Locating the Profession: Disciplinary Identities and Professional Spaces in the History of Rhetoric and Composition

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2013

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses contemporary concerns that composition studies lacks disciplinary coherence. In the past 50 years, composition has expanded across multiple scholarly specializations and programmatic locations, including Writing Across the Curriculum, writing centers, first-year writing, professional writing, digital media, and undergraduate majors. This project contextualizes this expansion by examining how composition established disciplinary authority throughout the 20th century. Using archival resources from journals, job lists, and the archives of scholarly professional organizations, each chapter explores a key term associated with the emergence of composition as a discipline—*science* in the early 20th century, *research* in the 1960s post-Sputnik era, the rise of specialized *labor* in the 1970s and 80s, and departmental *location* in the 1990s. Historians typically frame science, research, specialization, and departmental status as disciplinary achievements. Conversely, this analysis argues that these developments instead reveal centrifugal tendencies, both establishing visibility for composition and dispersing its work widely across multiple disciplines and sites of general and remedial education. Rather than frame this challenge as an identity crisis, this project calls for the field to develop strategic alliances and equitable labor practices across sub-fields and programs.
Acknowledgements

So many people gave me the encouragement and feedback to make this project possible. To my committee: first, my thanks to Kay Halasek, for always knowing exactly what I needed to hear to write and revise, for treating me as a colleague, and for modeling what it means to be an amazing teacher. Beverly Moss guided me throughout graduate school, opened her office to chat about anything, and forced me to consider the significance of terminology. Louie Ulman brought a critical voice that allowed me to visualize—often literally—my project in new ways. Frank Donoghue expressed unflagging enthusiasm—which often made it possible for me to keep working—and contributed so much to the intellectual backbone of this project. I needed all four of you.

Thanks to my reading group, Julia Voss and Jennifer Herman—how could I have made it through the past six years (much less the dissertation process) without your friendship, thought, and criticism? Lauren Obermark and Anne Jansen carried me through this last year of graduate school. Gen Critel inspired me to be a better person and scholar with her positivity, warmth, calmness, and intellect. Paige Banaji, Erika Strandjord, and Elizabeth Brewer deserve acknowledgement for their friendship and many intangible intellectual contributions. Last and most importantly, thanks to Shaun—I can’t express how grateful I am to you for everything.
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Introduction

“History cannot tell anything. But we can tell history so as to locate a present situation within a large narrative; then we can project how that situation will change if the main story goes as expected. This can be a loony activity, a paranoid exercise, a workout in millenarian fantasy. It can also disperse illusions and clarify choices. Readers will judge how the present effort turns out” (Ohmann 86).

The narrative I provide in the following chapters of this dissertation is one attempt to understand the multiplying locations and disciplinary identities of composition studies. Today one can no longer really refer to “composition studies” without wondering whether “writing studies,” “rhetoric and composition,” “literacy studies,” or some other moniker better suits the work that we do. Our meta-discourse also shifts, as we define composition alternately as a discipline, subdiscipline, postdiscipline, field, interdiscipline, and other such terms. As much as the terminology in the field has shifted, so too have the institutional locations of composition’s work proliferated, encompassing basic and first-year writing programs, writing across the curriculum (WAC), writing in the disciplines (WID), writing centers, digital media centers, professional and technical writing, undergraduate majors, graduate programs, and separate departments.
Such multiplication indicates robustness that is, in my opinion, healthy. But we are often asked to choose, to identify ourselves more clearly, to define what we all mean by ‘good writing’, to distinguish our discipline in terms of content, structure, or methodology. To some extent, these conversations may prove productive, but I do not think that we will, or even should, agree. In order to come to terms with such indeterminacy, however, we need a historical approach to talking about disciplinarity in composition. A historical approach shows that disciplinarity—as a relatively recent and often amorphous phenomenon—is a discourse of privilege not a real object.

Disciplinarity is a term used to indicate the prominence and status of particular kinds of work and workers, and it is connected to the material realities of funding academic work—teaching, research, and service. As a result, disciplinarity looks different across the academy. It shifts and is interchangeable with field, department, subdiscipline, and interdiscipline depending on time and context. In short, disciplinarity is a negotiated construct. In that sense, it does have intrinsic value—it can inform arguments about research, labor, and program funding, drawing from the historical legitimacy of recognized disciplines.

At the same time, no configuration of higher education is entirely consistent across institutions, and academic work is also authorized at an institutional level. Thus, the construct of disciplinarity represents our work in particular ways to particular audiences, and as a result it is also limited. Consequently, we employ other discourses of privilege—teaching, service, interdisciplinary, skills, access, democracy—to construct our work in broader terms. Some of these terms coexist with disciplinarity, but others
seem to challenge it. The classic example is that composition’s service work—teaching writing for the rest of the academy—diminishes its disciplinarity. Bruce Horner expresses frustration with constructions of composition’s work that “equate improved disciplinary status for composition with a rejection of its material practices,” leading to a series of “either/or” choices for composition: either abolish first-year writing or composition will be consigned a service function, never to become a discipline (xvi). Horner contends such a choice relies on a false binary. Similarly, Susan Miller demonstrates that the “service” work of composition is simultaneously central and peripheral to the work of English, occupying a “carnivalesque” position in the university. Miller and Horner suggest composition is in a position where it needs to simultaneously rely on and challenge configurations of our work as remedial skills and service. It is precisely this need to represent our work differently for different audiences that has made disciplinary identity such a central scholarly problem in composition studies.

At this point, I need to address how I am using the term discipline. Although, I emphasize the negotiatedness of disciplinarity in the following chapters, defining disciplinarity is not the primary purpose of this dissertation. Rather, these chapters together intend to show why disciplinarity has proven to be a frustrating and anxiety-ridden project in rhetoric and composition by examining the improvement in the material conditions of composition, particularly the formation of research, jobs, and departments. My contention is that anxiety about our status emerges from our tendency to view disciplines as reified objects rather than rhetorical constructs imbued with historical meaning. Offering a rhetorical perspective in Knowledges: Historical and Critical
Studies of Disciplinarity, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway, and David J. Sylvan define disciplinarity as “a historically contingent, adventitious coherence of dispersed elements” (3). In other words, all disciplines are historically and socially constructed categories of knowledge. Thomas Miller, in The Formation of College English notes, “The disciplining of discourse is a highly rhetorical process, but rhetoric becomes effaced when a discipline establishes its modes of inquiry, reference, and authority as natural parts of work in the field, rather than as the purposeful responses of a particular group to a specific social situation” (60). Adopting this perspective requires “questioning portrayals of disciplines as seamless, progressive, or naturally ‘about’ certain topics” (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, and Sylvan 3). Disciplinarity easily becomes reified when scholars define disciplines in terms of clear boundaries in methodology, content and subject matter, or scholarly communities.

In composition, for instance, scholarship has often framed disciplinarity as a matter of achieving particular milestones or acquiring certain privileges, a tendency I discuss further in chapter one. According to this framing of disciplinarity, composition scholars judge whether composition is a real discipline according to material conditions—research, jobs, graduate programs, and departmental status. For example, Maxine Hairston’s 1985 chair’s address tallies the addition of graduate programs, jobs, writing projects, scholarly journals, research grants, and theories as disciplinary milestones in rhetoric and composition’s work (132-133). Other scholars have isolated disciplinarity to a defining characteristic—a central set of values, object of study, or methodological orientation—that marks a legitimate discipline. Richard Fulkerson, arguing that the field
has become more incoherent and contentious in the 21st century, calls for us to develop 'axiological' consensus on how our field defines 'good' writing. Stephen Mailloux defines disciplines in terms of theories, practices, and traditions guiding how we read texts and which texts we choose to read (a very humanities-centered definition for discipline), and yet he considers something as broad as English studies to constitute a discipline (3).

But our disciplinary debates are complex because at the same time some scholars actively seek to construct composition as a discipline, others reject disciplinarity. Melissa Ianetta in “Disciplinarity, Divorce, and the Displacement of Labor Issues: Rereading Histories of Composition and Literature” describes disciplinarity as “the traditional paths to prestige in academe—publication, tenured faculty, PhD programs, and the like,” but she argues that those “traditional paths… may actually be the challenges, not the means, to the resolution of the labor problem at the root of many problems we face” (69). David Smit argues that because the field no longer believes in the premise of generalizable knowledge about writing or writing processes, we cannot define ourselves as a discipline (End 3). Disciplines, for Smit, are characterized by generalizable knowledge production, methodological coherence, and a progressive evolution of knowledge—none of which composition possesses (End 7).

Other scholars resist disciplinarity in favor of claiming a "post-disciplinary" status for the field. John Trimbur argues that disciplines create monopolies of expertise, encourage stratification, and exclude rather than invite democratic participation in knowledge-making because boundaries exist around a disciplinary community. Trimbur instead promotes a WAC program model, which rejects the model of disciplinary
expertise by inviting open participation in the making of knowledge about writing and composition pedagogy. Similarly, Joseph Harris argues that composition should position itself in terms of the activities of teaching writing, and should learn how to think "less in terms of ideal structures, of disciplines and tenure lines, and more in terms of possible reforms" ("Undisciplined" 165). Ianetta, Smit, Trimbur, and Harris are just a few examples of scholars who see composition as a location within the academy that can resist or subvert the existing culture of academic disciplines.

Such comments reveal that issues of labor and status imbue disciplinary debates with emotional significance. In Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching, Laura R. Micciche argues that composition is emotionally attached to a vision of its identity as marginalized (30). Thus, compositionists tend to bemoan their status in relation to English studies and the academy at large rather than construct our identity in more positive, creative ways. As Micciche’s work suggests, composition’s debates about disciplinarity derive from a deeply emotional way of constructing the field’s identity—its relationship to students, social change, and democratic access to higher education. The conversation about whether composition is or should be a discipline, however, obscures a more important conversation about how to make effective use of the heterogeneous work that counts as “rhetoric and composition” by publishers, journals, dissertation committees, writing instructors, job search committees, grant committees, and a host of invested parties within, across, and beyond universities.

I want to clarify that I do believe the discourse of disciplinarity does have real, material effects on scholarly work. But those material benefits of disciplinarity do not
derive from a universal and static definition of what it means to be a discipline, and a
conversation about disciplinarity would be far better served if we had specific, concrete
goals in mind about how to frame our work as disciplinary to particular audiences.

Drawing from their work on the “Visibility Project,” Louise Wetherbee Phelps and John
M. Ackerman remind readers that external classifications and reward systems, such as the
National Research Council (NRC) and the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP),
shape the kinds of disciplinary claims composition can make successfully. They assert
that “to achieve recognition or visibility via particular codes, [which represent] different
stakeholders, purposes, and uses, disciplinary aggregates like ourselves must conceive
and project identity in rhetorically fluid ways” (201). Phelps and Ackerman argue,

debates about disciplinarity throughout the history of the field swing
between the poles of unity and fragmentation, embracing the coalescence
of a discipline from multidisciplinary sources or rejecting the very notion
of discipline as a singular identity in favor of a postdisciplinary instability
and multiplicity. All these views represent intellectual constructions
within an internal conversation that presumes we have the luxury of
arguing and settling matters of identity and disciplinarity among ourselves
and then persuading others to accept our work in these terms (202).

Composition’s multiple institutional locations and its visibility impact the identity of the
field, which is why we need to move beyond static and autonomous understandings of
composition’s disciplinary identity. I show in this project that anxieties about
disciplinarity are products of composition’s history of becoming acceptable scholarly work, and thus have been difficult for the field to resolve.

**Disciplinarity in Histories of Composition**

Histories of composition have been one of the central locations in which debates about disciplinarity recur. Robert Connors, for example, argues, "Examining the history of composition-rhetoric allows us to see our discipline, which seems sometimes to be spinning centrifugally to pieces, as what it truly is: the current avatar of a tradition of studying and using discourse that is as old as literacy and probably older" (17). James Berlin identifies the historical origins of the social-epistemic rhetoric he espouses and charts its changes over time in *Rhetoric and Reality*. He then argues that we adopt this social-epistemic rhetoric by turning writing courses into sites that “prepare students for citizenship in a democracy, for assuming their political responsibilities whether as leaders or simply as active participants” (189). Steven Mailloux attempts to unite English, Speech, and Composition under the umbrella of rhetorical theory by demonstrating their common history and unfortunate fragmentation. Thomas Miller argues that rhetoric and composition should return to its historical roots as literacy studies, along with literary studies, creative writing, and English education (*Evolution*).

Not all historians, however, concede that composition is or should be a discipline. Joseph Harris uses his history of the discipline to argue that composition should be considered a "teaching subject" focused on writing pedagogy rather than a formal academic discipline (*Teaching*). David Fleming similarly asks in his historical work, “[W]hat if comp-rhet will never be a true discipline?... What if there is virtue in the very
aspects of the field that impede full disciplinarity?” (13-14). I am intrigued by Fleming’s assumption that we know and recognize what a “true discipline” is, as if disciplinarity is a constant entity. Such projects approach history with a preexisting definition and argument about disciplinarity, rather than looking to history to tell us something about how the discourse and attitudes concerning disciplinarity have changed over time—and what that tells us about how we understand disciplinarity now.

Historiographic approaches like those of Berlin, Connors, Mailloux, Thomas Miller and others narrate history in order to define a disciplinary identity and understand how major concepts within the discipline have evolved over time. In other words, they are primarily histories of ideas, a historiographic approach that Michel Foucault defines as "an analysis of a notion from its birth, through its development, and in the setting of other ideas which constitute its context" (74). These histories have the primary purpose of tracking changes in pedagogy or epistemology, and assume that historical narratives can prove instructive for contemporary practices. Approaching historiography differently, Maureen Daly Goggin takes a materialist approach to defining disciplinarity in *Authoring a Discipline: Scholarly Journals and the Post-WWII Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition*, focusing on the development of professional conferences and journals in composition and their function in directing the orientation of the field (142). She associates disciplinary status not with unity or coherence but with "the construction and maintenance of legitimizing apparatuses that serve both to permit and encourage and to control and limit objects of inquiry, questions, methods, and discourses” (xxi). By focusing on how disciplinary knowledge is produced and legitimated through texts
(specifically, scholarly journals), Goggin provides a materialist orientation for historical inquiry that refocuses our attention from what a discipline knows to where knowledge is located. However, by focusing on the legitimizing mechanisms of a field of knowledge, Goggin seemingly assumes that such legitimizing apparatuses are not objects of debate or anxiety within a field. Furthermore, Goggin sharply distinguishes between disciplines as intellectual space and departments and institutional locations as material spaces (12), a distinction I find problematic because it reinforces the binary between intellectual and non-intellectual work critiqued by scholars like Horner and James F. Slevin.

In contrast, this dissertation asks how the development of legitimizing apparatuses and discourses in composition—science, research, jobs and graduate programs, and departments—have actually incited debate and in some ways left questions about disciplinary identity and knowledge unsettled. This orientation toward history is what Foucault calls a history of thought, or

the analysis of the way an unproblematic field of experience, or a set of practices, which were accepted without question, which were familiar and ‘silent’, out of discussion, becomes a problem, raises discussion and debate, incites new reactions, and induces a crisis in the previously silent behavior, habits, practices, and institutions. The history of thought, understood in this way, is the history of the way people begin to take care of something, of the way they become anxious about this or that (74).

Although I am skeptical about Foucault's framing of problematization as coming "out of nowhere," I nevertheless find his work helpful in constructing my own gaze as a
historian. I am not interested in providing a history of how composition became a discipline, what defines composition as a discipline, or what our unifying center might be. Focusing on such questions reproduces the insularity of discussions about disciplinarity that Phelps and Ackerman (above) criticize.

This project instead examines how and why the development of the material conditions we associate with disciplinarity is linked to a new set of anxieties and problems for composition—anxieties about our institutional base (FYC), our location in the university, and our labor structures. In *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*, Lisa Ede notes, “The field’s professionalization seems to have increased, rather than decreased these anxieties [about composition’s status]” (5). Similarly, in “Sp(l)itting Images: Or Back to the Future of Rhetoric and Composition,” Karen Kopelson urges the field to "leave[] our identity crisis behind," calling the obsessive focus on defining ourselves "disciplinary self-indulgence" (775). This project responds to Kopelson’s directive not by posing yet another alternative identity for composition, but rather by contending that such anxieties might be put to rest if understood within a historical context. Understood historically, composition’s seeming failure to look like other disciplines makes sense given its emergence in response to local, institutional, social, and political exigencies; this historical development has meant that composition never seems settled in a single scholarly, departmental, or institutional location.

Although I position my project differently than previous histories of the discipline, I employ traditional historical and archival methodologies to locate and read
texts rhetorically. Linda Ferreira-Buckley argues in "Rescuing the Archives from Foucault" that historians should return to traditional methodologies of archival research, even when constructing "revisionist" histories. Consequently, my research methodology, much like the historians I name above, involves reading numerous archives, including published scholarship, like those from scholarly journals, the MLA Job Information Lists (JIL), reports in Profession, PMLA, and the ADE Bulletin, as well as archival materials from the National Council of Teachers of English and Conference on College Composition and Communication (NCTE/CCCC) archives. Like other rhetoric and composition historians, I emphasize that my reading of these archival materials is, in fact, rhetorical; that is, it involves the "rhetorical establishment of textual meaning," a material translation of one text into another that is informed by institutional and cultural traditions and locations as well as the "rhetorical politics" of the field's professional ideologies (Mailloux "Reading" 586). In short, I assume that history speaks to and emerges from present institutional locations, political stances in the profession, and traditions of reading history in the field, and is not a stable meaning emerging from a written record.

*Project Overview*

In my dissertation, I suggest that because composition histories have focused on articulating disciplinary unity, they do not address why composition resides in so many curricular, programmatic, and professional locations. I examine how composition has constructed its disciplinary identity throughout the 20th century. Using archival resources, each chapter explores a key term associated with disciplinarity at a moment when it became the subject of intense debate in composition—*science* in the early 20th
century, research in the 1960s post-Sputnik era of higher education, the rise of specialized labor in the 1970s and 80s, and departmental location in the 90s. Historians typically frame science, research, specialization, and departmental status as achievements in the progression to disciplinarity. Conversely, I argue that these developments instead reveal centrifugal tendencies, both establishing visibility for composition and dispersing its work widely. Thus, a key challenge for composition has been the perception that it is both too broad (multi-disciplinary) and too narrow (first-year writing, general and remedial education) to be an identifiable discipline. Rather than frame this challenge as an identity crisis, my project highlights the importance of attending to institutional history as we develop programs and curricula.

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation’s methodological focus by looking at an early, but ultimately transitory, attempt by composition and rhetoric scholars to establish authority by capitalizing on the discourse of science. I analyze publications from academic journals in the context of early 20th century educational philosophy, showing how scholars relied on the ambiguity of science to appeal to values of research, practicality, and liberal culture prevalent in American higher education. In this context, science might signify the German-influenced ideal of scholarly research, the practical application of scientific principles, or even the means through which culture could achieve moral progress. However, I note that instead of specifying composition and rhetoric’s work, these arguments broadened the field’s intellectual base by drawing from multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, philology, criticism, and history. As its advanced studies overlapped with other fields—and thus risked being subsumed by
them—composition’s undergraduate courses focused on applying rhetoric’s scientific
principles for vocational or cultural education. Thus, universities’ division into
undergraduate and graduate studies precipitated an institutional split between
composition and rhetoric, dispersing rather than consolidating its work.

In the second chapter, I discuss the development of composition research in the
1960s in the context of post-Sputnik era research and the managerial “multiversity”
described by Clark Kerr in *The Uses of the University* (1963). As universities allied with
federal and corporate sponsors, research increasingly connoted nationalistic advancement
through the sciences and language education. As a result, composition benefited from its
association with literacy education, and scholars consequently could argue for a range of
research practices. However, the turn towards empirical research created division in
English and composition over the value of humanistic research, particularly as some in
composition called for the field to abandon traditional humanism and turn toward the
social sciences. I contend that the early development of research in this era contributed to
the ambivalent relationship the field maintains toward its history of empirical research
and its location within English.

My third chapter continues to explore composition’s historical locations by
charting the emergence of tenure-track jobs in the 1970s and 80s. Based on my rhetorical
and empirical analysis of MLA *Job Information List (JIL)* archives, I argue that
composition occupied an indeterminate position in English studies, serving a variety of
departmental needs during the decades of job market distress in English studies as a
whole. Because of its flexibility, composition overlapped with literary studies,
linguistics, education, communication, and other fields, while also involving a range of administrative work across various institutional spaces. Furthermore, the development of faculty positions in rhetoric and composition is tied to the increasing demand for flexible and contingent labor in the academy at large. The expansion of faculty positions in rhetoric and composition—as well as the expansion of its programmatic and administrative locations—has been an unsettling aspect of our identity because our scholarly specialization is inextricably linked to the diminishing value of faculty expertise and the lack of a central location for our work.

Those concerns inform the debates from the 1980s and 90s over whether composition should leave or remain in English departments, which I analyze in chapter 4. As I demonstrate, some compositionists idealized departmental status as a symbol of autonomy, while those who argued to remain in English envisioned their research as transforming English studies. Both sides, I argue, construed location as a metaphor for composition’s centrality rather than addressing how location shapes research and labor practices. In the dissertation’s conclusion, I connect the threads of research, labor, and location by analyzing documents from the founding of Ohio State’s Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW). Working from the proposal for establishing CSTW and letters of support from the public, corporations, and academics, I discuss the way location shapes the perception of composition’s work and suggest how an attention to location might inform curricular and programmatic decisions at an institutional level.

Historiography as a Mapping of Major Debates
In “Remapping Revisionist Historiography,” David Gold calls for revisionist histories to move beyond the local (micro) and global (macro) division that has structured historical scholarship thus far (23-24). This binary frames macro, “big picture” histories as reductive representations of the field, and local, micro histories as revisionist. The resistance toward “dominant narratives” of the field has led to a “paucity of good general histories” in composition (Gold “Remapping” 19). Like Gold, I believe that the next project for composition history is to reconcile macro and the micro histories, and to imagine ways macro histories may be revisionist by avoiding a totalizing narrative of composition’s progress over time. This project has attempted to engage in a revisionist narrative by simultaneously narrating and questioning the emergence of the material conditions we associate with disciplinarity in composition—research, jobs, and departments. A historiography that centers on major debates and examines anxiety and identity crises cannot posit a dominant, totalizing narrative of composition history.

To illustrate that point, I end with an example. In 1960 the Committee on Future Directions attempted unsuccessfully to change the statement of purpose for the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The then-current statement of purpose read that the organization existed to “unite teachers of college composition and communication in an organization which can consider all matters relevant to their teaching, including teachers, subject matter, administration, methods, and students” (qtd in Bailey et al 3). The Committee explained their dissatisfaction with this statement, writing,
The Committee feels that the CCCC has outgrown this statement of purpose, at least as it has been traditionally interpreted. It believes that the organization can be more effective if its efforts are focused upon a discipline rather than upon a course or a particular group of teachers. The Committee therefore recommends that the statement of purpose in the Constitution be changed to read: The basic purpose of the CCCC is to improve college students’ understanding and use of the English language, especially in written discourse (3, italics mine).

The new statement, then, attempted to define CCCC as a disciplinary organization rather than a professional organization focused primarily on a particular course or the needs of those who teach it. Yet the ambiguity of the term ‘discipline’ in the proposed statement raises additional questions about the organization’s self-perception. What does discipline mean here and how is it connected with the goal of improving students’ use of written English? Does improving students’ use of written English constitute a disciplinary object of study? Why is a distinction drawn between a discipline and the concerns of teachers or of an academic course? The confusing use of ‘discipline’ here suggests that articulation was a key problem for composition at the very moment that the professional organization promoting research and bringing together scholars had become well enough established to apply the term ‘discipline’ to its work.

Members of CCCC at the time also took issue with this proposed statement, and the organization’s journal, *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*, subsequently recorded several debates over it from both the 1960 Cincinnati CCCC
meeting and the 1960 Chicago National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) meeting. In one such transcription, “Philosophy and Structure,” Robert M. Gorrell reported on the lack of consensus reached in one session, writing, “At the close of the meeting there was little agreement about how the purpose of the organization should be described…. There was agreement that we should, as quickly as possible, finish worrying about what we are and get on with being it” (14). Perhaps no other statement better describes the history of debate over composition’s professional and disciplinary status. Those at the NCTE meeting Gorrell described expressed a frustration with not being able to agree upon a “natural” or “logical” definition for composition studies. In the end, participants could only agree on the futility of the debate itself.

Gorrell’s anecdote is reminiscent of Kopelson’s more recent call for composition to “get over it” and other comments expressing frustration with the intense scrutiny disciplinary identity receives in the field. These kinds of debates make it impossible to locate an easy origin point or a linear progression toward disciplinarity. Instead, they point to the ways disciplinarity is always negotiated by particular institutions and individuals at particular times. Perhaps we can only begin to move beyond such professional identity crises if we understand them historically—and examine how they shape our understanding of our work, past, present, and future.
Chapter 1: Science, Discipline, and Coherence in Early Composition and Rhetoric

“The fabric of institutions intervenes between the material exigencies of life and the speculative scheme of things” (Veblen 406).

After decades of debate, the disciplinary status of composition continues to provoke negative emotions: anxiety, concern, disagreement, disorder, crisis, chaos, and division. These attitudes pervade our conversations about identity. Lisa Ede observes that as composition increasingly resembles traditional disciplines, anxiety over its status only grows (5). Laura R. Micciche argues that composition has an emotional attachment to its marginality within English. Kopelson calls the concern with disciplinary status self-indulgent (775). Explorations of these emotions have characterized composition’s lack of unity, methodological confusion or supposed postdisciplinary status as causal factors (North “Future,” Hansen, Massey). For example, Kristine Hansen has recently argued in her essay, “Are We There Yet?: The Making of a Discipline in Composition,” that composition can make no legitimate claim to disciplinary status because it still does not meet the criteria for disciplinarity that Stephen North established in The Making of Knowledge in Composition: composition has neither established ideological independence from English literary studies nor found harmony among the multiple
methodologies informing its research. Thus, Hansen (like North before her) perpetuates composition’s anxiety by highlighting what the field lacks.

Assessments like Hansen’s idealize disciplinary status by speaking of it in metaphorical terms—as an acquisition or destination. This understanding of disciplinarity has been furthered by composition histories that tend to view composition as developing into a discipline over time as it produced research, established journals, developed tenure-track positions, founded graduate programs, and created separate programs or departments of rhetoric and composition. Yet histories either ignore the ongoing anxiety over composition’s disciplinary identity or propose solutions to composition’s disorder. I argue we continue to debate disciplinary status precisely because the acquisition model of disciplinarity sees any challenges to coherence and unity as a problem needing to be solved or a crisis signaling underlying turmoil. Such assessments require impossible solutions: we need autonomy or we need a disciplinary center (a clear methodology or object of study). We need to control the expansion of the discipline into various research, programmatic, and curricular spaces. We need to find a global justification for first-year writing (FYW). We need to separate ourselves from English studies. These solutions represent idealistic goals, as if autonomy could ever be achieved in the increasingly bureaucratic university, or as if agreement could (or should) be reached in a humanistic discipline that values dissent, or as if composition could simply untangle its historical ties to English.
Similarly, histories of the early emergence of composition-rhetoric\(^1\) tend to perpetuate the view that disciplinarity is something a field either acquires or fails to acquire by hinging the fate of rhetoric almost entirely on its failure to establish a scientific—and thus disciplinary—identity. Our current historical narratives of the development of composition courses in the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries assert that composition was reduced to drill in style, mechanics, and arrangement when it failed to establish itself as a science and thus an appropriate subject for graduate study and research. In fact, this chapter shows that the relationship between science and composition-rhetoric was a prominent debate that continued into the early decades of the 20\(^{th}\) century. It was possible for some scholars to describe rhetoric as a science because definitions of science were contested and ambiguous as different academic institutions in America adopted and experimented with attitudes about science and research imported from German higher education. I discuss articulations of science by those who published on professional issues in composition-rhetoric around the turn of the 20\(^{th}\) century and the MLA pedagogical section's survey on the role of rhetoric in graduate education. In these texts, the problem created by adopting the discourse of science was two-fold. First, the ideological disjunction between undergraduate studies as cultural training and graduate education as research training presented one obstacle to defining vertical coherence for rhetoric and composition in the curriculum. Indeed, it challenged the notion that vertical coherence was a possible or even desirable goal. Second, related attempts to define

\(^1\) I use Connor's term "composition-rhetoric" in this chapter because it refers to a specific time-period rather than an epistemological stance, as Berlin's or Crowley's use of the term, "current-traditional" does.
graduate education in composition-rhetoric as a science actually expanded its work across multiple disciplinary and departmental spaces. That is, composition developed in ways that challenged the emerging institutional structures of departments, undergraduate majors, and graduate schools by being both too narrow and too broad at the same time. This account revises previous assessments of early composition-rhetoric, providing a framework for understanding our current challenge with definition. How do we construct a coherent curriculum when undergraduate study serves a vastly different purpose than graduate study? How do we establish a distinct space for the discipline when it claims to encompass and draw from a variety of knowledges?

I argue a historical perspective can provide a useful context for our contemporary discourse surrounding disciplinarity, showing a way out of a limiting “are we or aren’t we” debate. Throughout this dissertation I examine the development of research, tenure-track positions, and separate departmental and programmatic locations in rhetoric and composition—assumed ‘markers’ of disciplinary status. My purpose in this history is twofold. First, I demonstrate that disciplinary markers are not simply items that a field accrues on its path to stake out its disciplinary territory. In fact, these markers are always issues of debate and disagreement because disciplinarity is not, and never has been, a neutral construct symbolizing unity. Disciplinarity emerges from academic, cultural, and nationalistic values, and is always in the process of negotiation—both locally and nationally. Second, I argue that this understanding of disciplinarity as negotiated rather than acquired can help us understand the current expansion of composition’s work across numerous curricular, programmatic, and disciplinary locations. More specifically,
examining how individuals at particular moments debated and negotiated the terms of disciplinarity can uncover persistent assumptions that have shaped composition—what kind of work it involves and where it should be located institutionally.

Revising Narratives of Science in the History of Composition

Composition studies has many histories, but nearly all of them point to the early 20th century as a failure or missed opportunity for the field (see Connors, Berlin, Goggin, Miller, Crowley). Indeed, Connors, Goggin, James Berlin, John C. Brereton, Stephen Mailloux, and Thomas P. Miller all concur on this point. Composition-Rhetoric, Connors’ canonical history of composition in late 19th and early 20th century, states that rhetoric’s failure to obtain disciplinary legitimacy in English and in the liberal arts was largely due to the fact that “it is overtly pragmatic and not easily accessible to empirical methods…. Rhetoric is a field not easily made scientific, and thus it was not lifted with the other boats by the great positivist tide of German science in the period” (178-9). For Connors, composition-rhetoric’s failure to engage the dominant scientistic discourse of higher education prevented the development of research and graduate programs that would mark its achievement as a discipline.

Other historical narratives concur. Brereton suggests that majority of composition instructors in the early 20th century considered composition an art that, consequently, anyone could teach (18). Brereton further connects composition’s relegation to pedagogy with its remedial associations in the German-modeled American university. The privileging of literature over rhetoric and composition, he argues, “was practically inevitable given the fact that university English departments organized themselves on the
German academic model, rewarding research and privileging the doctorate, the learned article, and the monograph” (22). Within the German model, Brereton claims, composition as art and pedagogy could not establish its disciplinarity. James Berlin paints a similar picture, describing the German influence as a “shift in American higher education from an exclusive concern with undergraduate education to an excessive, if not exclusive, concern for graduate education and research” (22). Berlin ties the German model to a disinterest in undergraduate education generally, and composition-rhetoric specifically, given its failure to establish more than a handful of graduate programs. Not only do these historical accounts erase institutional differences, they tend to assume that rhetoric made no attempt to work within the research model and that literature could more easily assimilate to that model. But that claim overlooks not only the long history of debate over the method and purpose of studying literature, as discussed by Gerald Graff and John Guillory, or the parallel history of debate, which I will discuss, over the method and purpose of studying rhetoric and composition.

A more nuanced account of composition’s history comes from Maureen Daly Goggin’s Authoring a Discipline, which reminds readers that research was not the only ideal at work in the formation of disciplines in late 19th and early 20th century higher education. Relying on Laurence Veysey’s schema for describing values in higher education, Goggin argues that universities valued research, utility, and liberal culture for different ideological reasons, and all three coexisted in American universities. Despite this claim, her narrative of the formation of disciplines relies wholly on the ‘research
ideal’. Goggin argues that any field of study not considered a Wissenschaft would be denied disciplinary status (14). She elaborates further, arguing,

those seeking disciplinary and departmental spaces… had to show that their field was a naturwissenschaft [sic] (a science dealing with that made by nature) rather than a geisteswissenschaft [sic] (a moral science dealing with that made by humans). The former was understood to render universal truths and the latter was understood to render contingent truths subject to human whim (14).

Goggin, like other historians, relies on several false binaries to understand the failed professionalization of composition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—theory/practice, science/art, and research/pedagogy. Master/mistress terms in these binaries are often used interchangeably, sometimes anachronistically, as if they meant the same thing. For example, Miller, looking more broadly at English studies, argues that it divided into criticism (literature) and utilitarian work (composition—or what he sometimes terms ‘literacy instruction’) in the wake of the belles lettres movement. He asserts,

Rhetoric has never fit very well into either of the two cultures of the modern arts and sciences. Its concern for the situated and self-interested nature of purposeful discourse challenges the disinterested logic of the sciences and the refined sensibility of the arts (226, italics mine).

Miller and Goggin construct the same narrative of decline, but rely on what are arguably two different value classification systems. These narratives are not wrong that science
became a privileged term and important criterion for knowledge, but they do rest on an oversimplified dualism between art and science. Neither account for the wider range of values that Veysey delineates nor the history of debates over what counted as a science. This tendency leads historians to ascribe composition-rhetoric’s status problems primarily to *composition*, as an undergraduate study, an art, a practice, and a subject associated with pedagogy. No accounts, however, address why attempts to define rhetoric as a science and a subject for graduate education were unsuccessful at boosting composition-rhetoric to disciplinary or (except in a few transitory cases) departmental status. In 1901, William Edward Mead noted that the majority of respondents to his MLA survey on whether rhetoric was an appropriate study for graduate students felt that it was indeed fit for graduate study, and many of them agreed its suitability was predicated on the fact it was a science (188). How do we explain this disconnect between historical narrative and primary text? I argue that an analysis of these texts that attempt to define composition-rhetoric as a science demonstrate that at stake was not rhetoric’s failure to establish itself as a science, but a much more complex institutional issue. In fact, the debate over science reveals that adopting the discourse of science exacerbated a developing tension between the purpose of undergraduate and graduate studies, and consequently, definitions of composition and rhetoric. To provide context for this argument, I first outline in this section the relationship between the German model, graduate education, and the definitions of science in the university.

German higher education profoundly impacted the structure and credentialing process of American universities. In the 19th century, a large the number of scholars
traveled to study in German universities. Writing in 1928, Charles Franklin Thwing estimated that around ten thousand Americans had studied in Germany in the last hundred years, about half of them attending the University of Berlin, and more than half studying philosophy (40-1). For returning scholars, the most important contribution imported from the German system was the formation of graduate education focused on specialized research (not, as Connors suggests, positivistic science). German higher education approached scholarship with an ideal of continual investigation, without restrictions or market-concerns, for the sake of expanding human knowledge (see Veysey, Howard, Rudolph). Because it valued scholarly investigation, the German model institutionalized the products of continual research through the publication process and the space for such research and training through the credentialing of the Ph.D.

As many historians have recounted, American higher education quickly revolutionized in the two decades after the Johns Hopkins University was founded in 1876 modeled on the German system (followed closely by Clark University, Stanford University, and University of Chicago). The impact of this revolution has been well documented: the PhD became a requirement for most faculty at major universities; publication became a part of faculty responsibilities; graduate schools were attached to undergraduate colleges; and the university underwent massive reorganization as existing departments split or new departments came into existence and formed an increasingly segmented body in need of a new class of administrators. Also well documented is the fact that these changes occurred largely as the result of intense competition for prestige and resources not systematic reform. Competition encouraged standardization across
universities, and as departments standardized, they played a role in forming larger professional organizations that we now associate with disciplines (the Modern Language Association, MLA, being one example). All of these changes were significant, but as, Frederick Rudolph argues, universities lacked clear philosophical focus and thus the primary influences of the German model were structural.

Most notably, the German model brought to American higher education “a fundamental attachment to the graduate faculty of arts and sciences, to the idea of a body of scholars and students pushing forward the frontiers of pure knowledge” (Rudolph 334). As graduate schools developed, they were appended to already existing undergraduate colleges, which were a collection of decentralized and highly varied institutions in the United States. Patricia J. Gumport argues that the emergence of graduate education correlated with the departmental expansion that characterized the final decades of the 19th century. This model created a central dilemma: “If Ph.D. programs were integrated organizationally as a separate level from the liberal education of undergraduate colleges, they also were made parts of departments responsible for undergraduate instruction in a discipline” (229). That is, graduate education served entirely different purposes from, but was organizationally linked to, undergraduate education. Undergraduate departments provided a base for research faculty, supporting their work financially through undergraduate studies, while universities desiring increased status lured research faculty with the opportunity to research and work with graduate students. The impact of this system was profound. Indeed, Gumport explains that the pull of the undergraduate system compelled Hopkins and Clark to add
undergraduate programs to their institutions after their founding (229). But the system was also complicated. Unlike the German system, American universities received little state or federal financial funding, so financial restrictions impeded administrators’ desire and ability to value research and graduate education. Additionally, pre-existing undergraduate colleges already had funding resources, institutional aims, and constituencies whose expectations they needed to balance with the university expansion, particularly if they were to attract students and financial resources.

If the ideal of specialized investigation marked graduate education, what precisely did that mean? Goggin and Connors both reduce *Wissenschaft* to an educational philosophy privileging the natural sciences and based on a general positivistic epistemology. However, Veysey suggests that *Wissenschaft* possessed a variety of connotations, and nearly everyone found something to appreciate about the concept, including proponents of the classical college, liberal culture, and vocational education (132). The misunderstanding that the German model only valued ‘pure science’ is a consequence of the fact that the scientists and researchers who latched onto empirical investigation proved the most vocal proponents of the German model. Consequently *Wissenschaft* acquired “methodological connotations,” and was often translated to “pure science” in American contexts (Veysey 127). In fact, the university system was driven by competition more than a clear direction. Rudolph notes, “there were no theoretical or philosophical limits which the university developers might place upon themselves” (343). Rather, “The developing universities revealed an appetite for expansion, a gluttony for work, a passion for growth” that could encompass a range of research, professional, and
liberal studies (343). This push for growth without a clear curricular vision is one reason that rhetoric, as a formerly central component of the collegiate curriculum, could weather changes in the university and adopt new definitions.

With the expansion of graduate education, increased stress on faculty credentials (the Ph.D.) and productivity (publication) also became norms among universities. These notions extended into English, and were the subject of debate and controversy. Harry T. Baker, in 1928, wrote, “At one great university in the cow pastures of the Middle West, the attitude to young professors has been informally but accurately phrased as ‘Get a Ph.D. or get out!’” (824). The next year, Edwin Berry Bergum remarked, “The contemporary scholar in English studies is a business man. In proportion he is successful, at the top of his profession, he becomes a director of research among subordinates, a bureaucrat on the business model, always tempted to measure success in terms of output” (468). Indeed, Baker and Bergum’s comments indicate both the encroachment of specialized research on faculty demands, and the simultaneous resistance to this encroachment, as if it violated certain ideals about the sanctity of intellectual life by measuring it in terms of credentials and publications. These comments remind us that the research model was a subject of contention among faculty, even when they participated in its culture.

Furthermore, administrators and presidents, although they began to value the PhD and publication, possessed a somewhat vague understanding of research as “productive work,” ambiguously defined (Veysey 177). The university presented a number of competing demands on administrators’ attention. For example, Veysey describes how
Harvard President Charles Eliot contemplated trashing the Harvard library instead of paying to improve it, and the University of Chicago president complained about faculty offering too many graduate courses. Meanwhile, research advocates “learned that many of their potential disciples were irredeemably mediocre…. while over them usually lurked a president who was an incomprehensible alien” (Veysey 178). Roger L. Geiger concurs, noting that, even by 1920, research represented an important ideal, but “the manner in which they [American universities] sustained their commitment to research was inchoate at best. The major universities thus had a philosophical commitment to the advancement of knowledge but lacked a secure institutional means for meeting that commitment” (2).

In 1908, Gustaf E. Karsten outlined the fundamental difference between German and American universities: the German university system was highly standardized while the American one comprised a decentralized collection of institutions (27). Karsten’s account describes the German university as training both professionals and scholars. In Germany, the university, as “a state institution,” served “to train young men, and more recently also young women, for public service in the so-called learned professions, to supply the state with judges, administrative officials” (28). The German university also supported “the progress of the country and of humanity by extending the realms of human knowledge, by what we call original research work” (28). Thus both professional training and pure research were connected to national progress. Although research work, unlike professional training, might not possess “immediate market value” (29), it nevertheless had the potential to “remov[e] the rubbish that lies in the way of further
progress, until… some ingenious or fortunate man opens up new wealth, new probabilities of blessing for mankind” (28). In contrast to this German system, American universities had benefits and disadvantages. Karsten praised American universities’ administrative system for mitigating the individualism of the scholarly life and making the university more navigable for students (possibly, even, preventing undergraduate alcoholism!). However, the same administrative oversight had not “sufficiently safeguarded and encouraged” scholarship (29). As he explained, “And when some multi-millionaire gives millions to or for some institution, we see, with rarest exceptions, the old story repeating itself: a big undergraduate teaching establishment is founded… and by the time that is done the money is gone and practically nothing is left to build up the greatest work” (29). Karsten concluded that graduate education and specialized research could never hold the same status in America as in Germany because of universities’ relationship to public funding and endowments.

Furthermore, the fervor for the German method passed relatively quickly in American culture, even though its structural changes survived the 20th century. Thwing, reflecting on the impact of the German model twenty years after Karsten, asked, “Has pure scholarship found so large and lasting a place in the American university as was once prophesied?” (220). His answer was decidedly ‘no’, partly due to his belief that Germans are more a “race of scholars” than Americans (an indication of the racial undertones in the discourse of scholarship) (223). Much to Thwing’s dismay, Americans were too interested in “material resources and development” and too concerned with training “youth” (220). Both, for Thwing, were doomed to fail. Focusing on “the
application of scientific truth” rather than the investigation of such truths would
“inevitably result[] in scientific disintegration” (174). Additionally, the American
university, he continued, “uses scholarship as a condition and means for teaching, and not
as an end in itself” (220). With the influx of students, “The teacher has little time and less
strength for the pursuit of scholarship” (220). Thwing attributes the different focus of
American higher education to its relationship to public funding, concern for industrial
development, and responsiveness to demands for undergraduate education.

Indeed, an 1890 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer indicates just how early the
public’s view of science and education contrasted with the ideal of the German model.
Commenting on Columbia President Seth Low’s inaugural address, the article asserted,
“This is not an age of monasticism, but of hard, earnest work, of material development
and of a liberal scholarship that pervades every stratum of society” (122). The article
remarked that college provides “a necessary foundation for [the student’s] duties as a
citizen in the ordinary callings” and preparation “to launch upon a successful career”
(122). Citizenship and careerism mattered most because the “young man of to-day wants
to fit himself for an active business life. He wants the latest scientific knowledge” (122).
For example, the article continued, the electrician must now complete several years of
courses to be adequately prepared for the profession. The tone of the article indicates the
extent to which the public perception of science shaped the understanding of the role of
the university at the turn of the 20th century. The article emphasized scientific research,
but defined it clearly in terms of applied sciences (even at Columbia), preparation for
business life, and instruction in proper citizenship (seemingly also defined in terms of
‘ordinary work’). Such remarks indicate how little the concept of specialized investigation for the sake of knowledge pervaded public discourse.

Rather than pointing clearly to pure research, science was a complex and shifting term in higher education, with more cultural capital than clear definition. In the early 19th century science included “any well-organized body of principles concerning any arena of knowledge or speculation…. Science connoted orderliness and system, in ethics no less than in geology” (133). When the early colleges emphasized moral philosophy as the capstone of students’ course, this course did constitute a kind of science in so far as it rested on philosophical empiricism (see Guillory). Over the course of the century, with the impact of the work of natural scientists like Charles Darwin, inventers and entrepreneurs popularizing and then professionalizing the applied sciences, and the morphing of Wissenschaft into ‘pure science’ as newly minted doctorates returned from Germany, the meaning of the term became increasingly varied. Associated somewhat with the older terminology of natural laws, it also came to stand in for empirical investigation of phenomenon. To add to the confusion, the outside natural world was not the only object of empirical study—the human mind and human society could also now be scientifically researched (Veysey 134). Thus, “As science took on these new connotations, it became impossible for professors to agree on who among their number actually worked in a scientific manner” (Veysey 135). All of this confusion over science led to a loose and often contradictory use of the term.

Thorstein Veblen described the intermingling of these definitions in his 1908 article, “The Evolution of the Scientific Point of View.” Veblen charted the evolution of
the term ‘science’, arguing that Darwinian thought marked a change from science as a taxonomy system to science as a study of processes—that is, a study of cause and effect.² Yet despite this seemingly abstract definition, Veblen acknowledged the impact of cultural context on definitions of science (400). In a nearly Kuhnian move, he posited, “A scientific point of view is a consensus of habits of thought current in the community, and the scientist is constrained to believe that this consensus is formed in response to a more or less consistent discipline of habituation to which the community is subjected” (401). Thus, the scientific perspective emerged from ‘habituated’ and ‘disciplined’ community perspectives. Institutions played a large role in this process, as they “intervene[d] between the material exigencies of life and the speculative scheme of things” (406). For modern institutions, impacted by industrial culture, science represented not the “handicraft workmanship” of previous eras, but the “impersonal interpretation of phenomena in terms of consecutive change” (415). However, both modes of science coexisted, and those studies further removed from industrial pressures, like “ethics” or “political theory,” still operated under the “regime of handicraft,” investigating concepts like “authenticity” and “reality” (415-6). Veblen’s description highlights the persistence of older definitions of science as well as the range of what might be considered science—particularly with the ties between science and industrial development.

Furthermore, science implied notions of class. Paul and Blakeslee argue that science developed connotations of “utility, progress, and individuality” in the United

² Veblen is not so naïve to assume that Darwin himself caused this change, but merely, Darwin’s name is the “catch-word” for a new kind of science (398).
States (248). If not always evident in practice, these values functioned as “tropes in science’s argument for inclusion,” and became associated with science because it developed as an amateur hobby of middle class (not elite) individuals (249, see also Wolfe). Dael Wolfe, commenting on the university as the new ‘home of science’ by the end of the 19th century, explains, “Of the two ideas of the university—the university which offered graduate education and the university as the primary home of science—it was the former idea that was more clearly formulated” (61). Complicating the term’s ambiguity, the institutional location of science also shifted during this period, as departments expanded and graduate and professional schools were added to colleges. The period of transition created confusion; science was more than an intellectual issue, it was a structural problem. Where would different disciplines be located as they transitioned to this schema or entered the university for the first time? What purpose did they have, and did that purpose differ at the undergraduate level? Because it signaled so many different things to different audiences, science became a ubiquitous phrase that placed a particular area of study in the realm of legitimate academic knowledge. However, the lack of clear articulation also created a central issue in defining what a rhetorical science consisted of, and how it should be placed in the curriculum. The argument for composition-rhetoric as a science might thrive in a volatile and changing university, but it ultimately complicated the institutional location of the field in ways that made it vulnerable to charges of overlap with other fields.
The earliest notions of composition-rhetoric as a science among American rhetoricians occurred in the latter half of the 19th century. Even then, as Albert J. Kitzhaber notes, definitions of science were inconsistent and varied (77). However, for Kitzhaber, these definitions became increasingly heterogeneous after 1880, when Americans no longer attempted to “indicate the place of rhetoric in relation to other disciplines—an essential preliminary when each subject in the required curriculum had its own particular function to fulfill in the process of disciplining the mental faculties” (81). Kitzhaber elaborates,

when rhetoric was usually thought to be a separate 'mental science', a distinctive field had to be marked out for it and bulwarked against the encroachments of such other disciplines as logic, grammar, psychology, and ethics. The most plausible way to do this was simply to show in what ways rhetoric is indebted to these other subjects, yet manages to preserve its own identity and function (81).

According to Kitzhaber, after 1880, American rhetoricians abandoned attempts to distinguish rhetoric from other areas of the curriculum, but Kitzhaber does not explore this issue further. He assumes that rhetoric became “a much narrower and more pedestrians subject” as it became reduced to practical composition (94). Building on Kitzhaber’s argument, I demonstrate that the focus on demarcating rhetoric from other mental disciplines correlated with the tendency to view rhetoric as integral to a variety of
knowledges. As such, rhetoric had an expansive role that crossed departmental divides rather than establishing its own territory. John Guillory notes that the 18th and early 19th educational system based on the division between moral and natural philosophy shifted to a three part system as the late 19th century saw the emergence of modern disciplines: the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities (26). Although primarily focused on literature, Guillory rightly notes that this shift created a problem for subjects like rhetoric, which retained traces of its history as a mental discipline in the collegiate curriculum, but also attempted to establish legitimacy as a social science and humanistic study.

Ultimately, rhetoric, like philology, “straddled the new spectrum of the disciplines” (36). In short, it retained connotations of science that it acquired as a component of the moral philosophy curriculum, which defined science in terms of philosophical empiricism; however, maintaining this scientific connotation under the new system of disciplines expanded its territory rather than demarcating its territory. This expansiveness was complicated in the late 19th and early 20th century by an inability to articulate a clear correlation between undergraduate and graduate studies in composition-rhetoric—a crucial problem that placed rhetoric in a vulnerable position and exacerbated its definition woes.

This expansiveness of rhetoric as a mental discipline is apparent in early American texts, such as David J. Hill’s *The Science of Rhetoric* (1877). Hill rejected the Aristotelian notion of rhetoric as the study of the five canons: invention, arrangement,

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3 Earlier in the 19th century, Americans primarily relied upon major British texts, particularly the works of Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and Richard Whatley, rather than American-born texts.
style, delivery, and memory. For him, rhetorical science consisted of both a set of laws (and thus a taxonomical system) and a method for effecting mental change (and thus a process). He described rhetoric as comprising “laws of mind, laws of idea, laws of form” and seeking to act on the mind through language (39). These laws constituted rhetoric’s primary work, not the bellettristic focus on style and criticism, which Hill believed belonged properly to the study of aesthetics, not rhetoric (39). Distinguishing rhetoric from aesthetics, Hill saw rhetoric as informing “the methods of investigation... in the various departments of thought” such as law, theology, and criticism (3-4). As such, Hill delineated a broad, methodological role for composition-rhetoric, as fundamentally informing all fields of knowledge. He may have used ‘science’ variably, but Hill carefully articulated the differences between rhetoric and other “mental disciplines” such as aesthetics, ethics, and logic—classic components of the collegiate curriculum. However, for him, rhetoric fundamentally informed study of law, theology, and criticism. Defining rhetoric methodologically thus positioned it as informing the emerging disciplines and professional vocations, not as its own area of study.

Toward the latter half of the 19th century, academic reformers increasingly criticized the idea that college taught students “mental discipline,” arguing instead that college should provide professional training and instruction in the modern languages, arts, and sciences. Although traces of the ‘mental discipline’ model remained in higher education for many decades after the curriculum changed, new subjects were increasingly added based on vocational preparation and content knowledge. University of California president Daniel Coit Gilman (later the first president of Hopkins) defined the university
in 1872 as “the most comprehensive term that can be employed to indicate a foundation for the promotion and diffusion of knowledge—a group of agencies organized to advance the arts and sciences of every sort, and train young men as scholars for the intellectual callings of life” (qtd in Rudolph 333). With the emphasis on content knowledge and the imposition of new areas of study to replace the classical college curriculum, departments underwent a period of rapid development, emerging or splitting to create a much more compartmentalized system of units (Veysey 23-24, see also chapter 4). As I explain above, the specialization encouraged by graduate schools also motivated increasing departmentalization. The proliferating departments provided a convenient location for linking undergraduate to graduate education, so that the same faculty controlled both areas. But this arrangement also forced a correlation between undergraduate and graduate education that was not immediately obvious. Undergraduate education historically served to inculcate cultural and civic values, while the new graduate studies in the arts and sciences connoted specialized research. Thus, a fundamental question was how to construct continuity in the curriculum when the educational motivations of undergraduates were often vastly different than the aims and focus of graduate students.

Many rhetoricians writing after Hill continued to draw from an expansive, methodological definition of rhetoric, but they now had to articulate the role of rhetoric in undergraduate and graduate education and to work within a changing understanding of ‘discipline’ not as a mental process but as content knowledge. Take, for example John F. Genung’s argument that educators should see in “the art” of rhetoric “a practical value, immediate and universal” as well as a study “large enough for any elaborateness of
discipline” (134). Genung attempted to reconcile composition-rhetoric as a practical study and an art with the concept of a “discipline.” No longer assuming discipline implied mental training, Genung associated the term with abstract “facts, principles” (135). He saw these “facts, principles” as a key component of rhetoric, but favored artistic “construction, creation,” in teaching rhetoric (135). In fact, Genung wanted to reimagine the concept of discipline to include “creative,” not simply “receptive” objectives (135). Part of Genung’s emphasis on creativity is attributable to his desire to participate in and foster a national literary culture in America. Yet Genung did not abandon the disciplinary impulse entirely, and he argued that graduate and undergraduate study of rhetoric might be united by following a ‘scientific’ methodology for teaching rhetoric, which consisted of having students observe what works well in literature to foster writing ability: “This is not speculation out of some one’s head; it is scientific method. Rhetoric is the constructive study of literature, as distinguished from the philological and the historical study” (140). For him, rhetoric represented a particular methodology for studying literature in order to produce it, but this construction created another boundary problem for rhetoric. Although he attempted to distinguish rhetoric from philology and literary history, he nevertheless narrowed its object of study to literature, placing it within the domain of literature, not as a separate study.

Furthermore, Genung’s vision of the field attempted to establish parity between undergraduate and graduate study lines of work in rhetoric, where both would include such topics as professional training for writers and the study of methods of invention (141). This approach saw investigation not as an end in and of itself, but as a means for
training writers for professional work—an approach that contrasted with the form of graduate education in the arts and sciences as primarily the reproduction of an intellectual class (university faculty) not the production of a professional class. Was rhetoric a vocational study or a research subject? If a vocational study, the location of rhetoric within the arts and sciences would need to be completely rethought, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. If a research subject, then the relationship between composition and rhetoric would need to be rearticulated.

Some individuals strove to accomplish the latter, connecting undergraduate and graduate programs in rhetoric as a vertical research track. For example, Frank W. Scott began his discussion on “The Relation of Composition to the Rest of the Curriculum” by noting that composition did not fit the curriculum, nor represent the wider study of rhetoric. Scott argued that this lack of correspondence resulted from the competing aims of the course to improve students’ literacy on one hand and to inculcate literary and cultural sensibilities on the other hand (512). As the course had become increasingly practically oriented, it functioned as a “‘handmaiden’ to the rest of the curriculum” (513). Rhetoric was too dominated by the “pursuit of practical efficiency and… a sincere but mistaken attempt to make Freshman rhetoric meet immediate social and industrial needs” (513). Scott argues that the proliferation of specialized writing courses suggests a curricular confusion:

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4 The Master of Fine Arts as a degree option would come later, but the split between composition and creative writing would continue to mark the location of both in English departments (see Miller, Ritter, Mayers).
we have courses in ideas, in the evolution of the Darwinian theory since the death of Darwin, in current events, in advertising, in journalism, in engineering English, in agricultural English, in technique of the short story and of the play, and many other fads and specialties that promise to make competent writers out of students who know no rhetoric (513).

Scott’s understanding of these courses was shaped by his assumption that language is merely a container for thought, and “good English… is English for engineers as well as for all the rest of us” (516). Despite this limited perspective on writing, Scott made an important observation: composition was dispersed because it “leads nowhere, in the matter of [instructor] promotion, and, so far as our curricula show, has no scholarly relationships” (518). If composition-rhetoric had a scholarly agenda for researchers to study rhetoric as history, theory, aesthetics, criticism, leading to a higher degree and “opportunity for graduate investigation and scholarly research,” its status would improve (519). Such an argument sounds familiar to us today. Scott’s agenda would correlate the undergraduate and graduate courses in rhetoric (though he does not specify how), and would give purpose and value to faculty teaching introductory courses. Thus, Scott noted very early in composition’s emergence that the lack of correlation between undergraduate and graduate courses impacted the labor pool and status of the course; to that end, he argued that viewing composition as an introductory course in the theory and research of rhetoric, instead of practical writing instruction, would have material effects.

In contrast, many other individuals articulated diverging purposes for undergraduate and graduate courses in rhetoric. Joseph V. Denney, for example, used
science at The Ohio State University to place the study of rhetoric within the competing vocational and research aims of that university. As he articulated in “College Rhetoric,” a scientific approach represented a systematic method of instruction, in which students advanced from writing sentences to paragraphs to essays, and once those forms of discourse were learned, students practiced composing different genres. To teach different genres, Denny established a variety of courses with opportunities for advanced study in journalism writing, scientific writing, medical writing, and undergraduate research in rhetoric (precisely the sort of curriculum that Frank Scott disliked). His approach saw efficiency (a “scientific” approach) in the method of teaching students real forms and giving them purpose in writing (40). Much like Genung, Denney used the “scientific method” to establish legitimacy for what he perceived, at the undergraduate level, to be an art. As he explains,

One of the chief causes of our delay in reaching an effective method has been an unwillingness to accept in its fullness the idea that Rhetoric must, in its earlier stages, be treated mainly as an art rather than a science. It has been so much easier to compound a little psychology, logic, and philology, and to prescribe this compound under the name of Rhetoric, than to teach how to write (39, italics mine).

The curriculum that Denney pioneered established lower level courses that provided opportunities for both vocational and academic writing. In contrast, graduate courses explored rhetoric as a subject of scholarly investigation (see Mendenhall). The contrast between Scott’s view and Denney’s illustrates what was at stake in constructing the
curriculum: was the function of undergraduate composition-rhetoric to lead to graduate study in rhetoric (thus enhancing the status and labor pool of the course), or to improve students writing (thus fitting within the institutional mission for undergraduate and/or general education goals).

Similarly, Fred Newton Scott’s “Rhetoric Rediviva” distinguished between undergraduate and graduate study in rhetoric. He did not favor a view of rhetoric as an “art” or a “theoretical obligato to the practice of composition,” but rather saw rhetoric as a science worthy of “advanced study” (413). Concerned with justifying the scientific definition, Scott argued that rhetoric had too long been dominated by Aristotle’s “closed science” approach to rhetoric as a set of rules with no room for original investigation (413). Aristotle’s rhetorical science lacked “the wide survey, the causal nexus, the central co-ordinating principle without which a science cannot be” (414). Scott thus viewed the older taxonomic perspective as limited, and attempted to outline possibilities for original investigation in rhetoric for graduate students. Given Scott’s position at the University of Michigan, one of the few public universities included in the first list of universities by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), it makes sense that he would attempt to establish an appropriate graduate-level focus for rhetoric. However, for Scott, the undergraduate students still needed rhetoric to be a “cultural discipline”; only graduate students could “grapple with weighty and complex problems and… make independent investigation” (413). That Scott saw rhetoric as a cultural discipline for undergraduates, but not for graduates, demonstrates the difficulty in positioning rhetoric in the curriculum. Scott continued to grapple with this difficulty in
attempts to articulate the correlation between research and teaching (and thus graduate and undergraduate education). As he explained, “In this subject [composition], as in most others, the general educational principle holds good that elementary practice and advanced research are mutually dependent… Illustrations of this truth in mathematics, biology, medicine, and other sciences, will occur to everyone” (413). Although Scott argued that research improved undergraduate teaching, he based this claim on an analogy with the ‘hard sciences’ that failed to acknowledge differences between those studies and rhetoric.

A further problem with this analogy appears in Scott’s attempt to outline the elements of a rhetorical science. To be a science, rhetoric required “(1) a fairly distinct and unified subject-matter of sufficient richness, depth, and interest to reward the investigator; (2) a method of research based upon accurate observation, experiment (when possible), and generalization; and (3) as the end in view, an organized body of interlocking principles, laws and classifications” (414). Scott’s definition of science called for a *unified* subject matter and a method for investigation—all of which would lead to laws and classifications (somehow distinct from the laws and classifications that he disapproved of in Aristotle). After calling for unity, however, Scott then emphasized the range of fields that rhetoric encompasses—notably aesthetics, sociology, and psychology. Scott’s identification of the sciences on which rhetoric was based itself indicates the problem with rhetoric’s transition: he identified rhetoric’s connection to the emerging social sciences of sociology and psychology, but traces of rhetoric’s historical attachment to faculty psychology and aesthetics were also included in his schema.
Although historians have lionized Scott for validating rhetoric, his own justification for rhetorical study—like that of Hill—defined rhetoric as a compilation of various subjects, while simultaneously relying on a tenuous analogy between the natural sciences and rhetoric.

The analogy between composition-rhetoric and the hard sciences (or even the social sciences) was subject to criticism. Edwin Berry Bergum argued defining areas of English as a science provided questionable security: “The assumption is that in English research, as in science, anything is worth while provided the method is scientific. Yet the slightest scrutiny into the question of values would show the lack of parallelism” (472). The difference between English and Science, Bergum argued, is that English research does not currently improve the object of its scholarship or lead to an appreciation or betterment of literature, as Bergum believed it should (472-3). Speaking of both philology and rhetoric, Morton W. Easton cautioned in 1889 that the “science of language… is not an exact science” (21). He noted that comparing ‘linguistic sciences’ with the hard sciences “is but little to the advantage of the former” (21). Rather than diminish its significance, he argued that the lack of correlation actually provided language studies with a unique role:

What should we say of the teacher of psychology who should confine his work to the anatomical tissues of the brain and nerves? No! to stop here is to relinquish our distinctive claims to respectful attention. Language is an art; it is not merely the product of certain historical factors, it is an art,
and the study of its application as an art is worthy of our best energies as educators of undergraduates (21, italics mine).

Note that Easton, like Genung and Denney, saw art and science as mutually compatible, and connected the artistic study of language with the undergraduate mission. In fact, Easton suggested that an analogy with the hard sciences worked against demarcating the value of those studies. Focusing on undergraduate education, he argued, “the instructions in the modern languages is the only source of culture in the academical course…. the perhaps unavoidable professional tendency of the scientific departments of our colleges and universities is to convert men into mere wheels in the social machine, useful and active wheels, no doubt, but wheels nevertheless” (22). Although science provided a worthy aim for graduate education, “The proper function of the teacher of the undergraduate is of a different, and in some respects, of a higher order. To use the terminology of college faculties, he should be, preeminently, a teacher in the ‘Department of Arts’” (20). Only in the arts, could the study of language create a “well-rounded man” capable of dealing with “literary wholes” (22) rather than specialized periods or divisions. This study, Easton believed, better prepared an undergraduate for graduate studies if she wished to pursue them: “No postgraduate student deserves a postgraduate degree who does not, in addition to showing a thorough knowledge of the historical development of a tongue, render a good account of the spirit of the documents involved and of their artistic or aesthetic value” (23). Thus, Easton also articulated differing aims for the undergraduate course, and its relationship to cultivating a cultured, educated class of citizens rather than specialists.
Glenn E. Palmer at the University of Kansas summarized the conflicting view of undergraduate and graduate rhetoric in his essay, “Culture and Efficiency through Composition” (1912). Like Easton’s desire to bring art and science together, Palmer wanted to reconcile instruction in composition that emphasized cultural and literary refinement with approaches that strove to teach efficient prose composition. He noted,

That there is an increasing tendency at present… to view language composition no longer as a system of rules but as a subject for investigation was illustrated at the last meeting of the Modern Language Association (Chicago, December 26-29, 1911) in a paper read by Dr. David Blondheim, in which he declares that language study should be carried on in connection with psychology, philosophy, history, and kindred sciences. This tendency is but another expression of the general scientific movement that is alive today…. More and more rhetoric instruction is losing its nature as a drill in the tabulated language superstitions of the old generation, and turning its endeavor to a sane investigation of the facts of language expression and composition (489-490).

Palmer concurred that a scientific investigation of rhetoric, including historical philology, literature, psychology, philosophy, could inform composition. However, he too resisted the idea that this knowledge should be the sum of what composition taught at the undergraduate level (490). Palmer’s motivation for this assertion emerged from his particular perspective that undergraduate education should unify culture and efficiency.
As he explained, “After all, is not the purpose of education to enable us to live, and are we not safe in concluding that in the last analysis the most efficient life is that which is cultured, and the most cultured life that which is at the same time efficient?” (488). What is particularly interesting about Palmer’s desire to unite culture and efficiency is the implication that undergraduate instruction should mitigate problematic tendencies in American culture. A focus on liberal culture in education could become “dilettantism” while efficiency could be “carried to the extreme of impersonal system and administrative machinery that is rife in many of our state institutions today” (488).

Palmer’s prescription for these social ills was an extensive composition program taught over the course of “years, not of semesters” (491), involving “the concentration of all the forces of the university upon his development [as a writer]” (492). That is, composition served as the locus for a number of competing social desires—both public and academic.

Composition-rhetoric was positioned as a social remedy, cultural training, preparation for a literary vocation, and a course in the liberal art of rhetoric. Its role in the undergraduate curriculum seemed to demand something more than an elective course or an introductory course in the major, for nearly everyone writing about the purpose of the course. Undergraduate education played a crucial role in building and popularizing the university. As John R. Thelin argues, “Although the university-builders’ public pronouncements tended to disparage the historic college as obsolete, in private conversations they acknowledged that their universities were dependent on the colleges’ resurgence” (156). Furthermore, between 1880 and 1930, the demographic of boards of trustees changed radically, as individuals with corporate, not academic, backgrounds
increasingly constituted their membership (Thelin 238). Graduate education needed undergraduates for courses, tuition, future enrollment in graduate programs, and a host of other reasons. And undergraduates became alumni and incentivized charitable donations to the university (Thelin 156). All of these material constraints impacted (and still do) the range of intellectual possibilities for courses in composition-rhetoric. Simply put, the value placed on the undergraduate curriculum necessarily affected curricular goals and purposes.

*Many Sciences, One Rhetoric: Articulations of Graduate Education in Rhetoric*

As composition-rhetoric struggled with the relationship between undergraduate and graduate studies, the conflict over graduate education created another set of definition problems related to science. The significance of science in early arguments about graduate education in rhetoric is highlighted in a 1901 MLA Pedagogical Section survey report on the possibilities for graduate education in rhetoric. Although referenced occasionally in historical documents, this report has not yet been analyzed adequately. In fact, it has often been dismissed as a spark of passing interest in composition-rhetoric that quickly fizzled out. The sources I discuss above already indicate that the early 20th century experienced steady (if not widespread) interest in rhetoric and concern about its place the curriculum. In addition to confirming the existing confusion over the nature of graduate and undergraduate education, the survey reports reveal another fundamental problem with the discourse of science in rhetoric—that defining rhetoric as a science actually dispersed its work across multiple disciplines and made it vulnerable to charges of being unnecessary.
As I have already noted, Mead (the survey editor) summarized the responses as largely in favor of graduate study in rhetoric (188). Such a graduate program, as outlined by respondents, involved a range of “historical, psychological, or philosophical, and pedagogical” subjects for investigation (193). To begin with, then, Mead describes rhetoric’s content as extremely varied. This variety represents the conflicting definitions of science and the extent to which rhetoric, as conceived, overlapped with emerging disciplines in higher education. To show this range of views, the following list provides examples of respondent’s comments about what constituted appropriate graduate study in rhetoric:5

- [Rhetoric is] a composite of parts of grammar, psychology, logic, literary criticism, and perhaps other studies (194).
- Rhetoric [is] essentially a branch of psychology; it is the psychology of the creative activity applied to the processes and problems of literature… I believe it may be just as practical, just as interesting, just as profitable, just as liberally educative, to study literature constructively (in other words, rhetoric) as to study it historically (194-5).
- [Rhetoric] touches for subject-matter both literature and linguistics; for method psychology, aesthetics, and sociology (195).
- If regarded as a science it would be conducted on the same lines as Grammar or Language. The History of Rhetoric—the History of

5 Note that each bullet is a contribution from a separate individual, and contributions were submitted anonymously.
Rhetorical Treatises—Comparative Rhetoric, etc., would be proper objects of research (198).

- It seems to me the value of Rhetoric as a subject for graduate work depends upon whether it be regarded as an art or as a science, if these distinctions will be allowed… as a science I believe it is eminently suited for graduate work. It should be regarded in this latter sense as a phase of psychology (198).

- The history of rhetorical theory, as a branch of the history of criticism, is a proper subject. Investigations into the psychology of rhetoric and style (e.g. Herbert Spencer’s ‘economy’ of attention’) or scientific study of the history of style (whether as the rhetoric of prose or the rhetoric of poetry) are proper subjects. Rhetoric in this sense is a part of the study of the history of literary form (199).

- The relation of Rhetoric to Psychology deserves exhaustive investigation; is full of problems of interest and practical significance. The relation of Rhetoric to Logic, the history of Logic and Rhetoric, the philosophical implications of Rhetoric, are all crying for treatment and discussion… A study of Rhetoric on liberal lines I believe may have the highest disciplinary value for graduate learning and does offer problems of profound interest for research” (200).

What is clear from these responses is that rhetoric encompasses or overlaps with a range of other emerging departments and disciplines—literature, history, psychology,
sociology, linguistics, pedagogy (education), in addition to encompassing older mental disciplines, including logic, grammar, and aesthetics. Furthermore, these comments reflect a lack of clarity about whether rhetoric constituted a social science (psychology, sociology) or a liberal art, or both. Far from being insignificant, these articulations demonstrate a crucial transition that rhetoric needed to go through in order to fit with the model of graduate research—either it needed to transition out of the humanities entirely or it needed to become a liberal art. Louis Menand describes how fields associated with a vocation or otherwise non-academic study could transition to a liberal art by becoming the object of inquiry itself: “any practical field can be made liberal simply by teaching it historically or theoretically… Accounting is a trade, but the history of accounting is a subject of disinterested inquiry—a liberal art” (55). Thus, the comments arguing for studying the history or theory of rhetoric reflect attempts to fit rhetoric into the liberal arts model, and thus make it an appropriate graduate study in English departments.

With the expansion of rhetoric came the challenge of how to position rhetoric’s work in the scheme of English and other emerging disciplines. As Mead explains, some respondents felt that giving rhetoric ‘the false dignity of isolation’ would be to diminish rather than to increase its importance” (193). The importance of isolation and independence was stressed in other comments. One respondent defined rhetoric as a science, worthy of graduate work, but added the caveat that it is not "equal in importance to those subjects that have an independent existence, and if it is to be pursued as a graduate study its relation to other branches of knowledge must be fully realized" (Mead 194). Another suggested, “There should be no separate curriculum of graduate study in
rhetoric,” because it already existed as part of literary study (200). These respondents perceived rhetoric as a field lacking a natural or obvious object of study or reason for existence, and composed of too many other studies that themselves seemed to possess natural reasons for existence.

Because it consisted of so many different disciplines, training in rhetoric also presented a problem for the respondents. One commenter warned, “Without a fairly complete training, however, in modern psychology and aesthetics, as well as in literature and language, only dilettante work is possible, and that has long discredited the name Rhetoric in our colleges and universities” (196). (This problem would recur later in the 20th century, as chapter 3 explores). In addition to training, the relationship between rhetoric and literature—and their structural location in the department and university—also presented an obstacle to distinguishing between the two. The same respondent noted, “our current terms ‘literature’ and ‘Rhetoric’ overlap even to the extent of some confusion” (196). That respondent also questioned the wisdom, however, of trying to distinguish between literature and rhetoric: “In practice a given department is not to be divided a priori, with certain men strictly for ‘literature’ on one side of an imaginary line, and certain men for ‘Rhetoric’ on the other” (196). Significantly, some respondents constructed the question of the relationship between literature and rhetoric as “entirely a matter of organization” (196), rather than a fundamental issue related to the intellectual content and scope of rhetoric. That questions of organization were separated from questions of content and disciplinary identity signals a persistent and underlying tendency to view intellectual spaces and material spaces as distinct from one another, rather than
material spaces in higher education (departments, colleges, schools, etc.) as fundamentally informing intellectual spaces (disciplines). In fact, the location of rhetoric in English departments, I would argue, was one reason that rhetorical study ultimately conjoined with literary study (at least in English departments) rather than becoming a social science, pedagogical science, or a kind of creative writing degree.

The survey report also demonstrates that a central issue was whether composition had any place in a graduate program. A few respondents suggest that composition, as a pedagogical science, deserved inclusion in graduate education. Indeed, given that many universities established graduate level training in pedagogy or education during this early 20th century suggests that this was not an impossible vision for the field. One respondent remarked that rhetoric could provide "a scientific base for teaching an efficient use of the mother tongue," specifying that the ultimate aim of graduate study in rhetoric should be "pedagogical,” and suggesting like others, numerous areas of study for this pursuit: “the aesthetics of prose, the history of language, and the history of Rhetoric” as well as “the psychology of childhood and youth as related to the problems of language-teaching” (197-8). Yet because colleges of education tended to approach the latter investigation, while the arts and sciences focused on the former, this approach to rhetoric did not fit within the current structure of graduate education either.

Others interpreted the question of graduate education in rhetoric to mean that the university should offer writing instruction for graduate students, and this suggestion was discouraged emphatically: “Mere theme-writing, however sublimated or raised even to the nth power, ought never to be a part of the credits for a higher degree” (200). Another
similarly concluded that composition should be relegated to “undergraduate study, or, if graduate, should not count toward a degree” (197). The problem for one respondent was that Rhetoric might “simply continue the mixed lessons given under that name in elementary text-books” (194), the assumption being that rhetoric both lacked coherence (as a set of mixed lessons) and should differ in purpose at the graduate level. Composition might merit place in graduate education if focused on training teachers, but not if focused on writing themes.

However, some respondents challenged the definition of graduate education as disinterested investigation without practical application. According to Mead, many indicated, “a graduate school might be made to serve as a school for critical or creative genius; but their plans for the conduct of such a school were not very definite” (193). One comment in particular elaborates on this point:

If regarded as an art there would need to be a change in the interpretation of the advanced degrees. For the Oxford doctorate in music the candidate must present a musical composition as part of evidence of proficiency. I do not see why a rhetorical composition, an essay, a novel, a poem, or other literary kind, should not count toward a degree in literature (198).

This respondent challenged the idea that graduate school should exclude artistic performance, pointing specifically to the English model as an example of how this might be incorporated into the current educational structure. Yet reconfiguring the graduate degree according to an entirely different model was a radical proposal, and not likely to gain popularity unless it formed a separate degree or institutional location.
The MLA survey respondents parsed rhetoric into an array of subfields, related fields, and studies. In doing so, they followed the trend set early on by those like Hill, who saw rhetoric as a methodology integral to a number of studies. For the respondents, the question of science proved particularly significant to justifying whether rhetoric might prove appropriate for graduate education. Establishing this as a priority pushed questions of organization into the background, to surface only occasionally when the relationship between rhetoric and composition came into question. This historical tendency has obscured the integral relationship between location and discipline, and the way that rhetoric and composition has been fundamentally shaped by its historical emergence in American higher education.

Scholarship, the PhD, and the Public Value of Composition

As the above section demonstrates, arguments attempting to define rhetoric as a science struggled to locate it successfully within both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. This move was complicated by disagreement about whether the undergraduate and graduate studies should correspond or whether they should diverge. But external pressures on education and writing instruction also impacted the larger role of undergraduate education more generally. The idea that rhetoric represented a science seemed not to mesh with the larger view of undergraduate education, as many of the comments have already suggested. Baker, dismissing any value to the English Ph.D. as a training appropriate for teaching undergraduates, argued that the scientific approach to English of “grammarians, linguists, and scientists” (824) led to questionable composition instruction, in which “Freshmen” learned to “adorn their pages with innumerable
footnotes, as preparation for writing a future Ph.D. thesis or a learned article for one of the scholarly periodicals which never pay for contributions! It is difficult to see what relation such training has to the writing of plain English for sensible purposes” (822). Furthermore, the scientific approach applied to undergraduate education seemed ridiculous to the public, argued Baker:

A successful business man in New York once told me that if he ever accumulated several millions he would give at least one million to his alma mater, Harvard University, to enable her to hire competent instructors for this Freshman course. His own undergraduate knowledge of the world, he said, was equal to that of his teacher. (822).

This businessman, Baker assured readers, was not “egotistical” (822). The man simply recognized that the current scientific approach to English did not serve any practical purpose—and practical education was what the public wanted:

In only one college for men, Harvard, does [English] stand at the head of the list [of most popular majors]. It is generally eclipsed by economics and by social science. The great manly course in most men’s colleges is money and banking. And I shall merely say that this is true to note of our American life. The university is 100 per cent accurate in registering American interests (824, italics mine).

Baker’s argument reveals the complexity of the undergraduate/graduate structure of higher education, and its vulnerability, particularly in the humanities, to critiques from the public.
Baker supported the idea that the college should reflect public interests, but others denied that idea. One respondent to the MLA pedagogical section survey drew a stark line between “inside” and “outside” views of academic work:

My view has always been that the college (university) is a place for research, for scholarship, for finding out something hitherto unsuspected. Such is the object of our libraries and our seminary methods. The outside world hasn’t the time to investigate; we must do the investigating” (201).

This comment rested entirely on the assumption that the public would support investigation for which the outside world had no time or interest. In fact, even as early as the late 19th century, and the humanities suffered from, as Th. W. Hunt put it, a “strange depreciation… among parents, preparatory teachers, Boards of Trustees, Faculties of Arts, and with the general public” (120). Similarly, Albert Nitze wrote in 1922 that the public considered the humanities “a desideratum, an ornament so-to-speak of the scholar, a fringe on the lingerie of learning” (lxxvii). He noted the difficulty of negotiating “German” scholarly ideals with public attitudes in the articulation of “Modern Language Scholarship.” Nitze wanted to emphasize the value of Modern Language study to the public: “who has—or should have—a closer contact with ‘life’ than the teacher of Modern Languages?” (lxxvi). He reminded the “scholars” in the audience that the American context differed significantly from the German one, and scholarship should thus be conducted according to American values: “I very much doubt whether the
Selbstanzeige\textsuperscript{6} of the *Germanisch-romanische Monatschrift* [a German academic periodical], if transplanted to this country, would raise us in the public esteem, let alone sell our books” (lxxvi). Nitze saw reform as a solution: the university would need “considerable division of labor, a clearer recognition than we now have of what is a graduate school, a definite apportionment of professors to it, etc” (lxxvii). In other words, Nitze saw as a central issue the lack of clear distinction between the different aims of undergraduate and graduate education, and their relationship to one another. Furthermore, he called for scholarship to be accessible to the public. Noting the public’s frequent attack of abstruse dissertation topics, he called for academics to explain the purpose of such scholarship:

> If the public lack enlightenment, why not tell them our story, as the scientists are telling theirs, in a series of popular manuals which the average person can understand. Here is a task that some of our University Presses can legitimately undertake. In the long run it might prove far more useful—and certainly more remunerative—than the multiplication of existing types of journals and monographs, which in themselves may be excellent but because of their number and diversity are already a serious

\textsuperscript{6} Although *Selbstanzeige* is roughly translated from the German as self-disclosure (and used currently in the contexts of taxes), here and elsewhere the term seems to be used to refer to scholarship published in an academic journal or even the publication of a dissertation, as, for example, in Walter Benjamin’s *Selbstanzeige der Dissertation*. Perhaps the term is used as a disclosure, report, or review of one’s scholarship—in an article or monograph. In any case, it is clear here that Nitze intends this term to refer to scholarship of some sort in the German fashion.
problem to our libraries and bibliographers, not to mention subscribers (lxxix-lxxx).

Even more pragmatically, he argued that administrators would not care who read scholarship, but simply that scholarship was produced: “I believe—and I am now speaking ‘practically’—that it matters little in what channels our scholarship moves. The chief consideration is that it does move and thereby enables us to move others” (lxxxiii).

Other critiques of the research model reflected similar sentiments. For example, Bergum quibbled that research in English merely was a “spectacle of output” (469). The very fact that the research model received such scrutiny made it possible for rhetoric and composition, as well as English, to retain (or in some cases, repress) elements of liberal culture and vocational education in their curricula. Indeed, we should see the persistence of composition (and in some cases, rhetoric) in the early 20th century as a sign that English relied upon composition to justify its continued existence, even if implicitly.

This analysis of the role of English and its position in university and public eyes is crucial to understanding rhetoric and composition’s arguments about identity. For one thing, these arguments demonstrate that writing practices—framed as literary writing, scholarly writing, or “Freshman” writing—were crucial to the identity of English studies in a number of ways. That is, even as the science gained increasing sway in the university, writing (and its value) continued to pose a challenge to transitioning entirely to a research model in English. Howard J. Savage, discussing this problem, noted, “Perhaps in the fact that almost no one has ever embarked upon a course of graduate study with the ultimate aim of teaching Freshmen to write may be found the real crux of
the administrator’s problem” (439-440). Savage believed that seeing “scholarship and the ability to teach” as “complementary” could improve the relationship of Composition-rhetoric to the public (440). Noting the history of “gala days at state universities, when teachers and students entertain members of the legislature in the endeavor to secure appropriations and increases,” Savage believed there was “some advantage in the breaking down of academic isolation which attends the legislative invasion” (446). He praised the social scientists and the chemists for their contract with the public and industry, but notes that

The instructor in English is usually the furthest removed from things and people extra-academic. Yet this contact is precisely what is needed for the full development of a teacher of composition…. It is true that teaching composition is no more ‘narrowing’ than teaching literature or language or science, or manufacturing pig iron or operating railroads or coal mines or engaging in any kind of business, but between the extremes of commercial and academic isolation lies a mean which will lend itself less readily to ridicule, and which will divest the annual appearance of the professor at the alumni dinner of its present circus-like qualities (446-7).

What Savage does is argue for the increasing role of composition-rhetoric as a liaison between English studies and the public. Genung similarly wrote, the teacher of rhetoric has more “favorable occasion than perhaps any other place in the faculty to lessen that distance between teacher and taught which, as all acknowledge, is the most deplorable feature of college life” (157). Not only do Savage and Genung’s remarks, along with

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those of Nitze, Bergum, and Baker, position composition-rhetoric as having the potential to provide a valuable identity for English, they also indicate the early difficulty of English in establishing its viability. English’s own problems with identity complicate the narrative of rhetoric’s decline given by Connors, Berlin, Miller, and others. That narrative tends to see literature as always privileged and composition as always denigrated because it assesses composition’s history in terms of a very narrow set of academic values. In fact, composition’s persistence in English indicates the continued pull that the public exerted on the purpose and function of undergraduate education, and indicates that English studies itself was battling criticisms from within and outside of the academy.

In many ways, my analysis confirms the assessment that composition-rhetoric struggled with its identity in transitioning to a university model, but not for the reason that historians currently suggest—that rhetoric proved unscientific. Instead, with the switch from mental disciplines to academic disciplines, rhetoric’s identity as a methodological discipline informing a variety of knowledges worked against its ability to stake out a clear territory within English or as a separate department. Indeed, many of the strongest proponents of rhetoric as a science actually contributed to this effect by trying to draw from the psychology, sociology, literary criticism, and other studies. This incoherence did not necessarily ascribe it a dismal fate, but it did complicate and contribute to another emerging problem: the relationship of undergraduate to graduate studies. The multi-disciplinary ‘science’ of composition-rhetoric thus challenged the current structure of division that characterized the early years of the 20th century, and also
placed it in a vulnerable position to compete for its identity and for its material well-being. Not until the 1960s, as I discuss in chapter 2, did composition begin to emerge as a research specialization, when American higher education’s increasing access to federal and corporate funding for research benefited education and literacy-focused research in English studies. As subsequent chapters attest, composition and rhetoric benefitted from the increasing pragmatism, the focus in interdisciplinarity, and the need for faculty with flexible identities that occurred in the latter half of the 20th century.

Although some early scholars attempted to create a vertical curriculum from undergraduate to graduate education, or at least to articulate some correspondence between the two studies, persistent questions about the role of the PhD, humanities scholarship, and the purpose of undergraduate education complicated these attempts. Reframing the early “failure” of composition and rhetoric in this way provides insight into our current dilemma over disciplinary identity. In fact, with the proliferation of theoretical and practical studies in composition and rhetoric, the pull for interdisciplinary research that is often vaguely defined, and the development of vertical programs and departments (trends I discuss in subsequent chapters), we continue to confront the same issues that complicated early attempts to define composition.
Chapter 2: The Emergence of Composition Research in the 1960s

“So many of the hopes and fears of the American people are now related to our educational system and particularly to our universities—the hope for longer life, for getting into outer space, for a higher standard of living; our fears of Russian or Chinese supremacy, of the bomb and annihilation, of individual loss of purpose in the changing world. For all these reasons and others, the university has become a prime instrument of national purpose. This is new” (Kerr 66).

If the early 20th century has been defined as a failure of rhetoric and composition to establish a research agenda and disciplinarity identity, does the emergence of research in composition in the 1960s constitute a success? Composition historians largely agree that the 1960s mark the moment of composition’s disciplinary emergence. Stephen North in The Making of Knowledge in Composition writes definitively, “We can therefore date the birth of modern Composition, capital C, to 1963. And what marks its emergence as a nascent academic field more than anything else is this need to replace practice as the field’s dominant mode of inquiry” (15). Similarly, Robert Connors identifies the 1960s

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7 Part of North’s premise is that he is unsure whether we can call composition a discipline, and he prefers the term ‘field’ instead. Nevertheless, North still considers
as the date of a “rapid shift” toward contemporary composition-rhetoric, “which is
defined by being informed by scholarly work in a new discipline, composition studies”
(15). Connors cites anecdotal evidence suggesting the 1963 CCCC conference in
particular seemed “qualitatively changed from earlier conferences” (206). James Berlin’s
*Rhetoric and Reality* points to an earlier date of 1958 when the increased presence of
rhetoric at the 1958 CCCC indicates to him that “Rhetoric as a discipline had clearly
arrived” (118). Berlin also calls the 1963 publication of *Research in Written
Composition* a sign that composition was “confident of its value and its future [as a]
discipline” (135). The most canonical histories of composition, then, generally look to
the late 1950s or early 1960s as forging new legitimacy for composition.\(^8\) Moreover,
these narratives explicitly call upon research as the foundation for composition’s new
disciplinary identity.

However, as chapter 1 suggests, defining a research agenda for rhetoric and
composition has not always clarified its identity issues or its location in the academy.
The appearance of composition research in the 1960s needs to be examined critically in
order to understand the motives for research in that historical context and how those
motives intersect with the goals of the profession’s members. Few histories analyze the

\(^{8}\) Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality* focuses more on the role of rhetoric in the history of
composition, so much so that he tends to conflate the two. His reference to rhetoric at
CCCCC indicates his own perspective that the advent of rhetorically based research in
composition marks the origin of modern composition.

\(^{9}\) Some scholars, including Frank D’Angelo, John Warnock, Richard Lloyd-Jones (see
Williams), contest the 1960s origin date, but not generally historians. Other scholars, like
David Smit, contest the notion that Composition has ever been a discipline.
discourse of research; instead, most composition historians equate increased research activity with disciplinary status. Lloyd-Jones, one of the co-authors of RWC, has noted this tendency in the reception of that work, saying, “We considered ourselves as doing routine status summaries of conventional empirical research as a basis for identifying sound practice, but others (particularly Steve North) have used our reviews as a watershed for separating the old order in composition studies from the new” (18). Lloyd-Jones points to the disconnect between the motives of researchers and the interpretation of historians who attempt to identify a point of origin for the discipline.

As this chapter shows, efforts at researching writing instruction were sponsored by national, corporate, and professional institutions, and borrowed methodologies from education and the social and psychological sciences. Arguments about the meaning of composition’s location within English and the humanities returned as composition increasingly expanded the kinds of research efforts scholars pursued. The 1961 publication of the National Interest and the Teaching of English called for research in all areas of the teaching of English, and two hallmark studies published in 1963 called specifically for composition research—Albert R. Kitzhaber’s Themes, Theories, and Therapy and Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer’s Research in Written Composition. Countless articles published in CCC addressed the role research should play in the teaching and administration of writing. These early works provide insight into the discourses of research, professionalism, and disciplinarity mid century. Texts like Kitzhaber’s and Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer’s authorized future research projects, but their studies also contributed to debate over the goals and methods
of research, the nature of composition, and the relationship between composition and English. As such, the development of research during this time only complicated the attempts at self-definition. Thus, rather than representing an accomplishment, research constituted a problem at a number of levels for those in English and rhetoric and composition.

A history of the role of research in composition can help us understand why disciplinary identity has been and continues to be a source of anxiety and argument in composition. I begin this chapter by analyzing debates from the 1960s about research university culture, its relationship to the federal government, and nationalistic ideals. In particular, I argue that English studies scholars in NCTE and Project English efforts employed nationalistic and moralistic justifications for sponsoring English research and teaching, positioning English as key to the preservation of national values and American technological expansion. I then situate scholarship from CCC as well as key publications by Kitzhaber and Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer in the discourses of the American multiversity. My analysis of these texts suggests that the early sponsorship of research in composition encouraged an expansive vision of composition research by emphasizing the need for such research to be problem focused. Thus, research in composition developed in ways that challenged disciplinary boundaries. In attempting to assert the social relevance of composition and benefit from new funding initiatives, compositionists garnered increasing attention for composition research and teaching, but they also created a new set of problems about how to define composition within or against English.
The history of composition research in the 1960s I construct here looks at research as a specific response to the social and political context, arguing that research activities in composition responded to the general increase in the cultural capital of research in American higher education. An examination of major research studies and publications in CCC from the 1960s reveals that the inauguration of composition as a research “discipline” was more complicated and contested than historical narratives currently account for. While Kitzhaber, Braddock, and others certainly called for new research to improve composition and to define a central purpose for composition within English, others demurred, objecting to the scientificity of such studies and their deviation from humanistic ways of knowing. Research, then, represented a new problem for composition in two different ways. On one hand, it was a problem to be solved—a huge gap in knowledge that spanned an entire profession of English educators, from elementary to post-secondary education. English studies, and composition specifically, needed to argue that the U.S. needed a “New English” as much as it had needed a “New Mathematics” and “New Science,” and that the formation of a “New English” required extensive research. On the other hand, research initiatives to improve literacy education were represented as scientific, a rhetorical move that threatened humanistic of literary scholarship.

10 The terms “New English,” “New Science,” and “New Mathematics” referred to post-Sputnik, NDEA-funded educational attempts to develop a spiral curriculum that provided coherent and progressive instruction from K-12 to secondary and post-secondary education.
“At a Hinge of History”: Composition Research and the Multiversity in the 1960s

The drive for composition and literacy-oriented research in English emerged out of a moment of intense research sponsorship in higher education in the 1960s. In *The Uses of the University* (1963), University of California, Berkeley president Clark Kerr famously described the 1960s as “a hinge of history” for the American university. The “hinge” Kerr described was the arrival of a new phase in the university’s history: the era of the multiversity. The multiversity, for Kerr, was a bureaucratic institution that developed out of the need to manage the multiple demands of an expanding undergraduate population, renewed emphasis on graduate education, and developments in research, largely in scientific and technological fields. As he saw it, research became an increasingly predominant function of universities’ work, entangling that work with federal and corporate sponsorship in new ways. As the discourse of higher education increasingly capitalized off of research, research adopted nationalistic and entrepreneurial connotations. This struggle to balance goals and please several constituencies was further complicated by competition among programs, projects, and institutions for increasingly generous federal and private funding resources. The funding model adopted by the federal government encouraged such competition because it tended toward funding projects or research centers instead of large-scale funding of education, particularly in the implementation of the NDEA (Kerr 41; see also Urban). New alliances between the federal government and the university made the multiversity “a prime instrument of national purpose” (66), responsible as never before for economic growth and national achievement. Kerr joked that with the proliferation of purposes, motives,
and administrative structures in the multiversity, little united the institution besides “a common grievance over parking” (15).

Kerr saw the early 1960s as a turning point marking increasing prominence and prestige for higher education as it became a key partner in the nation’s industry and knowledge production. According to calculations Kerr cites from Fritz Machlup in *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (1962), 29% of the gross national product (GNP) came from the production, consumption, and distribution of knowledge, and growth related to knowledge production was occurring at twice the rate of the rest of the economy (qtd in Kerr 66). Yet the funding boom did not benefit all areas of the university or all types of higher education institutions equally. Federal funding in 1961, for example, largely went towards three areas: defense (40%), scientific and technological progress (20%), and health (37%) (Kerr 41). Funding was not only unequally distributed among fields, but also institutions; according to Kerr’s research, 20 universities received 79% of research funds from the federal government (41). Given the relationship between universities and knowledge production, Kerr wrote, “The university and segments of industry are becoming more alike. As the university becomes tied into the world of work, the professor—at least in the natural and some of the social sciences—takes on the characteristics of an entrepreneur” (68). Kerr conflates the American research university with scientific forms of research, but his privileging of the sciences is indicative of the general attitude in higher education at the time. Given that research was driven by industrial and federal goals, composition was primed to receive more funding
than other areas of English studies because it could (and did) position itself as having testable, measurable outcomes in the teaching of literacy.

The changing structure of the university did not go unnoticed by departments of English. The records from the Association of Departments of English (ADE) Bulletin reveal that the increased funding of research and what was termed the “managerial revolution” occupied discussions about the future of English. For example, a 1964 call for research proposals noted the abundance of funding for teaching-related research in English from the Cooperative Research division of the US Office of Education, which had $11 million dollars available that year. The call indicates that as much as $17 million dollars might be available the next year. Yet the call also notes that Cooperative Research “is having a hard time spending this on pedagogical research,” and urges “English scholars, teachers, and departments [to] flood the office with proposals of any sort that they deem important” (2). This call indicates that researchers working on projects related to English pedagogy had access to a significant amount of federal funds for specific projects. Yet the plea for proposals also suggests that people in the field were not always taking advantage of such funding. Thus, research may have occupied the discourse of English but that does not mean that the majority of those in the field knew how to (or were inclined to) enact such projects during early years.

The availability of funding for pedagogical research was not the only indication of changes within the departments. Several in English studies noted changes like those Kerr discussed in the administrative structure of departments and universities. These changes point to the effects of university expansion and a new emphasis on research. In a 1965
article, the *Bulletin* printed summaries of statements by various department chairs who spoke at MLA on “The Managerial Revolution and the English Department,” a panel attended by 400 chairs and guests (“ADE Program at MLA” 5). Warner G. Rice pointed to the rapid increase in the size of universities as a factor in the decreased role that faculty members played in the direction of the university. Additionally, he explained,

> [P]rofessors cannot meet their main obligations and at the same time be responsible, as a group, for decisions concerning the creation of new buildings, the handling of contracts for large but specialized projects, public relations, and so on. The scholar-teacher is likely to be confined to the role of an expert employee under the management of professional academic administrators (5).

Rice’s remark points to the rise of academic administrators as a division of labor, and their role in running the day to day affairs of the university as well as handing public relations issues.

William Rae Keast argued a counterpoint, suggesting that the exponential growth of the universities had stymied the so-called “managerial revolution”—that had such a revolution occurred the university would actually operate more efficiently; instead, he wrote, “there is little real cohesion of policy and execution in universities” (5). At the same time, Keast agreed with Rice that faculty no longer experienced the same degree of power in making decisions (they were subject instead to departmental power and other “interested groups”) and that administrators also were not being informed of faculty needs and desires (5-6). This disconnect in communication, according to Keast,
represented a “harmful individualism” that created inefficient departmental structure in which individualistic attitudes on the part of faculty and administrators led to decreased participation in university policy and government grants (6). These negative attitudes about the role of faculty are consistent with John R. Thelin’s argument that historians have viewed faculty roles nostalgically in scholarship on this supposed Golden Age of higher education. Thelin asserts that although research funding and increased prosperity temporarily elevated the prestige of faculty, the competitive, publication-focused atmosphere, increased federal involvement in university matters, and the proliferation of administrative positions signaled that real power lay, as it always had, in the hands of the president and board of trustees.

The competitive attitude surrounding research also permeated discussions in English at the Modern Language Association (MLA). In his 1965 MLA address, Morris Bishop charted changes in the meaning of research during his professional career:

“[Research] used to connote the mad scientists and the mad belle-lettrist, the Dryasdust endlessly copying unnecessary words from one piece of paper to another, the timorous fugitive from the real world. Now everyone honors the researcher, and everyone wants to do research” (3). The nostalgic image of the lone researcher recurs again and again as a trope for humanistic research in days gone by. For Bishop, and others, it reflected the perceived autonomy faculty formerly possessed, an autonomy lost in the heyday of research. Bishop continues, “We want to work outside the market; we want to do pure research, not applied research. We refuse the test of our work by practical utility…. The market wants large, easy generalizations; we want to do searching specializations…. 
And, yet, like all investigators, we must eventually accept reference to *a criterion outside ourselves*” (4-5, italics mine). The need to look “outside,” to borrow Bishop’s spatial metaphor, was “intensified by the present national mood of encouragement of research. We share in the bounty of fellowships and grants-in-aid, of sabbatical years and released time and reduced teaching loads” (6). Bishop’s metaphorical construction of research past and present is significant here, because it reappears in debates about composition during this time as well. The binary between the autonomous humanist and the market-directed/outwardly-focused researcher is one that significantly shaped discussions of research during this time.

The perspectives invoked by Kerr and those within MLA indicate important shifts in operation of universities toward research and administration. On the one hand, research in university culture became connected to both economic expansion and national defense, and as such it developed technological, industrial, and nationalistic connotations. At the same time, these new alliances created growth within the university that increased the need for managerial intervention and distanced faculty members from control over the daily operation of the institution. Because of the lack of clear distinction between the work of English and the work of composition, both changes would affect the way composition became positioned in the work of English.

“*A Prime Instrument of National Purpose*”: The Nation and the Profession in Composition Research

As Kerr described the university’s centrality to the “national purpose,” so *The National Interest and the Teaching of English (NITE)* (1961) asserted English’s centrality
to the “national interest” in an effort to be included in the provisions of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA). In the wake of the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite and the subsequent media frenzy over deficiencies in US education, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) twice attempted to argue for the value of NDEA funding, in publishing both the *NITE* and the subsequent *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English (NICETE)* in 1964. The former document led to the funding of Project English, including the availability of federal money for general and applied research studies and the establishment and operation of several curriculum research centers; the latter document led to the extension of the NDEA to English in October 1964 (Cristenbury 29). Despite the significance of these documents for garnering research funding for composition, few have analyzed them, or the way they positioned English in relationship to composition, research, and discourses of professionalism. Yet an analysis of the *NITE* and the discussion it generated demonstrate that the NCTE effectively positioned English research as having tangible effects on the improvement of the nation and its citizens. In doing so, they called upon the nationalistic connotations of research that emerged in the political and educational discourse of the 1960s.

This discourse emphasized outward-focused, applied research, in Bishop’s figuration of the term above. In this sense, then, it resisted supposedly traditional understandings of research in English. As John S. Diekhoff put it at a Project English conference, “Research in teaching we are likely to regard as unnecessary or fruitless or as outside our responsibility…. If we define *research* broadly as a deliberate, systematic
attempt to find out what we need to know, ought to know, or desire to know, we will discover… that teaching is an area of research” (21). This redefinition of research—focusing on what was traditionally considered outside the boundaries of English—challenged contemporary definitions of the subject. Although English had a long tradition of generalist criticism that discouraged narrow conceptions of English research (see chapter 1, for example), English has often conceived of its own tradition as one isolated from usefulness, elevating research over teaching, and succumbing to extreme specialization (Graff 4). In many ways then, English adopted the larger culture’s critique of the humanities that it lacked usefulness in order to assert the social relevance of its new research. In doing so, it paved the way for composition oriented research. The NITE played a role in this redefinition, for in order to emphasize the national importance of English to a public audience, it needed to define English in a way that emphasized literacy and the ubiquity of English rather than defining its content as a subject area.

As others have noted, the extension of the NDEA to English disproportionately impacted composition over literature because it emphasized literacy skills and teaching methods rather than content knowledge (Gallagher 113). This rhetorical focus was partly because the language of the NDEA was geared towards improving education, specifically developing scientific methods of educational research and using research to develop curricula. Wayne J. Urban, in More Than Science and Sputnik: The National Defense Education Act of 1958, demonstrates that one of the major accomplishments of the NDEA was the ushering in of unprecedented federal involvement in higher education. The launch of Sputnik and the subsequent media frenzy over the quality of U.S.
education allowed the backers of the NDEA and the Eisenhower administration to radically expand federal funding for higher education—a source of much political contention historically and today (Urban 74). In 1950s, the resistance to federal involvement in higher education was particularly tied up in attitudes about race and resistance to the forced desegregation of public schools. However, the media hype following launch of Sputnik was “translated into a story of educational deficiency for the American public by the media” (116). Although skeptical about the media’s portrayal of American deficiency in science and technological advancement, the Eisenhower administration responded with the NDEA, meant to be a temporary measure, to reassure the American public (80-81). Instead, the NDEA became a major achievement for politicians, educators, and members of the US Office of Education seeking to expand federal funding to higher education. Sputnik, more than anything became a “national defense metaphor” used to “[break] the dam against federal aid to education” (210). In short, Sputnik provided the exigency to argue for a new relationship between the federal government and higher education.11

11 Urban is cautious, however, about the way the Sputnik story translated into educational reform, noting that the ten titles of the NDEA introduced a funding system based primarily on fostering naturally gifted students rather than addressing issues of equity (203). Urban also notes that the sciences, through the National Science Foundation (NSF), lobbying, and a presidential advisory committee, used the opportunity of Sputnik to question public education and to argue for educational reform, circumventing the input of science educators at the primary and secondary levels (170). Thus, Urban concludes, the NDEA had a mixed legacy both in terms of its support of public education, especially at the primary and secondary levels, and its support of democratic or progressive educational goals.
The ability to position English persuasively in this political context was crucial for the *NITE*. Thomas Miller argues in *The Evolution of College English* that to assert the value of English, “the discipline tried to rearticulate the distinction between content disciplines and teaching methods that had enabled English professors to distance their humanistic concerns from teacher preparation, but which had also come to undercut their ability to claim resources for work with new technologies and public education” (187). Miller’s comment implies that English in 1960s had to reconsider its separation of teaching from research to justify its claim to funding. This divide however did not unquestioningly position research as superior to teaching. As Diekhoff’s quote above expresses, teaching was something to be incorporated into current conceptions of research in English. The rhetoric of research constructed teaching as the *goal* of research.

These new articulations between research and teaching, however, still relied on constructing the terms as a dichotomy. The *NITE* explicitly constructed the dichotomy between teaching and research by comparing English to science and math:
In the fields of science and mathematics, where the cultural lag was less acute, the spectacular appearance of Sputnik provided the impetus for re-examination and for such developments as the re-education of leading high school science teachers. In English the disparity between what specialists and research scholars know and what the school teaches is even greater than it was in science, but no dramatic orbiting of a linguistic satellite draws public attention to this disparity (Squire 75)

This passage makes two significant rhetorical moves. First, it compares teaching and research in the sciences and teaching and research in English. Both areas experienced a "lag" in the communication of new knowledge that, it implies, with the help of federal funding, could be sped up. At the same time the remark constructs a divide between specialists and teachers, it asserts that the knowledge of English studies specialists possessed value for English instruction at all levels—that knowledge could be applied to the work of teaching. In short, the gap between “what specialists and research scholars know” and “what the school teaches” could be closed through “re-educating” teachers at the secondary level. This claim divides researchers from teachers, but it also positions teaching as central to research. It invokes the Space Race in ways that imply not just a ‘disparity’ between teaching and research, but a ‘disparity’ between the literacy skills of other countries and that of the United States—just as the US was surpassed in the creation of satellite technology, so too it had been surpassed in its students’ literacy skills.

Teaching, then, became one way of connecting English and the humanities and the importance of humanistic ways of knowing to technological and national
advancement. The most repeated justification for English in the NITE, defined throughout as the tripartite study of language, literature, and composition, was that English constituted “the representative of the humanities” because “most elementary and secondary school pupils in the United States meet a humanistic study only by their continuous and sequential study of English” (15). Interestingly, then, the document tended to elide (perhaps unintentionally) a definition of the field by focusing instead on the work of teaching and the value of the teaching of English. The NITE’s outline of “The National Problem” similarly emphasized the social function of English rather than its content:

- The teaching of English plays a vital role in preserving human values in our technological society. [...]  
- Competence in using English is essential in every subject.  
- English is taught more extensively to more pupils than is any other subject. [...]  

As Thomas Miller’s rhetorical definition of discipline suggests, academic disciplines are responses to social needs (Miller 60, see introduction); however, they become recognized as disciplines when their methods and objects of study are seen as natural. The NITE conversely emphasized English’s social function rather than its logical content and methodology. For composition, the problem was similarly that, as Kitzhaber put it in Themes, Theories, & Therapy, “Freshman English is one of those things like spinach and tetanus shots that young people put up with because their elders say they must” (1). Or, to be more precise, people put up with ‘Freshman English’ because of its perceived
personal and social value, not because it made sense on its own. The key point here, then, is that the legitimation of composition and English relied on an array of moral and humanistic arguments; this rhetorical justification did not match the expectation that academic disciplines should possess a logical content and methodological coherence.

Asserting the ubiquity of English as the point of contact between students and the humanities, the NITE then connected the humanities and technological development, explaining, “The teaching of English plays a vital role in preserving human values in our technological society” (15, italics original). Human values and technological values were juxtaposed as opposites, with technology portrayed as potentially dehumanizing. The authors wrote, “Our young people need to be educated in both the dangers and the possibilities inherent in the use of these modern media, and inevitably much of this responsibility falls upon the teacher of English, the teacher most concerned about the uses of language and the student’s ability to think both critically and imaginatively” (Squire et. al. 25). Literacy, positioned as the focus of English studies, is the key term in this opposition between humanity and technology. With technological advances, the NITE asserted, “Mere literacy is no longer enough in the complicated world in which we live” (25). It is unclear what English offered beyond ‘mere literacy’, but the text implies that true literacy is essential to “man’s attainment of full human dignity” (15) and allows the individual “to share in the responsibilities and opportunities of society (17). Put simply, literacy was elevated as both defining humanity and defining proper citizens.

Moreover, the NITE’s appeal to citizenship also carried explicitly nationalistic and imperialistic motives. The world outside of academia today, to which English must
respond, was a world in which “East meets West in almost daily encounter” and in which “the profile of the ‘Ugly American’ is all too vividly etched” (Squire et al 17). In this context, Americans needed English to both preserve their own heritage—the “myth and folklore of lumbering, pioneering, and railroading” (16)—and convey it to the Other. English could help “Americans everywhere fully understand their heritage and see themselves not only as bearers of aid, technology, and materialism but also of ideas, of human dignity and freedom” (17). American studies scholar Christina Klein argues that in the Cold War era, orientalism played a large role in education, as

Middlebrow intellectuals often presented the Cold War as something that ordinary Americans could take part in, as a set of activities in which they could invest their emotional and intellectual energy…. Middlebrow culture brought these alliances [with non-communist parts of Asia] to life by translating them into personal terms and imbuing them with sentiment, so that they became emotionally rich relationships that Americans could inhabit imaginatively in their everyday lives (7-8).

In other words, the appeal to bringing American culture eastward was an affective appeal to white American culture and values. Both the orientalist and imperialistic perspective are troubling to see so strongly stated in a document that positioned English to political forces, yet they indicate that the NITE was far from a politically or racially neutral or document.

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12 This language of “bearing” American culture (language reminiscent of the ‘white man’s burden’) to other cultures, particularly Asian ones, is tempered further down in the same paragraph as “a mutual exchange of spiritual and cultural values” (Squire et al 17).
The irony of the NITE’s appeals to English as the representative of the humanities—the creator of good citizens and the preserver of national heritage—is that the document also bemoaned the lack of clear definition for English. English had “lost clear definition” and “been burdened with an increase in miscellaneous duties and responsibilities” (26). The writers lamented that because “English is the subject in which virtually all students are enrolled, it has frequently seemed natural to school administrators to consign to English teachers many special responsibilities” (26). The document thus undercut its own argument that English needed to be clearly demarcated and defined in two ways. First, it relied on primarily moralistic and nationalistic justifications for English rather than, for example, justifying the language-literature-composition content structure. Second, the NITE singled English out as deserving of research funding precisely because it possesses the highest enrollment of humanistic subjects—yet it also portrayed that high enrollment as a reason for its lack of clarity.

The NITE’s definition of English (or lack thereof) is significant to understanding the way it positioned research. The document invited support for “large-scale experimental projects (perhaps on a matching fund basis) involving a whole school system, or several comparable school systems” (8, italics original). The kinds of research it listed included research “basic to the teaching of English”, especially “classroom application of recent research in language by psychologists, linguists, and specialists in methodology” or studies related to teaching conditions and teachers’ use of their time (Squire 10). The emphasis on applied research projects appealed to the values of the NDEA—specifically the concern for improving educational curricula. Yet it also
promised a scientific basis for a new English curriculum. The opportunity for access to technologies and resources drove English to adopt and adapt definitions of research to the technological, defense, and scientific overtones of research.

In a retrospective article published in *CCC* in 1967, Albert Kitzhaber reflected on the aftermath of *NITE* and the Project English curriculum research centers. Describing Project English as “an outgrowth of the Cold War” (135), Kitzhaber nevertheless considered the centers a success for English. Crucial to English receiving NDEA funding, Kitzhaber explained, was the advent of the Kennedy administration and its appointment of Sterling McMurrin, a philosophy professor sympathetic to the humanities, as Commissioner of Education in charge of the ‘Cooperative Research Branch’ (136). McMurrin requested Congressional committees for the authority to fund projects related to “reading and written and oral usage of the English language” (qtd in Kitzhaber 136). Kitzhaber wrote,

> As a matter of historical curiosity, the exact wording of this phrase is worth noting. Observe that no mention is made of literature…. The Commissioner had a reason for this. In the first place, there was a distrust of literature, amounting almost to hostility, among some influential members of the Commissioner’s own staff, who were, we might say, ‘skills-oriented’. And this attitude was equally evident in Congress…. One Congressman was especially anxious to be assured that none of the

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13 Urban contends that McMurrin had a mixed legacy himself, as he conflicted with the National Education Association and was perceived to be more interested in supporting the goals and aims of private education than public education (132).
money the Commissioner was requesting for English would be used ‘to teach novels and poems’, an activity which, it was clear, the Congressman thought insane, possibly un-American (136-7).

I quote the lengthy passage above because it represents the way attitudes towards English and literacy (and composition by default) circulated in both educational and political discourse—as American versus un-American, as skills-oriented versus literary, and even as sane versus insane.

This kind of nationalistic discourse appeared in CCC as well. One particularly intriguing example is an article by George V. Allen, the current director of The Tobacco Institute, Inc. and the prior director of the United States Information agency. Allen assured CCC readers, in “Projecting the Image of America,” that composition and communication played a vital role in the national concern for America’s image. He explained that citizens and political forces needed to “organize the world in a somewhat more sensible basis than we have been able to manage so far” (203). In order to do so, the world needed “more widespread communication among people” (203). He assured readers, “Meanwhile, you are making perhaps the most important contribution of all by seeing to it that Americans communicate intelligibly” (203). The understanding of composition as outward-focused, then, was not simply an idea held within English; rather, it also shaped the way political and entrepreneurial forces conceptualized the value of composition.

Given the high stakes of defining English in these settings, it makes sense that definition of the discipline became such an important (and controversial) goal. Thus,
Kitzhaber described the success of Project English as “a much sharper definition of English as a school subject” (139). Acknowledging that “we are still a long way off from a genuinely rigorous definition of English—as rigorous, let us say, as the definition of mathematics or chemistry,” Kitzhaber continues, “the Centers have restricted English to the study of language, literature, and oral and written composition” and “the Centers have tried with some success to impart a philosophical integrity to the English curriculum, to view it as a study of great intrinsic value—not without its practical applications but not to be summed up or justified by these alone” (139). Kitzhaber’s language, and his comparison of the possibility of English to be defined as rigorously as the sciences and math, indicates just how strongly the NDEA’s privileging of those subjects influenced the way that English tried to position itself. At the same time, Kitzhaber contradicted this idea by asserting the impossibility of a definition for English, which, he stated, “even stripped of irrelevant matter, is still a composite in which no single set of organizing principles can be successfully applied throughout” (140). In other words, Kitzhaber perhaps unconsciously noted the double-bind of English—on one hand, if it were to be legitimized, it needed to be defined in a manner analogous to the way the sciences and mathematics were defined; on the other hand, English could never be defined that way because of its composite structure.

Kitzhaber’s remarks on Project English demonstrate how integrally research was connected to the hopes for defining English. Because this research focused on establishing a comparison between research in English and research in math and science, the activity was fraught with contradictory attitudes toward English. Additionally, the
field’s understanding of research was strongly influenced by the public audiences who were looking to English to make good on its promise of creating a more literate citizenship, better able to respond to national needs.

“Research and Reward”: Discourses of Research in Composition

As I have demonstrated, English was motivated by funding pressures to reconcile a focus on literacy-oriented research with highly moralistic and nationalistic justifications for English. In doing so, it focused primarily on the social benefits of English rather than on rationalizing its content. Under English’s umbrella, composition became a key factor in articulating the relationship between literacy research and English studies as a whole. It is not surprising, then, given the lack of clear demarcation between English and composition, that we find the same metaphors for English research appearing the pages of CCC during the 1960s. The discourse of research perpetuated the inside/outside and solitary/market driven definitions that also appeared in conversations about English. However, for composition, these debates about research were fraught with implications for composition’s location within and orientation toward English studies. Because composition research was geared toward addressing social problems in literacy and the teaching of writing, it questioned the methodological and epistemological inheritance of English studies.

The rationale of appealing to “outside” and “market” forces was that statistics and measurements could get the attention of those with power to support programs. Taylor Culbert, at a 1960 CCCC panel on research, urged composition researchers to see research not as a “solitary” activity but as a cooperative one, in which a researcher
needed to consider external forces to “get somebody to pay for his project” (“Research in Composition-Communication” 129). Culbert used the myth of solitary, pure research associated with the literature scholar to draw a contrast between former and new ways of conducting research in composition. Culbert later explicitly called the composition researcher’s background an obstacle in conducting research projects. He wrote, “the would-be researcher in composition… has probably been trained in another area—literature” (39). Culbert’s remark constructs literary training as insular and thus insufficient to addressing ‘outside’ problems.

Culbert represented one strain of the debate about research during this time, which tended to define composition research in contrast to the “traditional” methodological and epistemological orientations of English. It parodied the English literary scholar in an attempt to justify new methods of conducting research. Charles T. Brown, for example, questioned the validity of humanistic research, calling for composition instead to follow the “data” and to conduct problem-oriented research. He asserted, “Scientists speculate and then test. People in the humanities and social sciences, afraid to speculate, ‘repeat the speculations of the ancients or test superficial hypotheses without speculation’” (“Research in Composition-Communication” 130). Brown represented humanistic ways of knowing as emerging from fear. Instead, he encouraged problem-oriented linguistic and psychological research, particularly research “outside our own field [that] will help us toward the creation of a model [of how language is processed

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14 Interestingly, Brown’s aversion to humanistic research is also applied to the social sciences, which probably indicates more his bias toward scientific research not his knowledge of social science research.
Workshops at CCCC promoted empirical research as a way of improving knowledge in composition. At one such workshop, the panel discussion centered on the need for teachers “to improve their research techniques and… profit from a study of the methodology of statisticians and other research scientists” (“Research in Composition/Communication” 171). It was noted that “in general respondents favored research but with some aversion to the jargon of that activity” but after much debate attendees left “with less revulsion to such terminology and more willingness to try to measure and to evaluate, even in statistical terms, certain problems and certain results in the teaching of writing (“Research in Composition/Communication” 170). At a 1964 CCCC workshop, “Project English and the English Department,” John Fisher posed the questions, “What will the future English department look like if literature moves out of its central place? What contribution will research make to the teaching reading and writing” (182). One respondent, Louise Rosenblatt, encouraged quantitative (by which she seemed to mean statistical) research, “despite skepticism concerning quantitative measurement in the field of English” (183). This research, she suggested, should begin by attempting to agree on criteria for measuring good writing (183). These articles reinforced the problem-focused nature of research in composition, and held up empirical, even quantitative, research as the answer for improving knowledge about writing. At the same time, the mention of resistance by Culbert and the workshop attendees indicate that such proposals were not uniformly accepted.
There was, however, little discussion about how to reconcile scientific methodologies with the kinds of knowledge investigated in composition. One of the strongest examples of this oversight is Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer’s *Research in Written Composition (RWC)*. In *RWC*, the authors draw an analogy between composition and the sciences, likening the current state of composition research to alchemy: “Today’s research in composition, taken as a whole, may be compared to chemical research as it emerged from the period of alchemy: some terms are being defined usefully, a number of procedures are being refined, but the field as a whole is laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations” (5). Funded by the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Cooperative Research Program grant, *RWC* was conducted at the request of the NCTE's *ad hoc* Committee on the State of Knowledge about Composition. The impetus for the study, the authors note, was the intrusion of public opinion on the question of how to teach writing (1). Implicitly, then, *RWC* tried to answer the public’s question about how writing should be taught by providing direction for the scientific study of writing and the teaching of writing. In order to do so, they examined over 400 studies from *Dissertation Abstracts, Psychological Abstracts, Review of Educational Research* and provided suggestions for conducting empirical (and specifically quantitative, statistical) research on the teaching and learning of writing (2). Notably, this NCTE sponsored study pulled almost no research from within English, or even *CCC*, and the studies they did find, they acknowledged, were almost universally poorly done.

*RWC* defined best practices in empirical research as studies of writing that observed people writing, described their experimental procedures, used appropriate
statistics for analyzing the data, controlled the variables in the experiment, and maintained researcher objectivity (55-6). The logic of this statement of best practices, however, was based on the assumption that scientific methods could transfer to the kinds of knowledge investigated by composition research. In fact, the authors dismissed the remarks of a colleague who questioned their ability to control variables successfully in empirical experiments in composition (5). Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, simply responded by saying that research on written composition “has not frequently been conducted with the knowledge and care that one associates with the physical sciences” (5). The problem, according to RWC, was not that new methods of research needed to be rethought and reworked for composition, but rather that composition simply needed to be treated more like a physical science in order to for any kind of knowledge to be gained.

As Culbert, Booth, and RWC show, the strongest calls for a problem-oriented, scientific research in composition reflect the tendency of composition to position itself against English rhetorically, even though institutionally composition remained within English. In doing so, some in composition actually coopted a strain of critique of English from outside of academia in order to assert its relevance. The criticisms of English as insular, self-absorbed, and useless reflect the strain of anti-humanist rhetoric that, as Frank Donoghue demonstrates, began in the early twentieth-century by self-made industrialists and continued throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with the rise of corporate culture. Donoghue discusses the ways in which these criticisms from outside of the university questioned the content of the humanities curriculum on the basis of its usefulness (20). With the increasing importance of research to university life in the
1960s, research, not the content of the curriculum, became the point of contention. It mattered little whether English scholars ever worked in solitary confinement; the metaphor nevertheless evoked the image of the self-absorbed scholar for those advocating scientific composition research, and provided a useful contrast with the metaphor of the composition researcher as problem-solver, chemist, and scientist.

While the most enthusiastic supporters of composition as a science criticized English, not everyone positioned English and composition as diametrically opposed, methodologically or otherwise. Some saw hope for unification in the process of interdisciplinary research. Priscilla Tyler, writing about the implications of the NITE, saw English and composition unified in the pursuit of improving the communication of individuals and society. Tyler explicitly promoted an interdisciplinary approach, writing that with Project English, “English is to shake off its cultural slump and take its place in the dusty arena of interdisciplinary argument with the major disciplines of the day,” including linguistics, literary criticism, anthropology, and psychology (82). Tyler represented literary criticism as compatible with other ways of investigating language and knowledge. Similarly, H.A. Gleason Jr. asserted that the former boundaries between the sciences and humanities were culturally irrelevant, writing, “The old division between the humanities and the sciences is becoming vestigial and meaningless... The sciences are becoming more humanistic; the humanities must become more scientific, more devoted to… ‘the purposeful interrogation of nature’” (1). The unifying center for English, Gleason argued, should be language studies—a focus which could blur the boundaries between the sciences and humanities. Tyler and Gleason notably constructed English as
an all-encompassing term, but left little room for understanding the role of composition within English or for understanding how diverse traditions could reconcile methodological and epistemological differences.

Not everyone wanted to define composition research as a science, or as needing science in order to produce valuable work. For example, Eugene F. Grewe argued against a call by the Committee on Future Directions for a multidisciplinary approach to studying writing and training teachers because he felt the statement was too narrow and would make the organization too “linguistics-oriented” (19). He was troubled by the tendency “to shift interest from the teacher to the discipline” and preferred that labor, training, and teaching issues were emphasized instead (22). He wrote, “There may be some value in having a national organization devote its almost exclusive attention to a narrow discipline, but surely more value would accrue from an organization devoted to all of the related aspects of the work of the ‘College English’ teacher—his courses, his students, his training, status, texts, teaching conditions, et cetera” (20). Grewe suggested as an alternative to CCC that the organization focus exclusively on the first two years of college English, and retitle CCC as College English: The First Two Years.

Underpinning his proposal, however, was the assumption that compositionists were generalists within English. He argued that few teach only composition, and “questions of training, teaching conditions, and status cannot be satisfactorily handled if we do not consider the whole teacher” (20). In support of this claim, Grewe referenced his own article published four years earlier, in which he presented the results of an informal survey of department chairs. In that article, “A Teacher Looks at His
Professional Status” he noted that “the person who has decided to devote his life to teaching freshman composition or communication” does not exist. According to his survey of 90 department chairs, 83% did not hire anyone to teach only first-year composition permanently; the 17% of chairs who did hire some instructors to teach first-year composition on a permanent basis reported that those instructors only constituted 23% of the total number of instructors (215). Even more interesting, Grewe asked chairs, “Do you believe that the establishment of a separate department, or a distinct subsection of your department to consist of persons who teach only Freshman English, would improve the professional status of the teachers assigned to it?” The response: 86% said that it would not; 8% said that it would (215). Emphasizing labor over research, Grewe problematized the CCCC claim in its statement of purpose that composition was a profession; instead, he felt composition did not require separate department or a separate class of teachers to teach the course. In some ways, as the numbers he cites suggest, this perspective signaled a positive approach to the staffing and labor of the course; yet, it so reduced the work of composition to a side interest, a first-year requirement, as to make it insignificant within English.

The reduction of composition to first-year English was also a problem with Kitzhaber’s vision, as he articulated it in “4C, Freshman English, and the Future.” While Grewe argued CCCC failed to attend to labor and professional development issues, Kitzhaber wrote that CCCC had failed as an organization because it did not play an active role in defining composition (135). Its inability to do so, Kitzhaber argued, was partly a consequence of the field’s ignorance of the writing process; therefore, research was
needed that could condemn outmoded practice and suggest best practices for improving the teaching of writing (136-7). Yet Kitzhaber, despite his desire to elevate writing instruction, also ultimately reduced composition to first-year writing, insisting that CCCC should focus only on this course, identifying its area of “proper concern” (136), agreeing on its content, and cleaning up the “disorder and idiosyncracy” that characterized the course (137). While Kitzhaber resisted a skills-oriented view of composition, he nevertheless reinforced the idea that composition was a minimal fixture of English departments, and should be relegated to the first year only.

Kitzhaber reiterated this conclusion in his foundational Themes, Theories, and Therapy. Funded by the Carnegie Foundation, Kitzhaber's study used a number of survey and data collection methods, ostensibly to determine whether or not college composition was taught effectively, whether students improved their writing after the course, and how students could maintain that improvement over time. However, his research methodology of collecting syllabi and surveying composition instructors lent itself to superficial results about the consistency of methods of teaching composition. Finding no consistency in the course’s content, Kitzhaber was simultaneously disturbed by the range of approaches to teaching composition and convinced that "there are many ways to teach composition, and nearly all appear to succeed from time to time” (131). Consequently, he advocated only superficial recommendations for teaching elements of writing in composition. In fact, Kitzhaber was not interested in advocating a larger disciplinary agenda or in figuring out the one best way to teach the course. Miller criticizes Kitzhaber for this perspective, writing,
The lack of a unifying conceptual vision for composition studies undercut varied aspects of English studies, as is evident in Kitzhaber’s recommendations that improving the course depended upon changing teacher assignments and training, broadening graduate and undergraduate writing curricula, and reassessing the general teaching of reading and writing (188).

Kitzhaber was more interested in encouraging some preliminary research to determine simple ways the course might be taught more consistently and effectively within and across institutions. As such, Kitzhaber implied the main concerns of composition were organizational and administrative problems, rather than research or methodological problems.

Like Kitzhaber, Ken Macrorie, editor of *CCC* from 1962-1964, defined research as informal observation with the goal of improving composition instruction’s consistency and method. Macrorie called for informal observation of “what works” in composition courses, arguing that the lack of consistency in content and teaching method in first-year composition indicated that the course was failing. He asserted, “Good freshman writing courses are going to arise only when someone who finds his students improve greatly in writing in a semester sits down and systematizes his method” (629). This informal method of research, Macrorie felt, could provide an “essential philosophy and method that ties together all activities and therefore can be communicated to other teachers” (630). The problem with Macrorie’s, Grewe’s, and even Kitzhaber’s formulations of research, however, were that they did not effectively address issues of methodology,
research funding, and other crucial issues to the production of research in the university and national climate of the time. By encouraging mostly informal research, in the case of Macrorie and Grewe, or not addressing how to think about methodological and epistemological differences in composition research, as Kitzhaber did, they did not provide a workable or appealing means of integrating composition in English. As such, they shared some of the same problems that the proponents of scientific composition research also shared—a failure to attend to composition’s role in English.

Only Robert A. Senser indicated some of the professional problems that might present with the incorporation of radically different methodological and epistemological approaches to research within an English department. Writing of his communication-oriented PhD in English, intended specifically for teachers, Senser noted that a truly comprehensive course of study in communication would be detrimental to the cohesion and morale of the department. There seem to be two reasons for this feeling: one has to do with the social science content of a communication program, the other with what might be called status—that is, the problem which might arise between those teaching undergraduates in ‘service’ courses and those teaching the doctoral students (122).

Senser’s remarks provide a useful insight into the problems that were not addressed by those calling for interdisciplinary, and specifically scientific modes of research. Composition (and English) never addressed how to integrate different methodological and epistemological orientations toward work into the English department—or how those
differences might affect departmental hierarchies. Gerald Graff makes a similar a criticism of English’s tendency to avoid issues of difference in the history of its professionalization (8-9). Graff writes that the coverage model of English allowed the English departments to avoid confrontation between areas with disparate methodological and ideological orientations. As he explains, the tendency to separate English into different area specialties allowed the department to “organiz[e] itself on a principle of systematic non-relationship in which all parties tacitly agreed not to ask how they might be connected or opposed…. Latent conflicts of method and ideology that had divided the faculty from the first did not have to be confronted” (9). The problem, for Graff, was not so much the incoherence of this array of specialized areas, but rather the failure to even acknowledge it, or to address the tensions it created. Similarly, the conflict posed by scientific approaches to composition research would not even begin to be addressed in composition until the 1980s, when Stephen North and James Berlin would analyze epistemological and methodological differences in various camps of composition research.

Key publications from the 1960s reveal that, at best, discourses connecting research and disciplinarity in composition were indistinct and based largely on an attempt to respond appropriately to ideas about research that were “outside” of English and “market-driven.” Furthermore, composition’s place within English was still in the process of being articulated. Some in English wanted composition to be within its domain—as part of the language, literature, and composition triad, which at least partly helped identify English as a subject. Emphasizing composition’s location within English
also allowed English as a whole to adopt and adapt the discourse of literacy, communication, and educational research that were so popular in the political and social spheres. However, some in composition defined research in ways that often resisted the conventions of English studies and challenged the division between the humanities and social and psychological sciences. Others saw interdisciplinary definitions of research as threatening. For example, Thomas W. Wilcox pled for a return to a literature-based composition course or no first-year course at all, arguing that “English departments and their members rise in general esteem precisely to the extent that they have faith in the integrity of their discipline”—a discipline he envisioned as having clear boundaries surrounding study of literature (151). Regardless, the issue of interdisciplinary work, and how it might fit into the goals of composition and English or challenge them, remained largely unaddressed because scholars were so focused on the need to respond to the social issue of literacy education and American nationalism. Furthermore, such arguments over composition’s disciplinary boundaries contributed to the debate over the content, use, and value of composition research—a debate that continues today.

**Conclusion: The Problem of Composition Research**

Because composition positioned itself as an area of research with the power to speak to social problems and to provide useful knowledge, it continually crossed boundaries between areas of study, disciplines, and methodologies. Yet historians have often ignored the impact of this history on the current articulation of composition’s work in the academy. Scholar Julie Thompson Klein notes this tendency in disciplinary
histories in her essay, “Blurring, Cracking, and Crossing: Permeation and the Fracturing of Discipline.” She writes,

Because discipline has been the dominant category in studies of knowledge, permeation is usually undervalued or even dismissed as a peripheral or extra-disciplinary event. However, the permeation of boundaries is a major aspect of knowledge production with significant implications for the writing of disciplinary histories and the status of discipline as a category of knowledge (186).

Klein’s criticism has largely been true of composition histories. One of the most illustrative examples is Connors’ Composition-Rhetoric, in which Connors argues that the discipline has become unstable, and “may fly apart like a dollar watch” because of the range of research that people in composition and rhetoric now pursue. Furthermore, he asserts that historians should use historical knowledge “to attain unity as a discipline” (Composition-Rhetoric 18). Connors idealizes disciplinary unity as something that composition once possessed but may lose. However, a disciplinary history that looks at boundary-crossing as integral to every field of study can instead examine the way that this permeation has affected the discourses of research and professionalization in a particular field.

I have argued that we need to look at both the way in which composition research came about in response to external exigencies and the way in which its research has drawn from multidisciplinary sources. Klein, in describing several ways disciplines cross boundaries, points to “the pull of powerful or fashionable new tools, methods, concepts,
and theories” and “the pull of problem-solving over strictly disciplinary focus” as reasons that disciplines cross disciplinary boundaries (187). In the case of composition, the lure of scientific research and the exigency of a national literacy problem led some composition scholars to outline a research agenda that paid little attention to departmental, field, and disciplinary boundaries, in much the same way as scholars from the early 20th century listed the multidisciplinary research possibilities of rhetoric.

Composition did not form as a concerted effort at developing a discipline or as a collective attempt to improve the social and material position of those who taught composition. Instead, nationalistic and scientific impulses placed composition studies in an ideologically and institutionally favorable position in the 1960s American academic culture.

Composition rose to significance in English amid intense debates about English and national debates about research and education. As the next chapter shows, the generally favorable attitude in composition studies’ toward engaging with other disciplines and constructing a broad vision of the field’s work continued in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, the flexibility in defining composition—as more useful than traditional literary studies, more scientific, more practical, and more interdisciplinary—ultimately benefited composition when the academic job market in English discouraged faculty hiring. After the mid-1970s job market crash, composition scholars became seen as the rare English professor with the time and initiative to conduct ‘outward’ focused scholarship, and more as someone who could fill multiple purposes—administrative, pedagogical, and scholarly. In that era, rhetoric and composition became a recognizable
faculty specialization, but what that meant—and how those faculty members related to the English departments they worked in—was increasingly an issue to which the field needed to attend.
Chapter 3: The Development of Tenure-Stream Faculty in Rhetoric and Composition, 1965-1990

“One upon a time, in the Camelot decades of the fifties and sixties, the director of freshman English was usually a decent person without recognizable qualifications for the job, other than the negative one of lacking sufficient muscle vis a vis his colleagues to say no when asked to assume its responsibility, and whose chief instinct it was to remain as inconspicuous as possible in the general management of the department. In the mid-seventies, lo, a revolution has occurred. These lower echelon individuals have grown into giants. Like the present vitamin-fed college generations, they are flexing their muscles and demanding their place in the sun. The discipline of rhetoric comprises their armory and like a new breed of knight-at-arms they eagerly espouse its cause, the most aggressive ones bent on reversing the traditional roles of the study of literature and the skill of writing. Their battle cry is, ‘Rhetoric forever! Literature to the rear!’”—Max F. Schulz, 1978 (35)

“How can composition’s ‘success’ be separated from the story of failure for academic labor more generally?”—Marc Bousquet (165-66)
The demand for tenure-track (TT) faculty specialized in a given area is perhaps the single most important material condition of disciplinarity. Simply put: no jobs, no discipline. For composition, however, robust growth in the field’s faculty since the 1970s has been both a boon and a problem. Commenting on this growth in 1978, Max F. Schulz, a literary specialist and department chair at University of Southern California, described how the director of “Freshman English” moved from untrained literary scholar to an identifiable specialist in rhetoric and composition in a matter of decades during the mid-twentieth century. Supporting Schulz’s anecdotal evidence, advertisements for TT positions in the Modern Language Association’s *Job Information List (JIL)* increased from around 10 listings to 170 listings between 1966 to 1988 (see Table 1).15 Notably, however, Schulz conflated composition with an administrative position, the director of Freshman English, not the actual teaching of first-year writing (FYW). The association of composition faculty with administrative work—and the distancing from teaching—hints at a larger historical problem. In the same decades TT faculty positions in composition increased, so did the number of contingent faculty teaching in universities. Between 1966 and 1980, part-time faculty increased from 28% to 41% of faculty (“Part-Time” 1). As the contingent faculty population expanded, a qualified administrator needed to articulate and direct FYW. Given the correlation of the growth of the field

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15 The reason for these dates is twofold. First, anecdotal discussion of the rise of faculty in rhetoric and composition generally points to the 1970s and 1980s as the largest decades of growth. Second, the time span begins in 1966, near the earliest publication date for the MLA *JIL*, and ends in the late 1980s, when the percentage of rhetoric and composition jobs reaches between 20-25% (close to current percentages).
with the rise of contingent faculty, composition remains uneasy about its status as a
discipline, as Bousquet (above) intimates. The very thing that should ensure the field’s
success—the prevalence of jobs for its PhDs—simultaneously reminds us how far from
success the field remains.

Table 1. Increase in Total # of JIL Ads in Rhetoric/Composition by Year

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>1969-70</td>
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<td>1971-72</td>
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<td>1975-76</td>
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<td>1982-83</td>
<td>140</td>
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<td>1985-86</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>180</td>
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Although labor concerns have garnered attention recently in composition and
English studies—thanks to grassroots efforts such as The Adjunct Project—those
concerns usually stand separate from the narrative of composition’s disciplinary history,
often presented as a consequence of composition’s low status or a corollary of the large
size of composition programs. Meanwhile, the development of composition as a
discipline is usually ascribed to cultural shifts—the literacy crisis evinced by the 1975
Newsweek publication of “Why Johnny Can’t Write”—or intellectual changes—the
revival of rhetoric lending academic legitimacy to composition or the development of the
process theories of writing that spurred sustained research in the field. While these scenarios present compelling reasons for the field’s intellectual growth, they do not adequately explain higher education’s long-term investment in composition. How is it, in other words, that composition gained prominence as a faculty specialization amidst internal strife in English and a labor market that discouraged faculty hiring—institutional trends that would seem to work against the discipline’s development? The answer, of course, is complex, but this chapter suggests that the managerial nature of the field and its connection to the growth of contingent faculty is necessitated by the very material conditions of its existence—a historical fact that raises questions about what exactly expertise in composition means. Traditionally academic expertise has been defined in terms of specialized investigation; however, early faculty positions for composition ‘specialists’ defined such work in terms antithetical to specialization—emphasizing managerial skills and multiple secondary specializations typically associated with a generalist.

In examining the expansion of composition faculty after the job market in English plummeted in the early 1970s, I argue that institutional pressures—including diminishing faculty lines and the financial straits of the university—shaped the definition of expertise in composition. Instead of pushing to define English in terms of the tripod so popular in the 1950s and 1960s (language, literature, and composition), English increasingly became driven by the development and management of curriculum, compelled to find courses that would boost enrollments and engage students to ensure its survival. The drive to diversify curricula fostered a variety of composition programs and courses beyond FYW,
opening up additional opportunities for “composition specialists” to serve as administrators. Program and curriculum development impacted local and then national conversations about composition, which had a ‘bottom up’ impact on the growth of the field. The increasing delineation of rhetoric and composition as its own subfield of English studies catalyzed tensions already developing over the role of writing courses and programs in English departments—tensions that materialized in attempts to split writing and rhetoric from English departments in the 1980s and 1990s (see Ch. 4).

I begin this chapter by detailing the historical context in which composition faculty positions developed—the expansion of higher education post World War II, the labor shortage in English that led to increase the number of graduate students teaching courses, the glut of labor after the collapse of the job market, and the role that writing played in defining English departments and institutional missions in subsequent decades. I discuss how such trends shaped faculty positions by providing an empirical and rhetorical analysis of two decades of the MLA Job Information List (JIL).\(^\text{16}\) This analysis demonstrates that as faculty positions in the field increased, the types of administrative work and secondary areas of specialization associated with rhetoric and composition multiplied. This diversification of work associated with rhetoric and composition reflects two trends: first, a negotiation of the meaning of rhetoric and composition as a faculty specialization by the English studies at large; and, second, a push for flexible labor

\(^{16}\) Using a grounded theory methodology, I developed a set of codes for identifying trends in the JIL based on the structure of the job ads. I identify five possible primary specializations in rhetoric and composition (composition, rhetoric, rhetoric and composition (or both), technical and professional writing, and other). Within those five primary specializations, I look at secondary specializations, administrative work, and tenure level.
structures in higher education in the latter half of the 20th century. Expertise in composition has historically been a highly flexible construct—one subject to the particular exigencies of local needs. Composition thrived because faculty could serve multiple purposes in an institution—a labor situation necessitated by both the diversification of writing curricula and an increasing need for administrative-oriented faculty members given the growth of the casualized labor pool.

This argument builds on claims by Bousquet and Donna Strickland that composition remains uneasily reliant on managerial work and an increasingly casualized FYW labor force. The correlation of the use of part-time and contingent faculty to teach writing and the growth of rhetoric and composition as a discipline suggests that we now have a crisis of expertise in composition. Bousquet advocates the elimination of the Writing Program Administrator (WPA) as a means to improve composition’s disciplinary status, an argument that assumes without its managerial function composition could resume a traditional model of academic expertise and disciplinarity—in other words, status on par with literary studies. Strickland, rather than eliminate the WPA, would turn our disciplinary gaze to the ethics and politics of administrative work. Neither fully acknowledges the ways in which composition’s expertise problem extends beyond the managerial to changes in faculty work more generally. Rather, we might see this expertise problem as part of a historical tendency for composition to occupy—indeed, to thrive as—an indeterminate position in English. In some sense, composition faculty grew because composition functioned as a floating signifier, serving multiple institutional purposes and representing vastly different kinds of work. That flexibility in defining
expertise has contributed to the troubled relationship between composition and English as well as debates over appropriate graduate training and research methods that I discuss below and in other chapters.

This history situates labor as integral to the way composition has been historically and institutionally constructed without falling back on overly reductive claims about our past’s good and bad deeds. Writing programs (including, but increasingly expanding beyond, FYW) served an important role in redefining and asserting the value of English during a time of public scrutiny on the university. This historical tendency bears out particularly in the way that advertised faculty positions in rhetoric and composition constructed the field’s work. The proliferation of administrative work and the expanding scholarly specializations associated with the field serve as evidence for understanding composition’s persistent historical content problem—its need to negotiate the perception that it is simultaneously too narrow (remedial skills and service work) and too broad (interdisciplinary). The labor situation is not a problem that stands separate from the field’s work and identity as a whole, and it cannot be addressed as if it were. Understanding the entanglement of labor, expertise, and the historical growth of rhetoric and composition is crucial to addressing contemporary labor issues.

*The Emergence of Composition as a Faculty Specialization: Boom and Bust in the English Job Market*

The collapse of the job market in the early 1970s in English and the growing presence of writing and rhetoric in English departments exacerbated tensions between literature and composition that had emerged in previous decades. As I argue in chapter 2,
the rise of the research university in the 1960s paved the way for research in composition, providing federal and corporate outlets for funding literacy and education-related research. Composition, which at the time was conceptualized largely in terms of ‘Freshman English’, began to differentiate itself from literary studies as scholars asked what they did or could know about the teaching of writing. Scholarship in composition adopted ambivalent overtones with regard to literary studies, questioning the status and relationship of the two areas, and predicting that the future of the field lay in the turn to the social sciences, or, at the very least, the increasing interdependence of the humanities and sciences. Already tense, the relationship between literature and composition would become increasingly strained as universities’ financial straits placed pressure on the humanities to prove their value, transforming the curricula and faculty demographics of English departments as a result.

This transformation took root, however, before the decline of faculty hiring in English. In the 1950s and 1960s, universities experienced a ‘golden age’ of support for research and an expanding student population. For two decades after World War II ended, universities’ population swelled: undergraduate students multiplied 500%, and the graduate student population expanded 900% (Menand 64). The wealth of external funding for the sciences freed up university funds so that other disciplines received generous fellowships and financial support (see Kellogg). The massive post-war expansion of higher education led to a shortage of teachers, particularly for required lower-level courses like FYW. Concern over the dearth of qualified labor mounted in the 1960s—but qualified labor was still conceptualized in terms of the PhD. In 1965 the
ADE reported in “The PhD in English,” “How many doctorates SHOULD be granted each year to meet the demand for colleges, we have no idea... We do know that between 1953-54 and 1964-65, the percent of college English teachers beginning full-time teaching with doctorates fell from 29 to 10.9” (2, italics mine). The report assumed that the doctorate represented the appropriate credential for college teaching, but that standards had been forcibly lowered given the shortage of PhDs. That year, for example, 158 professorial and 272 other positions advertised in the trial JIL went unfilled (“The Ph.D” 2). Give the labor shortage, English departments admitted more graduate students, both to staff lower-level courses under the guise of professional development and to train sufficient faculty for the future. Unfortunately, the prediction of future faculty needs was based on the premise that higher education’s rate of expansion would continue. But because the PhD a took 9.7 years on average to complete (Bowers 2), programs had to predict faculty needs 8-10 years in the future, a move that would ultimately prove shortsighted.

The push to lower degree standards for college teaching also benefitted from a simultaneous questioning of the value of the PhD for training teachers. Many called to make A.B.D. an official degree or to develop a “Doctor of Arts” (DA) degree track for those who primarily wanted to teach. Fredson Bowers, for example, argued that the PhD presented too many obstacles for students to complete, and consequently, “an especially brisk market [is] developing in the aristocrat of all, the A.B.D.” (3). Bowers argued impetus for a D.A. degree lay in the inadequacy of the PhD to train undergraduate teachers. He argued, “If I were to formulate the ideal training for an undergraduate
teacher, I would not invent the present Ph.D.” (4). Citing intangibles such as the different temperament required of undergraduate and graduate faculty, Bowers proposed a two tier faculty system in which D.A.s would teach undergraduates while PhDs would teach graduate students. Such proposals were taken seriously throughout the 60s and early 70s, but generally abandoned when the market provided a surplus of PhD holders. However, Bowers and others set the stage for thinking about a split between the labor pool of undergraduate and graduate teaching.

The increase in graduate students only exacerbated the shortage of faculty—as more graduate students entered programs, senior faculty were pulled from undergraduate classes to teach those students. In this context, FYW became a program as opposed to another course faculty taught, and senior faculty increasingly identified primarily as teachers of graduate students. Reflecting back on the previous decade, Robert Kellogg explained in 1977 the push to programmatize composition, writing,

Because of the large number of graduate students and the consequent removal of the most senior faculty from the undergraduate classroom, graduate students also began to teach in a rhetoric or composition program that was set off as distinct from the English department proper. It was in this period that we became aware of a new species of English professor, the specialist in composition (24).

That is, Kellogg saw the development of the composition specialist as directly tied to the development of composition programs staffed by graduate teaching associates and directed by a faculty member. What differed was not the increase in composition
courses, but rather the programatization of composition necessitated by the removal of faculty from courses. Strickland concurs that the mid-century decades marked a tendency to distinguish FYW in composition programs, partly due to the change in labor that Kellogg describes, and partly due to universities’ adoption of “planning programming budgeting system,” which classified activities into discrete programs with target outcomes (81). Both worked together to transform FYW increasingly into a unit in need of management.

The few composition specialists before the 1970s consisted largely of senior faculty hired to direct Freshmen English and teach in their literary specialty. For example, in 1969 a listing from a community college asked for an “Assoc. prof., EdD (preferred) or ABD, Director of Freshman English or Supervisor of Literature Program (title & job depend on candidate’s qualifications)… 5-10 yrs. exp. desired, pub. desired. Competence in intro. to lit. (Amer. or Brit.) required…. Looking for the right man (Dir. of Fr. Comp.) to mold a dept., to provide stature & leadership” (39). In this ad, literature and composition work seem almost interchangeable, although the final imperative—finding the “right man”—stresses freshman composition as the primary need. The fluidity between literature and composition also indicates the prominence of the tripod model in understanding the work of an English department at this time. Both introductory literature and composition courses were crucial in the direction of the department as a whole, and thus the position necessitated a tenured faculty member with several years experience.
After 1970, however, English departments experienced what L.E. Lewis hailed as an “academic depression” (34). Historian John R. Thelin describes university problems in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a consequence of financial woes, due in part to the federal government redirecting funding away from higher education in favor of external agencies and independent institutes, and in part to the stark criticism universities endured for their inability to deal with student unrest (312-3). Waning financial and ideological support for higher education placed pressure on universities to justify their work. At the same time, undergraduate enrollment in higher education leveled off, leading universities to admit an increasingly diverse student body—many of whom were described as ‘underprepared’—in order to maintain enrollments (see Menand 64-70, Soliday).

After 1970, listings for positions in English reflected the upheaval in higher education. In 1971, Aquinas College posted, “No vacancies anticipated… unless by an act of God the enrollment of the college doubles” (50). Other listings hint at structural and labor changes in the department or college. Windham College was “re-structuring [the] English and Language Departments for 1972-3 with the probable result of reducing full-time appointments. Openings created for part-time composition teachers will likely be filled by area residents” (7). Such comments indicate changes in the economy and culture that discouraged universities from hiring TT faculty generally. In addition to hiring area residents (a more easily contingent population than national candidates), universities increasingly staffed courses with graduate students. For example, Northern Illinois University noted in 1975, “Part-time instructorships in Freshman English may be available… Ph.D.’s and AB.D.’s [sic] need not apply. Preference to applicants for
doctoral work” (11). Because TT faculty had expanded during the golden age, their number added increasing financial pressure to turn to part time and contingent labor. For example, Central Michigan University’s 1975 listing describes the faculty as “tenured in”; as a consequence, they would only be able to hire “a number of temporary positions for Ph.D.’s who can present evidence of special training or competency in the teaching of composition” (10). The language of CMU’s ad in particular suggests that expertise in composition—“special training or competency”—worked against traditional faculty labor structures in higher education. That is, a special interest in composition—and a PhD—became a requirement for a non-TT instructor of English. In other words, during the same time that expertise in composition became a faculty position for some, it increasingly became part-time or temporary work for others. Furthermore, with the excess of English PhDs, qualified labor for teaching college courses was increasingly easier to find.

The casualization of the labor force coincided with larger organizational changes in universities. Southwest State University wrote in 1975:

Last spring, SSU administration discontinued 5 positions, all from liberal arts and sciences—2 faculty were tenured. More cuts expected. Summer reorganization broke up Humanities & Fine Arts, and Social Sciences. This dept. now overwhelmed by Science, Technology, Business, Business Ed., and Hotel, Restaurant & Institute Management. Apply at your own risk (11).
Similarly, Marymount College posted, “Instead of hiring new professors, our department is being urged to shuffle the staff for greater economic effects. Emulating big business, we seem to look for persons to retire or leave for another post so that we will literally reduce our staff by that number. Accordingly, I forsee [sic] no openings for many years” (1971, 13). Such listings indicate desperation about the current circumstances, but also an awareness of the ethical issues surrounding a change in the treatment of faculty precipitated by departmental and college-level reorganization as well as reductions (or even terminations) in faculty lines. The decision to submit such institutional critiques to a major professional organization mark a resistance among faculty to the changes in higher education, but they also give the impression that faculty felt caught in a shift over which they had little control.

Faced with increasing scrutiny on higher education, university administrators needed to defend the use-value of their educational programs. In particular, English needed to develop a curriculum that “would not only be more in keeping with the needs of todays citizen’s, but would also appeal to today’s economizers and tax payers” (Lewis 37). With fewer high school graduates attending college and fewer men enrolling to avoid the draft, higher education needed to turn to vocational and technical programs to compete with other educational institutes (Lewis 35). At the same time, many universities bolstered general education and interdisciplinary studies to appeal to students and respond to criticism of the narrow specialization of academic work (Lewis 37, see also Thelin). Current definitions of expertise in English no longer sufficed. Lewis, for example, argued that the division between literature and composition (and the parsing of
literature into various subfields) was especially problematic, and he argued for a more holistic approach: “A division of language and literature or language arts or communication arts would certainly be easier to defend as an essential part of a college curriculum than is any one of the present subdivisions” (37). Traditional literary training in a historical time period no longer met the demands of a diverse student demographic. In 1970, Edmond L. Volpe wrote in an ominously titled article, “A Portrait of the PhD as a Failure,” that open admissions at CUNY signaled “a new relationship between the university and society” (4). Higher education operated on a dichotomy between scholars and educators, a division that ultimately did a disservice to students, especially in an age when, as he put it, the student body “is not docile, as we have painfully discovered in the past few years, and… is no longer homogeneous” (5). The traditional curriculum would simply not do: “our undergraduate colleges are being forced to acknowledge that they cannot simply be lower level imitations of graduate education” (Volpe 7). The tension between undergraduate and graduate studies, which I describe in Chapter 1, became an explicit focus of reform efforts in higher education.

This period of ‘reshuffling’ and changes in the labor demographics coincided with a trend of hiring a composition specialist who could fill multiple needs. For example, in 1975 West Virginia University posted one job ad, for an individual “to direct large freshman composition program and develop other writing programs, especially for teachers. Teach graduate and undergraduate linguistics. Ability to teach Old English a great asset” (6). The probability of only one hire meant that universities needed to fill multiple and often disparate needs with one hire. Similarly, the University of Missouri
called for an “Asst.Prof. in the Hist. & Theory of Rhetoric &/or Literary Criticism w/a solid academic background in Eng. &/or Amer. lit. Ph.D. in Eng. or Rhetoric required. Ability to assist the administration of composition & lower division lit. courses. Publications desirable. Evidence of scholarly potential required.” (1975 JIL 12). An advertisement for a position at the University of Colorado-Boulder demonstrated that literary coverage was a priority, with administrative work in composition a secondary responsibility: “Possibility of openings for two or three assistant professorships: 1) 19th Cent. American Romanticism; 2) 19th Cent. English Novel; 3) Johnson or Blake specialist. Persons able to serve as director of Composition during initial three-year contract receive first consideration” (1975 JIL 14). Across the board from community colleges to research universities, the job listings in the JIL indicate that composition occupied an indeterminate position in departments; the composition specialist was still, to some extent, expected to be an individual “without recognizable qualifications” for directing FYW (Schulz 35). As the University of Utah put it, the composition specialist need primarily be an individual with “demonstrated interest and experience in composition” who could serve as “Supervisor of graduate student teacher training” (1975 15). Administrative work, in many cases, was perhaps the primary criteria distinguishing literature faculty from rhetoric and composition faculty. To be a composition specialist, all one must show was a demonstrable interest in writing. Such interest in writing was, at the same time, a qualification for becoming a part time or temporary instructor of composition. This tension in the value of composition expertise illustrates the indeterminacy of the work of composition in the early years of faculty growth.
Diversification of Curricula: Institutional Pressures on First-Year Writing

In tough economic times, composition benefited from an increased attention to general and vocational education in universities. One of the main impacts of this attention was an expansion of writing programs beyond FYW. In fact, even with increasing reliance on TAs and part-time lecturers, “Freshman English” itself was considered expensive and inefficient, and became the target of various institutional reform movements that would push the work of rhetoric and composition outside the bounds of FYW. Patrick Shaw noted in 1974,

There simply are not enough entering freshmen to satisfy the voracious appetites of post-secondary education… Freshman composition has become the scapegoat for those who fear the dwindling enrollment figures. Get rid of that damnable freshman comp, the thinking goes, and more students will come through the doors and remain to be sophomore, juniors, and seniors (155).

Shaw, writing for the CCC audience, disapproved of movements to abolish FYW, to staff the courses cheaply, and to offer more opportunities for students to exempt the course. As he described it, administrators saw a “respectable escape route” (155) in the form of computerized exemption exams, and their perception was encouraged by the rhetoric of “testing representatives” who “speak of universities without walls and envision the day when students may acquire a college education without ever seeing anything more similar to a classroom than the little blocks on an answer sheet” (156). Shaw links the reliance on
contingent labor and on testing services as part of the same trend to eliminate or drastically reduce the course.

At the same time, writing courses beyond FYW became increasingly important to English departments. Ron Smith’s 1973 study of required FYW courses, published a year later in *CCC*, provides evidence that FYW increasingly held less institutional importance. Smith, surveying nearly 500 institutions, both public and private, found that only 76% of schools in 1973 required at least one course in FYW, as opposed to 93.2% in 1967 (139), a rapid decline for a period of six years. Furthermore, the composition requirement was stratified institutionally. Fewer private schools (69%) required composition than public (89%), which Smith attributes to the open admissions movement17 (140). And this trend likely would not change. Only 2% of schools were contemplating either bringing back required composition or expanding on their requirement (Smith 141). Several programs had decreased their requirements in fact, as the number of schools requiring two courses had fallen from 77.8% to 43% since 1967 (Smith 142). In short, FYW became the target of reform efforts as institutions sought alternative means of creating effective curricula to improve attrition rates.

Other institutional trends in the 1970s encouraged changes in FYW. Smith notes that state schools in particular felt pressure to alter the course, including eliminating literature from course materials, providing a pass/fail option, and giving students more

17 See Soliday and Shaugnessy for information about open admissions. Many universities in the late 1960s and 1970s began admitting a wider number of students and developed lenient admissions standards. Open admissions generally refers to the City University of New York’s 1969 decision to allow any city resident guaranteed attendance at one of 18 campuses with free tuition.
choice in course selection (Smith 143). At the same time, 35% of schools were being pressured to provide exemptions, while 68% of schools that already allowed exemption from composition through test scores or a written exam proctored by the school itself (Smith 143). Smith observed that schools with stricter admissions requirements generally offered more opportunities for exemptions, with 22% of the total survey pool exempting 10% or more of students (143).

Despite the decrease in required writing courses, Smith found an increase in schools that identified as having a “Freshman English program” (from 78% in 1970-1971 to 82% in 1973 (146). Smith’s finding likely speaks to the consolidation of FYW into a distinct program, pushed by changes in instructor demographics as well as budgeting structures that encouraged the formation of programs with identifiable outcomes (see also Strickland 81). 18 Interestingly, survey respondents noted a pressure from university administration to staff courses “only by those competent to do so” (Smith 143). Smith’s survey thus points to an interesting paradox: this period of intense pressure to reduce or eliminate FYW coincided with both an increase in the number of identifiable programs as well as a push to focus and define faculty/staff expertise. In other words, as FYW became increasingly more defined (a writing program rather than a literature course; something one needs to be qualified to teach) it also became a requirement to circumvent.

FYW thus occupied an ambivalent position in the academic imaginary. It was not simply administrators’ darling and English’s stepchild. It served different purposes

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18 Smith’s rationale is that perhaps Freshman English programs existed in schools that did not require the course but offered it as an elective. Smith may be correct, but trend of organizing FYW into programs may also have increased the number of schools who now identified it as something distinct (as Kellogg’s quote above also suggests).
depending on the institution. Because local institutions shaped writing programs, a
diversity of purpose, courses, and requirements emerged. As Mary Soliday argues,
writing played a central role in defining institutions’ “particular niches in terms of
mission, curriculum, funding, and admissions standards” (57). As she explains, “by the
1970s English departments in midlevel tiers had to redefine their mission to sustain
enrollments. The downsizing of the English major and the subsequent emphasis upon
basic skills programs and composition studies were institutional strategies for survival in
a period of economic and cultural shift” (Soliday 101). Writing played a particularly
crucial role, as it became a “crisis management system to stratify students within
institutions and then, later, specifically in the 70s to stratify institutions themselves”
(Soliday 22). Composition historians’ narrow focus on the importance of FYW,
however, has obscured the ways in which composition’s disciplinary development
correlated with the expansion and diversification of writing in the university. This
correlation indicates that the composition specialist emerged as a departmental and
institutional survival strategy—an individual or group of individuals that could fill
multiple roles in a department or program.

Indeed, while Smith found a slight increase in vertical writing programs in 1973
(140), the period between 1975 and 1985 would see an even more dramatic expansion in
enrollment in writing courses, particularly English as a Second Language (ESL) and
Business and Technical Writing, according to a survey conducted by Thompson, Werner,
and Rothschild. As writing programs expanded, FYW accounted for less than half of enrollment in undergraduate writing courses (45% in 1975-76 and 43% in 1985-86) (Thompson, Werner, and Rothschild 31). They survey also noted an increased interest in writing courses offered across disciplines: 18.1% of respondents reported their departments had interdisciplinary writing courses, and 29.5% said their institutions should or were planning to implement WAC courses (Thompson, Werner, and Rothschild 31). This trend tended to disperse writing instruction across an institution’s departments and disciplines, working against the isolation of FYW as the sole location of writing instruction in universities. Thompson, Werner, and Rothschild conclude their survey with the assertion that in the decade between 1975-1985 writing instruction “expanded in both variety and size” (32).

The rise in multiple kinds of writing courses and programs beyond FYW indicates that composition was part of a larger trend in English studies to diversify to survive. Marilyn L. Williamson described this trend as a new “pressure” to respond to “[t]he new students, the new literatures, the new knowledge about the writing process” (6). Calling English a “multidepartment” (in language mirroring Kerr’s ‘multiversity’ of the decade before), Schulz noted that in the early 1970s, “it looked as if, as chairpersons, we were presiding over the slow demolition of the study of literature…. in favor of modern literature, pop culture, film and other media studies, westerns, comic strips, and a spate of technical writing courses” (34). Describing the diversification of the curriculum as an

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19 Thompson, Werner, and Rothschild note that actual enrollment numbers for ESL and Technical and Professional Writing may be higher, given that those courses are sometimes taught outside of English (32).
attempt “to stave off a painful and lingering vasectomy of what we held most dear” (34), Schulz explained that English departments had become “mirrors” of the corporate world that need a “decentralized management” (36). This managerial style encouraged the development of what Bousquet calls ‘lower management’ like WPAs and other persons coordinating writing programs developed to organize the diverse new curriculum. Hiring a qualified composition specialist to oversee the composition program(s) would allow for chairs like Schulz to decentralize the management of an increasingly diverse department. The organization of labor furthered the motive to hire a composition specialist: the expansion of writing courses and programs needing management and the need to train graduate students who were teaching many of these courses in the disparate knowledges now associated with composition, including “linguistics, rhetoric, and cognitive processes” (Williamson 6).

Describing USC’s adoption of a PhD in Rhetoric, Linguistics, and Literature, Schulz provided critical insight into the complexity of what specialization meant for rhetoric and composition in 1970s. Rhetoric, in effect, was an add-on to traditional literary studies that reflected a need to diversify the work of English studies at large. It thus was viewed by those outside rhetoric and composition as an addition to literary studies. In another perspective on expertise in composition, Williamson argued that graduate students needed training in composition “not so that the graduate students will become such specialists but so that they will be able to fulfill adequately a major professional responsibility” (6, italics mine). That is, composition expertise was viewed as a necessary addition to the literary profession rather than a specialization, per se. This
perspective is important both for understanding future divisions between literature and rhet/comp, as well as for understanding that composition represented a fundamental shift in expertise in English studies. Developing composition programs and adding rhetoric and composition to graduate work would fulfill the push to hire more qualified teachers without adding to the department or college’s budget. At the same time, a specialization in composition was framed as a ‘professional responsibility’ of English literary studies that could promote and support the department in a time of dwindling resources.

Indeed, the unclear positioning of composition is evident in the early development of vertical writing programs (majors, minors, and advanced coursework in writing and rhetoric). For example, Rosemary T. Van Arsdel wrote of the expansion of writing courses in the English department at the University of Puget Sound (UPS), a private liberal arts college, in the 1970s. Van Arsdel contextualized the program’s development of a writing major as a response to the pressure on the university and the humanities. She writes,

No one needs to be told that these are hard times for English departments in the face of dwindling enrollments, budgetary crises, and pressures for practical, job-oriented training, English departments are increasingly being called upon to defend the discipline, to justify what they know to be valuable, fundamental, and worthwhile humanistic education that equips a student for a lifetime (40).

Van Arsdel felt that English should be “selling” itself more as “a valuable and practical study” (40). With this in mind, the UPS had bolstered its writing program (40). As she
notes, the university experienced “increasing demand from students, teachers, government, and business for more careful instruction in written English” (40). To respond, the department began by developing a writing seminar in which students could enroll in courses with themes such as writing about history: the biographical approach, writing for business, writing on scientific subjects, writing for the pre-professional major, developing a personal writing style (42). Van Arsdel implied that these seminars served a rhetorical purpose: “The idea is planted that English can be mastered, that one can write well, and that English is something which should be a fundamental part of everyone’s university experience, not just a one-time thing to be crammed down the throats of freshmen. In other words, we are selling English at the freshman level.” (41, second italics mine). What is fascinating about Van Arsdel’s language here is its commodification of English in terms of writing. On one hand, Van Arsdel’s comment represents a sophisticated understanding that consigning writing instruction only to a single writing requirement renders the course effectively useless and unpleasant to students. On the other hand, Van Arsdel also relies on reductive claims about writing to make that argument, positioning writing as a means to an end for literary study.

Van Arsdel conceptualizes this work as a larger initiative to bolster the traditional English major. With the seminars’ success, UPS additional writing courses for all levels in the English major. Van Arsdel notes her surprise that the writing courses had an unintended consequence: they bolstered enrollments by attracting non-traditional students who wished to be more marketable to employers and students outside of English (44). Because writing courses needed to cap enrollments at fewer students per class and no
faculties member could be assigned more than 2 writing courses per term, the program needed sometimes to employ adjunct faculty (44). That is, Van Arsdel represented the labor problem as a factor of the popularity of the writing courses as well as their need to remain small. Furthermore, she asserted that the writing major would allow “a student [to] pursue the traditional discipline of literature at the same time that he is also developing marketable skills” (44). That is, even a writing track was still conceived of primarily as a literary endeavor, but one that focused more on ‘skills’. Van Arsdel hastily adds that the English writing major, far from turning English into “professional writing schools” reinforces the traditional discipline of English, which is defined in terms of “close textual analysis, critical interpretation, and the techniques of formal research and scholarship that students learn to use language precisely” (44). These comments privileged academic forms of writing and downplayed the incursion of vocational preparation in English studies. The addition of composition was primarily a compromise intended to bolster English majors and course enrollments—a financial survival strategy.

Van Arsdel’s description of the expansion of writing at UPG is indicative of the cultural and institutional factors that shaped expertise in composition. Diversification of curriculum in English, as these documents suggest, occurred as apart of a larger survival strategy intended to attract students and to define the use-value of an English degree. Thus composition shifted from its one-time role as one leg in the tripod of English studies to take a more prominent position in the articulation of English. In English, scholars focused increasingly less on defining the disciplinary content of English—a task that occupied those arguing for research funding who considered the need for English to

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model the content-model of disciplinarity prevalent in the sciences (who were doing so well garnering funding). Instead, defining the central skills and the practical (rather than moral or civic) use-value of those skills became a central task.

*Expertise in Rhetoric and Composition*

As composition faculty continued to expand in the late 1970s and 1980s, composition expertise increasingly built outward from the administrative work of FYW to incorporate multiple writing programs and research methodologies. “Interest” increasingly became less of a demonstrable qualification, as graduate programs and training opportunities also developed during this time—a fact demonstrated both by composition ads calling for junior faculty trained in composition and by reports on the status of graduate programs appearing in *CCC* and *Rhetoric Review*. Robert J. Connors notes in the period between 1970-1975, several universities developed identifiable ways of training (some more or less ‘official’) graduate students to study composition, including the University of Texas, University of Michigan, The Ohio State University, the University of Southern California, and University of California, San Diego. By 1980, around 20 graduate programs in rhetoric and composition existed; by 1986, that number expanded to around 53 self-identified programs, although some of those were in the development process and some relied on as few as two faculty members (Chapman and Tate 124-5). In 1993, Stuart C. Brown, Paul R. Meyer, and Theresa Enos found 72 programs (240). They wrote, “Growth, consolidation, diversification—these three words sum up the evolution of rhetoric and composition doctoral programs [since 1987]” (240). Describing the range of program’s training opportunities, they note growth in areas
related to “scientific and technical communication, literary studies, linguistics, literacy programs, cultural studies, creative writing, and teaching” (242). Programs had “little consistency in core requirements or course offerings,” and “varied in their relationships with other departments at their universities” (247). Speaking optimistically, Brown, Meyer, and Enos described the field’s scholarship as marking rhetoric and composition as a “full-fledged disciplinary study” (248).

The diversification of graduate programs in composition reflected a larger diversification of composition expertise in higher education. By the mid-1980s, an important terminological shift had occurred—job ads increasingly called for a specialist in rhetoric and composition more than any other area of the field (see Table 2).

Table 2. Primary Area of Expertise in Rhetoric and Composition, by % of Total Rhetoric and Composition Listings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Tech/Prof Writing</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Composition</th>
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<td>1966-67</td>
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<td>1988-89</td>
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This shift suggests that time period was an important one in terms of establishing and spreading the identity of rhetoric and composition as a field, and in moving the work of writing specialists beyond FYW. As rhetoric and composition gained increasing visibility both as an appropriate graduate specialization and a recognizable field (no longer simply the ambiguous “director of Freshman English”), the kinds of administrative work faculty did also diversified (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). In the 1960s, the majority of administrative work consisted of the direction of Freshman English, Freshman Composition, or FYW (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Administrative Duties, 1969-1970](image)

In the 1970s and 1980s, recognizable programs in Writing Across the Curriculum, Writing Centers, graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, writing majors, and other administrative opportunities became important aspects of the work done in rhetoric and composition (see Figures 2 and 3).
Figure 2. Administrative Duties, 1978-1979

Figure 3. Administrative Duties, 1988-1989
By 1988, FYW was mentioned in fewer faculty advertisements than Writing Centers. Even more common was a tendency to hire a compositionist who would play a role in multiple administrative positions, or who would be involved, somehow, in the administration of a “writing program”—vaguely defined. The involvement of most (if not all) composition faculty, in the departments writing program or writing programs indicate how central administrative work was to the identity of rhetoric and composition.

The job listings during this period provide further evidence of the rapid expansion of writing courses and programs beyond FYW. For example, in 1978 University of California, San Diego listed the following advertisement:

**Asst. Prof of Writing**, to direct one of the 4 undergrad. college writing programs, teaching upper division courses in the Writing major, & assist in the development & teaching of grad. courses in composition theory, research & pedagogy. PhD in English, educ., ling., or psych. required, w/major emphasis &w/dissertation in comp. theory & research or equivalent. Publications &administrative [sic] exper. also required. Applicants must have interest in 1.program development & coordination (curriculum, TA training & supervision & evaluation and 2. Sustained scholarly research in comp. (2).

As this ad demonstrates, composition became an acceptable research interest for faculty members, rather than simply a teaching interest. However, what exactly composition scholarship consisted of was still in the process of negotiation, at least in terms of how members of an English department viewed its content. A compositionist, the ad suggests,
could be trained in an English, psychology, education, or linguistics department, and would be someone whose work would consist largely of program and curriculum administration in four different writing programs and a writing major. No longer consigned to a branch of literary scholarship, a composition specialist might also be defined in terms of a meta-knowledge about the discipline’s research, as indicated by University of South Carolina’s ad for an “Assistant or Associate Professor in composition research and research methodologies” (1988 30).

As the identity of rhetoric and composition solidified, a tendency also emerged for the senior hire to serve graduate students primarily, while the junior hire took on administrative responsibility. “With the new writing programs, brand-new professors increasingly were hired specifically to work as administrators” (Strickland 82). For example, the following posts, all from the same 1978 JIL demonstrate how frequently this trend occurred:

- University of Illinois, Chicago: Two appointments in Composition (as research specialization)... (1) Assoc or Full Prof (tenured).... Required: substantial and distinguished publications in field, national reputation, experience in graduate programs; (2) Asst Prof (tenure-ladder).... Required: doctorate in field; dissertation in composition or rhetorical theory; teaching experience; interest in remedial writing programs (supervision or research). Publication desirable. (6)
• Indiana University, Bloomington: Probable openings… for an associate or full professor with demonstrated accomplishment in composition research and theory and for an assistant professor with training in both the theory and practical administration of developmental writing programs” (7).

• University of Hartford: “Opening for an ass’t. prof. beginning in Sept., 1979. Qualifications: Ph.D. required. Duties include administrator of all freshman & advanced writing programs, including directorship of Writing Skills Center, & the teaching of writing. Some administrative experience & some interest & ability in creative writing or linguistics preferred” (23).

• Mich Tech University, Houghton: Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition. Ph.D. and experience in such areas as rhetoric, discourse analysis, the composing process… Assist in developing ‘writing across the curriculum’ program and teach courses in composition and related areas… “Possible Opening. Senior position in rhetoric and composition Ph.D. and significant publications in such areas as rhetoric, reading, technical communication, the composing process.” (10).

Administrative work, even when not explicitly mentioned in the job ad, was often conflated with composition’s work as a whole during these years when faculty hires emerged. That administrative work was often an unspoken requirement even when not
explicitly mentioned in a job description is hinted at by an ad from North Carolina State University for a faculty member specializing in “Composition and writing theory and research (not an administrative position)” (1978, 18). Hiring a composition specialist—especially at the junior level, often implicitly meant hiring an administrator.

At the same time that rhetoric and composition became increasingly visible as a primary specialization within English studies, the secondary areas of expertise associated with the field continued to diversify, often extending beyond the humanities to the social and psychological sciences. While literature remained a significant component of secondary expertise associated with composition, such expertise increasingly expanded to psychology, sociology, linguistics, and other disciplines and incorporated metaknowledges like research methodologies. As Figures 4, 5, and 6 indicate, the kind of secondary interests associated with rhetoric and composition specialists reveals just how greatly the field’s reach expanded across scholarly fields.

![Secondary Specializations, 1969-1970](image)

*Figure 4. Secondary Specializations, 1969-1970*
Figure 5. Secondary Specializations, 1978-1979

Figure 6. Secondary Specializations, 1988-89
The division of secondary specializations in the 1969 *JIL* shows the strong impact of the tripod definition of English on the work associated with composition, although the tripod did not totally determine the work associated with rhetoric and composition. Over the next two decades, that work would multiply greatly, expanding beyond the tripod.

However, even by the end of the 1980s, composition specialists were occasionally constructed as administrative oriented generalists in some ads. For example, in 1988 Central State University, requested a “Director of Freshman Composition” who could “organiz[e] a writing center and establish[] development programs. Must be trained in composition theory. May also be required to teach World Lit. and/or Classics.” (42). Despite requiring an enormous amount of administrative work in a range of writing programs, little is mentioned about whether this individual would actually teach writing. In fact, the need for this person to teach literature courses is stressed instead. Strickland identifies this scenario as a trend, writing, “directors of composition were not necessarily teachers of composition (indeed, they had most often been trained as literary scholars); rather their function was to coordinate and oversee those who were teaching the course” (63). The highly variable nature of the job ads’ framing of composition indicates two historical points. First, defining what an appropriate composition specialist looked like was *primarily* an institutional task during this time period. What appropriate training and teaching interests were differed greatly depending on the job ad. Second, even though the understanding of a composition specialist was extremely local, there was a larger trend or sense that the composition specialist was defined primarily in terms of administrative work, although such work was not limited to FYW.
A frustration with the lack of clarity about what it meant to be a composition specialist prompted Robert R. Bataille to write a guide for “Hiring a Composition Specialist” in 1980 in *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. Bataille explained to the audience why and how to hire a composition specialist—including every step from writing the job ad to reading candidates’ vitas and recommendation letters. Bataille showed faculty how to detect the “closet” literature specialist applying for a composition position, and provided methods for avoiding applications from such individuals in the first place. He suggested advertising for someone whose PhD and research plan were in composition. In the cover letter, he noted, a candidate might try to disguise her experience teaching a “freshman composition course in what really is a program in introduction to literature” (18). Search committees should carefully compare the cover letter with a candidate’s vita, paying particular attention to the candidate’s course of study, publications or research projects, and list of teaching interests. A list of professional interests including “British Fiction of the Nineteenth Century” and “Women’s Studies” would indicate the candidate was more interested in literature; in contrast, a candidate listing “Freshman Composition,” “Business Communication,” “ESL and the Problems of Native Speakers,” and “Rhetorical Theory” proved her interest in composition (19-20). As Bataille observed, “An interest in rhetorical theory shows at the very least that the candidate will probably have some sound basis for pursuing research in writing… The item dealing with applied linguistics tells us that the candidate is aware of what linguistics can tell us about the applicability of ESL methods to the remediation of native speakers” (20). Bataille additionally advised search committees to pay attention to
recommendation letters: “Obviously, if a composition applicant is serious, he or she will have at least one letter written by the director of rhetoric or freshman English” (20). The most telling criteria, however, is the candidate’s course work.

Among courses related directly to composition, we might hope to find the theory of modern rhetoric, theory of composition, classical rhetoric, the major practical approaches to composition, and perhaps modern persuasion theory. Among linguistics courses might be structure of the English language, non standard dialects, psycholinguistics, and perhaps a course on English as a second language…. In addition, a course in statistics and another in research design surely might be expected in the dossier of the composition specialist… [as well as] a course on teaching reading [and] cognitive psychology (19-20).

I quote at length because such comments indicate the sheer breadth of work expected of a composition specialist, even though Bataille acknowledged that most compositionists of his generation came from a literary background and were perfectly capable of being good teachers (18). Yet Bataille’s article also indicates what was missing from a discussion of composition’s growth at the time. He neither mentioned the importance of training junior faculty for administrative work (or how to look for a qualified administrator) nor how to train graduate students or set guidelines for the promotion and tenure of faculty who do such diverse work. Of course, one might argue that such considerations are beyond the bounds of what Bataille wanted to accomplish in his essay, but these concerns would manifest themselves in the coming decades.
As the job listings in rhetoric and composition increasingly encouraged a diverse range of subspecialties and administrative work, scholarship about developing graduate programs in the field grappled with the implications of the expansion of rhetoric and composition. In 1979, Douglas Park argued that graduate education in composition consisted of a "mishmash" of composition history, theory, and pedagogy. Park argued that composition lacked "a shapely coherence that [made] it definable as a discipline" (47). Observing the trend for creating graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, Park argued that we needed to define composition clearly as a humanistic endeavor consisting of "contemplation and critical thought of a quite traditional, humanistic kind" (54). While he acknowledged that research from other disciplinary approaches might help enlighten aspects of writing and writing processes, he nevertheless contended that incorporating such research would only provide an "ungovernable" knowledge (54). Park wanted to locate composition within the humanities primarily because it would be easier to reproduce faculty who did not have to master a variety of disciplinary knowledges. He explained,

One problem with our present situation and with the impetus to establish PhDs in composition and rhetoric is that they do squeeze too much together. The typical new composition specialist, therefore, seems to me likely to be professionally frantic, trying to control far too much material… torn between the impulse to theoretical exploration and the need to come up with something practical but expert to be used in tomorrow's class (55).
Yet the range of secondary specializations called for in the *JIL* indicate that to be a composition specialist one did in some sense, need to have control over a vast amount of material.

Other compositionists disagreed with Park. In her 1984 article, "Composition Studies: Dappled Discipline," Janice Lauer also noted the anxiety over the disciplinary identity of composition (20). Like Park, Lauer attributed this anxiety to the tendency for composition research to borrow from a variety of disciplinary perspectives to investigate and improve writing instruction. She identified early studies in composition as "multidisciplinary not only in their theoretical bases but also in their modes of inquiry" (21). However, unlike Park, Lauer saw the multidisciplinary study of writing as a forward looking approach to academic work, arguing, "Composition studies has maintained from the beginning what a number of disciplines are just starting to admit—that many of their most important problems can be properly investigated only with multiple research methods" (26). For her, a multidisciplinary perspective focused research efforts on problems rather than attempting to outline and work within disciplinary methods (26). Yet Lauer only hinted at the potential conflict that such graduate programs might have with the location of composition’s work, acknowledging that there might be some difficulty negotiating training requirements for graduate students in composition with literature faculty in English (27).

*Down the Road: Tenure, Promotion, and the Legitimacy of Early Rhet/Comp Faculty*

Given the history of variety in rhetoric and composition expertise, we might wonder about the long-term impact of the diversification and growth of faculty positions
in rhetoric and composition. How was such growth related to the labor conditions I mention in the introduction to this chapter? What happened to those hired during this period of mid-century flux in the definition of English and writing instruction and research? What happened to those not hired as faculty? The diversification of composition—and its tendency to serve multiple institutional purposes—certainly contributed to the widespread growth of faculty during a time of institutional strife in higher education.

However, as much as composition benefited from this situation, its expansion also created a problem in evaluating the expertise of faculty in composition. The history of status in rhetoric and composition in subsequent years reflects the difficulty created by the diversity of faculty expertise in composition. A 1974 resolution passed during the CCCC business meeting developed a set of resolutions for encouraging English departments to “give full recognition to research and publication in the areas of freshman English, composition skills, and English education,” and to provide course releases for those administering writing programs. A subsequent 1987 statement by the CCCC Professional Advancement committee again asserted the disciplinary value of composition, describing the “discipline of composition studies” as a “scholarly specialty emphasizing a productive diversity, drawing on many fields of study and many methods of investigation” (1). The committee stressed the scholarly value of composition, but noted,

Since writing is taught at most colleges and universities by large staffs of beginning and part-time instructors, junior faculty members with expertise
in composition studies are often given demanding and extensive administrative responsibility for designing and developing composition programs, recruiting and training a constantly changing instructional staff (1).

Such work may result in “lower scholarly productivity” for those faculty—in other words, less research (1). In speaking about the working conditions of composition faculty, the document hinted at the ways in which the increase in part time faculty and the legitimacy of TT composition faculty are interrelated.

Similarly, in 2000, the CCCC Committee on Tenure in Composition continued to wrestle with issues surrounding legitimacy in its proposal for a “Field Guide for New Tenure Track Faculty,” which included a list of items that the committee members felt they wished they had known in the first year of a new faculty job in rhetoric and composition. In addition to affirming, “All workplaces have weird cultures,” committee members noted the difficulty of navigating fluid definitions of what it means to do work in rhetoric and composition. In addition to affirming, “All workplaces have weird cultures,” committee members noted the difficulty of navigating fluid definitions of what it means to do work in rhetoric and composition (UIUC archives Box 9 “Proposed”). One individual described the need to “[b]e multilingual (lit-speak, comp-speak, creative-writing-speak)”; another suggested, “Build coalitions within and across departments” (Box 9 “Proposed”). Most items stress the need to be visible and integrated into the fabric of department and university life because of the general lack of understanding of the work of rhetoric and composition. Some suggestions indicated that the fluid identity of the rhet-comp specialist posed a problem; one item on the list cautioned, “Administration will see your work at odds with how you see it. Explain it to them” (Box 9 “Proposed”).
Also included in the meeting were several testimonies about the difficulty of functioning as a TT faculty member specializing in rhetoric and composition. For example, an email from Linda Ferreira Buckley observed that she had seen many colleagues denied tenure or promotion to full professor who had “book manuscripts, articles, good teaching—and no surprise here—an impressive record of service” (11/29/1999). Service work in particular often became a burden for faculty, detracting from research and placing junior faculty in vulnerable positions. Another email from Lil Brannon describes how her promotion to full professor was accompanied by “a lot of protest. I had four books. I attend most years four to five conferences a year. I was directing our Writing Center and teaching. I was serving in some capacity on just about every doctoral committee. I was doing what comp people do” (11/30/1999). Such claims attest to the difficulty that accompanied the development of TT faculty in rhetoric and composition.

These concerns are not unrelated to the overall difficulty that composition has experienced in staffing introductory writing courses and many administrative positions (writing centers, writing program directors) with TT faculty. An article in WPA in 1981 surveyed 156 institutions on their employment of composition faculty and found that of the collective 4,584 faculty employed across the institutions (institutions of a range of sizes, including both public and private institutions), nearly half (2,263) of those faculty were part-time. What this history should signal, then, is that composition’s very growth as a discipline is in many ways contingent on the growing use of part-time and adjunct faculty. This trend is not unique to 21st century composition but was set in place by the
growth of composition as an academic field since the mid twentieth century. The reason we continue to debate disciplinary legitimacy, and to express anxiety about our identity, are related to composition’s development as part of a solution to institutional labor problems. Faculty expertise in composition has from the earliest often been construed as an extremely flexible construct—covering multiple scholarly fields and different institutional and administrative locations. The legitimacy issues created by this historical situation have often led to an attitude of resentment in composition against English studies as a whole. Such resentment is not unjustified; however, it may be in part misdirected. The problem is not solely English’s fault. Rather, it is one that universities will continue to face in the future: how do we manage the problems that the desire for flexible labor structures create in traditional academic means of gaining legitimacy and status (i.e. tenure)? How do universities create spaces facilitating research that draws from multiple methodologies and disciplinary perspectives? These questions will be the ones we need to address—not how to define a unified disciplinary identity for composition—in the coming decades.
Chapter 4: English Departments and the Professional Identity of Rhetoric and Composition

“We are the ones at the center who reach to all other disciplines and to all other people. We synthesize knowledge and unite people. By our force, we draw the wisdom of other disciplines and in making it ours, transform it by combining it in new ways” (Lloyd-Jones 49)

“Here are two phrases I have heard used on several occasions, and always, incidentally, by administrators: teachers of writing are the ‘floating bottom’ and the ‘soft underbelly’ of the academy…. A ‘floating bottom’ cannot be central to the mission of the academy or accorded its highest priorities and rewards.” (Lunsford 190)

In his 1977 CCCC chair’s address—the first chair’s address for the conference—Richard Lloyd-Jones articulated composition’s “view from the center” of the academy. With missionary zeal, he forwarded a vision of composition as a central discipline whose work crossed multiple disciplines and could provide a location for “synthesizing” and “uniting” the work of the academy. Nearly ten years later, Andrea Lunsford’s address challenged this depiction by employing the imagery used to talk about writing instructors
by those outside of composition. The spatial metaphors she recited—writing instructors as the “floating bottom” and “soft underbelly” of the university—frame composition as underneath, dominated—the contingent (soft, floating) labor on which the real academy treads. Taken together, these two epigraphs encapsulate the identity problems that previous chapters explore—problems of composition’s relationship to other disciplines and of labor. Furthermore, they highlight the disparity between the way insiders and outsiders perceive composition’s work—a disparity that has perpetuated composition’s anxiety about its identity. How can composition be both central and peripheral to the academy?

In this chapter, I argue that problems of labor and composition’s relationship to other disciplines motivated the prominent debates about departmental location in the 1980s and 1990s. During those decades, the formation of independent departments of rhetoric and composition symbolized a disciplinary achievement for some members of the field. A standalone department, such arguments concluded, could improve the labor conditions of writing faculty and gain legitimacy for the kinds of work not always accepted in English departments, particularly work that extended beyond humanistic methodologies. Taken together, the problems of research, labor, and departmentalization provide insight into the ambivalent stance of composition studies toward disciplinarity. In order to move beyond the debates over whether composition is a discipline, we need to understand that such debates are in fact reflections of displaced anxieties and desires about material problems that have persisted throughout the twentieth century.
This chapter begins with a review of the rhetoric of departmental and disciplinary identity in histories of composition and higher education. I argue that this rhetoric often fails to identify the social and political functions that shaped the formation of departments, and thus has perpetuated a misunderstanding of their role in institutional power structures and disciplinary formations. I then look to major texts in the debate about whether or not composition should leave English, including the chairs’ addresses of Maxine Hairston and David Bartholomae, as well as published accounts of division from English from *WPA: Writing Program Administration* and the edited collection, *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies*, and I discuss similar trends in other scholarship.\(^{20}\) Certainly much attention has been given to the Hairston and Bartholomae ‘debate’ and the debate about departmental location more generally; however, I argue instead that the issue of departmentalization, like the other problems I analyze, metonymically stood in for other anxieties in composition—anxieties about its own identity as well as the role of writing instruction and academia in public culture. In other words, I show that the central assumptions in these debates reveal more about what compositionists arguing the issue held *in common* than their differences. I posit that the problem of departmental location, which encapsulated the tension between writing studies and English studies, existed for two main reasons: first, because labor

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\(^{20}\) Arguments to leave English have been influential but not predominate. A 1995 survey of 360 composition and rhetoric programs (out of 1,543 surveys sent) found only 8 existing outside of English (Chapman, Harris, and Hult). In 1999, the CCCC Committee on Part-time/Adjunct Issues noted 51 freestanding composition programs or departments. Current counts as of March 2012 find 33 independent writing/rhetoric departments (not including programs) (“Independent”). Although arguments for departmentalization remain the minority, the larger discourse that spurred the movement (or resisted it) provides insight into the ways composition articulates the role of departments, its relationship to English, and the (inter)disciplinary ideals of the field.
disputes remained unresolved after composition’s status improved; second, because the department functioned as a metaphorical representation of autonomy both for those advocating a split and those against it.

Reframing Location: The Rhetoric of Departmentalization and Disciplinarity in the University

Departments and disciplines have a complex rhetorical association in composition scholarship. Histories of composition have played a key role in furthering the assumption that the department signifies power and disciplinary status. For example, Robert J. Connors, discussing the demise of rhetoric in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, writes, “Why were there no departments of rhetoric? The answer is simple. There were no departments of rhetoric because there were no German PhDs in rhetoric” (178). Connors uses departmentalization as a marker for the achievement of disciplinarity after the transformation of the university in the late 19th century. The PhD and the department symbolize higher education’s recognition of disciplinary legitimacy. Similarly, Steven Mailloux compares the disparate paths of Speech, which solidified its disciplinarity by forming a separate department, and Rhetoric, which remained an “interdiscipline” in English (15). Mailloux hypothesizes that rhetoric, because it failed to “gain[] increased visibility and intellectual autonomy” through departmentalization and the creation of professional associations, became “marginalized in its former institutional home” (15). As Connors and Mailloux’s comments demonstrate, the assumption in rhetoric and composition has largely been that departmentalization represents disciplinarity—it encapsulates the prestige of the PhD and graduate programs and it represents intellectual
autonomy. The narrative forwarded by these histories posits that English literature won out over rhetoric for departmental control because rhetoric was intellectually and culturally denigrated (see Miller, Brereton, Berlin, Crowley). Modern English departments, according to this account, ultimately housed rhetoric but reduced it to a first-year course or eliminated it entirely over time. Rhetoric revived in the post-1960s era when certain individuals discovered a rhetorical history and successfully situated that history within the work of English. This narrative has a powerful impact on composition’s self-perception: the logical conclusion of this line of thinking is that our contemporary disciplinary emergence should be accompanied by the formation of separate departments. However, by framing departmental and disciplinary status as achievements, this narrative depicts institutional power as relatively autonomous. In other words, it largely assumes decisions about disciplinarity are a product of individual choices within departments rather than the interplay of interdepartmental, administrative, and public powers.

A brief review of the formation of departments in the U.S. system of higher education complicates this narrative. Departments as they exist today\(^2\) began to develop at the end of the 19th century but were changing and unstable institutional structures until the early years of the 20th century, when they became more consistent within and across institutions. In the late 1880s and 1890s, in particular, departments proliferated at an

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\(^2\) In the ante-bellum era, colleges were much smaller and existed without departments, with professors seen as experts in multiple areas and the president as another professor who taught the senior capstone class in moral philosophy. Departments arose with the change to the university structure in the post-Civil War era; initially, a university might have only four departments, until the period of proliferation around the 1890s (see Veysey and Rudolph for fuller accounts).
astonishing rate, often as a result of a single department bifurcating and forming two separate departments (Veysey 58-9). Many historians have attributed this growth in departmental organization as a result of increasing specialization and stratification, but historian Laurence Veysey notes that this is only partly true. In fact, many departments early on were established to train students for particular vocations, although nearly all departments made claim to some kind of specialized knowledge and investigation (142). The German influence on higher education, often blamed for the demise of composition, was only partly the reason specialized departments grew in this time period. Veysey argues instead that departments formed in an intensely competitive atmosphere as universities attempted to solidify their status and an enterprising new generation of the professoriate sought to advance their careers (321). He explains that departments were shaped by “scientific assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the functional requirements of organizational control, […] and expectations casually borrowed from the rather more formal German situation” (321). Because of this shaping influence, departments never have represented unity of a discipline or idea but rather they were “intramural battlegrounds” (59).

Departments functioned not as coherent intellectual units but as material for the arguments of faculty, administrators, and the president. Veysey explains, “[W]hen an entire academic structure was in the making, the department as such had to seem a necessary and forward-looking device in the eyes of administrators and leading professors” (321). The proliferation of departments brought increased competition, rather than increased autonomy per se. But with increased competition, the formation of new
departments actually waned in the early years of the 20th century (321). Departments became key players in administrators’ inter-university competition, used “as [pawns] in the campaign to surpass rival universities” (323). And while entrepreneurial new professors might have had their own career trajectories in mind, the university president controlled departments “as weapons in a grander struggle to gain eminence for his institution as a whole” (324). Members of departments similarly used departmentalization as de facto evidence to argue for resources by comparing themselves to analogous departments at rival institutions. Departments, then, historically served as resource strategies for different individuals both inside and outside the department.

Because departments were inter-institutional resource strategies, in which finding analogous departments at competing institutions became an important rhetorical strategy, this competition eventually standardized departments. The most prestigious institutions served as analogues and examples for other institutions to follow. Additionally, standardization sometimes resulted in existing departments expanding rather than continuing to split off based on discipline or subdiscipline, often because a larger group had more claim to resources (Veysey 330). Arthur Applebee and Gerald Graff have shown that such was the case for English. Both examine the formation of large English departments that developed based on an umbrella model of including a variety of disparate studies in order to martial more resources. Applebee notes that this umbrella model led to the “tripod definition” of English—as language, literature, and composition—popularized in the 1950s and 1960s. This model, however, created more anxiety than definition; at the 1958 Basic Issues Conference, he explains, “’What is English?’ became
in practice ‘What structure can best hold the legs of the tripod together?’” (202).

Applebee’s history makes two key arguments: first, that curricular confusion has left English particularly vulnerable to “charges of frivolousness, triviality, and lack of coherence” (239); and second, that because of this curricular confusion, English has fallen back on a content-knowledge justification of its value (245). Graff similarly dispels the notion that English was ever a coherent department or discipline in *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. He argues that the “coverage model” of English allowed disputes about methodology, epistemology, and hermeneutics to remain latent and unresolved, only increasing the confusion of the curricula. Despite these criticisms, though, neither Applebee nor Graff argue for splitting up English departments; instead, they seem to hold unconsciously to the belief that the power of its large size and its historical identity in the American university are powerful reasons for cohesion rather than division.

Whether or not Applebee and Graff are right in continuing to assume the necessary cohesion of English, their decision to do so demonstrates the ways that departments have come to stand in as disciplinary markers. That is, because the rhetorical connection between disciplines and departments is so strong, they see a disciplinary affiliation among all the haphazardly organized and related subdisciplines of English. This assumption also informs, for example, Walvoord et al.’s qualitative study of academic departments. They define discipline as essentially an epistemological framework: “a set of assumptions and tools for viewing the world in a certain way, addressing certain kinds of questions, and valuing certain kinds of evidence and insight”
(25). They advocate maintaining what they see as a disciplinary organization of departments, noting that departments advance by contributing to disciplinary knowledge, and that such organization “points to the preeminence of knowledge-making as the focus of higher education” (25). Although they acknowledge the inherent instability of disciplines and the need for departmental flexibility, they assert that organizing departments by discipline is a “powerful” academic value system (25).

Yet many of Walvoord et al.’s points demonstrate precisely the kind of strong rhetorical attachment to the connection between discipline and departments, and the connection of both to autonomy. In their survey of change in eight university and college departments, they note that despite having strong beliefs about what departments represent (including autonomy, specialization and expertise, academic freedom, and collegiality), many departments do not or are unsure how to enact these values. In short, they argue, “departments in the United States are still searching for viable notions of what to be” (7). This point is particularly important for understanding the debates over departmentalization in rhetoric and composition because such debates came to the table with preconceptions about what departments were that did not always have basis in historical realities. Furthermore, the association of departmentalization with disciplinary status is also complicated by the push toward interdisciplinary work in higher education in the late 20th and 21st centuries. In the next section, I suggest that this struggle to understand “what to be” as a department is challenged not only by the history of departmental formation in the U.S. but also by the increasing value placed in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work.
Interdisciplinary Challenges to Departmental Location

Although departments represent powerful resource strategies, the public has often seen those resources as primarily existing for the benefit of institutions, administrators, and tenurable faculty. The emphasis on specialization, research, and knowledge making, then, is seen to serve everyone but students, and consequently, public backlash against higher education often focuses on departmental and disciplinary isolation. Because of the rhetorical association between department and discipline, departments became the object of criticism along with disciplines in the post-1960s era of higher education. Walvoord et al. note that critics of the university have, since the 1970s, “cited departmental structures as a barrier to interdisciplinary teaching and research and to the application of research to real-world problems that were not encapsulated in any one discipline” (ix). Departments were seen to compartmentalize particular kinds of work and to reinforce the divide between town and gown.

Student unrest and rioting in the 1960s exerted pressure on the entire system of higher education to attend to student desires and needs. Enrollment declines in the 1970s also led administrators to focus greater attention on students’ demands, and to attend to various non-traditional constituencies (Thelin 326). Additionally, concern over money lost as a result of student attrition put pressure on research universities to engage students (ibid. 330). This phenomenon manifested itself in practical services for students, but also in attempts to provide an engaging curriculum through honors societies, freshman seminars, increased elective options, attempts to value teaching, and an emphasis on interdisciplinarity (ibid. 331).
With the push for interdisciplinary work came ambivalence about ‘traditional’ departments and disciplines. Michael Bérubé and Janet Lyon, in their essay on interdisciplinarity in the post-1960s era, suggest that the push for interdisciplinary work and the faculty’s multiplying disciplinary and departmental alliances resulted from a general resistance to the commodification of knowledge and its reduction to a certain set of facts and skills needed to optimize federal and industrial performance (a criticism borrowed from Jean François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*). That is, departments and disciplines became the object of ideological criticism because they were seen by many to serve the ‘military-industrial-educational complex’. Focusing on student protests at Berkeley during Clark Kerr’s presidency (which occurred shortly after the publication of *The Uses of the University*), Bérubé and Lyon note that student protestors desired to strike a balance between honoring cultural pluralism and resisting fragmentation and individualism that characterized the multiversity. The result was a new desire to unify knowledge produced across the university and to make it applicable to social and political activities outside the university (rather than federal or industrial goals)²² (188-9).

Bérubé and Lyon understand the increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary departments and programs, especially in the humanities and social sciences, as a response to the call to think of knowledge as an organic whole, as serving a political and cultural

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²² Although those goals certainly were not new to this era (we can identify various progressives and generalists attempting the same thing since the late 19th century, at least²²), Bérubé and Lyon do associate this time period with the emergence of a shift toward cultural studies in English as well as a general movement toward the explicit institutionalization of interdisciplinary centers, programs, and departments.
sphere beyond the university, and as resisting compartmentalization into traditional departmental locations. Although they tend to frame this interdisciplinary work as new and indicative of the approach of all humanities and social sciences disciplines, this model of interdisciplinarity is what Julie Thompson Klein attributes to the trend of ‘critical interdisciplinarity’ (5). Klein argues that many of its assumptions about knowledge as holistic thought and organic synthesis emerge throughout the history of the humanities (5). Yet the unexplored irony in Bérubé and Lyon’s essay is that, as they mention briefly, Kerr’s vision of the multiversity also encouraged interchange among disciplines and departments in the service of providing knowledge for economic advancement. In other words, both economically advantageous and epistemologically progressive visions of interdisciplinarity expressed dissatisfaction with departmental structures as confining disciplines. The “political reversibility” of interdisciplinary work, to borrow a term Bérubé uses elsewhere, is precisely its ability to be seen as both conservative and progressive, as serving idealistic and pragmatic social needs (32-33).

The key point for this analysis is to demonstrate some of the rhetorical associations that interdisciplinarity has accrued—as holistic, organic, critical, as well as economically and politically advantageous—and to consider the location of work that these formulations imply. Although Bérubé and Lyon begin their essay by listing their professional titles to highlight their involvement with numerous departments and programs, they do not pay particular attention to the location of interdisciplinarity. Yet interdisciplinary work challenges departmental organization. In the humanities and social sciences in particular, interdisciplines have created separate departments or
programs based on problem-focused or social and identity-focused conceptions instead of a vision of coherent content knowledge (Women’s Studies is a classic example). Some interdisciplinary programs and centers exist outside departmental structures entirely. Julie Thompson Klein, looking at cultural studies specifically, notes the “complex spatial dynamics of interdisciplinarity” in that interdisciplines are “located within disciplines, on their margins, in subfields and alternative practices, and in interdisciplinary enclaves” (51). Klein’s description of these spatial dynamics alerts us to the complexity of talking about interdisciplinary work within an institutional context that pushes for a standardized structure for all kinds of administrative and financial reasons. For those in composition studies, we particularly need to be aware that these spatial dynamics are more complicated than merely figuring composition as central to the university or ‘interdisciplinary’.

As Klein’s comments suggest, challenges to interdisciplinary work are many, both because of its often \textit{ad hoc} formation and location as well as its lack of clarity as a concept in higher education. Interdisciplinarity can serve multiple functions and take on multiple identities, even in the humanities, where it seems to be less subject to external constituencies’ demands. Bérubé and Lyon’s view of interdisciplinary work may reflect attitudes about their work \textit{inside} the departments they work in, but what about \textit{outside}? Interdisciplinarity is an unclear concept with a vast amount of cultural capital (see H. Graff, Johnson). Walvoord et al. cite a survey of 37 provosts from land-grant institutions in which the provosts valued departments most that were “interdisciplinary” and “entrepreneurial” (2). Both terms are vague floating signifiers, and when paired together
they connote productivity and performance. The ‘lure’ of interdisciplinarity—to borrow
Harvey J. Graff’s framing of the issue—is precisely its ability to function as a “politically
reversible” concept—with multiple audiences with vastly different opinions agreeing that
we should ‘be interdisciplinary’.

One of the larger goals of this dissertation is to ask us to pause and examine why
compositionists wants to be seen as a discipline or an interdisciplinary field, and how our
discourse is shaped by the history of attitudes about disciplinary and interdisciplinary
work in composition. Julie Stone Peters offers a way to think about interdisciplinarity
that explores its role in a field’s self-perception. Analyzing the misplaced hopes in law
and literature collaborations, she argues that interdisciplinarity is a “disciplinary
symptom”; that is, rather than being a distinct separate and later movement,
interdisciplinarity is bound up with disciplinary attitudes, anxieties and desires. In fact,
she frames interdisciplinarity as “hysteria, in the ancient Greek sense, in which the
wandering of the uterus from its proper home was thought to produce histrionic
symptoms in the patient, publicly theatricalizing an interior dislocation” (448). For
Peters, interdisciplinarity is a symptom of disciplinary anxiety, a feeling of dissatisfaction
with the limitations of disciplinarity that leads to looking for other disciplines,
knowledges, or work to make up for a perceived disciplinary lack. That is,
interdisciplinary projects are in fact projections of a “vision of the real” which reflect
other “political and ethical aspirations” which the discipline itself is seen as insufficient
to deal with for various reasons (450). For composition, the insertion of interdisciplinary
discourse in discussions of the field’s identity is indicative of the still unanswered questions surrounding its disciplinary status.

Klein continues by asserting that interdisciplinarity is bound up with a desire to believe “we’ve escaped our disciplinary boundaries” (451). Although Peters sees those boundaries as always present, she does envision a kind of interdisciplinarity in which mobilization and multidisciplinary connections can allow us to “think about the consequences of disciplinary tourism, to ponder the new terms we’ve erected as touchstones of our common project, and to offer richer readings of those real (and sometimes hyperreal) objects of our study” (451). Peters’ conception of interdisciplinary work is productive because it emphasizes not escape from disciplinary boundaries to more ‘real’ forms of scholarship but rather mobility and multidisciplinary connections—a vision of our work that might serve us better as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID) become increasingly significant composition programs. Peters’ vision is one of mobility not centrality, and her language highlights the way that the desire to wander and dislocate (to be ‘interdisciplinary’) reflects the ethical and political desires of an academic subject.

However, even Peters is overly optimistic about the possibilities of interdisciplinary work; she may agree that we cannot escape disciplinary boundaries in reality, but she does not acknowledge the ways in which the push toward interdisciplinary work is complicated by the pushback of fiscal policies impacting higher education. Bérubé and Lyon address this, writing, “The contradiction between interdisciplinary expansion and fiscal contraction has grave consequences for graduate programs, hiring
and tenure, and peer review at every level—all the forms of professional self-regulation (and intellectual self-definition) we have” (201). Similarly, Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente remind us that “the overall budget structure of the university also shows deep intellectual, financial, and structural investments in traditional disciplinary boundaries, particularly in response to competition for ‘leading-department’ status within colleges or throughout the university as a whole (1). This tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces may have long term negative consequences for the existence of interdisciplinary work, especially if interdisciplinary work continues to operate with little explicit definition or visibility. The key challenges are how to encourage visibility while practicing the mobility and rhetorical fluidity that composition needs in order to justify itself within existing institutional and academic value systems. The issue is about more, however, than just visibility, but a sustainable professional visibility that draws upon the power of a larger history, claim to resources, and other exigencies for our existence, as I discuss in my conclusion.

These are challenges I argue composition needs to face directly in the coming decade. We face inducements for both fiscal contraction and inter/multidisciplinary expansion. Given this climate, how do we figure our work in ways that do not over-emphasize a false and confusing metaphorical centrality nor uncritically accept claims about composition’s supposed disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, or postdisciplinarity? Analyzing composition’s discourses of departmentalization can help us address these underlying assumptions and consider how to reframe arguments for our work.
Although certainly not the first time compositionists discussed leaving English departments in recent history, the CCCC Chairs’ addresses of Maxine Hairston (1985) and David Bartholomae (1988) are one of the key debates over departmental location. Nearly all the literature on composition’s departmental or programmatic location positions itself in relationship to this debate (see Crow and O’Neill, Harris, Howard, Anson for examples). The frequency of their citation suggests that these texts play an important role in the cultural imaginary of composition, particularly because they represent two seemingly opposed sides in the debate about composition’s identity. For Hairston, composition needed to break its “complex psychological bonds” to its “adversaries” (literary theorists) in English departments, who stifled the development of composition as a discipline and maintained the subordination of writing instructors (133). Bartholomae responded by suggesting that the division between composition and English was problematic and untenable, and that composition needed to resist the desire to draw its boundaries in the terms of a traditional discipline, especially a discipline separate from and opposed to literature. Bartholomae, reflecting on his address several years later, wrote that he intended to respond to Hairston and to assert that English was an appropriate home for composition (182-4). Given this, it seems easy to position Bartholomae and Hairston against one another. Hairston’s insistence on disciplinarity seems counter to Bartholomae’s resistance to it. Hairston’s dismissal of English as useless and elitist contrasts with the symbiosis Bartholomae sees between those fields.
However, understood within the rhetoric of departmentalization, it becomes apparent that Hairston and Bartholomae operated from the same commonplaces, although they envisioned different directions for the rhetoric and composition. Because they draw heavily from Hairston and Bartholomae, scholars writing on the issue of departmentalization often perpetuate those same commonplaces for the field—whether they argue for or against segregating composition from English. As a term, ‘commonplace’ indicates more than just common ground; it also indicates the unexamined and culturally accepted premises on which arguments are based. In my analysis, the term shows that these arguments about departmentalization indicate underlying and often ignored assumptions about the role of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity—and their location within in the academy. I see three interconnected assumptions in Hairston, Bartholomae, and other texts I analyze. First, the main overarching commonplace of these arguments is that autonomy is possible given the right location or formulation of our work. That is, there is an assumed power over the field’s location and identity management within the university. Stemming from this main premise is a second commonplace that our work resists an outmoded and problematic ‘traditional humanism’—sometimes termed as such and sometimes implied as the stance of English departments. This premise shapes an “us vs. them” mentality in which “we” are working against “tradition,” “humanism,” “the literary elite,” or some other oppositional and benighted group. Third, each calls for work that exists outside current disciplinary boundaries as key to composition’s work, but they often do so without acknowledging the consequences, constraints, or challenges of restructuring the work of
the field. In this last commonplace, terms like “interdisciplinarity,” “postdisciplinarity,” or “multidisciplinarity” similarly function to represent the promise of escape from various limitations of disciplines.

Autonomy is both an important and misunderstood desire in contemporary academic institutions. Walvoord et al.’s study of academic departments notes that autonomy is one of the core values of departments, but its aims are complicated by administrative structures, particularly given the amount of power administrators have over funding decisions. They connect a desire for autonomy with the idealized version of departmental organization as collegial. Yet they note that “traditional collegial forms are stressed as departments take on new roles and new types of non-tenure-track faculty or support staff, and as they conduct education in geographically dispersed or virtual spaces, collaborating in new ways with businesses and with alternative providers” (iv). Because of the increasing need to operate as flexible, and interdependent with various publics, “Departments’ internal organization combines elements of the collegium and the bureaucracy as well as oligarchic, political, feudal, and caste-based systems” (iv). In other words, figuring departmental power in terms of autonomy, and figuring autonomy as the solution to collegial working environment, is highly improbable given ongoing stresses on the system of higher education, including competition, student unrest, public mistrust, bureaucratic structuring, and fiscal conservatism.

Autonomy and collegiality, then, are interconnected idealistic views of departmental identity. These idealistic views were explicit in Hairston’s assertion that breaking from English departments provided a solution to the problem of autonomy and
lack of collegiality. She writes, “we will come of age and become autonomous professionals with a discipline of our own only if we can make a psychological break with the literary critics who today dominate the profession of English studies” (134, italics mine). Here Hairston points specifically to a mental change—signified, where necessary, by a departmental split—as the key to achieving professional status, without acknowledging the structures in which departments operate themselves. She attributes inequitable labor practices primarily (if not solely) to composition’s low status within English.

Ellen Cushman echoes Hairston’s rhetoric, but goes a step further by insisting that Writing Studies (abandoning the moniker ‘composition’) split into separate departments—not separate programs. In “Vertical Writing Programs in Departments of Rhetoric and Writing,” she asserts that a vertical curriculum would justify the discipline of Writing Studies and would provide a labor force of “fully enfranchised teachers” (123). Cushman goes so far as to argue that without separate departments, a vertical curriculum is impossible, and composition would retain its identity as student remediation and a service program for the university. She writes, “Without department status and a mission to do so, vertical curriculums can not be developed… and tenure-track lines will never exist” (124). Cushman’s claim that Writing Studies could develop autonomy as a department is based on the premise that no possibility for a reconciled and unified vision of English studies exists; thus, for Cushman, the only possibility for curricular success for composition is to work in a departmental structure over which it has complete control.
Cushman indicates that once outside of English, composition would have little difficulty persuading a larger academic and public audience of its intellectual validity. Cushman thus oversimplifies departmental autonomy. The key to changing attitudes about writing as a discipline, she assumes, is harnessing the cultural capital of writing as a utility. Cushman suggests that the field “could tap into the cachet that writing has in many university administrations” because of the “value placed on writing by leading business, government, and community members” (123). Yet Cushman, in emphasizing the critical role of departments to change perceptions, status, and working conditions, seems to ignore the complexities of how people outside of academia define and understand the role of writing. In a final note, Cushman reiterates, “We can no longer trust literature professors to do the right thing when deciding where composition will be taught and who will teach it” (125). Interestingly, Cushman frames the issue as a problem of trust rather than a “real” disciplinary or other divide. Moreover, this position presumes that all those within the new Writing Studies departments would inherently have a shared agreement, and faith in one another and the endeavor.

Yet faith in the possibility of autonomy is not just the province of Hairston, Cushman, and others advocating a split from English. The same faith lurks in arguments about staying in English, and underpins Bartholomae’s assertions as well. Bartholomae, instead of longing for disciplinarity as Hairston and Cushman do, distrusts disciplinary structures. His address reaffirms the relationship between English and composition, and expresses nostalgia for earlier days in the profession when composition existed outside
the expectations for mainstream work in the academy. Describing his entry into the field, he writes,

\begin{quote}
  CCCC … seemed to me to provide the terms and context that allowed people to get to work… not cranking out just one more paper, not laddering their way up to the top before another famous book or another famous person, but doing work that one could believe in… where we felt like we could make things happen, \textit{not just in our own careers, but in the world} (170).
\end{quote}

Here Bartholomae reiterates nostalgia for the early years of work in composition, as if that era could be returned to and maintained. His articulation of this new version of English is predicated on a suspicion of academic structures more generally. He writes, “I suspect that most of the problems of academic life—problems of teaching, problems of thinking—come from disciplinary boundaries and disciplinary habits” (180).

Bartholomae essentially sets up a catch-22 scenario, in which a unified English department provides the possibility for autonomy and collegiality, but that English department also operates somehow outside of ‘boundaries’ and ‘habits’ of traditional disciplines. He assumes that the pre-professional days of composition, its existence outside of any disciplinary \textit{status quo}, can be maintained through a resistance to drawing boundaries and constructing definitions for composition. Yet that kind of power over one’s status implies an enormous amount of freedom within the structures of the university itself. While certainly Bartholomae’s desire to focus on the social value of composition’s work rather than on the demands that accompany the tenure-track is
admirable, he overlooks the actual institutional setting of composition, and how it might manage the inevitable process of professionalization in ways that benefit all teachers of writing.

Bartholomae’s comments mirror the criticisms of academic compartmentalization from the 1960s and 1970s in their focus on the social value of composition for public and political spheres. Without a clear plan for maintaining existence outside the lines of professionalism as such, Bartholomae reiterates a tendency to “blame[] the problems of the institution on the process of professionalization itself, not distinguishing between professionalism as such and the specific forms professionalism has taken under the peculiar circumstances of the university, forms, which—it must be stressed—need not be the only forms possible” (G. Graff 5). Trying to suggest alternative forms of professionalization, Joseph Harris has called attention to the contradictory stance of Bartholomae’s argument. While he agrees with Bartholomae’s critique of disciplinarity, Harris argues that it make little sense to remain in English departments that reinforce those structures. He calls Bartholomae’s argument “quixotic” insofar as “resisting disciplinarity somehow became [an argument] for remaining within the discipline of English” (155). Harris instead argues for composition to be “a kind of intellectual work that takes place outside the conventional academic disciplines, that resists the allure of both English and of becoming a separate field of its own” (156). In some ways, Harris’ vision propagates a more problematic vision of autonomy than either Hairston or Cushman, because he desires to circumvent departmental structures entirely, opting instead for a vision for the field that focuses on the work of teaching first-year and basic
writing courses. As such, it makes it much more likely for composition to become a transient program involving few permanent faculty and little ties to research or scholarship. Harris’s prescription for the field relies entirely upon one or two courses and one or two tenured faculty members to maintain professional interests and representation for composition in a university.

As he describes it, Harris’ program at Duke provides post-doctoral teaching positions in the teaching of first-year writing open to PhDs from any discipline, and he emphasizes the need for composition to strive to support “good teaching for fair pay,” while also including research support and professionalization for the post-docs teaching writing (157). Each year the program employs 26 post-docs hired from multiple disciplines to teach 5 classes of “Academic Writing” per year, which are capped at 12 students each. Such positions are not permanent but are seen as temporary holdovers for PhDs who will seek employment elsewhere. Yet the program description he provides raises several questions about its longevity. What might become of such program if Harris were to leave? Or, even more to the point, what might become of such a program were Duke to decide to streamline students’ time to degree by increasing the number of students testing out of the course or using AP credit? Harris thus advocates a scenario that relies entirely upon a vision of composition as an institutionally-specific solution to the labor problems of other disciplines whose PhDs often cannot find tenure-track positions in the first year on the academic job market.

While he acknowledges his program is not a model for other institutions, his argument takes a contradictory position on how to think about the work of composition
more generally. Despite pushing against disciplinarity and preferring a vision of composition focused on the needs of first-year and basic writing, Harris contends toward the end of his essay that he does not want to argue against composition scholarship or its establishment as a discipline (164). Unlike Cushman’s desire for vertical writing curricula and majors, Harris emphasizes the work of first year and basic writing—work that he sees existing outside of disciplinary structures because of their nature as remedial and General Education courses. The work of basic and first-year writing, he asserts, is primarily political work focused on labor issues, but it is also focused on aligning one’s primary intellectual interest with pedagogy rather than the disciplinary apparatuses of “graduate programs, scholarly journals, and academic conferences” (156). However, because the work of writing pedagogy is completely dispersed throughout the disciplines, the composition expert functions primarily as an administrator, complicating Harris’ own desire to emphasize teaching. Composition scholars are not, in this formulation, teachers of composition; rather, that work belongs to transient faculty from other disciplines. This vision for the field places the work of composition in an extremely tenuous position over the long term.

Harris and Cushman, then, essentially are trying to achieve the same result—autonomy over labor decisions—with two different paths. Cushman sees the departmental structure as offering legitimation for composition’s intellectual work, and thus control over labor and curricula. Harris, on the other hand, sees the same possibility for work that exists outside of departmental and disciplinary structures entirely, and therefore can work around traditional staffing of first year courses with graduate students
and part-time faculty. Yet Harris remains ambiguous about the balance he sees between local programs and the larger discipline. In fact, he contends that “the disciplinary location of first-year writing programs doesn’t matter that much—what really counts is our ability to recruit good teachers of writing and to support their work” (166). The difference between location and disciplinary status that Harris and Cushman express is, I think, a crucial one, because it demonstrates that the central issue at stake in such arguments is how compositionists view their own identity as workers. Are compositionists intellectuals? Are they administrators or managers ensuring fair labor practices and effective teaching? Are they, as David Smit has more recently argued, part of a larger Writing Across the Curriculum program that sees its primary role not as teachers, but as teaching experts available for consult across the university? More crucially, are we limited by Harris’ and Smit’s view to think of composition as merely having two kinds of work: research and administration? And won’t this create the very class division (between teachers and researchers) in composition that Harris and others want to end in English?

Both Harris and Cushman depict these decisions as ones which composition can make autonomously in their own institutions; however, other narratives of departmental and programmatic splits from English complicate this idea. One particularly representative example of the constraints of institutions is Eleanor Agnew and Phyllis Surrency Dallas’ narrative of the split of their Department of Writing and Linguistics from the English and Philosophy Department in 1997 at Georgia Southern University. The departmental fission, they note, was actually a top-down decision made by
administrators who pushed for a split because of a mandate from the Georgia legislature encouraging the formation of new programs and departments (40). Despite an initial majority vote in the department to stay together (41), the administration decided to split Writing and Linguistics from English Literature and Philosophy, reassigning faculty as they saw appropriate. Conflict resulted as faculty with allegiances to both English and the teaching of writing dealt with their reassignment to the Writing and Linguistics department, an arrangement that ultimately still benefited graduate students (who often still taught FYW) and faculty in English, who could take assignments in the writing department when an English course failed to make. Agnew and Dallas, while ultimately hopeful about the future prospects of the department, remind us that autonomy—even in terms of control over institutional location—is not always a possibility.

This desire for autonomy is often motivated by reluctance to identifying completely with the humanities. Claims that English or ‘the humanities’ are traditional, impractical, or monologic/monodisciplinary inform arguments over creating separate departments of rhetoric and composition. As chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate, resistance to humanistic ways of thinking—and a desire for composition and English to adopt a more scientific identity—emerged very early in the history of the field as an attempt to assert its social and cultural relevance. Among more recent scholars, this opposition functions to reproduce ambivalence about anything in academia that is not seen to serve a practical or productive purpose. Although all academic fields need to consider how to articulate their work to wider constituencies, composition’s drive to move outside the humanities often feels more like its skirting the need to justify its (most often humanistic) research
by relying too heavily on problematic associations of writing that continue to imbue writing instruction with cultural and actual capital. Composition itself has moved away from a social science understanding of its work, and it maintains a strong connection to the humanistic study of rhetoric. If we want to maintain these ties with rhetoric, we need to pay attention to our unconscious attitudes about the humanities and collaboratively respond to charges of their uselessness.

For those advocating departmentalization following Hairston, anti-humanism most often appears as a resistance to the work of English. Hairston positions composition within the humanities at the same time as she positions composition as fighting against the elitist and impractical “literature faction” (133) whom she figures as “mandarins” with “long fingernails” constructing useless decrees for women to bind their feet (136). She writes, their “elitist mindset that prefers that which is accessible only to the few and that despises the useful or the popular” (136). She continues “And in the mind of most of today’s critic-scholars, their handicaps, their inability to do useful work or communicate with non-specialists, have become advantages because they separate them from the masses” (136). Here Hairston contrasts the practical work of writing instruction with the elitist (and useless) work of literary scholarship, relying on a complex and orientalist battle metaphor. This is a double-bind for composition because while it draws on values of practicality that have cultural capital, it nevertheless forces composition to conceive of its work as narrowly utilitarian.

Interestingly, though, Hairston is not against literary study; rather, she sees the problem with literature as a result of its turn to theory. She writes “the commitment to
literature itself and to teaching students to enjoy literature that made most of us join this profession seems to have faded and to have been replaced by a commitment to criticism for its own sake” (135). Hairston takes issue not only with the impracticality of English, but also the work of literary theorists who (according to her) ended the model of literary study as pleasure. What is particularly interesting about this critique is that it actually reproduces a debate over theory and the canon within English literary studies that emerged out of the culture wars. Although she oversimplifies the former romantic model of literary study, her charges against “theory” reflect a larger debate at the time. Given the in-fighting among literature faculty in the 1980s and 1990s over the role of cultural studies and the canon, it seems particularly problematic to depict literature as a monologic field of study at this time period. This is a key point because pitting composition against literature erases differences among literature faculty as well as those among composition faculty.

I make this point not to diminish the very real resistance composition has encountered within English historically, but rather to suggest that our tendency to view our mistreatment as English’s fault, and not representative of larger institutional and cultural attitudes (many of which are the very reason composition has cultural capital outside the university), is misleading. What Hairston ultimately seems to resist is not English as such but a particular political and theoretical orientation within English literary studies—one that many in composition studies also hold. As Chapman, Harris, and Hult make this point very well when they write,
The image of a composition proletariat overwhelming a literary aristocracy is easily invoked. But, as in the French Revolution, we face the difficulty that we may want to depose our enemies only so that we may be more like them. In fact, many of us can recall what a dreary, atheoretical enterprise composition studies used to be. To some extent, composition studies have become interesting to the degree that they have become more like traditional literary studies—more professional, more theoretical, more dependent upon research (429).

This problem that Hairston aligns with “literary mandarins” is not centrally a problem with literary studies but with a particular orientation towards literary studies. As such, literature merely functions as a straw man argument against which composition seems more practical, useful, and inviting.

Hairston does ultimately insist that composition is a “humanistic discipline,” but she neither defines nor explains the term except to say that we should not aspire to a scientific or social scientific identity. She asks the field not to give in to the “temptation to seek status by doing only empirical experiments that can be objectively normed and statistically validated” (139), and sees empiricism as limited because quantitative research can only investigate a narrow set of issues (140). For Hairston, the humanities seems connected to the vague work of “learn[ing] to formulate good questions, to examine data—especially data that come to us in language—sensitively and meticulously, to control for bias, and to be careful not to claim too much for our findings”
This formula for research is so vague as to define almost every form of research in the academy. Hairston criticizes the humanism of English, but offers no clear alternative.

Resistance to humanistic epistemologies also appears in arguments to “undiscipline” composition among scholars such as Bartholomae, Harris, and Andrea Lunsford. While Hairston positions composition against “literary theory,” Bartholomae positions the field against traditional humanism. Bartholomae values composition’s history of resisting a common enemy… a version of English represented by an attenuated humanistic tradition that placed literature (a Norton-anthology-like unified body of texts) as an unquestionable center of value, and that placed the professor, who could demonstrate acceptable ways of using and responding to those texts, as the primary representative of English (172).

Much like Hairston, Bartholomae figures the version of the humanistic tradition in English as a problem that composition sought to solve or ‘decenter’. For him, the value of composition is the very fact that it created anxiety about English (and specifically required first-year English), that it became a site for the “renegotiation” of the meaning of English (173).

While Bartholomae focuses mostly on traditional humanism of eras passed, Lunsford depicts challenging the humanities as a present concern in her CCC Chair’s address the following year. Lunsford praises composition for “resist[ing] the temptation to make ourselves over in the image of traditional humanistic disciplines, defined by what we exclude” (190). Lunsford, like Hairston, contrasts an inclusive composition with an
exclusive, traditional humanities, although she does not explicitly invoke the metaphor of
‘mandarins’. Instead, she continues, composition is defined (or, to use her term,
composed) as “a postmodern discipline, a postmodern profession,” she argues, “insofar as
we threaten boundaries, hegemonies of all kinds, insofar as we demonstrate charity of
response, clarity of speech, and self-consciousness about principles” (191). The
assumption here is that traditional humanism creates boundaries, is hegemonic,
uncharitable, unclear, and unself-conscious, and that somehow within the university we
can also abandon its forms. These are precisely the claims leveled against the
humanities, and English in particular, by those advocating a split.

Practicality is often the central value that emerges in this anti-humanistic rhetoric.
Within this framework, the practicality of composition is what makes it culturally and
institutionally valuable, while the impracticality of the humanities contributes to its
continued decline. Yet practicality must often rely on the political reversibility of
composition studies—its ability to be seen by many as a skills-based curriculum assisting
the creation of a literate workforce. Royer and Gilles, for example, describing some
literature faculty at Grand Valley State University before the writing department split,
write that there were “deep biases” against “any education with practical dimensions and
worldly affections” or anything attempting to sully the “ethereal calling of literature” as
they sarcastically phrase it (32). Royer and Gilles describe the success of their
department in the administration’s eyes and note that they imagine a day when they will
bring literature into their department as a branch of rhetorical study, not “queen of
content” (35). Of course, their article responds to and describes a particular group of
individuals and situation at Grand Valley that no doubt represents their experience of
antagonism well. However, because they participate in the antagonistic discourse
surrounding the relationship between literature and composition, they perpetuate a wider
distrust of literature faculty and reification of the work of both literature and composition
scholars.

Moreover, such antagonisms also have consequences for composition’s
relationship to rhetoric. Royer and Gilles see rhetoric as an integral part of their
approach, but certainly that fact is not emphasized in their title as the Department of
Academic, Creative, and Professional Writing. Rebecca Moore Howard notes that in the
split between literature and writing at Colgate University, administrators rejected their
petition to be called the Department of Interdisciplinary Rhetoric and instead settled upon
the Department of Interdisciplinary Writing (43). Howard notes that some felt the term
was too broad and would justify theoretical courses not related to writing as they saw it;
others felt the term did not encompass the range of composition, language, and
linguistics courses included in the department (44). In any case, Howard’s and Royer and Gilles’s
examples seem to reinforce the trend that O’Neill and Crowe note for independent
writing departments to tend toward more limited and utilitarian definitions of writing and
curricula (O’Neill and Crowe 4). Furthermore, it reinforces the notion that departmental
control does not allow for the total management of a disciplinary identity, even at the
local, institutional level.

It is particularly important to note, however, that these antagonisms against the
humanities are not always explicitly figured as such, even when scholars are forthright
about their mistrust of English. Rather, these attitudes are implicit within the *us vs. them* narrative characterizing our understanding of departmental splits. For example, Chris M. Anson explicitly states, in his discussion of the dismantling of the University of Minnesota’s Program in Composition and Communication, that “no one in composition studies denies the importance of humanism or the need for at least some literary study in all undergraduates’ experience” (158). And yet Anson also portrays composition as not “myopically limited to literary interpretation and criticism” (159), and he figures the split between literature and composition—their “historical tensions”—as a product of composition’s growth into “an increasingly independent and interdisciplinary field” (158). Anson’s spatial mapping of composition and English depicts composition as outwardly-focused with its own cultural capital and English as inwardly-focused and unable to see beyond its own limited methodologies. In other words, it reproduces the same antagonistic split between English and composition that Hairston uses.

I am wary of arguments that rely on an explicit or implicit rejection of the humanities because while I think they stem from a desire to assert the value of composition studies, they do so through a negative lens. Perhaps the most strongly worded example of this negativity comes from Kurt Spellmeyer. He writes, “The difference between the humanities and the sciences is not that one has become commercialized while the other has not, but that the humanities have typically drawn their power and prestige from an avowed ability to slow down the pace of change or to arrest certain changes altogether” (291). Spellmeyer sees the problem with the
humanities as their failure to keep pace with changes and to prove their productive value.

He continues,

The decline of English ought to disabuse us of [our] fantasy [that scholarship leads to prestige]… Our best chance [of survival lies] with getting closer to the funding that sustains the academy’s most prominent players…. Turning our backs on commercialization won’t give us a moral advantage; it will simply leave us all the more powerless (292).

Rather than investigating the decline of English, he merely attributes it to a vaguely defined inability to keep up with everyone else in the academy. Success, Spellmeyer assumes, is merely a matter of “keeping up” with change in the university. This assumption is an overly simplistic way of depicting the problems with the humanities because it takes a vague action with positive connotations—“keeping up with change”—and submits it as the path to success in an extremely complex institutional context.

For Spellmeyer, as others, interdisciplinarity is panacea to the ills of humanism and the dissatisfaction with boundaries that limit our freedoms as academics. Spellmeyer, dissatisfied with advances in interdisciplinary work, writes, “The boundaries of disciplines… still determine the organization of professors—fiscally, spatially, and in terms of the microcultures each department shelters—just as these boundaries still determine the character of the knowledges these professors keep turning out” (280). Of course, he assumes that we can somehow escape those boundaries and still function in effective and visible ways in the academy. Although his language is harsh and not representative of most compositionists, it does nevertheless mirror the wording
Bartholomae, Harris, and Lunsford use to talk about disciplinary boundaries. Unfortunately, all of these conceptions of interdisciplinarity put aside exactly what it might mean to do this kind of work in higher education.

Composition, then, has a history of both longing for and rejecting disciplinary boundaries. This history, as I suggest, indicates that the longing for interdisciplinarity often stems from a desire for autonomy and a discomfort with our humanistic identity. Yet attitudes about interdisciplinarity also share some common assumptions. Hairston, for example, sees the need for interdisciplinary and extra-university work as essential to building disciplinary prestige. She continues, “And by establishing connections and credibility outside of English departments, we stand to improve our standing with the whole university community” (140). Part of Hairston’s point is that composition can mitigate its status issues largely by reaching out to interdisciplinary studies and business connections, where presumably its work will be met with more favorable responses than within English. She assumes that the persistent biases against the work of writing within English will disappear once composition moves to other disciplines.

For others, practicality is not necessarily the main focus of composition’s work; rather it is the emphasis on pedagogy that challenges disciplinary norms. This issue has been explored in a number of ways in recent decades, the most extensive example being James Slevin’s attempt to construct a schema for disciplinary work that values teaching and administrative work more in the tenure and promotion process. Many of the arguments over departmental location express similar sentiments. Bartholomae argues that composition has the potential to redefine the very idea of a discipline because it
stands “for both an abstract subject and something materially present, a course and its students” (178). This more nuanced emphasis on the real-world value of composition—through pedagogy—is one that is particularly appealing because it avoids the more troubling claim of valuing practicality for its own sake. Yet it is unclear how composition could enact such change if it follows Bartholomae’s vision of a pre-disciplinary subject that exists outside the boundaries of disciplines.

On the other hand, Lunsford argues more explicitly for an interdisciplinary conception of composition, asserting that the field is a postmodern discipline. Lunsford asserts that composition can redefine the very concept of disciplinarity through its existence as “interdisciplinary, nonhierarchical, exploratory, collaborative, dialogic, democratic, technologically savvy, committed to praxis and theoria” (190-1). In addition to conflating interdisciplinary with postdisciplinary, Lunsford assumes that we can redefine the terms of disciplinarity without operating from a position of power. Harris has a more concrete sense of how this might work, through a writing program that is located entirely outside of disciplinary structures. Although he contradicts himself somewhat on the issue of composition’s disciplinarity, he ultimately argues for composition to be “a kind of intellectual work that takes place outside the conventional academic disciplines, that resists the allure of both English and of becoming a separate field of its own” (156). That is, the work of composition should be a multidisciplinary endeavor across the university instead of attempting a disciplinary entity.

In reading these articulations of inter/post/multi-disciplinarity, it quickly becomes apparent that various vaguely defined terms have been employed with little consideration
for how we might need to define composition within the existing frameworks of location and visibility in the academy. The question that remains after examining these interrelated commonplaces in composition is how to think about the location of composition in a way that acknowledges institutional constraints instead of autonomy and disciplinary mobility instead of either centrality or dispersion.

Furthermore, the challenge for composition is to articulate its relationship to English and the humanities in productive and mutually beneficial ways—regardless of whether rhetoric and composition remains within English. We must acknowledge not only our historical ties to English but also our areas of epistemological affiliation and our mutual concerns. This articulation is particularly key because composition does stand in a position to be seen as politically reversible and rhetorically fluid. If composition has cultural capital—through its perception as interdisciplinary, practical, and, more recently, multimodal—we must harness that capital to argue for the validity of other kinds of humanistic and theoretical work that do not serve an immediate economic or productive purpose. This is not a pure altruism. As any glance through recent journals in rhetoric and composition will attest, composition does much work that might be considered traditional humanism, literary and cultural theory and analysis, and other forms of research that align greatly with English studies. Although we should continue to make multidisciplinary connections and to respond to the challenges of new media and new composing methods, we ourselves may easily become target to the same criticisms that have long plagued the humanities.
One key challenge for composition, Nedra Reynolds has recently argued, is to articulate a vision of our *location* in a way that does not “privilege spatial metaphors over material realities” (45). As the analysis above suggests, ‘department’ has often been employed in composition scholarship as a metaphor for status, autonomy, disciplinarity, and collegiality. The metaphorical value of departments can be seen in the current discourse surrounding independent writing departments. Danielle Koupf, describing the rationale behind the formation of most “Independent Writing Departments”—including writing, rhetoric, and/or composition-focused departments—writes, “These departments often develop out of departments of English or literature, and… two primary factors often motivate independence: concerns about staffing first-year composition courses and hierarchies of power within English departments.” Koupf is right to suggest that how composition scholars choose to navigate staffing issues and power relations is an institutional decision. However, I have tried to show that departmentalization is not in and of itself a way of controlling those perceptions of writing as a “floating bottom” that seem to work against a vision of writing as having a value to all disciplines.

Furthermore, creating separate writing departments also does not definitively split literature from composition. Composition remains linked to English historically and professionally in ways that complicate autonomy.

First, historical ties to professional organizations outside of the university complicate the formation of independent departments—and how those departments understand themselves in relation to English. For example, composition and English are
historically linked through organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), CCCC parent organization, and membership and scholarship in the Association of Departments of English (ADE) and the Modern Language Association (MLA). These organizations all provide a means for access to resources, the advancement of scholarship, and ties to K-12 education. The relationship between NCTE and CCCC, in particular, represents this double bind well as the organizations have a long history of tense interaction. In 1994, around the time many freestanding composition departments and programs were separating, a report from the Task Force on the CCCC/NCTE relationship discussed how the discourse of departmentalization challenged the current state of the alliance between NCTE and CCCC. The authors, Cynthia Selfe and Richard Lloyd-Jones, noted,

> Almost 20 years ago the groups began jointly to host the luncheon at the NCTE annual meeting and CCCC members dominate the section, but CCCC has been militant about excluding literature from our meetings, we have had calls for separating composition from departments of English, and we have often held up MLA as the enemy. Do we emphasize separation from the [College] Section [of NCTE]? Although the tension between CCCC and NCTE emerged from more than just the literature/composition division, this remark demonstrates the ways that composition’s resistance to English impacted larger organizational conflicts. At the same time, this division remained problematic because research in English education continued to assert
the need to pair reading and writing. In a related report from the Subcommittee on Governance/Relationships, chair Frank Madden writes,

Research and theory in composition, literature, rhetoric, pedagogy, and cultural studies, have, however, forcefully challenged the division between… composition and literature by advocating, for example, that the reader reconstructs or rewrites the text and that meaning is socially constructed… In addition, technology is challenging all areas of English studies. (Urbana-Champaign Archives).

This particular report hints at the embedded emotional attitudes about composition’s identity and its relationship to English. Although research and theories of textuality and literacy challenge the division between reading and writing and literature and composition, the emotional attachment to excluding literature, to viewing MLA as the enemy, and to emphasizing physical and ideological separation persists. Understanding, historicizing, and analyzing these discourses of location and relation may help us productively find new ways to situate our work.

Second, we must consider the attitudes about composition that exist across the university and complicate our autonomy. For example, neither those within English nor freestanding departments of composition and rhetoric achieved the autonomy over labor decisions they desired to have. Those remaining within English continue to grapple with the complicated relationship between first-year writing and the English graduate students and contingent faculty increasingly teaching FYW courses. For freestanding departments or programs, separation did not, at least initially, guarantee control or power over labor,
curricular, and other decisions. In 2001, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) published a report containing the results of the CCCC Survey of Faculty in Freestanding Writing Programs, from Fall 1999. The CAW report compared faculty and staff work conditions from multiple disciplines (see Coalition and CCCC Committee on Part Time/Adjunct Issues). They noted that freestanding composition programs contained the fewest number of full time tenure track faculty, with only 14.6% full time tenure-track faculty, compared to 36.3% full time tenure-track faculty in English departments with composition programs (see “Table 1” in Coalition 7). In pointing this out, I do not intend to suggest that only tenure-track faculty can teach well, but rather that when the overwhelming majority of labor for such programs and departments was, at least initially, part time non tenure track faculty and graduate teaching associates (together, 73.2% of instructional staff), little claim can be made about the benefits of separating from English for labor, autonomy, or disciplinary status.

O’Neill and Crow confirm similar findings in their frank discussion of departmental and programmatic splits from English, (the perhaps ironically titled) *A Field of Dreams*. Although they continue to assert that without separation many composition programs could not achieve the “independence that Hairston and others have called for” (3); they are also aware that “independence within the university is illusory” (4). They warn that these programs tend toward conservative (4), and that labor in particular can become exploitative if such programs or departments exist outside the framework of tenure (7). Furthermore, and perhaps the most interesting area for future investigation, O’Neill and Crow found no examples of stand-alone departments of writing at
historically black, Native American or Hispanic colleges and universities. The CAW report and O’Neill and Crow’s research suggests that labor is more than a local problem to be solved, and that we need to understand the ways in which the division between literature and composition might be ideologically informed by institutional history and public attitudes about literacy.

Certainly, the decision to remain within English presents continued challenges as well as the decision to split. For one thing, English’s reliance on contingent and graduate student labor remains—but splitting from English does not always mean (or even usually mean) splitting from the labor of English departments. As the narratives in *Field of Dreams* show, often English graduate students remain employed in FYW programs even when such programs exist in a standalone department. This staffing model perpetuates a cycle in which tenured faculty need graduate students to teach lower-level courses and graduate students and faculty both need composition as a way to ensure a teaching assignment—a cycle that tends to obscure rather than clarify decisions about changing graduate programs or staffing practices. Additionally, within English, composition still faces visibility challenges, especially in departments that are structured according to historical time periods or the “umbrella” model of content that discourages connections between rhetoric and composition with other elements of the English curriculum.

In the conclusion, I explore these issues in more detail by discussing more recent arguments for composition’s disciplinary/interdisciplinary identity and how they position that identity in relation to the humanities and English. Furthermore, I turn to an institutional history—that of Ohio State’s Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing—
–in order to examine the myriad relationships that inform the general perception of composition and writing, even when such writing is located in a university center with ties across disciplines. As this chapter hints, our discussion of disciplinary identity almost always focuses on our self-perception. In order for such discussions to be productive in the future, we need to look not just at the value we see in our work, but also the value seen by wider audiences. Increasingly, such audiences will have an important stake in justifying the work that we want to do.
Conclusion: Location and Investment in Composition Studies

“Composition has no optimal institutional home and therefore in managing its institutional relationships can count on no predictable expectations and can rely on no predictable best practices” (Colomb 13).

This dissertation has tried to show that the recurring anxiety over disciplinary status is really a displaced concern over labor and location in composition that arises because of the dispersed nature of writing instruction and research. As chapter 1 explains, composition historically navigated its identity as both too narrow and too broad in part because of the structural and ideological split between undergraduate and graduate education in rhetoric and composition. Furthermore, composition has also been the object of cultural, national, and institutional desires that encourage the expansion of writing research and the institutional locations of writing instruction. In many ways, composition’s expansion has been advantageous, contributing to the availability of funding for writing-related research and to its growth as a faculty specialization, as chapters 2 and 3 detail. At the same time, the perpetual conflict between the narrow (service) and broad (interdisciplinary) definitions of composition’s work also have
contributed to anxiety among composition scholars about its labor practices and status in
English departments and the university—the subjects of chapters 3 and 4.

The purpose of providing this historical analysis is not to perpetuate more
definitions of disciplinarity or to show that composition has developed into a discipline. It is, rather, to highlight how composition’s myriad locations (in individual institutions as well as professional organizations, in English departments, writing departments, writing centers or programs, WAC/WID) continue to challenge any singular vision of disciplinarity, making debating our disciplinary identity in the abstract largely a fruitless exercise. Instead, locating the work of composition—pedagogically, theoretically, historically, empirically—might allow us to move beyond an unproductive debate, or at least to identify situations in which hailing our disciplinarity is productive and situations in which it is not. To that end, I call for more explicit attention to the ways location currently impacts and has impacted the kinds of programs we have developed and the value that different constituencies place in composition’s work.

Capitulating to the expectations of those outside of composition can be a perilous enterprise, but a perspective that considers how location is tied to status and labor might inform how we evaluate and respond to investments in composition’s work. In “No Discipline? Composition’s Professional Identity Crisis,” Christine Farris recalls her experience responding to a dean’s request for the history department to develop and teach its own first-year writing (FYW) course. The history department’s desire to take matters into its own hands no doubt derived from a number of considerations, including the common complaint that FYW does not teach students to write, as well as the need to fund
additional Graduate TA stipends. Farris considers that composition is vulnerable to such “turf battles” for two reasons: because composition scholarship needs to be employed more frequently in local contexts and because the low status of the FYW labor pool detracts from our disciplinary ethos (60-61). Improving in these two areas, she implies, would solidify our disciplinary location. In other words, composition should emphasize the aspects of our work that best reflect our common sense understanding of disciplinarity—faculty expertise and scholarship. However, Farris also argues that composition needs to reassess continually its worth outside of those structures:

Composition will only maintain control of [its] exchange value… as long as we continue to redefine its use value. The cross-curricular and extracurricular sites for the production of discourse, including community literacy work, virtual community Web sites, service-learning venues, that are changing our assumptions about what it is that students need in order to analyze and produce discourse, are also changing our expertise. Furthermore, there is more than one kind of writing expert whose local practices—teaching, research, and consultation—can produce local change (61).

Farris connects composition’s use value to local institutional situations, to community outreach projects, and to composition’s ability to respond reflectively to social, curricular, institutional and political exigencies. This rhetorically astute conception of composition’s work moves beyond the debate about whether we are a discipline to
suggested that perhaps we locate our work in both in traditional academic sites (FYW) as well as outside of the academy or a departmental structure.

Currently there are two camps of scholarship about how to locate the work of composition: scholars who focus on abolishing FYW as an English department enterprise and moving to a WAC or WID model (Trimbur, Smit, Harris) or scholars who argue primarily in favor of structuring composition as a writing studies discipline, with a clear progression from an intro course (FYW), writing majors and minors, and graduate studies (Wardle and Downs, Cushman). In the former model, horizontal relationships across departments, and collaborative efforts within an institution, provide the most promising approach to teaching writing. In the latter model, “composition” is rejected in favor of “writing” to downplay the association of freshman comp classes with remedial and service work, to strengthen vertical programs within departments, and to make a claim to the legitimacy of writing studies as a scholarly field that has staked out majors, minors, graduate programs, and in some cases separate departments. Such extremes, I have tried to show, rely on stark definitions of disciplinarity that often are reductive and arhetorical. Either disciplinarity is exclusive and should be rejected or disciplinarity is the only path to academic success. However, we might consider how to locate composition’s work in ways that employ both models.

Being located both within traditional department and degree structures and outside of them makes our work visible in a number of different ways and best ensures our longevity. Discussing the National Research Council (NRC) classification, Phelps and Ackerman made two interesting observations about its positioning of location: first,
that departments are not synonymous with disciplines according to the NRC’s methodology committee; and, second, that “[i]t seemed not to matter, for purposes of assessment, where programs are situated institutionally, how they are named, or whether they are embedded in other programs, as long as they can be identified with an established research enterprise and compared to peers” (190). Given findings like these, we might be less concerned with issues of coherent disciplinary identity or a consistent institutional location, and more concerned with how we can make a persuasive claim about our value to different audiences. With that project in mind, I turn now to an institutional example that considers the values different audiences place in composition’s work, and I end with suggestions and considerations for future practice.

**Competing and Coexisting Values: An Institutional Example**

In 1996, Andrea Lunsford chaired a committee of faculty at the Ohio State University to submit a proposal to establish the Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW), an independent unit within the College of Humanities that was physically and materially separate from the English department. The CSTW reflects a relatively common, but not ubiquitous, set-up for composition studies in large research universities. It did not dislocate rhetoric and composition faculty or courses from the English department—in part because the requirements for university centers did not allow for such a move. According to the final version of the proposal, CSTW would operate outside of departmental structures to accomplish several tasks, including serving as the primary location for the writing center, community outreach programs, writing research across disciplines, and the development of general education writing courses in
numerous departments (Cognard-Black et al. 4-7). The appendices to the proposal contained letters of support from faculty and administration across the university, from comparable units in other universities, and from those in the greater Columbus, Ohio, community who might benefit from CSTW. The letters represent a wide array of perspectives on the work of composition research and teaching—from community partners to analogous centers at other institutions, and from other departments to local businesses. Thus, they provide a useful archive for understanding how composition scholars might draw upon a range of complex, sometimes competing values associated with writing research and instruction. To be clear, such letters do not indicate whether CSTW was a “success,” nor do I intend to use them as evidence to argue that establishing a comprehensive university writing center is the path all institutions should follow. Instead, looking at how local institutions navigate those values for the material benefit of composition can prove a useful exercise for understanding the how status and location exist both within and outside of the academy’s and the public’s conceptions of disciplinarity.

The letters indicate what people from the community and university value about writing instruction and research, encompassing views of writing as a skill and a service as well as articulations of writing that emphasize interdisciplinarity, research, and the complex social practices involved in writing. What is perhaps most interesting about the letters, however, is that these different conceptions of composition coexist—often in the

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23 Today, CSTW also houses the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, a minor in Profession Writing, and a Communication Technology Consultants program (cstw.osu.edu).
same letter of support and certainly in the letters read as a whole. Taken together, they
draw on the collective ethos of different constituencies to underscore the significance of
writing and writing instruction to an audience outside of the English department—one
responsible for making administrative and funding decisions.

The letters indicate that a number of invested parties value writing instruction as a
service to other disciplines and the community. Sally L. Kitch, department chair and
professor of Women’s Studies, noted, “Like other fields within the humanities, Women’s
Studies is writing intensive, on both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
Opportunities for students to concentrate on improving their skills will enhance their
learning in our field” (83). This comment employs the premise espoused by WAC
programs that writing is key to learning in all fields, a philosophy summed up in Kitch’s
remark, “Writing is a skill at the heart of the thinking and learning processes of all
disciplines and professions” (83). Yet many in composition are uncomfortable with
figuring our work as service because of its association with defining writing as a skill.
Indeed, other letters make this connection explicitly as well. For example, Isaac Mowoe,
the acting chair of the Department of Black Studies wrote, “It has been clear for a good
many years that the American Academy must find ways and means of attending to a
problem of some importance—the inability of a good many students to express
themselves in writing” (Mowoe 86). These comments about serving other disciplines and
improving students’ writing skills assume that writing is merely a straightforward task of
expressing thought and for convey and learning content in another discipline.
Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle have strongly critiqued composition’s tendency to capitulate to the values of service and skills, arguing,

When we continue to pursue the goal of teaching students “how to write in college” in one or two semesters—despite the fact that our own scholarship extensively calls this possibility into question—we silently support the misconceptions that writing is not a real subject, that writing courses do not require expert instructors, and that rhetoric and composition are not genuine research areas or legitimate intellectual pursuits (53).

Downs and Wardle argue that to combat the notions of service and skills, writing should be taught as a discipline, and that FYW should be taught as an introduction to the discipline of writing studies (553). However what is interesting about the letters of support for CSTW is that they often combine the language of service, skills, and research. Ruth Ann Hendrickson, a research scientist from Battelle, a locally headquartered nonprofit research and development organization in the science and technology industry, asserted, “Deploying good technology requires good writing skills,” but the teaching and learning of writing depends on writing research, in particular, research that explores “effective writing and effective ways to teach writing” (101). Such research, the letter contended, “[would] benefit the university and wider community” (Hendrickson 101). Thus, the often-reductive discourse of skills and service exists simultaneously with a discourse that values research.
These comments are employed in the larger context of the letters, which combine skills and service discourse with the discourse of outreach and research. Indeed, the letters suggest that such work is framed more effectively in terms of the value of outreach, and that location is central to the possibility for outreach connections. One letter framed the CSTW as an intermediary between the university and the community, arguing, “Clearly, the center would provide an important connection between The Ohio State University and the greater Columbus community” (Schwarzwalder 105). Sandi Lerman from Columbus Speech and Hearing Center wrote of the potential for writing research to benefit the community: “I am especially interested in your plans to do transcultural and –linguistic research on writing, as students who are Deaf have unique cultural and linguistic characteristics that affect their success as writers” (103). Another letter framed the CSTW’s location and outreach potential in market-driven terms, speaking of the need for “writing services” to be “consolidate[ed]… at a university as large and decentralized as Ohio State… to provide better customer service to the students, staff and faculty. A one-stop-shopping approach is logical and demonstrates a commitment to making services accessible” (Kaczmarek 102). The juxtaposition of market terminology with the language of access is perhaps indicative of the ways in which cultural discourse in American higher education swings erratically between democratic and pragmatic justifications for education. Another letter of support spoke in individualized terms about how his tutoring sessions with faculty member Kitty O. Locker helped “refine my technical writing skills” and enhanced his “professional image and career mobility” (Zevchik 107). Thus, writing often has a highly individualized
significance to those who are interested in the work of composition, and such attitudes will not likely be overthrown by changes in the format and content of FYW, as Downs and Wardle imply.

Supporters of CSTW also emphasize the value of research and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Although the letter from the Department of Women’s Studies spoke of the value of writing as a service and a skill, Kitsch also expressed the sentiment that “the Center’s role in facilitating interdisciplinary research on writing could contribute to several areas of special interest to Women’s Studies, including epistemological issues connected with language as well as the relationship between gender and writing” (83). Such remarks were not limited to the humanities. Richard L. Lewis from the Department of Computer and Information Science wrote of his interest in pursuing psycholinguistic research through the center, saying, “This center in particular appears to have the potential to engage researchers across a wider spectrum that [sic] is normally the case even in cognitive science” (84). The college of Engineering also supported such work, but interestingly connected their desire for additional offerings and experience in technical writing to the claim, “our industry partners recognize and support the benefits of inter-center cooperation such as proposed by this new center” (Dickinson 79). These letters suggest that we cannot necessarily isolate support for composition research and a view of writing as a complex social practice from the discourse that frames writing as a skill for the marketplace and writing instruction as a service to other disciplines and the community. Downs and Wardle however, frame those visions of our work as mutually exclusive in their argument for relocating FYW as an typical introductory course in the
discipline of writing studies—a discipline that conceptualizes writing studies primarily in terms of the major and graduate programs. Their argument overlooks the importance of outreach and engagement, and I would argue that it promotes an insular view of the field in its conceptualization of how to locate the work of composition, although their goal of improving the labor pool of composition and promoting a complex understanding of writing are admirable.

In contrast to Downs and Wardle, Gregory R. Colomb suggests that composition redefine its service work as a “public trust” or “franchise” rather than eliminating all traces of composition’s service function entirely (13). Colomb’s notion of franchise represents a rhetorical negotiation of composition’s identity that does not emphasize disciplinarity to the exclusion of horizontal engagement with academic and public communities, or vice versa. By focusing instead on developing “our collective relationship to our publics,” we might better receive the necessary visibility and support to improve the status of individual workers in our field long term (Colomb 20). This project for enhancing composition’s visibility is both local and global, involving “education, persuasion, and demonstration of the need, value, and success of what we do” (Colomb 25). To a large extent, Colomb argues, we have been successful in persuading some academic and public audiences that composition is no longer “a one-year mopping-up operation charged with teaching clear and lucid exposition,” but rather a “curriculum-wide and career-long charge to teach students not only to address the variety of writing tasks, situations, and genres that they face in college but also to be better prepared for those they will face later” (21). As both Colomb’s notion of the franchise and the
collective letters of support for establishing CSTW underscore, composition must navigate a variety of beliefs about what the teaching and learning of writing means. The understanding of composition and writing instruction embraced by the academic and public communities invested in our efforts may not reflect scholars’ theories about composition. However, those beliefs cannot be simply labeled correct or incorrect, reductive or theoretically astute. Instead, those beliefs and values also can support arguments for the visibility of composition and create pathways for long-term community and academic partnerships.

**Conclusion**

Ongoing challenges of definition persist because disciplinarity has *always* been a messy construct in practice. This messiness has resurfaced recently in the slippage between defining our work as a discipline or an interdisciplinary field, a trend that recalls the history of debate over composition’s identity that I discuss in the preceding chapters. We might confront the tension surrounding our knowledge base—and its impact on FYW, minors, majors, departments, and various other writing programs—by considering how articulations of disciplinarity shape the location and content of writing and research at all levels.

To that end, institutional histories can provide a heuristic for considering curricular issues. In curricular development, we might think beyond the vertical alignment of courses—following a track from FYW to a writing and rhetoric degree. Instead, we need to think vertically, horizontally, and institutionally about how to create courses and curricula. In other words, minors, majors, and graduate programs increase
the field’s legitimacy by shaping it into the model of a traditional liberal discipline, but our work might also operate outside the vertical model to engage other disciplines and communities in writing instruction or interdisciplinary programs of study. As we engage in building programs and courses, we might consider the following issues:

• **Vertical legitimacy**: Does the structure of a course or program reinforce our claim that writing and rhetoric are legitimate areas of research and knowledge at all levels—from the first year to advanced undergraduate level courses and graduate studies? Do advanced undergraduate courses provide opportunities for undergraduate research and theoretical engagement in addition to courses oriented toward training students for relevant professional work? How can our understanding of the purpose of undergraduate majors in writing and rhetoric reshape our graduate programs?

• **Horizontal outreach and engagement**: Does the structure of a course or program support our contention that writing is the province of all disciplines and professions? Do our FYW programs and undergraduate writing majors have substantial and sustainable connections to the writing that happens in other disciplines, even if those courses do not feed back into a minor or major? Can minors, majors, and graduate programs accommodate writing and rhetoric-focused coursework from other disciplines and departments? Do programs, courses, and community outreach opportunities actively work to engage public values and
knowledge? Do graduate programs account for the range of professional as well as academic careers students might pursue?

- **Institutional values and contexts:** Does the structure of a course or program operate persuasively within a particular institution’s culture and history? Do outcomes and assessment practices employ research in rhetoric and composition while engaging local audiences and attending institutional values? How can we adapt program and professional development (FYW, graduate training, etc.) to improve the labor structures unique to our institutions?

  The questions I raise here acknowledge that disciplinarity is one important but limited argument for resources. For example, we might consider how the structure of the PhD shapes research and curricula, not just in introductory composition courses, but also in subfields such as technical and professional writing. If that structure prioritizes research, we may need to be more explicit about including and valuing opportunities for community engagement and professional experience as part of graduate training. And how do we balance disciplinary and institutional values? Teaching introductory writing courses as an introduction to writing research—an approach that has influenced my own teaching—provides a sense of vertical coherence by modeling the approach of other disciplines. However, my course still operates within—and must support the assessment of—general education goals outlined by my university. Those goals range from discussing diversity in American culture to teaching “expository” writing and critical thinking. Furthermore, writing instruction in general education is complicated as we
involve faculty across disciplines—particularly when a writing program or department has no central administrative control over WAC/WID courses, or when WAC/WID programs replace FYW entirely. These issues of location highlight the ways that institutional structures shape intellectual work at both local and global levels.

Histories of composition, histories of the university, and histories that explore disciplinarity can reveal the challenges and debates that recur as composition navigates the social, political, and academic climates shaping its work. At what time, and by whom, has composition been considered a discipline? When has its status been in question? How does composition’s status relate to the material conditions of its work and workers? If composition has never had an “ideal location,” as Colomb argues in this conclusion’s epigraph, perhaps historical work can continue to present us with new ways to frame our work in the future. At the very least, I hope, it can provide us with a way of understanding our present locations.
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Appendix A: Coding Schema for the Modern Language Association’s Job

Information List

*Primary Specialization*

Primary specializations emerged as five distinct categories early in the coding process.

- Composition (includes writing studies, writing specialist, and director of freshman English director, when appropriate).
- Rhetoric
- Rhetoric and Composition (incl. composition and rhetoric, but requires that both are mentioned in the context of the ad)
- Technical and Professional Writing (incl. business writing, science writing)
- Other (e.g. literacy studies)

*Secondary Specialization*

Secondary specializations emerged during the coding process based on additional areas of expertise requested in a job ad. All additional areas were counted in the coding process in order to get a sense of the specializations linked to rhetoric and composition jobs. The examples below show the main categories and examples of similar closely linked phrases that were counted under the same codes.
• Basic Writing (incl. remedial writing, basic skills in writing)
• Communication (inc. Speech, Science Communication)
• English Ed (incl. pedagogy, working with primary or secondary-level teachers, reading education)

Administrative Work

Administrative categories were coded based on whether the ad indicated that such work was part of the job but work done in addition to teaching and research. Such work was sometimes related to research areas, but not always. The examples below show the administrative work coded and similar terms also coded under the same term in parentheses.

• FYC (incl. Freshman English, First-Year Writing, Freshman Composition)
• Writing Center (includes Writing Lab)
• “Writing Program” (signals any vague reference to administrative work in a program without regard to level)

Department

As part of my data, I coded whether jobs were listed in English or other departments (communications departments, independent writing departments, etc.). Because nearly all job listings during the time period I examined were from English (or language and literature) departments, I do not discuss these findings in chapter 3.
Rank

Rank was coded as one of the following categories:

- Assistant professor or instructor
- Assistant professor
- Open Rank (if the listing allowed for pre- and post-tenure applicants to apply for the position).
- Senior (including both Associate and Full listings)

Examples

“Director of Freshman Composition. Responsibilities include organizing a writing center and establishing development programs. Must be trained in composition theory. May also be required to teach World Lit. and/or Classics.” (Central SU, 1988 JIL)

Figure 7. Sample Coded Job Advertisement, Director of Freshman Composition
“Asst. Prof of Writing, to direct one of the 4 undergrad. college writing programs, teaching upper division courses in the Writing major, & assist in the development & teaching of grad. courses in composition theory, research & pedagogy. PhD in English, educ., ling., or psych. required... Applicants must have interest in program development & coordination (curriculum, TA training & supervision & evaluation)” (UC San Diego, 1978 JIL).

Figure 8. Sample Coded Job Advertisement, Assistant Professor of Writing