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CCCC Position Statement

A statement on an education issue approved by the CCCC Executive Committee

Scholarship in Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Chairs

Conference on College Composition and Communication

*[March 2018 (replaces the 1987 CCCC “The Range of Scholarship in Composition: A
Description for Department Chairs and Deans”)]*

The purpose of this statement is to describe the range of scholarly activities in rhetoric, writing, and composition. The audiences for this statement include faculty and administrators who have the responsibility for evaluating this scholarship as part of the recruitment, promotion, and other evaluative activities that occur in colleges and universities; scholars in the field who are explaining their work to nonspecialists; and any others who want to understand the work of scholars in this broadly interdisciplinary field.

What the Field of Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition Includes

As the title of this statement indicates, the work of scholars in the field is described by various interrelated terms, *rhetoric*, *writing*, and *composition* among the most prominent. The interdisciplinary nature of this scholarship may also include or draw from scholarship in institutional and administrative practices; literacy studies; the scholarship of teaching and learning; communication; print and digital media; technical communication; second language studies/English as a Second Language; linguistics; and critical and cultural studies, among many others. Scholars working in rhetoric, writing, and composition treat the activity of writing, broadly conceived, as their subject. Rhetoric, writing, and composition scholarship addresses how texts are composed, conveyed, and received in a variety of media and for a variety of purposes and audiences, both inside and outside the academy. Scholars investigate writing processes and products in schools and universities, in academic disciplines, in the workplace, in the public arena, in the home, and in digital/virtual environments (see CCCC [Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for Work with Technology](#)).

Scholars of rhetoric, writing, and composition understand the power of language and are frequently influenced by their understanding to ask questions about how theories and practices function to support inclusivity or to work against it. The power of language can give people voice, but it can also silence people. Language can be inclusive, but it can also exclude. It can break or sustain traditional stereotypes, biases, hostilities. Scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and composition often examines the power of language through rhetorical, theoretical, and empirical investigations.

Scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and composition may not foreground diversity and inclusion, but it is typically informed by the recognition of the power of language. The scholarship that led to the adoption of the CCCC Position Statement titled [Students' Right to Their Own Language](#), that led Mina Shaughnessy to bring the diversity of her open enrollment students to our attention in *Errors and Expectations*, and that explains why David Bartholomae's “Inventing the University” remains powerful today is indicative of our field's long commitment

to understanding the power of language and the language of power. Some scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and composition takes diversity and inclusion as its primary focus, as is the case in the works just named. Other scholarship may use issues of race, gender and gender identification, class, multilinguality, and/or national origin as lenses to consider topics such as assessment, as do the contributors to Asao Inoue and Mya Poe's book *Race and Writing Assessment* (Studies in Composition and Rhetoric No. 7, Peter Lang, 2012).

How Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition Scholars Conduct Research

Scholarship in the field includes a wide variety of areas of inquiry, methods, and publication genres/media, including but not limited to historical or theoretical research, pedagogical studies, assessment of writing pedagogies and programs, rhetorical analysis of traditional and new media texts, linguistic analyses, studies of community and civic literacies, multimodal and digital research, and other creative and narrative genres. Scholarship may be text- or media-focused, using methods common to the humanities. It may also be focused on teaching and learning in educational settings, or on professional composing practices, using observational and experimental methods common to the social and behavioral sciences. Such studies require approval from Institutional Review Boards to ensure safe and ethical interactions with human participants, the students or members of specific organizations being studied (see CCCC [Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies](#)). Published scholarship often combines the development or application of theory with empirical research. While some scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and composition takes as its primary focus texts written by other scholars, or literary texts created by novelists, poets, and playwrights, a substantial amount of scholarship in the field examines texts (and images and rhetorical acts of all kinds) composed by students and/or writers in "ordinary" settings.

The omnipresence of writing both within and beyond educational settings opens multiple sites of inquiry for scholars in rhetoric, writing, and composition, and makes the boundaries between those areas of inquiry somewhat porous. One subset of scholarship involves itself primarily in the ways writing instruction is delivered in varied settings, from traditional classrooms to workplaces and sites of social need (prisons, workforce development, community literacy centers, etc.). It acknowledges that such sites vary by the circumstances and backgrounds of learners, attending, for example, to specific needs that arise in four-year, two-year, and online institutions, as well as institutions that focus on traditionally underserved populations. It also attends to the differences in the delivery of writing instruction in subject-specific writing (as with WAC/WID programs), in tutoring/consulting sessions, for L2 learners, and in online environments—all of which also include a wide range of instructor preparation and professional development as well as the work of writing program administration in developing curricula and preparing teachers. And while research on these sites of pedagogy attends to issues of instructional processes, other areas of research focus on the writing products that emerge from those sites, providing occasions for rhetorical analysis, studies of discursive differences, and studies of impact on both the work done at those sites and the producers of those texts. Moreover, scholarship in the field often turns its attention to issues of application, posing such questions as "What are the implications of this research for the classroom and/or community?" and to issues of outreach, asking, "What does this research suggest for developing literacies beyond institutional walls?"

Scholars in rhetoric, writing, and composition often conduct and publish work collaboratively, and often eschew traditional notions of "first author," both because the field typically regards collaborative work as equal partnerships and because the order of names may not indicate contribution levels.

Where Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition Scholars Are Located in Institutions

Because of the wide range of scholarly, teaching, and administrative situations in which scholars in rhetoric, writing, and composition act, they may hold positions in a variety of institutional departments and programs. Traditionally, rhetoric, writing, and composition faculty have held tenured faculty positions in Departments of English, but at many institutions, rhetoric, writing, and composition resides in a department of its own. At other universities, rhetoric, writing, and composition scholars may hold positions in institution-wide writing centers or Writing Across the Curriculum programs, frequently with a tenure home in

an academic department. Rhetoric, writing, and composition scholars may hold tenure in Departments of Technical Communication, and because of the close relationship between writing and second language studies, some rhetoric, writing, and composition scholars are members of Departments of Applied Linguistics or Second Language Studies or Communication. Some may hold appointments outside of traditional departments, as may be the case of a faculty member directing a professional writing program located in a college of business. Rhetoric, writing, and composition scholars often hold joint appointments in more than one administrative unit.

How Writing Program Administration and Scholarship in Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition Are Linked

The boundaries between scholarship, teaching, and service are quite porous for faculty members working in rhetoric, writing, and composition. This is because much of what we study is about pedagogy and practice: how writing is taught and learned in courses, programs, and extracurricular sites. This is also because many rhetoric, writing, and composition scholars administer (and study) writing programs of various kinds, including but not limited to first-year writing programs, writing centers, professional writing programs, writing majors, and Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines initiatives. There are doctoral-level courses in writing program administration now offered across the country and increasing attention paid to the ways that programmatic work can be considered scholarship.

This linkage between our administrative work and our scholarship and teaching is so common and, for many, so central that the Council of Writing Program Administrators issued a statement in 1998 titled "[Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration](#)". This statement recognizes that much administrative work conducted by writing scholars can and should be considered scholarship, not just service. However, for that to be the case, it can "neither derive from nor produce simplistic products or services" and must instead "draw upon historical and contemporary knowledge, and . . . contribute to the formation of new knowledge and improved decision making." This statement contends that "writing program administration may be considered intellectual work when it meets two tests. First, it needs to advance knowledge—its production, clarification, connection, reinterpretation, or application. Second, it results in products or activities that can be evaluated by others." The statement notes five areas of administrative work that might meet these two tests: program creation, curricular design, faculty development, program assessment and evaluation, and program-related textual production. Any of these "products" or activities might be considered scholarship if they generate, clarify, connect, reinterpret, or apply knowledge based on research, theory, and sound pedagogical practice; require disciplinary knowledge available only to an expert trained in or conversant with a particular field; require highly developed analytical or problem-solving skills derived from specific expertise, training, or research; and result in products or activities that can be evaluated by peers. The statement further suggests criteria for evaluating this work: is it innovative, does it improve/refine, can it be/is it disseminated, and does it produce empirical results?

How Scholarship in Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition Is Made Public

The work of rhetoric and composition teachers and researchers appears in professional and popular print and online publications, single- or coauthored monographs, edited collections, and textbooks. We are often called on to respond to language-related issues (e.g., the English-only movement, gendered and racialized expression, the teaching of grammar, the use of inclusive language) by way of editorials, radio and news interviews, and panels. Perhaps more than any of our colleagues, we are the public face of English studies (see CCCC [Statement on Community-Engaged Projects in Rhetoric and Composition](#)). Outlets for the publication of scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and composition include traditional university presses, private academic presses, traditional print journals, "born digital" online journals, and open access, peer-reviewed publications. Because, as mentioned above, innovative textbooks are a common product of scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and composition, the writing of textbooks should be considered evidence of the scholarship of teaching and learning. As is the case in all disciplines, peer review is standard practice in the scholarly publishing of books, essay collections, journal articles, and textbooks in rhetoric, writing, and composition.

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