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Battlegrounds and Common Grounds: First-Year Composition and Institutional Values

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Abstract: This article offers strategies for administrators who struggle to contextualize their writing programs in institutional climates increasingly focused on recruitment and retention, rather than discipline and discovery. As composition scholars negotiate disciplinary and institutional values, there are productive juxtapositions of university mission statements, writing program goals, and *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, which was jointly published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project in January 2011.

Much ado has been made of the crisis of the humanities. Depending on the issues of the day, the crisis might center on relevance, or budgets, or politics, or all of the above. Recent debates, however, have focused on the utility of studies in humanities. How well do these fields equip students for their near-future careers? In an interview with *The New York Times,* Google's Laszlo Bock claims "an A+ student in English" wouldn't have the rigorous thought processes of "a B student in computer science" (Friedman). Andrew Green of University of California, Berkeley, tells *The Atlantic* that humanities-related jobs have dwindled due to "the twin phenomena of delayed retirements of tenure-track faculty and the continued 'adjunctification' of the academy" (Segran). Other perceptions—and misperceptions—about the crisis of the humanities have located their roots in cost-consciousness (Altschuler), a friable education system ("The Heart of the Matter"), overhyped expectations (Straumsheim), overzealous protectionism (Zaretsky), gender imbalances (Tworek), or overwrought nostalgia (Dettmar). Similarly, English departments—and, specifically, those held responsible for teaching composition—have often faced a crisis in identity. Certainly, most English professionals would be quick to point out that composition is not the primary purpose of the department, just as chemistry professors would deny that General Chemistry is the culmination of their field. When composition programs, however, are broken down into numbers—budgets, tuition, and population—it's hard to argue that introductory courses aren't the driving force behind any department. First-year composition, particularly, has long been a profitable endeavor, for both the English department and the university.

While first-year composition courses are efficient, the necessity of *required* first-year composition courses has long been under debate. Most public and large private universities would not, however, opt to forgo having a first-year composition course at all. Even beyond any ethical debate of a profit margin, the unceasing concern for "Why Johnny Can't Write" makes first-year composition a valuable asset. If students don't learn how to write in first-year composition, other spaces in an increasingly specialized university won't allow for those lessons to be taught. That is, universities often demand a specific writing skill set, and English departments can impart that skill set upon the student population. While other departments may incorporate writing and writing techniques into their work, such training is very often directive and contextually based, without particular consideration of future transferability or applicability. Composition classes are generally the only places where writing, as a process and a mode of inquiry, is the primary focus of the class. Writing as the field of composition teaches it, however, is not solely about the techniques other fields might demand.

Skill sets, such as a mastery of punctuation rules or an understanding of APA citation style, are not what most composition scholars are interested in delivering to their students. These traditionally "lower order" skill sets are a certainly hoped-for outcome, but they are not the primary objective of first-year composition. Composition instructors often include suggestions about grammar and proper citation for their students' writing, just as a chemistry instructor values accurate calculation when balancing chemical reactions. And just as organic and analytical chemistry are

advanced levels within their field, and require advanced computation, so too does composition require consideration of "higher order" issues such as critical thinking, rhetorical awareness, and creativity. Therein lies the conflict: what the university thinks students need is not what we, as composition instructors and scholars, generally identify as vital. That is, as Edward White points out in *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, "The language of the assessment community too often defines writing as a skill, made up of component and teachable parts, expressed in measurable products. But the community of writing teachers rejects almost every part of that definition" (146). Or, as Mike Rose describes in his examination of documents from UCLA's academic senate, administrators seem to make several assumptions about writing: that writing ability can be quantified according to a lack of errors, that writing is "a skill or tool rather than a discipline," and that students must be taught these skills in order to be literate (341). The space of first-year composition thus becomes a place of tension in which we must negotiate between what we value and what the university demands. The question in many ways then becomes how can we, as composition scholars, identify what we value as a field in a way that is valuable to the university?

Very often our field's disciplinarity becomes defined by how we delineate ourselves for the university, and most especially through the objectives of the first-year composition. These objectives are typically presented in statements like the "Goals, Means, and Outcomes" document published by Purdue University's Introductory Composition program. Statements like these are often meant to create a bridge between institutional needs and disciplinary concerns. For example, the goal, "To help students understand that they can and should use writing for multiple academic, civic, professional, and personal purposes" addresses an institutional need—helping students prepare for college-level writing—while highlighting the importance of various rhetorical situations. Too often, however, the deliverable items on the list—word counts, project expectations, etc.—become the focal point of what first-year composition *does*, as well as what first-year composition *is.*

Disciplinary Values within Institutional Spaces

As composition scholars our focus is on items traditionally seen as "higher order," such as rhetorical situations, revision strategies, and writing processes. In an attempt to articulate the values of composition, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project jointly published the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* in January 2011 (http://wpacouncil.org/framework). Part of this project focused on habits of mind, which were defined as, "ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practical and that will support students' success in a variety of fields and disciplines" (5). The eight habits of mind—curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition—center more on the development of individual students, rather than larger institutional concerns or vocational demands.

The framework continues on to articulate how instructors of composition can foster these habits of mind in their pedagogy, offering different strategies based on the traditional areas of reading, writing, and critical thinking (5). So, for example, to encourage persistence, teachers are encouraged to help students, "commit to exploring, in writing, a topic, idea, or demanding task" (9). To teach metacognition, the framework suggests that students "use what they learn from reflections on one writing project to improve writing on subsequent projects" (9). While these and the other suggested strategies are couched in traditional composition pedagogy, they are still relatively abstract.

Institutional demands, while sometimes similarly nebulous, are more often oriented towards goals that are more easily assessed. Purdue University's recent strategic plan, for example, presents the university's objectives in three prongs: launching tomorrow's leaders, promoting discovery with delivery, and meeting global challenges. Though these aspirations might seem pie-in-the-sky, they are connected more directly to external presentation and production. That is, while "launching tomorrow's leaders" might seem a lofty ambition, it might be easier to impart a leadership skill set to students than it would be to instill the habits of curiosity and creativity. What leaders are expected to do can often be broken down into discernable qualities: confident public speaking, an aptitude to persuade, and the ability to quickly analyze and solve problems. And just as business professionals attend seminars to build upon these strengths, so too could these principles be built into the curriculum of a leadership-oriented major.

Purdue University's other two objectives can be similarly instantiated in the classroom. "Promoting discovery with delivery" increases the connection between research and pedagogy, in which faculty could be encouraged to bring more of their scholarly work into conversation with their students, whether as part of seminar discussions or department colloquiums. The final objective, "meeting global challenges," might feel the most abstract, but a stronger emphasis on context and applicability in the classroom might provide a usable metric. Rather than confining course principles to the abstract or theoretical, instructors could further elaborate on how they can be translated to current or future practical endeavors. This marriage between aspiration and pragmatism would serve to enhance

both institutional reputation and individual students' vocational ambitions.

Other land-grant universities espouse the same sorts of ideals. Pennsylvania State University's mission statement, for example, focuses on the production of cutting-edge knowledge, the "promotion of human and economic development," the fostering of global understanding, and progress in professional practice. While these goals might seem nebulous, one could easily identify ways in which these principles could be assessed through publication or major projects. Similarly, Michigan State University seeks "globally engaged citizen leaders," research that makes "a positive difference" in the world, and "research-driven activities that lead to improved quality of life." Just as with Purdue University and Pennsylvania State University, these might be grand statements, but they also embed metrics that could be implemented without much difficulty. How these metrics can be connected to the first-year composition program, however, is less clear.

The tension that is generated between institutional demands and disciplinary concerns is most often found in the stated objectives of the first-year composition programs. Though some universities might have a writing-intensive or writing across the curriculum requirement, very often the first-year composition class is the only course that explicitly makes composition the primary goal of the course. Composition, as typically taught, reflects a discipline's "particular histories, cultures, appropriations, and transgressions" (Monroe 3), which manifest in "recognizable identities and particular cultural attributes" (Becher 23). That is, as White articulates, composition functions on two levels, first "as a *socializing* discipline (enforcing and confirming student membership in an educated community)," and second "as an *individualizing* discipline (demanding critical thinking and an active relation of the self to material under study)" (12). First-year composition might be seen by those outside of the discipline as a class to teach students how to write academically or, more broadly, a space where students learn to *do* college.

In order to bridge the gap between disciplinary values and the institutional demands, composition's disciplinary concerns and values manifest themselves as goals and outcomes a composition course seeks. As a course usually required of all students, first-year composition often acts as the only course in which disciplinary values—as practiced through the eight habits of mind—are disseminated to the university at large.

Thus the English department takes the reins, whether through a committee or through the appointed writing program administrator, to present some sort of programmatic statement that articulates those disciplinary values in a way that specifically addresses the university's needs and demands. These programmatic statements often lend a sense of "changing the public discourse about writing from belief to evidence, from felt sense to investigation and inquiry," and, as Chris Anson notes, "may help us move…toward some common understandings based on what we can know, with some level of certainty, about what we do" (11-12). This attempt to harmonize disciplinary values with institutional ideals does not always succeed, though. The intersection of these two sets of values can be seen playing out in the outcome statements of first-year composition and writing courses. These statements set up the conventions and expectations for all first-year composition courses, program-wide.

We can trace, for example, the idea of openness valued in the eight habits of mind. Michigan State University's writing program has three foci for its first-year writing class: writing, reading, and researching. To emphasize the framework's ideal of openness—"the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world"—we can delve more deeply into their three foci. Michigan State University's students are supposed to use writing "for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry," and similar sentiments are expressed under reading and researching. This focus on solely academic inquiry does not entirely address "new ways of being and thinking," as it reinforces the idea of composition being consigned solely to classrooms, rather than pushing students to rethink how they approach making things. Students, then, might continue to treat their composition class as the training ground for writing the ideal ten-page research paper, rather than seeing it as a space to explore how inquiry infuses their everyday interactions. A similar challenge is posed by the required concepts and skills of Pennsylvania State University's first-year composition course: writing as process, rhetorical situation, invention, arrangement, style, critical reading, and library skills. While these concepts and skills are all integral needs of the first-year academic experience, this collection of tools does not explicitly or necessarily promote the framework's concept of openness. Instead, it provides students with a checklist of items which, once acquired, need not be reconsidered again. While the course itself might be scaffolding these concepts into a coherent whole, when students step into different spaces—whether academic, personal, or work-related—that platform often disappears.

Within the goals of Purdue University's introductory composition, students are supposed to receive "opportunities to write as a means of discovery and learning about themselves….and as a means of exploring, understanding, and evaluating ideas in academic disciplines." The means for this are, generally, to interpret and produce work "in a variety of genres," as well as "using a variety of modes for learning, including attending to lectures, participating in class discussions, contributing to collaborative learning in small groups, and providing critiques of peers' writing." The outcomes portion of the statement is even more practically oriented, detailing different skills that students should be able to perform, such as understanding the writing process, adapting writing for different audiences, and

being able to incorporate other people's research into their own scholarly work. If these practices are not explicitly connected to other rhetorical situations—for example, discussing how a project proposal in class could function similarly to a workplace memo—the lessons learned are collapsed within students' minds. That is, unless they are asked to consider the different situations they might face in the future, students will locate what they've learned to that particular project, rather than allowing that project to act as a new lens for their own practices.

The compression that often takes place in the goals, means, and outcomes can become a problem, especially as students (and instructors) move towards the more concrete outcomes. If students are supposed to demonstrate the ability to "critique visual designs and formats," for example, the end outcome becomes the focus of the instructor's concern. Composition instructors, in their own way, begin to teach towards the test. Regarding visual rhetoric, instructors might focus extensively on heuristics (e.g. Robin Williams' rubric of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity) and neglect to talk about cultural associations of particular images or tropes. Within the "means" portion of the statement, a more traditional focus on "production of 7,500-11,500 words of polished writing" is specified as one of the ways students are able to achieve the goals of the course. In many ways, however, composition scholars might be hard-pressed to identify why this particular number of words is considered a guarantor of composition skill. An overall word count, however, is one of the easiest points to identify as completed, and thus it becomes one of the highlights of the programmatic statement. What can be assessed is not necessarily what composition scholars value, but the values emphasized must be deliverable. That is, while something like "critical thinking" is desirable, definitive assessment of that trait in a first-year composition student, even through use of a portfolio, isn't possible.

Negotiating between Disciplinary and Institutional Values

So what can be done to resolve this conflict? While Rhetoric and Composition, as a field, often advocates a rethinking of composition through the rightful rejection of current-traditional pedagogy, there remains an unfortunate lack of popular pedagogies that prove both oriented to pragmatism and theoretically sound. Further, the university, as an institution, prioritizes transferrable concepts and deliverable skills, which some in composition might understandably resist. If a major focus of a composition course, for example, is the retention of grammar rules and citation forms, how much of a class' curriculum will center on rote memorization? Pushing away from concepts easily practiced with flash cards, however, might pull a course into the exact opposite conundrum. As Ana Maria Preto-Bay and Kristen Hansen observed, there is "a tendency in mainstream composition programs for WPAs and teachers to engage in a kind of self-deception that if we teach what we believe we should teach, the students will learn what they need to learn" (49). For example, many composition instructors would guide their students away from meta-commentary such as, "the purpose of this essay" statements. In a business report, however, the omission of that clear statement of intention would be inappropriate. While composition instructors are, of course, steeped in the conventions of English as a discipline, it's vital that we recognize that those conventions aren't one-size-fits-all. Our sense of "good" academic writing is not applicable to all fields. If we fail to recognize and address that fact when teaching our students, we not only undercut the institutional mission, but impoverish our students' understanding of composition, as well.

Conversely, any attempt to mechanize composition into a mere skill set is doomed to failure. While it might seem useful to place a stronger focus on spelling and grammar—a common demand from those outside of composition scholarship—studies have shown that writing pedagogy focused on "correctness" do not always lead to the development of better writing. As Patrick Hartwell summarizes in "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," while experimental research does not deliver conclusive answers to this debate, a pedagogy centered on correctness often requires "a model of composition instruction that is rigidly skills-centered and rigidly sequential" (108). A stronger concentration on form leads to a similar obsession with convention. A student might think they can ape the same essay structure without consideration of the motivations and purposes that lie behind that structure. Then, when confronted with the composition demands of other disciplines and professions, they would find themselves at a loss. Teaching students to write according to particular outlines and expectations, while possibly helpful in the short-term, only serves to undermine the semester's efforts in the long run. Being able to, for example, write an extremely coherent five-paragraph synthesis essay would be an easily measurable outcome, but few students will be asked to replicate that feat outside of the pressures of finals week.

In order to help students (and instructors) connect the goals of the composition class with the institutional mission, writing programs need to clearly articulate how the two meet. A programmatic statement for a university's first-year composition program is a good place to start, and using the eight habits of mind from *Framework for Success* can also be a useful way to situate the composition class as a small node in a large field. There also, however, needs to be a deeper understanding of the intersection between student concerns and student development—that is, the negotiation between institution and discipline. "[I]f we continue to rely on *belief* in our pedagogies and administrative decisions," Anson observes, "whether theorized or not, whether argued from logic or anecdote, experience or

conviction, we do no better to support a case for those decisions than what most detractors do to support cases against them (11-12). A clear statement of goals, means, and outcomes that work in harmony with the *Framework for Success* is admirable, but it does not suffice on the day-to-day pedagogical level.

A pilot study investigating the outcomes of first-year composition courses would alleviate some tension that these programs experience. A composition program could present the *Framework for Success*'s eight habits of mind at the beginning of a composition course, parallel with courses that use more traditional objectives. While those eight habits are not immediately concretized, they might serve as a structure to help students see composition working not just within the confines of the classroom, but outside of it, as well. In the same way that most classes begin the semester with a discussion of course objectives, this pilot class would introduce the eight habits of mind as the ur-objectives, the ultimate goal of the introductory composition course, and connect those objectives to the institutional mission and the students' own goals for the semester. At the end of each project or sequence, the students and instructor would return to those eight habits and consider how their work has helped habituate them into those habits. At the end of the term, a comparison of the two "tracks"—through student and instructor self-reporting as well as curriculum assessment—might provide useful data. Would the emphasis on internal development lead students to greater confidence in their writing? Would this shift in emphasis affect the instructor's perception of what students learned? And how would these perceptions, on both levels, match up with what outside assessors, within the department or the overall institution, found?

On a programmatic level, a clearer articulation of pedagogical strategies as instantiations of the eight habits of mind would allow for more purposeful instruction. The debate on the efficacy, and even the necessity, of first-year composition courses may continue as long as these courses are offered. What often becomes overlooked, however, is the need for transparency within the classroom itself. There needs to be an honest statement, from instructor to student, about what composition scholars want to do and what means composition teachers have available to them. Without this discussion, students—the most vital stakeholders in the classroom—will be constantly frustrated, as they stretch to attain knowledge in a realm outside their reach. By explicitly outlining what can, and should, be sought from the class, the instructor and students can negotiate as partners in the process of the course's evolution. Further, by being asked to specifically articulate what they are learning, the students are more likely to retain those concepts and, even better, begin to see how they might be transferred to other rhetorical spaces. That is, through recognition of the *stuff* of composition, students will be better equipped to understand not only how their class fits into a larger discipline, but also how it coheres with the curriculum set out for them by the institution.

To be sure, this level of transparency may be somewhat uncomfortable for both instructors and students. Writing is a weird and nebulous process. Attempts to guarantee composition expertise, at least through first-year composition, are disingenuous. A chemistry instructor can emphasize how their introductory course helps students prepare for the more complex (and more professional) endeavors. Similarly, a composition instructor can identify how practices in first-year composition can help students learn how to grapple with future writing challenges, without shoring up the idea that a single composition course will suffice for their needs. Thus, just as chemistry students don't expect to master biochemical reactions after their first semester of classes, composition students won't assume that they're necessarily prepared for freelance journalism after ENGL 101 is complete.

This scaffolding of the habits of mind would be a simple way to reframe the first-year composition classroom without making any unduly hasty programmatic shifts. While the goals, means, and outcomes, and comparable composition pedagogy, provide deliverable achievements, the eight habits of mind can be treated as scaffolding for more career-minded objectives. First-year composition courses do not have to incorporate a writing-across-the-curriculum emphasis, but acknowledgement of what the students need—and what the university demands—will help all parties involved pull those connections together.

Programmatic Values and Institutional Measurements: How Do We Assess That?

It's nigh-impossible for any quiz or examination to fully demonstrate a student has developed a mastery of composition within the space of one or two semesters. Some sort of measurable outcome, however, is necessary. And, just as instructors have to provide a grade for each student at the end of the semester, writing programs must be able to provide some sort of self-assessment, if only for the institution's accreditation process, when the time comes. But how do we reduce the complexity of a composition program to a handful of statistics for the annual report?

In his examination of teacher evaluations, Donald L. Haefele identifies two purposes for which assessment is conducted: summative and formative. In summative assessment, evaluation "pertains to decision-making concerns,

e.g., hire, terminate, promote" (21). Formative teacher evaluation, on the other hand, "is concerned with the development and improvement of teacher performance" (21). These two categories can be similarly applied to programmatic assessment. White claims, "assessment can and often does function as the enemy of instruction" (3), and perhaps in the summative sense, it might. A programmatic assessment based on summative concerns could very well focus on "lower order" skills such as grammar, citation format, and style. Alternatively, a summative view could seek to assess "higher order" concerns like critical thinking, and yet end up unreflective of the local context, as evidenced in some of the criticisms of Arum and Roksa's *Academically Adrift* (Sternberg n.p.). Summative assessment is, however, the kind often required by institutions, because it is easily compiled and easily comparable. Summative assessment of programs, however well-intentioned, threatens curricula with its blind weight, reducing the complexities of learning to a series of Likert scales. Or, to use Rose's language, summative assessment can keep writing instruction "at the periphery of the curriculum" (341). To be sure, summative assessment is necessary—a longitudinal view of this form of evaluation is a great asset when a program is doing long-term consideration of the program, whether for accreditation or internal use. Summative assessment can provide essential data, illustrating how well a course or program fits into the university curriculum. In the short-term, however, summative assessment alone lacks the feedback everyday instructors and administrators might need.

Formative assessment, White points out, would be a beneficial way to flesh out the findings of summative assessment, "For at its best, assessment can improve our teaching, make our jobs easier and more rewarding, and demonstrate the value of what we do" (8). The focus becomes less on defense—on scrambling to impart skills that students "should have" learned—and more on what we can do to promote what we really do, and how we can do it well. This sort of assessment is better aligned with composition's disciplinary values, as it focuses on developing things already present and finding ways to make them better. Formative assessment, couched correctly, allows us to avoid the framework of remediation and focus on fostering the values we already have.

The statements provided by the Council of Writing Program Administrators provide scaffolding that we can use to build formative methods of assessment, especially since they articulate what most composition theorists can agree upon, and better highlight how disciplinary and institutional values can intersect and support each other. The *Framework for Success*, as detailed through the eight habits of mind, presents ideals that coincide with university mission statements, while the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-year Composition (http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html) provides a template on which first-year composition programs can build their own outcome statements.

Using the *Framework for Success,* as detailed earlier, allows writing program administrators to sync disciplinary values with institutional imperatives. In order to do so, it is important for WPAs to proactively assess their own programs, using language that resonates with university administration. Ideally, the goals of the institution, the WPAs, the instructors, and the students are aligned, but the differences in terminology can put these stakeholders at cross-purposes. By becoming more familiar with institutional metaphors, and by being more flexible with their own pitches, enterprising WPAs will find themselves better equipped to promote and, ultimately, protect their programs. The following three principles can help guide us:

1. *Be familiar with the institutional mission statement.*

How does the university want to present itself to the public? While this point may seem an obvious step, if a WPA is not actively involved in university governance or strategic planning, shifts in institutional mission might slip by unnoticed. Further, since WPAs often work separately from the department chair, they might not have input into the formulation of institutional statements, either. Keeping abreast of university zeitgeist is imperative if a WPA wants to avoid being caught unaware.

2. *Be articulate.*

How are university goals synonymous with the Habits of Mind we want to foster? For example, it is not enough to espouse creativity as a habit that composition instills, because "creativity" as a concept can be interpreted in many ways. We should also be able to connect creativity in composition directly to the leadership skills the university desires. That is, compositional creativity isn't just the ability to find a nice turn of phrase—it is also, and perhaps more importantly, "the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas" (1). Students who succeed in composition, then, should be able to approach problems from different angles and present their solutions persuasively to their audience, much in the way a strong leader is expected to act.

3. *Be nimble.*

How can the assessment of university goals and disciplinary goals overlap? Identify how the institutional goals can

be assessed, and how those same methods can be used to assess the Habits of Mind. A university might, for example, wish its future leaders to be globally engaged citizens. This desire resonates with the Habits of Mind, which include engagement through "investment and involvement in learning" (1). A proactive WPA could suggest that a service-learning component in first-year composition would be indicative of this engagement. If service-learning is not a viable option, the inclusion of university-specific proposals in the course curriculum could be seen as a first step in students' journey to becoming more engaged in the community and beyond.

Pedagogical Values: How Do We Teach That?

After considering how programmatic values are situated within the university, WPAs should then consider how disciplinary values can inform program objectives. The "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition" identifies specific outcomes that a first-year composition class should instantiate in its students: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading and writing; processes; knowledge of conventions. More recent amendments have added the ability to compose in multiple, and often specifically electronic, environments. WPAs can use this outcomes statement to build the goals, means, and outcomes for their writing program. Further, composition instructors can use this framework to better communicate disciplinary values to their students who, in turn, will be able to find clearer cohesion in their curriculum overall.

1. *Be proactive.*

How do we address student desires in first-year composition? The first step should be to clearly articulate why first-year composition exists. Very often these discussions are confined to the first day of a course, when the class objectives on the syllabus are quickly glossed over. By using the WPA Outcomes as our pedagogical structure, we allow for an open discussion about common misconceptions about "lower order" skills and remediation in the classroom, and help students better understand what composition *is*. Giving students a space to articulate what they want, and what they expect for the course will also engage them in their coursework.

2. *Be frank.*

How do we guarantee expertise? Writing is hard, and it's difficult to assess. While first-year composition includes a variety of processes and practices that can lead to successful writing, few composition instructors will promise students that they will all write like professionals by the end of the term. Instead, we should be up-front about our pedagogical goals, as well as what they can and can't do for students. Helping students find their individual best practices is very often what FYC *does*, but students must be empowered to search for those practices ahead of time.

3. *Be explicit.*

How do we impart disciplinary values? Composition instructors should hesitate to reduce composition to a set of skills, but the day-to-day reality of the classroom often requires some element of directive. A clear articulation of why students are doing a freewrite, or peer revision, or a specific brainstorming activity, will rarely go unappreciated. Identify which activities correlate to which outcomes, and students will grumble less about busywork. Ask students to consider how their work can be transferred to other academic and professional work, and they'll have a better chance of transferring their composition expertise to their future endeavors. Being explicit with activities and outcomes will, in fact, help students learn *more*.

As composition scholars, it is imperative to hold fast to our disciplinary values. We wouldn't be long in the university without that tenacity. What we do need to acknowledge, however, is that the values of other stakeholders are just as vital. We need to assist our students "to see the discipline not only as a system of terms, texts, expectations, and procedures, but also as a dynamic realm" that allows for a multiplicity of voices (Thaiss and Zawacki 150). Compromise does not have to mean attrition, but it requires some concession. If we take the time to emphasize the connections between stakeholder desires, however, we may find ourselves giving more, without needing to give up ourselves entirely.

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