to preserving the inequitable but sustainable system by continuing to make use of it.

Please carefully consider the description below. It is not hyperbole, nor is it the brashness of fallacy. Rather, it is the description of the interconnectedness of stakeholders that the interpretation of the data in this project and my own experience together depicts. This reasoned interpretation shows how those of us who depend on the system of academic labor in writing programs are bound to it, and imprisoned by it, even as we perpetuate the system’s use.
For those of us on the tenure lines, teaching and engaged scholarship—often counted as service—are considered less valuable for tenure and promotion and merit reviews. Therefore the pragmatically justified trend for tenure line faculty is to eschew both service and teaching in favor of the science model that privileges research and publication over teaching and service. The paradox exists when tenured faculty frequently—knowingly perhaps, or likely more often, unknowingly—allow the mixed status labor inequality to persist unchecked by opting out of undergraduate teaching. This arrangement frees up these tenured faculty up for activities that “count” for promotion and advancement.

For those of us who are less-contingent faculty, even if we have risen to full-time faculty status, there is also complicity in propping up the inequity of the academic labor system. The arrangement also “allows” FTNTT faculty the freedom to simply teach,—or more recently in academia, there has been a drift toward “allowing” the FTNTT faculty to simply teach, and engage in service, and establish and maintain a research agenda, and participate in professional development. While salaries and wages have risen somewhat, the expectations of the FTNTT have risen in proportion, but the FTNTT faculty still lack the academic freedom and job security that tenure affords. In some cases, the original idea was to replace contingent teaching positions with a more stable FTNTT faculty but others have corrupted this trend to instead replace their institutions’ tenured faculty lines with less expensive FTNTT and diminishing tenure. The FTNTT position which was helping to make academic labor less exploitable is thereby being used to make academic labor more exploitable. It is here that the tenured faculty, the administration and the union must serve as checks and balances for the good of the academy lest they undermine themselves, the students they serve, and the public good of the society which depends upon the academy for innovation and progress.
For those of us at the FTNTT level, every time we agree to teach a 5/5 load with no classroom attendance cap we short change our students and perpetuate a new normal that will serve as the acceptable conditions of labor in writing programs for those that come in after us. To break the chain of absorbing risk into our personal lives on behalf of the system that oppresses and traps us all we might begin to ask: How will the exploitation escalate from this new normal? What will be added to this expectation in leaner times? What does this steal from my students?

Those of us in administrative roles, at all levels, make our contributions to propping up the current, inequitable system when we decline to use our administrative talents of open communication, creative management, and leadership to seek new funding models that do not require growth to be successful. Each time we do what is comfortable because it is less risky for us we shift the risk to other members of our stakeholder community. If we determine, as UCF, Syracuse, DU, and others have, that the most important stakeholder in this community is the student then we must find ways to serve the stakeholder and not worry as much about shareholder principles. Those of us in administrative position could do very great things indeed by privileging conditions in which the student learns over creating the appearance of those conditions for recruiting and marketing purposes. It is a valid question to ask what would become of a university that privileged investment in teaching and learning.

For those of us that are contingent faculty, we too contribute to the perpetuation of our own exploitation. Every time we accept a position at the last moment for poor pay with no benefits we absorb the risk for a system that abuses us. Every time we sit in a parking lot trying to decide which institution to drive to next, we contribute to our own exploitation. It is understandable that those of us who hold contingent status feel most trapped by the system of academic labor also feel the least empowered to institute changes to that system. As we have
seen in the Syracuse writing program, open communication with leadership, excellence in teaching and curricular development, and scholarship in that program has created changes over time.

Many respected scholars like Seth Kahn (2013), Joe Berry (2005), and Eileen Schell (2004) argue that lobbying for union representation is a very effective way to relieve the weight of oppression that the system places upon us. As Paulo Freire (2007) notes however the oppressor is always trapped by the same system that traps the oppressed. Therefore it stands to reason that, if at each role in this system we find, in varying degrees, reliance on the inequitable system, and complicity in our reliance and even, I would argue, a sense of being trapped by our complicity, then the mitigation of this inequity in the current system would be most effectively achieved by efforts from the entire stakeholder community.

With as much as 75% of faculty off the tenure track (Dorfeld, 2014), however praiseworthy it may be to create these new FTNTT designations that help to normalize the conditions and the language of academic labor, one must also question the rate of tenure track lines offered to Writing Studies especially in the light of the recent resolution to re-affirm the commitment to tenure (CAA, 2016). If the provosts collectively express an increased reliance on tenured faculty (Jashick & Lederman, 2017), what is the nature of this reliance and where is this increased reliance made manifest? As Wardle (2013) stated of Writing and Mathematics at UCF, there are some areas of study that seem natural sites for reform and innovation. With writing as a common interdisciplinary activity, and the surveyed provosts’ desire to rely more upon tenure and tenured faculty in the future made public, the question is raised: Are the words of the provosts empty or will they become action that could contribute to a renewed interest in a central practice, such as writing, which connects virtually all disciplines across academia?
The UCF Faculty (2008) stated their position in a resolution as did the Faculty at Syracuse in another which suggests that the university should maintain a greater percentage of tenured and tenure track faculty to keep research as a central focus of Syracuse’s mission and yet these are not being awarded proportionately in the Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition Department. At Denver, Hesse has also expressed a position that indicates that his writing program would be best served by tenured faculty, albeit from rhetoric and composition and not from literature. It remains to be seen whether power differences will persist between the largely literature teaching tenured faculty and the largely non-tenured writing faculty across the discipline. Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition is a field of study with its own researched body of knowledge and the stakeholders surrounding the activity of writing would best be served by a tenured faculty with access to academic freedom. How long should the disparity in status between literature faculty and writing faculty persist with so many stakeholders standing to gain from a tenured professoriate in Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition?

Admittedly, the previous passage was written with a glaring assumption in effect: the assumption that the reader inhabits a program that occupies a position in the majority, a program that has not yet found a cause or, if the cause has been found, has not yet located an agreeable path toward reducing dependence upon contingency and moving toward a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor. Some have begun these moves of course. The concept of labor conditions can be a catalyst for change as seen in the Syracuse University writing program. Labor conditions could become an important linchpin to a program as it seeks to better serve its students with a more demanding curriculum as seen in all three programs in this study.

Idiomatically speaking, it doesn’t matter if the horse is ahead of the cart if the wheels of the cart fall off. It is clear however, that, in a community of stakeholders such as ours, labor
conditions must matter if we hope to correct the inequity in the system that binds us together and
free the discipline to mature further.

**Heuristic Question 4**

*Where is the focus of each argument or announcement in this context that notes or implies the
need for change in the conditions of academic labor?*

Many arguments made over the last half century plainly state that the exploitation of
labor in academia is not a morally acceptable practice. Rhetors and compositionists have made
this argument with an appeal to ethos as our disciplinary organizations like NCTE, CCCC,
CWPA and others have written Resolutions, White papers and position papers from that
authoritative position. And yet The Wyoming Resolution (1988) had its “teeth pulled” (Sledd,
1991). The Portland Resolution (Hult, Joliffe, Kelly, Meade, & Schuster, 1992) is honored at
only select institutions. The Position Statements (College Section Steering Committee, 2010) and
Whitepapers (CWPA, 2015) seem to keep coming out with revisions and now enough people
thought that progress toward improved material conditions of labor for writing teachers was slow
enough that a new resolution was drafted in Indianapolis (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, &
Lynch-Biniek, 2016). The reasons for the perpetual revision and re-adjustment of this string of
documents—which rely heavily on appeals to ethos—are indeed many. And much good has
come from them too, so please, dear reader, do not take this observation of revision and
readjustment as a sign of failure or as call to end such noble work. The fact remains however as
Phelps and Ackerman wrote, our appeal to ethos might be seen as illegitimate by some
audiences,

But to carry any weight or gain purchase in that domain, these facts must be recognized
as the intellectual work of a scholarly community, not merely a service or supplement to
other fields. External validation matters; disciplinary status can’t be willed from within, nor can it be solely written into existence. (Phelps & Ackerman, 2010, p. 182)

Simply regulating ourselves does not win us the authority or autonomy to make the policy changes required to serve the needs of the stakeholders connected to FYC. We require assistance from other stakeholders to make those wholesale changes that will better allow for equity and sustainability in FYC programs and the labor practices that influence its quality. Switching to, or integrating with, another rhetorical appeal may meet with more success with audiences outside the writing program as the morality easily seen by instructors and WPAs doesn’t as effectively touch the motivations of audiences further away from the classroom. That particular appeal is based on an assumption that the audience shares certain emotional experiences in common with the instructors and WPAs. What if these experiences are not held in common?

This moral argument, appealing to ethos and pathos, has also been made to varying degrees by authors and activists such as Ohmann (1976) to Miller (1993) and Schell (Schell, Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers, 1998) with books released into the public marketplace of ideas. These arguments are echoed by McQuade & Slevin (Davies, 2017) and Witte & Faigley (1983) in their reviews of writing programs, the various conditions in them and effectiveness of them. In even more recent offerings like Johnson, Kavanagh, & Mattson (Steal This University, 2003), McClure, Goldstein, & Pemberton (Labored, 2017), and Welch & Scott (Composition in the Age of Austerity, 2016) the reader finds essay after essay in these collections that contain these sorts of arguments. The argument of morality and humanity in academic labor has been only marginally successful and yet it seems to be the main of the case against the ever-expanding pattern of exploitation.
There even exists a subgenre of analysis of adjunct horror stories (see (Fulwiler & Marlow, 2014) (Woolf, 1997) (LaFrance & Cox, 2017) (Anson & Jewell, 2001)). Susan Wyche (2017) declares “maybe it’s time for the anonymous teachers of institutions today to speak out about the new realities of teaching and learning in postsecondary writing, in league with their fellow workers in other disciplines” (p. 13). There is a growing body of fiction and creative nonfiction as well that condenses the experience of the contingent faculty member into a unified powerful appeal to pathos ((Haber, 2013); (Kudera, 2016)). And yet the trend to replace tenure lines with contingent faculty positions continues to accelerate.

If we seek more than commiseration and a raising of awareness, another audience we also want to reach with our arguments for equity and sustainability in academic labor lives outside the classroom, outside the program, and outside the department: upper administration. If they manage their organization on an economics-based model, this is an audience who tries to separate their work life and their personal life specifically so that they can resist the appeal to pathos in their work lives and in doing so appear strong and less gullible. “The influence of economic thought, though often unacknowledged, has pervaded the teachings of management schools in recent decades; and in economic thought there is no place for persuasion” (Legget & Rosanas, 2008). In economics-based managerial models it is necessary to the performance of administrative duties to reduce decision making to fact weighing. In examining the arguments made by the three writing programs we can see other possible appeals that have separately or in concert with other arguments, met with success.

At UCF, Elizabeth Wardle made, and joined in on, many arguments in securing resources for the writing program. She saw that many stakeholders shared certain goals and used those shared goals, combined with her skills in assessment and knowledge in Rhetoric, to make a case
that the administration would be able to receive. One can see the power of *identification* at work as Wardle explained to the administrators how the writing program wanted the same things as the other stakeholders: to turn out critically thinking competent writers. If we consider that the appeal to pathos may be intentionally blocked by the filters, or terministic screens, of administrative listeners, it frees us to make other arguments that can circumnavigate those screens and reach the target audience. Since the current arguments can’t be heard, and therefore fail to persuade, new arguments that can be understood by our administrative stakeholders must be developed.

Appeals to logos and ethos together seemed effective in the case of Syracuse University. The Gates Report spoke authoritatively about the deficiencies in the writing program and the reasons that these oversights should be corrected. McQuade & Slevin informed that report as did the institution’s own investigation to the conclusions that Syracuse University could not, “either morally or intellectually, defend building such an ambitious program on the backs of grossly underpaid part-timers” (Davies, 2017, p. 218). This argument was received because it prompted the hiring of Phelps as a new WPA with tenure however; the administration missed the main point of the admonishment in the “Gates Report” as they began a program of curricular revision with an entirely contingent staff. The arguments continued to be made by Phelps and others, in a variety of styles, for 30 years until the essence of the vision of the “Gates Report” materialized. It is difficult to deny however, that logic played a central role in that initial movement toward labor policy reform.

At Denver, although no complete historical account or ethnographic profile exists in the texts immediate to this study, logical argument markers can be seen in DU’s transformation story as well. The sequence of events alone serves as an additional heuristic as one observes that
Douglas Hesse was given charge of the writing program in 2006 (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 60) and by October 20\textsuperscript{th} of that year he was able to report to the Faculty Senate that 19 new lecturers with terminal degrees had been hired, divided into working teams to support students in the writing center and faculty in a WAC/WID style initiative (University of Denver Faculty Senate, 2006). It was also reported that,

The program is establishing writing-intensive Core courses and is identifying individual departments and programs in which to develop intensive plans for writing in the majors. The program is planning a longitudinal study of undergraduate writing at DU, tracing a cohort of students for four years. The Writing Program is developing ways to feature excellent undergraduate writing and will have a grand opening November 2-3. (Faculty Senate Minutes, 2006, p. 4)

This is a list of items so vast that no human could have pulled this off in the two months from the beginning of the term to the report he delivered to the Faculty Senate. Approval for each of these initiatives in the old system under the English Department would have taken much longer, maybe even years. This rapid succession of initiatives to overhaul the University Writing Program had to be approved by the Provost and the new administrative structural location of the program allowed for more direct contact and conversations between the director, Hesse, and the new Provost, Greg Kvistad. There is no record of those conversations but one can safely assume that the planning for all of these initiatives was discussed in detail with the Provost, and that Hesse’s arguments were informed by the positions he had already made known in his published work.

An excerpt from Hesse’s “2005 CCCC Chair’s Address: Who owns writing?” should offer some insight into the mindset of the director of the new Writing program at DU:

...
We've come to shorthand these familiar arguments, grounded in theory and fueled by despair with the conditions for adjuncts, as the abolitionist movement, a very historically charged frame. The term is hyperbolic to the point of being un-ethical, promising the end of enslavement for both students and teachers, trading the title to the plantation of English 101 for new intellectual acres. These new lands may include a graduate program or a vertical undergraduate one, even a major, multiple courses, not one or two. The richest programs of our futures feature writing in a welter of circumstances and genres, creative, journalistic, and professional, as well as civic and academic. They feature work in design-visual and aural as well as verbal. They fully imagine students in complicated worlds of school and work and politics, yes, but also passions, relationships, and art. They teach writing to these students and not to compliant essay generators producing scripts for Intelligent Essay Assessment. (p. 347)

It is tempting to cite other documents like Denver’s 2005 report from their Task Force on Teaching, as evidence at DU for a move away from contingency as a path toward better curricula and teaching quality but alas the prime document for such an observation is rife with language that indicates hegemonic thinking patterns present in the task force that wrote it. All through the document suggestions are made to reduce workloads and increase compensation for teacher excellence as well as a mention of a system of rewards for excellence in teaching, but then, in the area of adjunct treatment, it becomes clear that the task force did not intend most of that talk of rewards or decreased workloads to apply to adjuncts. The following passage makes clear that the writers did not understand the experience of contingency or contingent work very well:

The classroom teaching evaluation process should be applied to all teaching faculty members, regardless of status: tenure-line, non-tenure line lecturers, and serial adjuncts.
For non-tenure line faculty, the enhanced reviews would occur every five years if applicable. These teaching practices may be expected of tenure-line faculty, but not of other faculty, depending on the unit. For faculty whose single role on campus is to teach a specific class (adjunct) or for a limited time (1 year lecturer) it may not be appropriate to “raise the bar” in terms of expectations of teaching performance outside the classroom.

(Teaching Task Force Report, 2005, p. 14)

This report actually does suggest that contingent faculty should not be expected to teach well and yet they are provided a place in a university that wishes to be known far and wide for its commitment to good teaching: an interesting dualism. By its allowances for serial adjuncts the document could be seen as condoning serial contingency. The possibility does exist, of course, that this wording was an attempt to support tenure and encourage tenure lines but it surely did no favors for the poor “serial adjuncts” that will show their contingency driven limitations in this self-reporting system that favors permanent faculty. No mention is made of where the contingents will get the time to provide this self reporting documentation nor if any excellence reported will result in a path to a full-time existence. But it must also be acknowledged that this same document lists, as a primary implementation resultant from the report, that the university should concentrate efforts into “development of the University Teaching Professorship Program” (p. 25). In the mean time, treating contingents as inferior may not have been the intent or the report but it could well have been the effect.

The successful arguments were mixed ones. It would be best not to disregard the appeal to pathos as it often reaches the audience even if they refuse to admit it. Knowing, however, that administrators have more public risks, it is unlikely that pathos, a more private appeal for the audience, will be the swaying factor to drive the change. Knowing also that, in Rhetoric and
Composition, “even as our field matures, we perversely have less respect” (Hesse D., 2005, p. 347) we must not rely solely upon ethos for success. This leaves a healthy dose of logos backed by current data, coupled with elements of ethos and pathos as the path I suppose for Denver and readily see evident in the documents of both Syracuse and UCF.

Often those in the Humanities imagine administrators as a breed apart, a wholly different creature with no concern for humans or human interactions, harboring only the desire to make policy that affords them more power and influence. It is only when we take the empathetic view of the concerns that administrators face that we can begin to see what their goals and motivations are. In truth, unless we learn to see from the administrator perspective, and to hold their needs and hopes next to our own, we can never come close to forming arguments that can reach the target audience in their seats of power. Yet, they must reach those seats, in order to show them that there are sites of common ground that we can occupy together, to achieve shared goals.

Once common ground is established, just as in Rogerian forms of argument, we can work toward common goals and begin to negotiate our differences as stakeholders work within that authentic empathy (Teich, 1987). To state it plainly, instructors and WPAs need to see what administrators see, from where they stand, if those instructors and WPAs ever expect to know what the administrators will be able to hear, from way over here in the classroom, the place from which teachers and instructors must stand to speak. If the people with the power cannot see how serving teachers and teaching can accomplish the goals and fill the needs of their positions, change will never come and the ecology will collapse. If however communication becomes more regular and WPAs can argue for change that will serve the entire stakeholder chain, in a way that administrators can understand, the opportunity for stabilization of equity in the academic labor environment and steps toward sustainability can begin to take place. A sensibly minded WPA
might restate this call to empathy in this very Rogerian way: Before we can teach them to see us fairly we must teach ourselves to see them fairly as well.

**Heuristic Question 5**

*How can Kairos be seen (past, present, future) in this context as a contributor toward locating an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor in writing and composition programs?*

*Kairos is not chronos. Chronos is the ancient Greek word that refers to the passage of one moment to the next in an orderly fashion while kairos speaks of an alignment of events, circumstances, and other factors that create eddies and hollows in time in which the opportunity for speech can nestle presently before moving on. Kairos “generally refers to the way a given context for communication both calls for and constrains one's speech” (Silva Rhetoricæ, 2016). The expanded discussion of kairos here is not limited to sequences and timings alone but also allows for the consideration of unlocked opportunities and the possibilities that may be found beyond them. These untapped possibilities that can only be accessed sequentially, might compel action, or open dialogues, or conversely, might keep some consequences locked away by a choice not to act or not to speak. Idiomatically, in addition to the road not taken, this kind of discourse of kairos even hints at the idea that you can never go home again, meaning the possibility that a choice opens one door and closes another. As seen in Figure 5, if we imagine the archer’s arrow as the speech act we must propel and the target as the desired outcome or*
purpose of that speech act, then kairos in that moment when all the rings we are asked to pass the arrow through align. At that kairotic moment we must loose the arrow or the circumstantial conditions won’t be met and the outcome will fail. It is in that moment that we must have the arrow notched, the breathing steady, the eyes open, and the bow properly aimed.

In “Intractable Problems” (2013) Elizabeth Wardle’s section on Kairos lists, in the first sentence, herself, the Dean-and-Vice-Provost, the University President, the State of Florida, and also makes nods toward the students and the instructors by naming the classes they inhabit as suspected sites for improvement. That was in one sentence. How much more complex is the true nature of a site of human interaction, with a stakeholder chain the length of the one for FYC, when examined more deeply? How many wheels and gears must align and engage to make work happen? How many alignments of purpose and opportunity must align in a system like this one to allow for a moment of transition toward lasting value? What must align in the stakeholder community to improve the material conditions of labor for the instructors of FYC thereby raising the level of returns for all stakeholders in the community?

If the change toward a rhetorically based curriculum begins from the administrative area of the stakeholder chain, without first creating the capability, through training and hiring, to execute that curriculum it will surely result in a significant waste of time, effort, money and influence when the curriculum fails to produce the desired result. If the change comes from the classroom side of the stakeholder chain but meets with an administration that undervalues the practice and practitioners of the discipline of composition, the movement is also blocked. Thereby writing instructor dissatisfaction in the material conditions of labor, exploitation of that labor, and disservice to the students are likely to remain. All three writing programs studied here
were able to seize upon convergences of such fleeting moments of opportunity. They accomplished this through a number of similar moves and inherited conditions.

1. They all overhauled, or replaced, the old curriculum in the program with a newer one that was based upon current Rhetoric and Composition research, disciplinary knowledge bases, and previous experiences. In each case, the new curricula served the students and to varying degrees met with some resistance among the instructors.

The new curricula at UCF demanded rhetorically trained instructors to make the WAW curriculum work. Among the moving targets were:

- a pilot study in the UCF writing Program,
- the Florida laws that demanded that recent tuition increases be used to bolster undergraduate learning,
- the UCF President responding to other stakeholders requests for better writers in the workplace,
- and other windows of opportunity

The openings all swung into view at the right time for Wardle to shoot the arrow—previously constructed and recently notched—through those moving openings to strike the target of “micro-level classroom practices with macro-level disciplinary knowledge to be centrally important to our field’s development and our students’ learning” (Wardle, 2013, p. 1). Some of the contingent faculty there were recruited and trained rhetorically as the pilot became a program but some could not or would not make the change, perhaps distrustful of further exploitation.

At Syracuse Phelps (1995) also reports this saying that “many teachers in my program were angry, anxious, and resistant to the expectations of professionalization” (p. 312). The instructors even sent a letter to Phelps, the WPA, indicating that the work was more difficult and time consuming and that they would require more compensation for doing the
professionalized labor. It could be surmised that the increased compensation might allow some of the contingent faculty to pull back from another commitment at other institutions to better serve the new demands at Syracuse—a scenario an administrator might not initially see not having lived the contingent experience.

The new curriculum at the University of Denver, based in themed courses, also came with an almost wholesale change in the teaching staff of the writing program. That kairotic moment is one that occurs very rarely and is not a guarantee of success. In some cases like in the K-12 public schools of Youngstown Ohio (Carr Smyth, 2015) the blame for poor results was erroneously placed upon the faculty and not upon the curricula and the same practices were revived with a new cast. From the contingent faculty’s perspective this moment of kairos could well have seemed unjust. This feeling is comparable to the ordeal of many Wheelock College Faculty and staff involved in a merger (Glatter, 2018). While the outcome that the administrators desire will likely have many potential benefits, the window of opportunity slammed shut in soul crushing quickness for the adjuncts who staffed the old program and they were not in a position to take advantage of it.

This sweeping curricular and staffing transition at DU eliminated the resistance to the new curricular choices and facilitated a move of the program to rest close to a Provost that was in transition to a new leader. If the Provost position had not been in flux the change may have occurred very differently if it happened at all. Many moving parts, over years and not just weeks or months, had to converge for this successful curriculum to come into use. Hesse’s curricular framework was already constructed, as it was in UCF with Wardle, but like Phelps in the Syracuse writing program context, Hesse allowed and encouraged the input
of the new FTNTT faculty members, lending the new FYC program flexibility and variety
that DU’s former FYC program lacked.

2. Each program experienced closer communication with the university level of
administration through administrative relocation of the writing programs the new WPAs led.
Through this realignment at UCF the Writing program became a department with
opportunities to enlist WAC efforts and Writing Center activities in ways that helped the
program support the university. This new potential for service in support of faculty moved
the writing program’s image away from the low status that served a gatekeeper function and
inoculated students against bad writing and took steps toward a higher status role of an
active partner in the academy. Proximity may also have something to do with the status bump
at UCF. As Hesse (2012) alludes to in his essay “Who Speaks for Writing?”, humans have
long held that positions closer to the source — water, thrones, lineage, etc. — are more
desirable ones. Access to needed resources and prestige occupy those spaces more densely
nearer the source.

This positioning also played a significant part in the successes at the University of
Denver. Even with the window of the Provost’s transition open, the movement of the
program to a new space, outside the Department of English, must be seen as a very real
factor that contributed directly to the success of the program. The move was a window that
facilitated the hiring of new FTNTTF trained in composition and rhetorical knowledge that
was essential for the new curriculum to serve the students. This wholecloth creation must
have seemed more like a fresh design rather than looking like a new patch on an old garment
that could have well been the case without the relocation. The abruptness, with which the
new chain of administrative communications was established, although painful and even
devastating for many of the former contingent faculty at DU, can also be seen as reducing the overall pain and suffering of the program which was very different from the prolonged relocation for Phelps at Syracuse.

The alignments at Syracuse are mostly spelled out in Davies’ (2017) words about the relocation of the writing program at Syracuse:

   Its independence happened through an alignment of the Gates Report chain-of-command administrative recommendation, the embedded disinterest for writing instruction by many of the faculty in the English Department, and the actions of Phelps, Himley, Lipson, and future faculty administrators, who led the program as if it were an independent academic department, even [though] it was not officially recognized as such by Syracuse University until years later. (Not Just Teachers, 2017, p. 219)

The timing used to make the relocations happen was slightly different but, in all three cases, the end result was a writing program that could better serve the university by being more closely associated with the university instead of being considered, when considered at all, as some backwater sub-division of a nonessential discipline. The reduction of isolation from the main operation of the university can expose the WPA to new ways that Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition can be employed to support the students, staff, and public image of the university community. Without that sort of kairotic alignment, engineered, manufactured, or naturally occurring, Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition and their FYC programs may still be toiling away in obscurity and obscene material conditions of labor.

3. In each writing program a vertical writing model, founded in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing research, was adopted by each of the three new WPAs studied here. The conversion
from an older model—literary based, one or two course requirement—into a new model that
supports students across time and disciplines. This vertical model that recognizes that the
traditional two-course sequence could never accomplish what it was supposed to accomplish
is a commonality among these three successful programs. These programs each had different
windows that had to open to allow the shift but the successful action in all three cases
depended on the open window to begin the transition to the vertical program model.
The general shape of the vertical model seems to include a course or two for new college
students, not for the purpose of mitigation of errors in writing, but rather to serve as an
introduction to the varied activity that writing is. Following the FYC sequence, and perhaps
an intermediate or advanced composition course, the vertical model relies partly on WAC
initiatives to help the disciplines carry writing as a practice into the content areas through
writing intensive disciplinary courses in each major. Additionally, the real shift in the view of
composition, from the outside, is when Minors and Majors are added in Writing and
Composition and eventually one would presume Graduate programs also develop in
Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition.

This vertical education model based in writing is a radical departure from the FYC
programs that had been seen in English departments for decades and geared to non-English
majors who needed help to remedy their writing skills. The older way seems flat in
comparison and yet, even in those days, it was tacitly understood that English was necessary
to the university by virtue of its work in administering FYC. The new model resembled
somewhat the literature studies model that many English Departments have come to
privilege. This new development of relocation with verticality as well now raises an
important question for English departments: How will the shrinking enrollments in the
English majors and minors effect a new-model English department that does not house FYC? Perhaps an object of future study to answer that question could be to ask how the UCF, Syracuse, and UD English departments have responded to their new environments.

At UCF the justification for a Department of Writing and Rhetoric included establishing content degrees. These degrees would serve as the backbone “in a new Department of Writing and Rhetoric that would also include undergraduate and graduate writing degrees. This new department and its initiatives came into existence on July 1, 2010” (Wardle, 2013). The elements of kairos that made this verticality possible are tied largely to the realignment of the power structures in the three programs of this study. The power structures changed after the administrative location of each program became relocated outside the purview of the English Department. This movement changed the status of the programs and opened up new avenues for using writing and composition as a unifying activity across campuses by tapping into the interdisciplinary nature of writing. The value added to students’ employability and job performance, and the activism and amity in communities that good writing can foster, continues to open space for more writing program development as demand for minors, and double-majors, rises.

Interestingly then, once the kairotic moment for administrative realignment opened other windows, and WPAs, university administrators and other actors had seized upon those opportunities, the disciplinarity of the practice of writing has become, itself, another window of opportunity for other changes in, the business world, in the disciplines, in academic labor practices and demands, and even in the way that graduate programs must now be considered in the reflected light of this new vertical Writing Program structure.
4. Each writing program became a site of research not only for the faculty but, in many cases, also for students. Part of the disciplinarity of modern American Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition has long been that writing is an activity that merits study. Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2015) place this concern foremost in their text when they write in Chapter 1:

Writing is created, produced, distributed, and used for a variety of purposes. In this sense, it is an activity in which individuals and groups engage. However, the production, consumption, circulation, distribution, and use of writing are also areas of inquiry. Researchers in a number of fields (including, but not limited to, rhetoric and composition, linguistics, and literacy studies) investigate questions about writing. (Adler-Kasner & Wardle, 2015, p. 15)

The description of writing here indicates an ongoing practice not a new development so one might ask how kairos can be seen in an ongoing practice. Through the decision to hire a new WPA, with tenure, the opportunity to implement a new curriculum presented itself. Even though many windows had opened and closed before this time to create the context that Wardle entered in 2008, just for discussion in this section I label these events Aperture 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Wardle’s pilot study could be seen as Aperture 4 and the class size study could then be called Aperture 5. Then Aperture 6 can be seen as the introduction of the need for professionalized academic labor to fulfill the demands of the rhetorically centered curriculum. Without Apertures 1 thru 5, the opportunity to improve the material conditions of labor

![Figure 6. Apertures of Opportunity](image)
through changing the nature of what the positions at UCF required of the instructor never arises. This is of course a simplistic analysis, and a very linear model, that takes relatively few factors into consideration as it is for explanatory purposes. A more comprehensive model would appear far messier and mirror the complex rhetorical situations it represents. Through this interpretation however the inextricable messiness of the endeavor of FYC comes into focus showing a sequence of events and their connected opportunities and insurmountable constraints, even as and presents itself again, now, in this study, as another site of study: thus we could add a 7 to Figure 6.

Similar results came about in Syracuse and, while no one individual can, nor should, be accorded sole accolades for the successes of a program; “individuals do impact the identities of writing programs, but the programs themselves are artifacts of collective, collaborative action” (Davies, 2012, p. iv). The solutions that arose on Syracuse’s long path to a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor stemmed from Phelps conviction that programs are unique contexts. Davies later reports, “instead of one-size-fits-all solutions, Phelps argues for local design, an inventive process that takes into account local stakeholders and constraints to come up with a realistic plan to ethically include part-time instructors in a writing program’s teaching faculty” (2012, p. 65). Finding one’s own path necessitates assessment, evaluation, and study. This was not top down mandate but a consolidated effort of many complete with many internal and external assessment reports that I argue are indeed scholarly work whether they find publication in a journal or not.

The mostly FTNTT writing program faculty and DU conducted a longitudinal study and conclusions have been reached but the proclivities of publishers have not yet leaned toward that study’s publication. The program has other ongoing research as well as can be seen on
their [website](Research and Other Activities). As a part of what it means to practice Rhetoric, Writing and Composition in a program as a FTNTT faculty member the Instructors, Lecturers, Professors of the Practice, and Teaching Professors, by whichever designation their university refers to them, show that professors, by their very inquisitive nature will endeavor to support the exploration of their disciplines through research and inquiry. This particular point is another point of possible exploitation of academic labor as less contingent FTNTT faculty might be expected to engage in these time-consuming activities without proper compensation and release time if they happen to be at an institution that does not allow unions or negotiated protections in their contract. Rather than forbidding the activity to avoid the possibility of exploitation however, it should be made clear that “research opportunities, incentives, and support in these positions will provide a type of professional development for faculty who might want to seek tenure-track jobs later in their careers” (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 68). This could rectify Hesse’s (2017) assessment of a flat horizon for FTNTT Faculty.

Even if this tendency to engage in inquiry makes FTNTT and more contingent faculty vulnerable it serves as confirmation of Boyer’s “mosaic of talent” (2016, p. 77) and might even be essential to the discipline. This tendency toward exploration is also evident in Colby& Colby (2017)—both FTNTT faculty—when they state: “simply put, for research within composition to continue, research and the teaching of first-year writing need to go hand in hand” (p. 59). So in this sense not only was a culture of research and study of difficult messy problems part of the initial success at DU but it is also essential to the future of the enterprise of teaching writing.
5. All three contexts began working to orchestrate promotion and rank designations for FTNTT faculty. With the changeover to FTNTT faculty, whether it took a well considered decision or it took a good long time to complete, new windows of opportunity began to present themselves, sometimes as problems and at other times as co-developing conditions that seemed to be unrelated to the shifting toward less contingent labor. When the shift toward rhetoric and composition in FYC in these programs began the need for more instructors who were rhetorically trained and steeped in composition research and pedagogy also presented itself as a condition for success in the new curriculums, the responsibilities of the new FTNTT faculty grew. With that growth in responsibility, there also came a sense of professionalism and a feeling that there might be a place in composition that one could make a career that valued teaching. When the question of career compositionists arises then cohabitating within that concept are the ideas of professional fulfillment, advancement, and promotion.

Each of the universities in this study handled the process of ensuring those affordances slightly differently but each one found, relatively early, that there were concepts that had to be addressed if they were going to retain the expensive new hires and realize a return on investment from the training and professional development that had been provided to their writing programs. At DU the texts show that manageable teaching loads, reasonable enrollment caps on composition courses, decent pay, travel funds for research and conventions were all among the valuable affordances that were offered (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 60). In Hesse’s (2016) Faculty Handbook there are also well-defined descriptions of what it means to be FTNTT as well as a definition of ranks, and pathway for advancement.
through each rank, from Teaching Assistant Professor and Teaching Associate Professor, to Teaching Professor (pp. 15-44).

At Syracuse the texts told a story of Phelps and an initiative at the university Faculty Senate, in the Academic Affairs Committee, pushing for those same sorts of rank and promotion affordances that support professionalized status (Academic Affairs Committee of the University Senate, 2016). A quick peek at the SU Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition shows many moves, creating many different titles over the years from Lecturers, and Professional Writing Instructors to, more recently developed, a Teaching Professor series. And similarly at UCF leveled designations of Instructor and Lecturer abound where once there was little aside from adjuncts. Here UCF too changed the rankings across the university to make accommodation for the new class of professionals. Each program has also won multiple awards for teaching excellence which can easily be argued as related to this professionalized teaching faculty status. I believe that President John Hitt of UCF would agree with my statement that these windows were all directly linked. Without the need, there would have been no development of these ranks and likely no award winning writing program.

6. All of these WPAs had been brought in with tenure to make changes. This is the most obvious commonality in which one can see need and timing come together to start an entire chain reaction of kairotic moments. If the Boards, Councils and Presidents had taken their decisions more lightly when they hired the new WPAs in their respective universities, I would be talking about some other site of study, or may have even taken a different topic. That is to say, I posit that the common choice to grant tenure or seek a tenured professor to serve as WPA in each case—chronologically, Phelps at Syracuse, Hesse at the University of
Denver, and Wardle at the University of Central Florida—successively informed and impacted upon the performance of the next and afforded each WPA the authority and autonomy to take chances instituting a curriculum that was based upon the body of research in Rhetoric and Composition that they might not have otherwise been able to take. Every window of opportunity in each program stems from that one requisite choice to ensure tenure at the helm of the program.

A Summary in Metaphor

Any ecology—social, professional, or otherwise—must possess certain components if it hopes to survive. In nature, environments form around two components in particular: the resources of food and water. Rather than attempting to inject these resources into a constructed environment, as humans often do, in nature ecologies develop with those resources as the foundation of their ecological balance. Resisting the urge to assign labels to corresponding components in the writing program ecology, one can see the allegorical comparison easily enough. The resources for life to thrive must be present in the environment for the ecological balance to exist. In many locations temporary ecologies exist in times of plenty and then collapse when threatened by drought or other disasters that interrupt the supply of resources. Likewise the resources of academic labor ecologies cannot be based upon intermittent supplies of resources such as occur when enrollments determine staffing. Elsewise, in times of plenty, the population using those resources will multiply to unsustainable levels and then, in leaner times, the laborers dependent upon those resources suffer, become transient, or turn upon one another to survive.
CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THIS PROJECT

In this chapter I discuss how the examination of selected texts from three successful writing programs informed the answers to my research questions in this project and I also offer a categorical summary of those answers. In addition, I discuss the limitations, indications, and implications of this project, and discuss how this project relates to other existing research. That discussion is presented alongside recommendations for readers and researchers. I also explain the contribution of this research to the field of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition before finally offering a reflection on the project, process, and product that is *The Phenomenon of Academic Labor in 21st Century Composition: A Heuristic for Textual Analysis.*

Research Questions and Findings

I arrange the discussion of the finding here in another way leaning back to my original research questions for a frame with which to discuss those data and their interpreted meanings.

**RQ1.**

*How can a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs teach us about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor in writing programs?*

I started with a problem that many people have oversimplified. The ecologies of academic labor in writing programs seemed, to me, to be unsustainable because they appeared to be less than equitable with well up to 75% of the faculty on average being classified as contingent labor nationwide (Dorfeld, 2014). Sifting through the papers that link this trend of increasingly contingent appointments to causes like the financial crisis of 2008 (Laurence, 2014)
and the many narratives that seemed to be highly descriptive of details about the symptoms offered little hope and no viable solutions. However, the analysis of the public documents, which stem directly from the successful writing programs at UCF, Syracuse, and DU, yielded many ideas about moves that could be made to approach an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor. The short answer to, *how these kinds of data can be made to teach us*, is summarized in this: when using carefully constructed heuristic questions, such as the ones constructed and applied in this project, trends of successful moves and actions have been identified and located in the writing program contexts that produced the texts. Since those texts are artifacts produced amid the human interaction surrounding the specific writing program contexts they can serve as a kind of record of the moves and patterns of moves experienced in those writing programs. In some cases these moves can be seen across two or even all three of the contexts hinting at some level of transferability of the moves that proved successful, albeit with unique adaptations that marked each program.

I have learned through this project that, when humans interact in an academic setting that there is often a record of their experiences left behind in the texts they produce, both intentional and unintentional, that can be assembled and read critically in order to gain insight into the human interactions that produced the texts. The texts will vary based upon the contexts in which they were produced, and the framework in which the *group* of texts is constructed. The focus on the *how-ness* of my first research question is answered, in this project, by a multi-stage process of

1. Constructing a heuristic,
2. Gathering relevant textual artifacts,
3. Applying the questions to the texts,
4. Interpreting the answers against experience
This methodological process has been largely successful in making the sets of texts become teachers from which researchers, such as I, can learn.

First: through the use of a carefully constructed, reasonably focused, set of heuristic questions that target the area of study I was able to reduce partiality toward the texts. Constructing the questions first, before seeking texts to interrogate, allowed me to focus on reading for relevance during the selection of texts without allowing the texts to limit or influence the heuristic questions. The separate heuristic construction allowed my reading, in the text set selection process, to seek out labor-relevant texts asking only, “does this have enough to do with academic labor to be included?” without worrying about the implications of the text, because the heuristic that would discover those implications had already been constructed.

The second step in the process was to select relevant texts that were related directly to the writing program context to be studied. In this project I retained the option to add, to a text set, one or two extra documents that emerged in the research during the application of the heuristic questions. As in archival research, and grounded theory research as well, one artifact or data point often leads to others, and so it seemed prudent to afford the text sets the ability to admit another source if it were central to the context under study or the questions being asked. Any future research that adopts this particular heuristic inquiry method would do well to listen to the texts, for each time we pick them up they are speaking and, with each analytic read, we may be better able to hear them than we were the last time we held them. Because our collected human experience is always changing, it follows that the analytic and interpretive power we bring to any given reading of a text is always growing as well. It is in our minds that the texts speak to one another. Listening to the archives, and the artifacts and texts we have selected, may mean taking reading recommendations from them.
Third, the application of the heuristic questions to the sets of texts may be done by question, across contexts, for a different reading than I have done here. I intentionally first applied all the questions to each context separately hoping to gain insight into each writing program context individually rather than seeking insight into each question across contexts. I did however combine all data during the interpretation phase as I sought commonalities and patterns of difference in the ways each writing program solved similar problems and met similar challenges. It should also be noted that one context and a greater number of texts could also produce a different kind of result as this would yield something like an intensive profile or a history of a single context. I would add that histories and profiles of single writing program contexts are the richest sorts of text I encountered in this project and the field could surely use more of them. These histories often contain more direct conversation about the program than other more operational texts that simply conduct business. The purpose of the histories is to describe and explain rather than to accomplish a task. The histories also enfold a stretch of time, like a film, whereas the other genres serve as a marker of a moment, like a photograph.

Finally, a researcher’s interpretation of the data, in this case text sets, transforms the data from a set of isolated instances, pulled from frozen moments in the history of a single context, into either recognizable shared patterns of human experience, or recognitions of events unique to one context. In this study specifically, the interpretation recognized shared patterns, and distinctiveness, that pointed the writing programs that produced the texts toward success in the movement toward the equity and sustainability of academic labor in writing programs.

This systematic, analytical, and interpretive approach answered the question of how these historical texts, and the data within them, can be made accessible and useful to those of us—like instructors, WPAs, Program Directors, Department Chairs, College Deans, Provosts, Presidents,
Chancellors and Lawmakers—who desire greater, or continued, success for the writing programs in which they share a stake. Since these needs for different kinds of success often arise among very different stakeholders amid mercurial times, using this process approach as a way to see into times of change in the past, the successes that arose from that change, and sometimes the erosion of those successes, we can, in looking back, discern some successful paths into the future, which I name later in this chapter. Please note that this process is an examination of contexts and one must allow that past performance is not a guarantee of future success. This process can however, even if it cannot manufacture a rubric for success, make the data that is available more useful as a source of inspiration and guidance by revealing context specific, and sometimes generalizable, meaning hidden in the data. This process accepts that there is no one size fits all solution to the woes created by inequity in academic labor systems but leaves open the possibility that inspiration from the success of others can be adapted, through invention, to fit other contexts that seek to move toward similar successes. The How of the first research question is answered: by use of this multi-stage process a researcher can arrange textual data effectively enough to find some of the meaning within the human interactions of the specific context one wishes to study.

**RQ2.**

*What are the specific contexts that existed, the strategies that were employed, and the measures of success used in the writing programs at the University of Central Florida, Syracuse University, and the University of Denver, as it relates to developing a more equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor?*
**Contextual conditions.**

In each of the three contexts, (the UCF, Syracuse, and University of Denver writing programs) certain contextual similarities existed. Before each program was recognized for excellence by CCCC, and subsequently by the writers of the Indianapolis Resolution, all three programs were housed under their respective Departments of English. The programs, for different reasons, were not practicing teaching of writing in a way that was consistent with contemporary research and disciplinary bodies of knowledge at that time the need for change was discovered by administrative inquiry. Each of these writing programs were administratively relocated, new WPAs were brought in, new curricula were adopted, the expertise to execute those curricula was acquired and/or developed, the material conditions of labor improved in the writing programs, the students were better served, and the excellence of the new writing programs were recognized on many levels. This chain of stakeholder rewards does not stop there either. The innovation that arises from these professionalized programs engages community partners and serves the needs of the local and regional economies by providing the best instruction possible to the students it teaches. The reputations of these universities rise among future cohorts of students as friends and relatives graduate with traits that employers want and need, like good writing and critical thinking. The successes in each of these cases arose as a result of many partners moving in the same direction and those successes now feed the entire stakeholder network.

**Strategies employed.**

As a result of a realization that the actual practices in each context no longer sufficiently served the students, decisions were made by the administrators to depart from literature based writing instruction and move toward curricula that embodied more of the body of researched
knowledge common to Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition. While the importance of Literature is undeniable—and because of that importance literature will, and should, retain an important role in higher education—these separate decisions to re-envision writing were all informed by compositionists. In some cases this enlightenment came from within, in some cases from outside through consulting compositionists for external audits, and in some cases from both origins. It is also true that, in each case, the organizational authority and responsibility for the writing program was relocated to a location closer to the University level. This major endeavor of writing instruction, that English had presided over and benefited from, was removed from the purview of English and that removal was not always seen initially as freeing but instead, it was often seen as loss. Perhaps careful planning for such perceptions and open communication could help ease the suffering of similar transitions in the future.

In each case the new research-based curriculum needed faculty with rhetorical knowledge and skillful teaching practices to faithfully execute the curricula. The programs employed these necessary instructors in very different ways based on what path would best fit each university and writing program context. These instructors were professionalized over time at Syracuse, hired wholesale, and at UCF a pilot bloomed into a program allowing both outside hiring and internal professionalization and education. The end result in all three cases was a cadre of invested career-minded faculty that enacted a richer writing program that could engage students more deeply.

The money for this professional faculty had to come from somewhere. The problem of acquiring the funding, to hire and train the much needed faculty, was successfully navigated in each case despite the differences in the strategies employed to accomplish this seemingly insurmountable task. The keys to extracting this funding issue lay in the communication that the
WPAs had with the instructors and with the administrators. The WPAs successfully showed the instructors a better future and simultaneously showed the Administrators the value such a future would bring for the stakeholders of writing program.

At UCF, rather than making the argument that dwelt on injustices in labor, and highlighted the immorality of the labor system, Elizabeth Wardle aligned writing as the central piece that could satisfy the needs of the administration and the needs of the other stakeholders as well. In laying out a concrete plan and naming the resources necessary to fulfill those stakeholder needs she placed the burden of action on the administration. This more open, shorter route of communication resulted in community whereas the older arguments had created dichotomies and division.

At Syracuse, the transition took over three decades and the argument for academic labor equity was made in words and in deeds. It was voiced via more open communication channels with the university level and through hard work in committees and councils across campus. Meanwhile, the strength of Phelps’ argument was bolstered by instructors who were willing to endure the extra work, and sometimes suffering, to break the constraints the inequitable system of labor preserved. Their victory over the difficult task of teaching composition in the modern university against such odds was rewarded slowly, in increments and stages, by an administration that finally recognized the value already present in those instructors.

At the University of Denver the shortening of the communication lines also paid dividends across the community of writing program stakeholders. Although I was unable to completely reveal the arguments made through my text set choices in this project the results of the decisions that arose from them are quite clear. The Administration made a conscious choice to think about the funding model for FYC differently than they had previously. In the decision to
transition to long term budgeting practices, rather than a simple supply and demand economic approach, Doug Hesse was empowered to literally transform the mission, operation, and veracity of DU’s writing program. The administration later added more requested FTNTTF lines when the program under Hesse’s leadership met with observable success. Some arguments remain to be made that could contribute to greater equity for the instructors of the writing program at DU when comparing their contribution and rewards to those of other disciplines. Great improvements in labor conditions have already come however and, as a result of the more direct paths of communication with administration, discussions and conversations can now take place that would have been unthinkable in the pre-2006 FYC system.

In the course of the facilitation of those discussions having a tenured faculty member in the director’s chair has also shown to be of utmost importance. Knowing that tenure represents varying degrees of permanency and stability, and knowing that such security is based directly upon the environment in which the leadership role is enacted, the tenured designation has a long tradition of being utilized to protect academic freedom and rigor in the academy. These cases of UCF, Syracuse, and DU reinforce that useful tradition. Placing an experienced, tenured professor in the leadership position sends a definite message that the faculty of the university and the administration are committed to the integrity of the activity being supervised. From the perspective of each university administration, this move of hiring a tenured professor to address a perceived need could arguably be named the first step toward success; provided, of course, that administrative ears then listen to the recommendations and earned expertise of the individual that they hired to fill the WPA seat.
**Measures of success.**

In each context the measures of success, in terms of academic labor, were multiple, varied, and often defined by whoever was holding the measuring stick: meaning that each stakeholder measures success against their own goals and motives. For the faculty in the newly created FTNTT roles, it is clear that, in all three writing programs of this study, there are still steps to take to improve the balance of equity in the labor conditions. The move away from over reliance on still more contingent adjunct faculty however, must be seen as a positive stride toward equity and sustainability in the academic labor of writing programs. The cycle of hiring, certifying, and training instructors every new term is greatly reduced and therefore the administration of writing programs can engage in other scholarly activities when the heavy burden of staffing the program is mitigated with longer contracts offered to highly qualified teaching focused faculty. Adjuncts do have a vital role in the academy but that role has always been to infuse the disciplines with current practices and thinking in the field. With FYC this justifiable adjunct role does not exist in the quantity that it is currently being used across the discipline. And so FTNTT and Part-Time NTT would be much more appropriate positions to offer, given the need for highly skilled instructors in FYC to execute the current pedagogies, and reserving the adjunct roles for specialized needs like journalism, editing, or professional writers that have special industry knowledge to impart. In a transition to FTNTT faculty one would logically expect less hiring paperwork, easier staffing decisions, increased instructor loyalty to the institution, and deeper relationships between the peer instructors and WPAs.

Those instructors can see, resultant from that same small policy change, increased stability in their professional lives. This move allows what could once only be seen as a temporary job to become, under the longer contract, something more like a career. Better health care and reduced
travel between universities and colleges allows these instructors to develop institutional loyalty, communities of peer learning and practice, and better teaching practices to better serve the students they teach. One change, in these cases, allowed the entire stakeholder network to enjoy some sort of benefit. I provide further suggestions below for other changes that were observed in these cases that could provide similar integrated benefits for some other programs if the suggestions are properly adapted to fit the new contexts they are intended to serve.

**RQ3.**

*What can be learned about equitable and sustainable ecologies of academic labor from a close analysis of existing texts that describe the contexts of specific writing programs?*

The implications of this research are essentially the answers to this third question. I here list and discuss them but I have also, from these implications, created a set of recommendations, arranged below by areas that would be primarily responsible for implementing each indicated change.

First, the complex idea of the ecology is a good metaphor to use in discussion of the writing program’s rhetorical situation and labor conditions, at least until a better one comes along. The network of stakeholder risks and benefits is interwoven at a great many points and to varying degrees such that a metaphor, like that of ecology, that demands complexity of thought is appropriate.

The experiences themselves cannot ever be truly known from the written records alone, but those records can lead us to persons who participated in the experiences of those communities of practice. Sometimes studies, such as this one, can provide an exigence for those participants to participate in interviews or write their accounts of those times, as Susan Wyche (2017) has done these many years later. Her contingent and precarious experience at the
Wyoming Conference now can be safely told to add depth to the account of the drafting of the Wyoming resolution. How many more silenced voices could be uncovered in further stirring of the archives?

**Relationship With Other Research**

This project is a next step past much of the other research I have read on the topic of academic labor in writing programs. Much of the research in the field has attempted to establish that a problem exists with academic labor and staffing practices that rely heavily on contingent labor, explores the depths of the problem, and suggests that the contingent problem should be addressed. This project seeks to move to the next step in stasis by acknowledging that work and counting it as successful by assuming that the fact has been established, the description has added to the urgency of the discussion. The forensic work is done. Yes there is a problem and it is very bad for the entire writing program stakeholder chain. Using that work I have moved, through seeking what solutions are praiseworthy and promising, toward a deliberative mode. Taking note of these three positive examples of writing programs that exist in the world, and describing how they have found this praise when they enacted the disciplinary knowledge of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition, I have shown that change is not only possible but can even be practical. The reader of this work will likely find observations that they have made in their own experiences, and, should the reader find themselves in a position where change toward an equitable and sustainable ecology of academic labor is required, this project has identified some ways that others have employed to get to that goal. If the reader can see that the time is coming, but has not yet arrived, for such changes, then this work can serve as a planning tool with which to formulate their own adapted plan for this type of success as they wait for that kairotic moment.
to make an appearance. This work can serve as a sort of dressing room to try on the solutions of others and see how they fit before buying them and taking them home.

**Limitations**

It should be pointed out that a major limitation in this study is that it cannot produce a one size fits all solution that can move any program toward an equitable sustainable ecology in academic labor. This simply is not possible because every institution has a different mission, a different faculty makeup, and serves a different student base. Each writing program context is essentially a unique community with its own needs. Any application of the findings of this research as a coverall answer cannot be expected to meet with the exact same success. What this project can provide are: a call to action, a description of some successful strategies and arguments that other programs have employed, and a set of questions that can be used to help explore the labor practices of any writing program through the record of the texts it produces.

Another thing that this study does not do is suggest that contingent faculty should be dismissed summarily in favor of FTNTTF. While I would hold that tenure is necessary to the academic freedom of academia and should be the primary constituency of higher education staffing, there is a real and valuable place for adjunct faculty and for non-tenured faculty. These outside voices can and should infuse the disciplines that they teach with current practices from the field to prevent stagnation in the discipline. In finding this balance of teaching, research and application in each writing program however, each program must decide if the abuse of contingent faculty through repeated serial appointments to “temporary” positions for low wages, no benefits, and little hope of stability is ethical, practical, moral, and necessary.

If the answer to any of these is yes, then perhaps the reader should return to this text and read it again, for even with its limitations this project does show that the entire chain of
stakeholders is best served when those with the authority listen to those who are closest to the action. The top down only model works for manufacturing but the university is not a factory and students are not products. We are all humans engaged in relationships and reducing those humans and relationships to a series of numerical representations diminishes the relationships and dehumanizes the people in them. The students require the best chance for success in their education and that means that there should be a place for adjunct, non-tenured, and tenured faculty in the ecology of academic labor. This project cannot prescribe the proper mix at any institution but it can suggest that the ratio of 75% contingent is definitely not that proper mix.

Another of the limitations in this project was the absence of additional research methods such as interviews that would add the insights and first person stories from those stakeholders that participated in the writing program contexts as their program’s practices of labor changed. Many questions arising from the reading of the texts in this project could have been answered in interviews with the authors or participants shedding greater light into the human interactions and dynamic relationships that existed in the writing programs. It is my intent to prompt other research such as interviews with some of the key writing program stakeholders from those writing program contexts studied here to deepen the knowledge gained in the project.

Furthermore, that intent also hopes to prompt textual analysis and follow-up interviews in further writing program research about additional writing programs whose contexts were not studied in this project. Because of the complicated nature of and variations across writing program contexts, greater understandings, both deep and broad, of labor conditions and their impact on student learning and university goals will likely come from research that is both text-focused and human-focused. Time waits for nobody, and so if questions that arose in this project are ever to be addressed directly by those primary persons that were involved—administrators,
department chairs, WPAs, and even students in those programs—now is the time to gather those rosebuds.

**Problems Arising During the Research**

Researcher bias, in this project, is reframed as experience from which to draw rather than as some kind of contamination. Some readers may not care for this feature having studied or favored some other methodology. Hermeneutical Phenomenology is dismissed by some for this reliance on the unique way phenomenology identifies the researcher’s outlook upon the world as a lens with which to view an object or topic of study. The preference of the reader for empirical research however does not negate the value of the findings of this project unless the reader cannot set aside their own biases to accept that, because we are human, and inhabit only our one body, divorcing one’s self from their only true perspective is an act of engaging in fantasy. The problem for the reader is that that we must accept our natural bias, and interrogate it, in order to begin to engage in empathy and exploration of the world outside the self. In the beginning of this project, this was also a problem for this researcher. That is why it is listed here in this section. Identification with the researcher hinges on the willingness of the reader to acknowledge the humanity of the researcher, the humanity of the actors described in the texts of this study, and in the identifying the reader’s own humanity. This can be problematic but, with effort, not insurmountable.

Another limitation this project presented, although self-imposed, was the strict limitation of the number of texts in the text sets. In the desire to triangulate repeated patterns of success in these three programs, a very low number of texts were permitted into the text set of each program. Allowing the data, in this case text sets, to suggest one or two additional sources partially mitigated this restriction but if this study were repeated I might have taken another tack.
These questions in the heuristic may be useful with a data set that is broader, like a set constructed of a single program ethnography or history from each of ten or more institutions. This reduced pool from each context would allow for observation of patterns of success in a wider field and be perhaps more suggestive of ways of knowing success in developing sustainable and equitable ecologies of academic labor in writing programs. Alas, many writing program contexts do not have such documents and scholarship or these kinds of texts have been lost for various reasons. The heuristic set may well also work with a data pool that is thinner but deeper, like all of the available texts of a single writing program. It may help to trace labor through a program’s history or to construct a written program history.

**Recommendations**

Holding in mind the limitations of this one study, I provide here suggestions for various stakeholders in writing program contexts. While instructors, WPAs, Directors, and Department Chairs are dwellers of the middle level of this complex ecology of academic labor and cannot create larger policy and practices for the larger level—College, University, and States in which they are located—they can most certainly contribute to the knowledge base with which those policies are created. While the people of the middle level cannot truly dictate what goes on at the micro level—personal interaction, collegiality, peer support—they can, however, certainly encourage those micro solutions we see in the literature of the field by creating supportive programs and departments that strive to find the right balance of equity and sustainability in their local ecologies of academics and labor. The following recommendations are adaptable actions that, as a result of this study, I have come to see as valuable in creating and securing success in the labor practices of writing programs that mirrors the successes of the three programs studied here: the University of Central Florida, Syracuse, and the University of Denver. I have divided
them into suggestions for three different sorts of actors that live in the ecology of writing-program academic labor.

**WPAs and Instructors.**
- First and foremost WPAs and instructors should engage in positions of governance as servants. Working in silos or towers no longer supports the stakeholders we seek to serve. We cannot horde our disciplinary body of knowledge when it could position Rhetoric and Writing as full partners, unifying activities, and even leaders in the academy.
- Make stakeholder based arguments alongside or in lieu of moral and ethical ones.
- Police our own profession as other professionals do to remove those who abuse tenure.
- Develop a community of teaching and learning through professional development, two way communication avenues, and an ethic of care.
- Conduct and support research at the program level that furthers the disciplinary body of knowledge.
- Lobby for NTTF positions and offer them to contingent faculty who are qualified.
- Establish a status and promotion system for NTTF.
- Create paths to tenured status for those who show high suitability for the demands of tenure.
- Integrate distributed authority as professional development. Whether it was authority over classroom practices, responsibility for training groups of teachers, or for designing curricula, each WPA in this study distributed authority to FTNTT faculty, and in some cases to more contingent faculty.
- Curriculum revision on a regular basis to reflect current disciplinary knowledge can support stakeholders and justify the need for professional NTTF positions.
- Establish and support, where feasible, a vertical curriculum that affords students a view of writing as a lifelong practice in which they can participate.
- Make successes visible to other stakeholder groups by all available means.

**Upper Administration.**
- Re-evaluate the administrative structure to which your writing program is bound asking if it is being supported effectively and if realignment or a re-staffing, could be leveraged for the good of the stakeholders (especially the students).
- Publicly and pragmatically hold teaching and service as equal with research in value and importance.
- Defend and support tenure by creating new lines wherever prudent.
- Place tenured lines in leadership positions of writing programs including FYC, WAC, and Writing Centers.
- Plan budgets to value the long term strategy that supports NTTF positions
Researchers.

- Conduct archival research to write our own histories for those who come after. We cannot be sure we are moving forward if we have no idea where we have been or where we now stand. As Davies (2017) states Modern independent writing programs, like the Syracuse Writing Program, are relatively new academic units and thus have not been the focus of extensive archival research” (pp. 216-217).
- Conduct human subject based research to create profiles of our writing programs.
- Conduct interviews with the people that helped shape the programs we study to preserve those stories.

Contribution to Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition

I see this project as a beginning. This beginning imagines Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition as a discipline with its own body of knowledge. To that body of knowledge I add that each program in the discipline is site of much human activity including social, academic and labor relationships all of which can be studied and learned from at the disciplinary level. This characterization of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition “as a field of study” is not new but thinking of labor across the discipline as a site of study that can be compared, contrasted, and analyzed is a valuable concept that adds shape to the intellectual and organizational space we occupy:

- Learning that labor practices in the discipline can be seen as a key, if not the key, to unlocking the potential of academic and intellectual success in the discipline is an actionable finding of note. It indicates that many other kinds of successes are bound up in the teachers that enact the instruction in the body of disciplinary knowledge and the way they are professionalized, respected, and compensated for their expertise.
- I have offered a method for developing a heuristic instrument to explore sets of texts as artifacts representative of the human interactions and relationships inherent in the contexts that produced them.
I have developed a specific set of heuristic questions that seeks to explore labor practices of writing programs, which could be applied to other writing program contexts individually, in groups or sets, or across the discipline.

I have compared the paths to success in labor and staffing of three notable Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition, programs to discover that, as they grew out of FYC programs, into the vertical education programs they are today, each had to first transform their labor practices in order to professionalize their curricula and unlock other successes in academics that they now enjoy.

Notably for administrators, in this study I have also presented evidence that a community of stakeholders can be sustainable without being equitable but in balancing the equity each stakeholder stands to increase their returns on the risks they invest in the community and that this equity can be achieved without sacrificing the community’s sustainability—meaning: improving the material conditions of labor, even though initially perceived as costly in all three of these cases, turned out to provide more benefits to more stakeholders that clearly outweighed the costs.

Reflections

In undertaking this study I had initially hoped to develop a list of best practices that could serve as a roadmap to success but as the study deepened, it became clear that no such one-size-fits-all solutions existed. I have discovered in this project however that certain commonalities noted across programs can serve as inspiration and adapt to inform the practices of labor in other unique writing programs. As with political and social problems, top down solutions do not work without grassroots support and in these programs I found that the successes were community efforts led by skilled organizers. The instructors cannot solve the problems alone nor should they
shoulder all of the blame for stagnant or atrophied writing programs. Administrators cannot mandate good teaching nor should they be expected to know what is best for each classroom. In sticky, messy entangled problems, like the ones writing programs regularly face, it takes an entire community working together, performing their individual roles, to achieve the best result.

I have come to think of writing program success, through this project, in a different way than I did at the outset. I no longer think of successful writing programs as a group of well paid professional teachers lead by a strong WPA leader. I now see it as much more. I truly see the successful writing program as an environment, made up of many constituent parts, each serving a function in the equitable and sustainable ecology. In this social ecology as in nature the resources are continually renewed— through the water cycle, food chain, weather, etc— and the balances constantly shift and adapt so that the environment survives. It may not be a wild ecosystem entirely but it is inescapably interdependent among its constituent parts.
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