

**Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition  
Minutes from April 6, 2011, 1:30 p.m., Atlanta, GA, CCCC Convention**

The meeting was called to order by the chair, Cindy Selfe, at 1:35 p.m., and the 25 people present introduced themselves. An agenda was distributed.

**Program:** Three presenters spoke about how their doctoral programs have responded to local and national needs.

Linda Ferreira-Buckley from University of Texas, Austin, discussed generational change and problematic assumptions they have dealt with. Texas has a separate undergrad program in the department of rhetoric/composition and a separate PhD in English with a rhet/comp specialization and an emerging literacies specialization. Twenty doctoral students are moving through the program at any one time. About 14 faculty participate. The department has admitted students and hired faculty of all ages. Issues: expectations -- how do we translate things that have become routine; how do we distinguish between policy and rules and practice or custom. Newer faculty usually have read the rules. Time in the job is not the same as time in the profession. Experience outside the normative PhD pathway is invisible. Inviting new hires to do a phd seminar in first year can be problematic as can be asking new faculty to chair dissertations. There is too much pressure on new faculty, especially faculty of color and faculty in technology. One pressure on newer faculty comes from the double bind of thinking through their own ideas when teaching doctoral seminars. Their own ideas walk out the door, and there is fear of exposure. Differences in compensation packages given to new hires cause fear among current faculty. Some suggestions: avoid assuming that local practices apply beyond the local. Remember that 'we' papers over differences in a program. Make connections across disciplines or within the discipline. Mentors should establish secure relationships with mentees and put these issues on the table without adding to the anxiety.

Carolyn Rude from Virginia Tech spoke about new program challenges (funding/competition). Tech's program was approved in spring 2006. The first class was admitted in fall 2007. The first 3 graduates (spring 2011) have academic jobs. Tech had the opportunity to think afresh about curriculum while considering the field's expectations and aligning curriculum with faculty strengths and university culture. The process of program definition was not linear and required many hours of meetings about defining rhetoric and writing, what grads should know and be able to do, and how to incorporate digital technology. Rhetoric in society became the program's identity while the name is rhetoric and writing. Other decisions included which research methods and courses would be required (field methods with other methods courses encouraged). Infrastructure – Center for the study of rhetoric and society: How do texts and related communication practices mediate action in a variety of social contexts? Students do projects in the center. Resources were a struggle, but funding is more stabilized now. The program has about 16 doctoral students and 9 dedicated faculty; other faculty are partially

involved such as a linguist. In response to a question about whether the program got help from consortium, Carolyn answered that Cindy Selfe came to help and some senior faculty were hired. Where the faculty lines come from is a main issue—no new resources but a stirring of the resources. New programs have to adapt quickly to changes if they're to succeed. Balancing of interests determines the present and future. Program identity (brand) is key.

Carolyn Miller from North Carolina State spoke about her program--Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media--which is housed in the dean's office rather than in the communications or English department. The first students were admitted in 2005. The program now has about 40 students and has changed the university in some ways. NC State is a land grant university. The opportunity for the PhD arose because the chancellor wanted additional graduate programs so the university would be eligible for the AAUC. New media seemed to be the best way to access the synergy between communications and English. Growing pains were addressed by focus groups and surveys, which uncovered concerns about the role of the social sciences and students' desire for more of the digital. The communications faculty is smaller than the English faculty and social science oriented but has a bigger percentage of faculty in the program. Issues: How to control the scope of an interdisciplinary program (cultural studies, rhetoric, rhet/comp, professional & tech comm., digital media); how to include digital humanities and digital literature; how to get faculty to talk to one another about the education of doctoral students. Advice: Must be willing to have ongoing conversation. No department or faculty member owns a core course.

Open Discussion raised several topics: What funding is provided to doctoral students? 4 years funding at NC State which required moving exams to fall of 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Other programs have 5 years; often can extend to 6.

How involved are assistant profs in working with grad students? Carolyn Rude said they try not to have asst prof direct dissertations. Their mentoring program discourages too much committee work before tenure. NC state also tries to protect assistant profs from chairing. Generational change may mean few people between experienced and very new faculty. Co directing is one option.

What are the methodology requirements? 2 courses at VT; one is introductory and one is field methods. Ed schools have heavy methods requirement according to Chuck Bazerman.

Does work in cross-disciplinary programs count toward tenure?

How can we piggy back on what the sciences do when they tenure someone who has brought in \$ even if they haven't published much? What could we do as a consortium to help people who do digital work get tenure? Cindy will add a link to [susandelagrange.com](http://susandelagrange.com) from the consortium website and draft a statement that the consortium endorses the principles contained in documents about tenure and promotion (such as those from CCCC, MLA, and WPA).

Louise Phelps talked about changing the length of the tenure clock at the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year review depending on the discipline.

What about grads looking for positions outside the academy? Cindy asked presenters to put their presentations up on the web site with a couple web links that might be helpful. Linda said they invite back a couple grads who took jobs outside academe to speak to the next cohort. Also internships can be a way in.

### **The Consortium's Business Meeting began at 3:30.**

**Treasurer's Report:** Helen Foster, Treasurer: \$410 balance. Now that everything is digital, we will no longer collect dues. Helen has created a website for undergrad programs and is going to see if we want to transition the graduate consortium site to the same provider next year. She will start a Facebook account for the consortium.

**Communication Needs:** Chuck Bazerman asked what the ongoing communicative needs of the consortium are. We have a list serv at Michigan State U but we don't have much discussion on it. Only the reps from each program are on the list serv. Needs: to extend the discussion started at our annual meeting; to raise new issues, to gain as many programs as possible into the consortium and to leverage that power; to draw people to the resources we offer; to know how many programs there are.

Do we need a separate open list to meet these needs? After much discussion, we concluded that we might use Facebook and wpa-l to announce topics. Helen will pilot facebook and topics on wpa-l as strategies for driving communication to the website. Gail reported on the materials on the web site including resource lists and the visibility project materials.

**Visibility Project:** John Ackerman and Louise Phelps published an article on NRC and CIP codes. Louise asked about follow-up to get grads to be counted under the right code, including undergrads. This is really an issue for the whole field not just doctoral programs. Next issue is survey of earned doctorates. We still don't have a code after 5 years of trying. Louise and Chuck have been working on it, but it's a catch 22. They've now agreed to look at dissertations to see how they're coded. Students don't know what it means when they pick codes. The consortium can put something on its website – advice to grad students- which tells them how to fill out and the survey and what the significance is. Helen's committee is working on this. Cindy asked Louise to send her an alert message that consortium members can post to their school's list servs. Patricia said she can check the codes students are putting in Proquest. We got the r/c code for Proquest in 1990.

Common data sets – Petersons and US news and world report –

Criteria for TAs across accreditation organizations such as SACS are part of visibility. SACS may not recognize rhet/comp courses as 18 hours in English for those who get TAships.

**Motion:** Seconded and passed: The consortium supports the Visibility Project looking at accreditation agencies and different standards they have for TA eligibility.

**Elections:**

Nominations were offered for the incoming Assistant Chair's position. An election will take place this Spring.

Next year the Consortium will elect 2 at-large members for the officer's board. They will serve as liaisons to graduate student groups.

**Other Business:**

Carl Whithaus asked for letters to support the UNLV professional writing program – where 4 faculty will be fired.

**MOTION:** That Cindy to draft a letter from the consortium including a list of the doctoral programs supporting the program at UNLV.

Janice Lauer will ask the graduate student group to send a liaison to the doctoral consortium.

Suggestions for next year's program:

Writing studies in international contexts what would it mean for writing studies to move beyond a primary focus on writing in English; how are writing and WAC programs being constructed internationally? How do we respond to an international focus in ways that help our programs? How do we construct the language requirement in doctoral programs?

Visualizing data, collecting it, arguing with data for doctoral program leaders. The doctoral consortium can ask someone to propose a workshop. When do we collect programmatic data; what do we do with it? Our institutions are asking for it all the time.

**Announcements:**

Chuck Bazerman: WRAB conference requesting bids to host 2014 conference.

Encourage our grad students to think about papers to give.

Janice Lauer announce a program tomorrow to honor Ross Winterod who died of pneumonia a couple months ago.

Doug Day announced a reception in Atrium room 602 at 5:30.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joyce Neff, Associate Chair