

## Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric & Composition

*Wednesday 3/20/02 from 1:30-5:00 p.m. in Parlor D, Sixth Floor, Palmer House.*

### *Agenda:*

- a. Using technology to share resources (Louise Phelps)
- b. Current dissertation practices (Doug Hesse)
- c. Electronic resources status: webpage (Lisa McClure); listserv
- d. Hiring practices of R/C positions
- e. Recruitment practices for R/C graduate students
- f. Program evaluation
- g. Professionalization of graduate students
- h. Status at CCCC (similar to the Research Network?)
- i. The coming year's agenda
- j. Other

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CONSORTIUM OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

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Subject: Re: doctoral consortium caucus

Doug,

I am willing to be involved. I'm enthused about Louise's proposal, but am a bit unclear on what I could offer on that at this point. I am open to suggestion tho.

I am also interested in pursuing the general question of "What is the place of the "methods" course in Rhet PhD work?" I thought you and I (DH) had a rather interesting -- if brief -- discussion about this. While I think it's a timely issue, others may not agree, or this may not be the kind of topic you have in mind.

Chris Haas

At 11:04 AM 04/19/2002 -0700, Doug Hesse wrote:

Dear Selected Participants in the Consortium of Rhet/Comp Doctoral Programs,

You'll recall that in Chicago I agreed to see how our group might secure regular Wednesday afternoon space at CCCC. Kathi Yancey would like all program proposals for CCCC next year to go through the regular proposal process. We should work as a "caucus." I've written back to Kathi pointing out that the CFP assigns caucus space to Thursday and Friday evenings. I also pointed out the the Intellectual Property and Coalition of Women in Rhetoric groups have for several years been given prominent space on Wednesday. I'm sure Kathi will have some helpful perspectives on this.

However, I'm thinking it would behoove us to put together a caucus proposal, with a specific request that the group be assigned time on Wednesday afternoon, not Thursday or Friday.

I'm willing to do the work.

If this makes sense to you, then I'd need titles and a two or three-sentence blurb from at least three or four folks, to give the proposal some heft. Louise's technology proposal would be one focus. What are another couple of issues in doctoral programs that we could feature on a proposal?

Note that "Workshops, SIGS, and Caucuses are exempt from [the one speaking role] restriction." (CFP, 2).

And note, finally, that the whole thing is due no later than Monday the 22nd.

Doug

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Doug Hesse

Inbox (<Dominant>)

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Using Technological Innovation for Collaboration among Doctoral Programs in  
Rhetoric and Composition [working title]:  
A Preliminary Proposal

Louise Wetherbee Phelps

*Below I have sketched out preliminary ideas for a proposal I am developing on behalf of the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition. I want to solicit feedback and advice from colleagues in the Consortium and consider approaching leaders in the higher education community involved in graduate education reform and the current effort to rethink the PhD.*

*[Ultimately, I'd like to have a short (2-page?) version of this to use with outside readers.]*

**Purpose: To use advanced technologies of communication to promote collaboration, resource-sharing, and joint action among doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition as a basis for rethinking and reshaping the PhD in the discipline.** We propose that the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition spearhead a disciplinary initiative in cross-institutional technological innovation and incorporation of technology into PhD education. The project would provide a national model for launching reform of the PhD collaboratively through a discipline-wide consortium; for using technology to promote common goals (for example, minority recruitment into the field) and to enhance cross-institutional communication about research and teaching among faculty and graduate students; and for developing the capacity of doctoral programs to work with distributed partners in higher education and other sectors on improving the preparation of PhDs for new roles and diverse settings as faculty and professionals. Through each of these emphases the project addresses the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs for education and lifelong learning in writing and multimedia communication. One feature of the project would be its combination of studying, teaching, and implementing cross-institutional technological innovation in graduate education.

**Need:** [Summarize here recent initiatives to rethink the Ph.D. and the reasons for doing so that they have identified.]

Most such higher education reform projects have been primarily organized around funding major universities to undertake pilots. They begin with the most elite institutions and programs in the hope that these will exert influence as exemplars for less prestigious institutions, becoming leaders of reform. The pilot stage has typically been followed by attempts to disseminate what is learned in these pilot projects through disciplinary organizations. Each stage, but particularly the second, is accompanied by efforts to foster communication, mutual influence, and concerted action among different kinds of institutions to change the system.

This approach has had significant success, but it has some disadvantages in implementing the goals of collaboration and dissemination.<sup>1</sup> One reason is simply the distance among institutions and the competition for participants' time and attention, which together make it difficult to establish to sustain the kind of close intellectual and social relationships that enable true collaborative work. Technology promises to alleviate some, but not all, of these difficulties. A more profound problem is that the model begins with the idea of individual pilots conducted by graduate programs at elite schools that are naturally competitive with one another, acutely aware of their individual distinctiveness, and at the same time, inclined (at the department and faculty level) to be highly conservative about reforms because they have been so successful with traditional models. It is a struggle to find common ground and replace the notion of all-out competition with one of strategic collaboration. In the second stage, this problem is magnified when reformers try to move reconceptualizations and action models into the discipline at large, either by extending the number of pilots at research universities or through policy statements by disciplinary organizations. Each is a cumulative, incremental, and largely top-down route for dissemination and presents considerable problems of cost and inefficiency.

Opportunity: [and why comp/rhet can/should do it]

An alternate or complementary approach might begin by treating the scholarly community of a single discipline as a potential collaborative force for pioneering and disseminating reforms. The possibility for such interinstitutional cooperation is enhanced by recent developments in technologies of communication, including (for example) email, web-based discussion lists, chat spaces, the web, streaming video, and course management systems.

The field of rhetoric and composition has unique features that position it to explore these possibilities. These include a long experience with and inclination toward collaboration among graduate programs; a history of addressing the issues raised by technology, including issues of diversity and access, and of making practical use of technology in research and teaching; and extensive experience working across disciplines, higher education institutions, and sectors in partnerships on shared goals (including organizations that link writing programs regionally and nationally).

*Collaboration among graduate programs:* Doctoral programs have developed only recently, burgeoning in the nineteen-eighties and achieving critical mass in the nineteen-nineties during the same period that the field coalesced and achieved recognition as a discipline. To document and facilitate this progress, scholars have conducted surveys that provide comparative information to scholars who teach in doctoral programs or want to create them. (refs) Faculty interested in doctoral studies in writing have been communicating and collaborating on the common goals of program development during this period

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<sup>1</sup> [I have observed these problems as a participant in several such projects in both stages, including the Future Professoriate Project at Syracuse, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and FIPSE; the PFF Project recently completed at NCTE; and the broad-based effort to change faculty roles and rewards (including my participation in early meetings among disciplinary organizations at Syracuse and as a member of the MLA Commission on Professional Service, which produced a comprehensive reform document).

through the Doctoral Consortium on Rhetoric and Composition, proposed by Charles Bazerman and formed in 1993, under the coordination of Janice Lauer. The programs of the Consortium, while competing with one another to some degree for students, are highly diverse and adapted to their institutional contexts, distinctive missions, and regional needs. Thus competition has not been a severe barrier to cooperation, both in a given region and nationally; shared goals are more important. In addition to the Consortium itself, many graduate programs have sought relationships with others in the region to promote relationships among their faculty and students; a number have arranged workshop days and graduate student conferences among three or more institutions. Increasingly, these efforts make use of technology to link people and activities in different institutions and programs.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the NCTE is currently administering Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) grants at five institutions to improve the preparation of doctoral students for faculty life. This initiative emphasizes partnerships with local institutions to prepare students better for teaching and for their roles and challenges in many types of institutions. Composition and rhetoric has a unique advantage in promoting partnerships among faculty groups at research universities and other institutions. In many cases graduate programs can build on informal relations or existing regional or state organizations, as well as a national organization (WPA), that link the directors and faculty of writing programs at highly diverse institutions.

*Technology:* At the same time, technologies of communication and their impact on writing and teaching are a primary topic of research in composition studies and rhetoric. The field has pioneered the use of technologies in teaching [refs to journals, books, etc. in footnote] and scholarship, including online bibliographies, listservs, online journals and archives, Pre/Text Re/Inter/View (etc.) Its doctoral programs in professional and technical communication include many experts who specialize in multimedia technologies, their impact, issues of access, and their role in work settings as well as education. Recently, a group of scholars has formed Itext, devoted to exploring information technologies with texts at their core.<sup>3</sup> This project would enlist these experts in our own field, including those whose institutions do not have doctoral programs, to help make its technological and collaborative goals realistic and make them feasible in practice.

*Other sectors:* Many scholars in the field work closely with other sectors, including business and technical professions, secondary educators, and community literacy groups, who could become partners in our effort. [Specify this further? Examples?]

#### Specific Goals:

- Improving doctoral education in the discipline at large through grad programs' sharing resources via technology (coupled with face to face contacts):

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<sup>2</sup> Examples include, for example, sharing of courses online; the Graduate Research Network Online; listservs; etc.

<sup>3</sup> The mission of the IText Consortium is "to develop the IText projects of its members; to develop relationships with funding agencies shaping the national IT agenda; to foster multi-institutional projects to bring visibility and attract scholars and researchers to IText issues; develop appropriate and rigorous standards for IText research; and to reach out to affiliated professions who are also concerned with issues related to Itext." See <http://www.rpi.edu/~geislc/lttext>.

--enriching educational programs, esp. at smaller programs: expanding access to faculty, information, contacts, etc. of students in the participating programs

--stimulating collaborative research or teaching projects

--perhaps ultimately arranging joint appointments for faculty; exchanges of grad students for a semester

- Improving research and teaching and faculty satisfaction at smaller programs or institutions with no programs by drawing them into the delivery systems for PhDs nationally, giving them contact with grad students, a scholarly community, mentors or mentees, research collaboratives, etc. Some might become affiliated faculty at local institutions.

- Possibly extend the collaboration to offer online education for people in remote areas and with disabilities: even perhaps eventually set up a distance PhD administered through the Consortium and drawing broadly on its resources.

- Prepare faculty better for their role as teachers, scholars, administrators, community consultants, etc. through their contact with other institutions, exposure to differences, and familiarity with issues of technology

- Collaborate to define, debate, and pursue common disciplinary goals: e.g.,

--Recruiting minorities into the field as a group (instead of only competing for the same few people) through systematic outreach using technology--this may have implications also for their access to technology

-- Making technology part of the equipment of future teachers and scholars and professionals in communication: make this a Consortium goal? for all programs, including critical study as well as use of technology according to individuals' and programs' purposes

Methods We would propose to experiment with a variety of elements and activities during a 3-year pilot project focused among a small group of participating institutions but also in some instances linking or addressing the whole consortium; evaluate these, refine goals, and propose funding for technology, travel, evaluation, dissemination, etc. for perhaps another 5-year project phase.

Combine regional partnerships, including face to face collaborative projects and meetings, backed up by technologies for frequent communication, with national networks implemented through technology. (Can range from simple bulletin boards and listservs to sharing of courses and faculty). Possibly a model of concentric circles, with different levels of intensity of contact.

[See brainstormed list, attached]]

Possible Allies and Partners:

NCTE/PFF and maybe other 4Cs groups?; Itext

Benefits

[These mirror goals, but specify the stakeholders and the synergies this could create, as well as its capacity to act as a model for collaborative accomplishment in the areas of graduate education and technological innovation.]

Funding Needs/Budget

?? I need help on what kinds of funding to request and how to use it. E.g., for travel, conferences; evaluation; released time or stipends; and esp. technology. We need to figure out and recruit a small group of people prepared to work hard on this at particular institutions: a few major grad programs (committed faculty and students at each), some experts at other institutions.

BRAINSTORMING ABOUT POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Further development of bibliographical websites like Comppile
- A portal site for collecting web resources
- Conferences mediated by technology, supplemented by face to face regional meetings or meetings at national conferences
- linkage of courses through various means (email, web, collaborative site, streaming video, videoconferencing, etc.)
- Moos
- Archiving graduate syllabi as a resource
- Electronic dissertations?
- Converting web pages to data bases

### POSSIBLE FUTURE STEPS

- Form a group to work on refining this proposal; plan a time line for completing it, submitting it to the Consortium for approval, and disseminating it in different versions to gain support
- Identify a small group of institutions and individuals to pursue it, who can commit themselves to working on it in a sustained way and have collectively some internal resources for doing so, as well as the technological expertise and collaborative experience. Although they would take the lead, some activities would immediately be open to all participants in the Consortium and other partners, and would have broad benefits (e.g., web resources).
- Create a web site where all Consortium participants can share ideas about this project and report on activities
- Plan and make contacts with individuals, groups, foundations, etc. who might help find resources, obtain grants, etc. (Might involve visits to Washington, meetings at conferences, etc.)
- Plan ways to implement the cheaper and most feasible technologies to begin demonstrating our capacity to do this, in part by simply gathering together and systematizing our knowledge of what is already done and is easily possible
- Seek funds first for a pilot project.

### Suggested sequence from one adviser for sharing courses / faculty:

- Summer activity with communication among faculty of core programs
- Develop a common web site with projected graduate courses over 2 years
- Develop among the participating schools some web presence for all their courses (syllabi, reading lists, notes, handouts, etc.)
- Connect the schools together with video conferencing. Have selected participant stream video of courses live, backed up with taped video that is later compressed and made available on the web as Quicktime or Windows Media.
- Make arrangements for students at selected schools to sign up for the course, including some schools that are remote, have small programs, or otherwise need course and faculty resources to strengthen programs
- Find funding for every school to have a narrow-band video room where a group can participate when course-based video is available (streamed video or tape)