Tracing Ableism's Rhetorical Circulation through an Analysis of Composition Mission Statements

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Circulated documents, like mission statements, demarcate normative boundaries related to student and instructor identities, behaviors, and experiences. In attempting to create inclusive documentation, universities frequently use standardizing language. While promoting standardization, however, such documents may prove exclusive by disregarding a range of student and instructor identities and abilities. Grounded in insights from disability studies and technical and professional communication theory, this study models the use of corpus linguistic analysis for analyzing mission statements, thereby providing interdisciplinary methods for writing programs to evaluate the documents they create and circulate. The findings show that by attempting to universalize experience, composition programs may contribute to normalizing structures that circulate ableism. These findings help programs recognize the discursive impact that mission statements may have by illustrating how ableism may move across even seemingly neutral spaces. In turn, the article calls for composition studies to consider critical documentation practices that prioritize disability and offers data-driven guidelines for revising mission statements.

Introduction

Universities frequently turn to universal standards to promote inclusion and transcend student and faculty difference. However, the field of technical and professional communication (TPC) argues that when relying upon "normative commonplaces," institutions may, in fact, dictate "rigid ideals" that contribute to the ongoing exclusion of disabled individuals by confusing inclusion with normative assimilation (Konrad 135).[1] When using standardizing language across their documentation practices, university professionals do not account for uniquely embodied differences like those represented by disability. Furthermore, such practices may contribute to the circulation of ableism, which positions particular individuals as disabled, or "lacking" when they do not meet standard embodied norms (Cherney 8). Standardized documentation practices may thus communicate conditional notions of inclusion that contribute to ableism's movement across university spaces by endorsing individual alignment with the status quo.

To understand the circulation of ableism, one must first understand neoliberalism, which denotes "a set of economic principles and cultural politics that positions the free market as a guide for all human action" (Stenberg 4-6). Striving for "profit, control, and efficiency," neoliberal standards frame certain bodyminds and behaviors as more productive and, consequently, more able than others (Giroux 434).[2] Neoliberalism normalizes such productive, ableist standards by endorsing them as natural and encouraging individuals to align with them. When university professionals rely on seemingly neutral standards of productivity across classroom and departmental documentation practices, they may thus be circulating ableist ideals.

As the field of TPC has recognized, institutional documentation practices directly impact individual understandings of identity by framing certain behaviors, values, and standards as normal (Slack et al. 28). Specifically, technical and professional communicators have identified how reliance on seemingly neutral, universal norms across institutional documentation practices may exclude disabled identities. As mission statement documents articulate departmental values and behavioral standards, it is critical that composition programs and independent writing departments better understand if and how such documents may disregard disabled bodyminds and contribute to institutional ableism.

Responding to Tara Wood et al.'s 2014 call to integrate disability as "central" to composition, this article recommends an epistemic shift to composition documentation practices that resist ableist rhetoric by prioritizing disabled individuals at the forefront of design processes (147-148). To trace how ableism may move through documents, I turn to an understanding of neoliberal ableist rhetoric as circulatory. Because neoliberalism impacts daily life, tracing it requires the recognition that "rhetoric circulates through our everyday, situated activities" (Chaput 20). Ableism is a rhetoric that functions at the level of the everyday, as institutional norms frequently assume able bodyminds. Thus, an understanding of ableism as rhetorical circulation allows us to trace how standardized documents may exclude disabled individuals.

To demonstrate how ableist rhetoric may circulate across documents, I use critical discourse analysis and examine mission statements from thirty-two Research-1 institutions (see Appendix A) through WordSmith Tools, a corpus linguistic analysis program. I analyze frequency, concordances, and collocations to evaluate the discursive construction of student and faculty identities across mission statements. Based on these findings, I offer guidelines for composition instructors and writing program administrators to trace the circulation of ableist rhetoric across their programmatic and departmental documents. Drawing from disability studies (DS) and TPC, these guidelines encourage compositionists to resist ableist documentation impulses.

The Ableism of Neoliberal Documentation

In their discussion of the ideological impacts of mission statements on institutional spaces, John M. Swales and Priscilla S. Rogers explain that mission statements directly influence "the plethora of regulations, instructions, and procedures" in an institution and may act as "carriers of culture, ethos, and ideology" in programs and departments (226). Megan Schoen recognizes these ideological implications and proposes that mission statements reflect a "critical ground of investigation" for composition as they "communicate the core identity of the university as a whole" and demonstrate that "writing programs [function] as part of a rhetorical ecology—a constellation of people, programs, initiatives, opportunities, constraints, and cultures that emerge and interact within a specific university context" (38). In addition, mission statements denote a significant site of analysis because they are often featured on public-facing websites. Compositionists, then, should examine who is and is not anticipated by the norms such documents uphold and should attend to mission statement documentation practices to determine how they discursively influence the identities and experiences of students and faculty. Although scholars have recognized that mission statements may influence individual experiences, the field has not fully analyzed how these documents may contribute to the circulation of neoliberal, ableist rhetoric. This article thus extends the existing conversation by examining these influences.

Integral to neoliberal rhetoric is a reliance on seemingly inclusive, neutral language (Welch 547). Disregarding unique embodiments, neoliberal standardization generally privileges the most dominant or "unmarked …white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle-class bodies—that appear neutral" (Hamraie, n.p.). Neoliberalism's standardizing influence, as the following analysis will show, plays out in how program documents often neglect writing's embodied, intersectional nature. In the context of departmental mission statements, students frequently are referred to as a standard group and held to common expectations. As Robert McRuer writes, composition's heteronormative, ableist standards reflect "a corporate model of efficiency and flexibility" that often prioritizes "order and efficiency" while "forgetting … the composing bodies that experience it" (148-152). As neoliberal logics frequently disregard disparity in students' academic opportunities and economic resources, they frequently promote ableist assumptions. Consequently, when drawing from neoliberal ideals, university mission statements may, unknowingly, contribute to ableism by positioning some bodyminds as more efficient, or able, than others.

DS provides an avenue for understanding the relational impact that mission statements can have on disabled bodyminds. By situating disability as

a personally embodied and sociopolitically "relational" experience, those in DS recognize disability as existing in the relationship between an individual body and a specific context (Garland-Thompson, "Misfits" 600). Those in DS understand disabled conditions as involving a complex relationality between bodies, space, and social discourse (Dolmage, *Disability* 19-20). Whereas the able or normal identity is understood as "neutral" because the environment is seamlessly constructed for it, the disabled identity cannot "conform with [the] architectural, attitudinal, educational, occupational, and legal conventions" of that same environment (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary* 8, 46).

At the heart of neoliberalism is ableism, or the belief in "an idealized norm that defines what it means to be human" and assumes "that those who do not fit that norm are disabled … [and] lacking" (Cherney 8). Integral to neoliberal productivity, each idealized norm becomes naturalized as human through its circulation across "a convergence of networks of association" (Campbell 17-20) that designate which qualities may further "the common good" within institutional structures (Cherney 17). Relying on what Michel Foucault refers to as the "power of homogeneity," neoliberalism regulates populations on the everyday level through discursive technologies—such as documentation practices--that locate, measure, and fix individuals against prescribed standards (184). Such technologies influence individuals' "thinking and acting" by evaluating them against standard, productive norms (Chaput 4). Through ableist assumptions, then, neoliberal standardization disenfranchises particular bodyminds.

The Circulation of Neoliberal Ableism

Since neoliberal rhetoric functions in "everyday, situated activities"; or, in institutions housing those activities (Chaput 20); or, and in bodies that engage in those activities (Dolmage, *Academic* 9), so, too, does ableism. To examine the influence of neoliberal rhetoric across institutions, Catherine Chaput encourages a shift from understandings of rhetoric as "an isolated instance or… series of instances" to one of "a circulation of exchanges, the whole of which govern individual and collective decisions" (8). I follow Chaput's theory of rhetorical circulation to examine how mission statements may contribute to ableism's circulation when they align student and instructor identities with the neoliberal status quo.

To explore this, I analyzed the mission statements of thirty-two Research-1 (R-1) universities. R-1 composition programs serve a significant number of students and largely influence national trends in composition. Referring to the 2018 "Carnegie R1 and R2 Research Classifications: Doctoral Universities" list, I visited the website of each of the 131 R-1 universities' Writing Programs, First Year Writing (FYW) Programs, or English Departments (when FYW was housed there). From these sites, I collected mission statements from December

2020-January 2021. To ensure that the analyzed documents were mission statements, I chose the thirty-two documents that used the term "mission" either in their labeling of the statement or in statement language (see Appendix A). If labeled mission statements included visions and goals, I also analyzed those. Though other universities had documents that likely served as mission statements, I did not include them in my analysis if programs did not specifically refer to them as such. Importantly, this analysis was not intended to critique individual programs or to generalize about all R-1 composition programs, but instead to demonstrate the connection between the standardized language used in many university mission statements and neoliberal, ableist assumptions.

To identify ableist rhetoric, I used critical discourse analysis. Acting as an "identity kit," discourse guides one's "words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities" so that one may be recognized by others (Gee 526). By establishing a normative baseline of ability as natural, neoliberal discourse designates and regulates certain behaviors as more valued, able, and ideal than others. I utilized critical discourse analysis (CDA) "to analyze discourse practices … and to investigate how meaning is created in context" across these university mission statements (Bloor and Bloor 13). CDA traces the relationship between discourse and identity by examining discourse's role in reinforcing social norms and correlating power relations (20). CDA thus allowed me to identify how the language used across mission statements may position certain identities and behaviors as more productively valuable than others and may consequently circulate ableist assumptions that contribute to disability's exclusion across departmental spaces.

To critically analyze the circulation of ableist discourse, I used WordSmith Tools, a corpus linguistic analysis program. Although such programs do not replace traditional rhetorical analysis, they do highlight linguistic trends through frequency, collocational, and concordance data. Frequency reflects the most frequently used words in a corpus and offers "a sociological profile of a given word or phrase enabling greater understanding of its use in particular contexts" (Baker 47). By studying word frequency, my analysis underscores the discursive significance of the linguistic patterns across the study's corpus. I also conducted collocational and concordance analyses to understand the sociopolitical implications of the language in these documents. Concordances are the occurrences of a particular word in context. Collocations are words that frequently "occu[r] next to each other" and reveal significance between word associations (Baker 71-96). In examining concordances and collocations, I gained insight into the discursive framing of student and faculty identities within the mission statements. This method also allowed me to look systematically at the mission statements' grammatical constructions and to assess their role in potentially circulating ableism.

Analyzing Mission: Frequency, Concordance, Collocation

In this section, I provide an overview of the findings yielded from my corpus linguistic analysis, organized by word. A brief discussion precedes a summary table of corresponding data.

Frequently Occurring Words

Using WordSmith Tools, I first determined the most frequently occurring words in my corpus. Of the 375 total words (occurring five or more times), I've featured forty of the most frequent in Table 1 below. This list includes the first forty words (occurring twenty-six times or more), excluding function words (which were unrelated in my study). I attended specifically to two groups of word frequencies:

1. To better understand the impact of mission statements on identity, I attended carefully to the frequency of the words "faculty" (40) and "students" (168).
2. I also examined the most frequently occurring pronouns--"we" (107), "they" (39), and personal pronouns "our" (123) and "their" (74)--because pronouns may denote power differences and influence experiences of belonging (Bloor 21).

Table 1: List of 40 of the 375 most frequently occurring words in the corpus

Word	Frequency	Texts
WRITING	247	31
STUDENTS	168	31
OUR	123	23
WE	107	20
ENGLISH	99	20
DEPARTMENT	74	20
THEIR	74	22
COURSES	72	21
RESEARCH	61	25
THROUGH	60	21

Word	Frequency	Texts
PROGRAM	56	15
MISSION	53	26
LITERATURE	52	17
CREATIVE	47	14
UNIVERSITY	46	20
COMPOSITION	43	15
RHETORIC	43	16
ABOUT	42	21
PROFESSIONAL	41	21
FACULTY	40	15
THEY	39	14
FIRST	38	13
TEACHING	38	23
CULTURAL	37	16
FROM	35	21
GRADUATE	35	14
ALL	33	13
WORK	33	14
CRITICAL	31	17
LEARNING	31	12
YEAR	31	11
ACADEMIC	30	18
COMMUNITY	29	13

Word	Frequency	Texts
COMMUNICATION	28	11
DEVELOP	28	12
KNOWLEDGE	28	16
UNDERGRADUATE	28	15
SKILLS	27	15
WORLD	27	15
LANGUAGE	26	16

Faculty

Having identified key terms, I then examined the concordances and collocates for the word "faculty" (40) which was often paired with "members" (6), as in the phrase "faculty members" (refer to Table 2). Collocates "in" (9), "of" (15), "program" (5), and "department" (4) also frequently co-occurred with faculty. Collectively, these constructions position faculty as insider "members" who exist "in" their "programs" and "departments." In addition, a lack of reference to faculty bodyminds and the co-occurrence of faculty with "the" (19) suggest that mission statements presume that faculty "members" reflect standard, universal embodiments.

Based on this collocate analysis, I examined the grammatical constructions across the concordances. "Faculty" was equally positioned as an active subject in sentence-level constructions (21) and as a direct object (19). However, when positioned as a subject, "faculty" were framed as productive contributors to the department, demonstrated by their association with active verbs like "support," "coordinate," and "contribute." Specifically, one mission statement notes, "Faculty members contribute to … creative activity in the humanities to advance knowledge and serve the public good." This statement positions faculty as collectively facilitating the advancement of the university and the larger public. Likewise, among the active verbs associated with faculty were "teach" and "integrate," indicating that faculty are responsible for educating and thus integrating others. Specifically, faculty were most frequently associated with the direct object of "students" (3), demonstrating that students were most often the assumed recipients of faculty efforts. This suggests that when mission statements rely on standardizing language, they may reinforce goals of capitalist productivity that situate particular forms of faculty engagement

as more valuable than others. Likewise, such constructions frame learning as a process in which faculty align students with existing norms. This language does not attend to students' agency in determining their own knowledge-making experiences.

Table 2: "Faculty" Summary Table

Most Frequent Collocates of Faculty	Frequency of Faculty in Subject/Object Position	Examples of Associated Active Verbs when Faculty Is Positioned as Subject	Examples of Associated Direct Objects when Faculty Is Positioned as Subject
The (19) In (9) Of (15) Students (12) Members (6) Program (5) Time (5) Our (5) Its (4) Department (4) Writing (4)	Subject Position: (21) Object Position: (19)	Publish (2) Coordinate (1) Contribute (1) Engage (1) Include (1) Integrate (1) Represent (1) Support (1) Teach (1) Participate (1) Produce (1)	Research (3) Students (3)

Students

To better understand how mission statements may use standardizing language in representing students, I examined collocates and concordances of "students" (refer to Table 3), the second most frequent word across my corpus (168). The collocate analysis indicated that "students" were frequently associated with words like "of" (46), "in" (46), and "our" (30). Though "our" was associated with "students" (30) and might suggest insider status--as it did with faculty--it was positioned to the left of "students," as in "our students," in 26 of 30 appearances. This frames students as belonging to another entity, whether the faculty, program, department, or university. However, "students" were also associated with "their" (20), which, contrastingly, situates them as outsiders.

To gain additional insight into the discursive construction of "students," I examined the grammatical constructions across the word's concordance. Of its 168 instances, "students" appeared as direct objects (136) rather than active subjects (32) predominantly across the corpus (refer to Table 3). Furthermore,

when "students" appeared as active, they were associated with verbs like "will" (5), "need" (4), and "develop" (4). This suggests that when standardized language is used to designate agency to "students" in mission statements, such agency is often limited to prescribed expectations in relation to tasks that students are told they "will" do or "need" to do. This is corroborated by the frequent positioning of "students" as an indirect object (136) that others "help" (15), "teach" (9), and "prepare" (8).

Positioning "students" predominantly as indirect objects, the language used by mission statements in my corpus credits students' actions to the efforts of others. Specifically, one mission notes that their "department is dedicated to . . . inculcating in them [students] the ability to think critically and communicate effectively in their professional and personal lives." Here, students are positioned as objects rather than agents, being taught how to communicate effectively. Equating student behavior with that of the department, this statement's neutral language does not account for a range of students' thinking and communication styles; instead, its language frames students' thought processes and communication practices as behaviors shaped by standardized departmental efforts. Likewise, despite the association of "students" with the words "become" and "develop," students' bodyminds are never mentioned in the missions. Instead, through assumptions of standard bodies engaged in productive action, these statements reinforce specific forms of student engagement as indicative of "progress" and therefore appropriate for the classroom. These mission statements thus occlude the value of students' unique experiences, knowledges, and thought processes in shaping classroom and departmental practices.

Table 3: "Students" Summary Table

Most Frequent Collocates	Frequency of "Students" in Subject/ Object Position	Examples of Associated Active Verbs When "Students" Are Positioned as Subjects	Examples of Associated Direct Objects When "Students" Are Positioned as Subjects	Examples of Received Actions When "Students" Are Positioned as Objects	Examples of Indirect Actions When "Students" Are Positioned as Objects
The (58) Of (46) In (46) Writing (31) Our (30) Their (20 With (19) We (16) Develop (14) Courses (13) Faculty (12) Help (10)	Subject Position: 32 Object position: 136	Will (5) Need (4) Develop (4) Learn (2) Apply (1) Perform (1) Engage (1)	Research (2) Experience (2) Study (2) Scholarship (1) Lives (1) Knowledge (1)	Help(s), helping (15) Teach/ teaching (9) Prepare(s) (8) Provide/ providing (7) Encourage (5) Offer(s) (5)	Read (7) Write (7) Develop (6) Learn (5) Become (4) Practice (4) Gain (3) Understand (3)

We

"We" was the most frequently occurring pronoun in the corpus (107), and I analyzed its appearances to better understand the role of pronouns in constructing student and faculty identities (refer to Table 4). "We" was heavily associated with "students" (16), which consistently occurred somewhere to the right of "we." This suggests that "we" and "students" are framed by the mission statement language as separate entities. Through sentence-level analysis of the concordances, I found "department" (58) and "faculty" (20) to be the only identifiable referents of "we," excluding students from this group. In addition, "we" was frequently associated with verbs like those co-occurring with faculty, such as "offer" (8), "encourage" (4), "help" (3) and "provide" (3). For example, one mission statement notes, "We provide cutting-edge training in writing for first year students." This suggests that mission statement language positions "we" as active agents whose efforts enable the "training" and subsequent development of "students."

Table 4: "We" Summary Table

Most Frequent Collocates of "We"	Referents of "We"	Frequent Actions Associated with "We"	Frequent Direct Objects Associated with "We"
The (48) Of (34) In (26) Our (20) Students (16) Believe (14) Offer (9) Writing (7) Have (6)	Faculty (20) Department (58) Unclear (29) Students (0)	Believe (14) Offer (8) Encourage (4) Aim (3) Help (3) Provide (3) Produce (3) Prepare (3) Seek (3)	Students (15) Writing (7) World (4) Courses (3)

Our

I next examined the concordances and collocates of the possessive pronoun "our," as the term often was used across the mission statements (123). While "students" (30) was a frequent collocate of "our," it was mostly positioned as a direct object (24), indicating that students belong *to* "us," or faculty, rather than *with* them. "Courses/ classes" (14) was also a common direct object of "our," suggesting that "our" reflects the perspective of faculty or departments. One program explains that "Because … texts in their infinite variety take as their subjects our fellow humans, our histories, and our cultures, we aim in

effect to equip our students both to read the world, and write the future." In this statement, students are positioned as objects rather than agents, who are "equipped" by educators to read and write. By standardizing all "histories" and "cultures" as "ours," this statement also problematically equates a range of histories and cultures, including those frequently underrepresented in classroom or popular discourse. In the absence of a specific referent, constructions of "our" confuse classroom experiences with those of all.

The use of "our" across the corpus likewise demonstrates the term's capacity to demarcate normative, ableist boundaries. Phrases like "our own" (5) suggest that independent action and ownership is valued by this collective group. Likewise, "our" was frequently associated with "work" (4) and "research" (4), which suggests that "our" group is united through their productive commitments. In addition, through the relationship of "our" with direct objects like "place" (3) and "community" (3), "our" presumes that all of "us" are part of one, singular community. For example, one mission statement notes, "Our commitment is to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of our campus, our community, and the individuals who compose them." This presumes that to be a part of "us," one must identify with prescribed understandings of "intellect," "culture," and "community." While words like "our" may seem inclusive, their tendency to draw universal assumptions may lead to the exclusion of populations like disabled individuals who reflect non-normative experiences. As I highlight later in the discussion of these findings, such language may thus contribute to the erasure of embodied differences within classroom and institutional contexts by encouraging individuals to assimilate with standard, normative structures.

Table 5: "Our" Summary Table

Frequent Collocates of "Our"	Referents of "Our"	Frequent Direct Objects of "Our"
To (40) Of (40) In (36) The (36) Students (30) We (20) Writing (18) Courses (14) Mission (10)	Department: 79 Faculty: 20 Unclear: 24	Students (24) Courses/classes (14) Mission (6) Faculty (5) Own (5) Program (5) Research (4) Work (4) Department (4) Work (4) Place (3) Actions (3) Community (3)

They

Given the insider/outsider dynamics emerging from the data, I next examined the concordances and collocates of "they" (39) to see how the word compared and contrasted with "we." Upon analysis of the "they" concordance, I found that the most common referent of "they" was "students" (30). Like "students," "they" was associated with indirect action verbs like "can" (8), "need" (5), and "learn" (4), and indicating that "they" are similarly framed by missions as passive outsiders learning to engage in prescribed ways. Likewise, by associating "they" with words like "can," such statements presume that "they" are universally able. The mission statements thus do not account for the generative value of students' embodied differences in shaping their individual learning experiences and the broader knowledge-making practices within university classrooms.

Table 6: "They" Summary Table

Most Frequent Collocates of "They"	Referents of "They"	Frequent Actions Associated with "They"	Frequent Direct Objects Associated with "They"
In (13) Of (11) Can (8) Writing (7) Write (5) Need (5) Learn (4) Our (4)	Students (30) Faculty (2) Other (7)	Need (5) Learn (4) Initiate (2) Complete (2) Understand (1) Practice (1) Constitute (1) Discern (1) Teach (1) Use (1)	Research (2) Perspective (1) Listening (1) Voices (1) Conditions (1) Connections (1)

Their

I then examined the collocates and concordances of "their" (74) as this word also frequently occurred across the corpus. As previously demonstrated by "they," findings indicated that "students" was a frequent collocate (20) of "their," occurring predominantly to its left side (19). Through a close analysis of the "their" concordance, I found that "students" (59) was predominantly positioned as the referent of "their," while "faculty" (7) was far less frequently associated with "their." Like the other pronouns, "their" was often used to denote in and out-group boundaries, specifically when positioned in contrast

to "our." Like "our," "their" reflected an assumption of ableist independence through its association with "own" (8). Likewise, "their" "writing," (5), "lives" (4), "communities" (4), and "thinking" (4) are presumed by mission statement language to be universal. For example, one mission statement notes, "We emphasize writing skills, critical thinking, and creativity as a means of preparing students for the increasing demands on their literacy in the workplace and in their communities." While this statement uses standardizing language applicable across contexts, it does not account for the fact that writing classrooms offer a specific, limited understanding of literacy that may or may not fully prepare students to engage across diverse cultural and professional contexts. Likewise, this statement does not consider how productive, rational understandings of literacy may invalidate certain thought processes or behaviors that do not align with standard logics. Finally, such generalizing statements do not consider the complex ways in which certain bodyminds may experience political inequities in certain professional and cultural contexts when their literacies and knowledge-making practices do not align with expected norms. By not addressing students' embodied differences, these statements miss the opportunity to articulate how their programs and courses validate the personal and political literacy experiences of a range of student identities.

Table 7: "Their" Summary Table

Frequent Collocates of "Their"	Referents of "Their"	Frequent Direct Objects of "Their"
In (26) Of (22) Students (20) Writing (10) Lives (9) Own (8) Develop (8)	Students (59) Faculty (7) Other (8)	Own (8) Writing (5) Lives (4) Communities (4) Thinking (4) Goals (3)

What We Learn: Assimilation, Disembodiment, and Productivity.

Through an analysis of word frequency, concordance, and collocation, three themes emerge from the language in this mission statement corpus. Each of these, in turn, leads to subsequent insights about how to recraft mission statements to avoid neoliberal, ableist assumptions and language.

Assimilation

The language of the mission statements in my corpus generally demarcates boundaries between students and the broader academic community. Faculty

are positioned as a standard group, united as "members" through their ongoing "commitment" to their departments and students. Faculty were positioned frequently as both subjects and objects in mission statements: their agency seems grounded in their alignment with department expectations. Across the mission statement documents, "faculty" are often charged with "teach[ing]" students prescribed, insider behaviors (Table 2). The use of pronouns in the mission statements further indicated this dynamic, with "we" and "our" typically designating faculty and "they" and "their" indicating students (Tables 4-7). Specifically, "our" faculty and departments, united by collective "actions" and "community" (Table 5), are charged with acclimating students to the university and preparing them for the workforce. The frequent positioning of "students" as the indirect objects of faculty and departmental efforts further illustrates this trend (Table 3). Collectively, these mission statements hold both faculty and students accountable to normative standards.

By attempting to transcend student and faculty differences to promote inclusion, such standard language actually excludes. This standardization of student experience is most apparent in discussions of "students" as "develop[ing]," "learn[ing]," "becom[ing]" and "practic[ing]" in universal ways (Table 3). Through such discourse, these mission statements standardize experience by dictating appropriate behavioral norms. These findings demonstrate that neoliberalism-- the forces of profit, control, and efficiency--inflects how these missions encourage student and faculty assimilation with normative expectations (Mitchell and Snyder 8). Although many of the missions note values of diversity, CDA of the documents suggest that such values are occluded by language that encourages alignment with the status quo. Rather than including disabled bodyminds as they are, such normalizing discourses rhetorically circulate ableism and contribute to disability's erasure. Consequently, by presuming that classroom content and practices will align with students' individual knowledges, experiences, and behaviors, the standard language reflected by this mission statement corpus may indirectly communicate that knowledges and experiences beyond standard universals are invalid and unwelcome within classroom spaces.

Disembodiment

The standard language in the corpus's mission statements also disregards uniquely embodied experiences, thus reinforcing the homogeneity of imagined student and faculty bodies. Framed as belonging to an "our" or "we," individual faculty difference is erased by references to collective "work," "actions," and "community" (Table 5). Student embodiment is similarly overlooked, as students are assumed to "develop" uniformly (Table 3). Such framing situates disabled individuals in precarious positions, as they reflect

bodyminds that challenge idealized norms. Specifically, normative understandings of rhetorical engagement often reflect communication and behavioral practices associated with able bodyminds. These rhetorical standards, in turn, guide norms related to social interaction and human citizenship. Historically, the non-normative engagement of disabled individuals has been framed not only as "rhetorically suspect" but also as less than human (Yergeau 3, 6). In standardizing engagement, these mission statements simultaneously dictate the bounds of social experience. Furthermore, student engagement is frequently divorced from the body through the continuous positioning of students as objects rather than embodied agents across the documents (Table 3). Engaged in processes of "develop[ing]," "learn[ing]" and "becom[ing]," student actions are credited to the efforts of faculty and departments. In drawing from standardized, neoliberal language, these collective mission statements do not account for the embodied nature of the writing process and the unique knowledges that students bring with them into the classroom. In addition, by presenting all students' rhetorical experiences as equal, such statements do not account for the ways in which students' intersectionally embodied differences, such as ability, race, class, sexuality, and culture, may impact their rhetorical capacities when engaging with specific audiences in certain contexts. Such constructions thus disregard the highly political nature of the writing process.

Productivity

The ableist implications of standardizing language are similarly reflected through the corpus's focus on productive independence. "Faculty" and "we" are discursively framed as active agents across the mission statements (Table 2 and 4), engaged in efforts of "publish[ing]," "coordinat[ing]," "contribut[ing]," and "produc[ing]." To participate successfully within the department and university, such language communicates that faculty must align with standard notions of productivity. In addition, both "faculty" and "we" are expected to contribute to the progress of "students," indicated by the frequency of words like "support," "teach," "offer," and "help" used across the mission statements.

Students, in turn, are positioned as direct objects, passively receiving faculty efforts and "learn[ing]," "develop[ing]" and "becom[ing]" universally productive (Table 3 and 6). In addition, through frequent discussions related to what "student(s)" "will," "can," and "need" to do , the standardized language of this mission statement corpus suggests that certain behaviors are normative, perhaps even necessary for full participation (Table 3 and 6). The mission statements do not anticipate difference, complication, or failure. The language in these mission statements also does not consider the unequal distribution of resources across student populations and the varying degrees of labor required of them.

Focused on standard, independent students, these mission statements forget the "inequities" and "economic realities" that privilege some students over others (Dolmage, *Academic* 107). Emphasizing efficient individual progress, the neoliberal language in these statements contributes to ableism's circulation by excluding disabled individuals, such as those with autism or mental illness, whose rhetorical actions may appear involuntary, unproductive, or dependent when measured against neoliberal standards (Yergeau 9-10).

Framework for (Re)constructing Mission Statements

CDA analysis of these mission statements reveals that they may unknowingly circulate ableism across universities through their reliance on neoliberal standards that prioritize profit, control, and efficiency in ways that exclude or invalidate disabled experiences. When drawing from such neoliberal language, universities may impede their department's efforts towards equitable inclusion by endorsing disembodied, apolitical understandings of writing education. I thus recommend that writing programs and compositionists "crip" their documentation practices. To "crip" means to be "non-compliant" and "anti-assimilationist" by upholding disability as "a desirable part of the world" (Hamraie and Fritsch 2). By "cripping" documentation strategies, we can resist the assimilative impulses reflected across these findings and consider disability not as a problem to be resolved but as a generative source of institutional transformation (Dolmage, *Disability* 96). To "crip" documentation practices, I recommend that compositionists consider insights from TPC, which recognizes how documents "construc[t] reality and determin[e] what—and more relevantly, who—counts as normal" (Browning and Cagle 443) because they endorse particular "identities, social practices, ideological positions, discursive statements [and] social groups" (Slack et al. 28) within institutional spaces.

To resist potentially ableist documentation strategies, I offer three general guidelines that contextualize this study in relation to TPC: articulating anti-assimilationist multiplicity, validating students' embodied agency, and advocating for collaborative interdependence. This section outlines each guideline and models that strategy through revisions to analyzed mission statements. I offer these revisions in recognition of their limitations as distanced from each program's initial intentions but with the hope that they will be useful through local contextualization.

Articulating Anti-assimilationist Multiplicity

As TPC articulates, reliance on "normative commonplaces" may result in documents that confuse inclusion with normative assimilation by overlooking individuals' uniquely embodied experiences and needs (Konrad 135).

When mission statements endorse behaviors and expectations associated with dominant, neoliberal standards of productivity and efficiency, they may, indirectly, communicate to readers a need for alignment with such standards. By attending to how disabled students experience academic spaces differently, we can better understand and challenge "professional discourses … [that may] reinforce normalcy and marginalize the embodied knowledge" of disabled individuals" (Palmeri 50). I thus recommend that composers of mission statements identify and resist neoliberalism's normalizing tendencies by anticipating a range of student and faculty bodyminds in their language practices in order to produce more equitable documents. To do so, I offer the following guidelines:

1. Avoid Norm-Prescribing Language

The mission statements in this corpus prioritize able embodiments through linguistic assumptions related to productive success. This is illustrated in the repetition of "can" and "will" across the statements and the presence of ableist language like "see," "vision," and "voices." Such language disregards other forms of engagement that may not align with ableist standards, such as those demonstrated by deaf or blind students. By interrogating normalcy, we can identify and disrupt ableism in institutional spaces (Moeller and Jung, n.p.). I thus recommend that mission statements avoid norm-prescribing language. To demonstrate the impact of this shift, I offer a revision of text from my corpus:

> <u>Original Text:</u> "Students **need to** become more globally aware and better equipped to **navigate nimbly** a broader and … rapidly shifting world."
>
> <u>Revision:</u> In these courses, **students may** become more globally aware and better equipped to navigate writing amidst rapidly shifting **cultural and global dynamics.**

This revision removes ableist language like "nimbly," and it resituates the writing process from reflecting a series of necessary mandates to a process that students may engage in across dynamic contexts. Composers of mission statements may thus resist neoliberal goals of normative assimilation by avoiding language that assumes students and faculty of able bodyminds and statements that frame certain behaviors as imperative. Through such methods, compositionists can begin to move away from neoliberal articulations that understand access as an assimilation with ableist norms and instead articulate access as a frictional opportunity to both critique and move beyond established structures (Hamraie and Fritsch 10).

2. Cultivate Multiplicity

Similarly, this study indicates that mission statements often promote equal access to the same, standard knowledge. Thus, these statements "hol[d] bodies and texts to normative ideals" by offering "alternative ways into the same thing" (Boyle and Rivers 31, 37). This may enforce homogeneity while negating alternative forms of engagement. Consequently, I recommend the generation of multiple forms of engagement and end goals attuned to diverse embodiments. To indicate how this shift might be accomplished, I offer the following revision to corpus text:

> Original Text: The "department is dedicated **to enlightening** students about the world and **inculcating in them** the ability to think critically and communicate effectively in their professional and personal lives."
>
> Revision: The department **supports student and faculty efforts to** think critically and communicate effectively in their professional and personal lives by **drawing from a diverse multiplicity** of personal, professional, academic, social, and political **perspectives**.

This revision situates students' experiences as integral to classroom knowledge construction. Rather than a skill "inculcated" in students by a department, critical thinking is here reframed as a process that requires students' active engagement with a complex range of perspectives. This revision challenges neoliberal standardization and cultivates multiplicity by anticipating a range of intersectional knowledges and prioritizing students' lived experiences as integral to classroom learning. Such revisions may also foster what Casey Boyle and Nathaniel Rivers refer to as "multiple ontologies," or multiple ways of being. Challenging accessible initiatives that offer individuals various routes to standardized constructions, Boyle and Rivers call for an idea of access that promotes multiplicity through accommodations that expand, deepen, and potentially challenge dominant structures (37). The revisions offered here thus not only resist assimilation with neoliberal standards but ultimately challenge such standards by multiplying rhetorical possibilities.

Validating Students' Embodied Knowledge

Standardized mission statements may obscure the needs of unique embodiments by universalizing student and faculty experiences. One possible reason is that composers of such documents often assume an audience of "unproblematic and disembodied" users and do not anticipate the unique needs of diverse bodyminds (Melonçon 69). In addition, like all embodiments, dis-

ability is experienced dynamically by individuals "depending on the time of day, specific physical environment, and condition of their body at any particular moment" (Oswal and Melonçon 275). By assuming an audience of consistent, disembodied ability, composers of mission statements may fail to anticipate the flexible resources that disabled individuals may need (Wendell 39). To pursue more complexly embodied understandings of users, I recommend the following:

1. Value Embodied Difference

Mission statements should prioritize embodied difference through attention to intersectionality, or how personal experiences of "privilege or oppression" are mutually and complexly informed by embodied identity categories like disability, race, gender, and sexuality (Berne et al. 227). I would suggest that mission statements avoid "mechanistic" understandings of audience and instead attend to the complex and uniquely situated nature of human experience (Gutsell and Hulgin 92). To demonstrate considerations for intersectional context, I offer the following revision of text from my corpus:

> Original Text: **"We** emphasize writing **skills,** critical thinking, and creativity **as a means of preparing students** for the increasing demands on **their literacy** in the workplace and in **their communities."**
>
> Revision: **Students draw upon class content and their individual and collective intersectional experiences to** develop the writing skills, critical thinking capacities, and creative thought-processes to negotiate literacy demands in **diverse** workplaces and communities.

While the original version positions "we" as the active agent and students as passive recipients of "skills," the revision frames students as agents who draw upon their intersectional experiences as valid sources of knowledge to develop writing, critical thinking, and creative capacities. This allows all students, including disabled students, to understand literacy as a complexly contextual, intersectional, and frictional "negotiation" and to recognize the value of diverse knowledges in navigating professional and public contexts. It likewise expands notions of critical thinking beyond rational standards by positioning it as influenced by personal experiences. Mission statements that draw from intersectional understandings of individual embodiment can both foster more dynamic understandings of embodiment and resist the universal standardization that often encourages disability's erasure (Berne et al. 227).

2. Promote Student Agency

Mission statements in the corpus frequently positioned students as passive recipients of faculty and departmental efforts. Such constructions deny students the capacity to influence classroom knowledge and writing structures. Instead, I recommend that mission statements anticipate and "value…diverse embodied experiential knowledges" as integral to writing processes, specifically in relation to populations who may be historically marginalized (Smyser-Fauble 88). I thus recommend that programmatic and departmental documents position students as active agents in mission statements, so that it is clear how students influence classroom epistemologies and practices. To exemplify how missions might be reconstructed to consider student agency, I revise text from my corpus below:

> <u>Original Text:</u> "**We provide** cutting-edge training in writing for first-year students."
>
> <u>Revision:</u> **Students** individually and collectively develop writing skills and co-construct knowledge by integrating classroom content with their **diverse literacy experiences.**

This revision denotes not only a change in language but likewise an epistemic shift from an understanding of writing as skills passed down from faculty to students to a process that asks students to co-construct knowledge by integrating classroom learning with their own literacy experiences. Through this revision, writing is represented as a collective, dynamic experience, rather than a set of skills to be passed on. Missions can actively displace dominant, neoliberal norms by centering the embodied experiences of a range of students, including disabled students, in document design. Such a redesign promotes the DS value of universal design, or design for as many individuals as possible, by situating students of diverse bodyminds, including disabled students, as co-constructors of classroom knowledge in relation to literacy and writing (Dolmage, *Academic* 127-129; Hitt 54-55).

Advocating for Collaborative Interdependence

Collectively, the missions disregard students' ranging abilities through phrases like "students can" and "students will." Such statements promote able ideals by advocating for a productive independence that disregards students who may engage with class materials in unanticipated ways or with access to resources others do not have. I thus recommend a shift to statements encouraging collective interdependence that demonstrate how "relational circuits between bodies, environments, and tools" influence individual autonomy (Hamraie

and Fritsch 12). To show how documentation strategies might consider collective interdependence, I offer the following recommendations:

1. Remove Insider/Outsider Markers

The use of pronouns across the mission statements establishes boundaries of belonging that promote a particular status quo. I thus recommend that composers of mission statements specifically avoid the use of insider pronouns such as "our," us," and "we." Likewise, rather than positioning students as passive recipients of faculty efforts, classroom agency should be communicated as collectively negotiated between and among faculty and students. To demonstrate these tactics, I offer a revision of selected text from my corpus:

> Original Text: "Because [literary] texts in their infinite variety take as **their** subjects **our** fellow humans, **our** histories, and **our** cultures, **we** aim in effect to equip **our** students both to read the world and write the future."
>
> Revision: Because [literary] texts engage **diverse** histories, cultures, and personal perspectives, students and faculty **collectively examine** course texts by **dialoguing across their different histories, cultures, and positionalities** to both read the world and write the future.

By removing "our," and "we" and by framing textual examination as driven by difference, this revision anticipates students' and faculty's varying positionalities rather than encouraging individuals to assimilate with prescribed standards. Likewise, by understanding the collective nature of this process, this revision prioritizes DS's goals of interdependence, which resists neoliberalism's individualizing impulses through collective efforts to support differently abled individuals as they are (Berne et al. 227-228).

2. Promote Collaboration

Phrases like "every student," present across the corpus, position learning as an individualized process of meeting standard expectations, which may erase differences like disability. I therefore recommend the prioritization of difference through constructions that anticipate and draw upon a myriad of dynamic experiences. As TPC articulates, disability should inspire large-scale environmental change across institutional contexts (Konrad 138; Palmeri 57). To illustrate considerations for disability, I offer a revision of text from my corpus:

> Original Text: "FYW aims to **develop each student's** capacity to understand and adapt to new writing situations."

Revision: In FYW courses, **students and faculty collectively work** to critically understand and adapt to new writing situations.

Rather than positioning "students" as objectively "developed" by FYW, this revision frames students and faculty as collaborators. Likewise, this statement articulates "understanding" as a process that requires collective, critical effort rather than a static, individualized activity. As part of fostering collaboration and promoting student agency, writing programs and departments might even incorporate student feedback in the review and revision of materials (Smyser-Fauble 87). Such tactics challenge neoliberal goals of independence by positioning learning as an interdependent process between students and faculty. They likewise support universal design by directly involving students in the ongoing redesign of classroom spaces and the documents, like mission statements, that organize behavior within them (Dolmage 127-129; Hitt 54-55).

Conclusion

A CDA study of a corpus of R1 mission statements provided, here, the raw material for considering how composition programs and departments position themselves and their students relative to each other; to neoliberalism's aims of profit, control, and efficiency; and to ableism's language practices with respect to assimilation, embodiment, and productivity. This positioning fuels the rhetorical circulation of standardizing language that may have exclusionary effects, particularly upon disabled individuals. There are, however, strategies for thinking about institutional documentation that steer away from both neoliberalism and ableism's pitfalls: validating students' embodied knowledge, articulating anti-assimilationist multiplicity, and advocating for collaborative interdependence. These guidelines reflect a starting point for thinking resistance; they can, and should, be developed further for departments' unique needs. In offering these guidelines, I recognize constraint: many programs and departments construct mission statements in response to the assessment practices of institutional structures or accrediting organizations. While such practices aim to ensure that students receive consistent educational experiences, this article illustrates that such standard goals may contribute to the circulation of an ableist rhetoric that marginalizes disabled individuals. Future research therefore might examine these impacts and pursue non-assimilative forms of assessment. Methodologically speaking, future research might push past the limits of CDA and analyze the embodied impacts that mission statements can have on students and faculty. As neoliberal standardization continues to permeate higher education, it is vital that compositionists acknowledge and assess its impacts on documentation practices.

By cripping mission statements and other documents through considerations for DS and TPC, compositionists may celebrate difference and expand documentation beyond ableism's violently neutral bounds.

Notes

1. I use disability-first language (i.e., disabled individuals) rather than person-first language (i.e., individuals with disabilities) to prioritize disability as a desirable aspect of one's lived experience. Person-first language rmay einforce ableist assumptions that one is a person despite one's disability and disregards the political nature of disability (Cherney 23-25).

2. Margaret Price's term "bodyminds" demonstrates the connection and mutual influence between the body and mind.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the *Composition Studies* reviewers and editors whose generous feedback helped to improve the quality of this piece. I also express sincere appreciation to Dr. Maureen Daly Goggin, Dr. Elenore Long, Dr. Shirley Rose, and Dr. Mark Hannah for their guidance and support as I developed this project.

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Appendix A: List of Mission Statements

1. Arizona State University-Tempe, Writing Programs
2. Colorado State University-Fort Collins, Composition Program
3. Cornell University, Knight Writing Institute
4. Emory University, First Year Writing Program
5. Iowa State University, Department of English
6. Kansas State University, English Department
7. Michigan State University, First-Year Writing Program
8. New Jersey Institute of Technology, Department of Humanities
9. Northeastern University, Department of English
10. Syracuse University, Writing Program
11. Texas Tech University, Department of English

12. Tulane University of Louisiana, Department of English
13. The University of Alabama, Department of English
14. University of Arizona, Foundations Writing Program
15. University of Arkansas, Rhetoric and Composition
16. University of California-Los Angeles, Writing Programs
17. University of Central Florida, Department of Writing and Rhetoric
18. University of Colorado-Boulder, Program for Writing and Rhetoric
19. University of Florida, University Writing Program
20. University of Hawai'i-Monoa, Department of English
21. University of Louisville, English Department
22. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, English Department
23. University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Center for Writing
24. University of Missouri-Columbia, Campus Writing Program
25. University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of English
26. University of New Mexico-Main Campus, Department of English
27. University of North Texas, First-Year Writing
28. University of South Florida-Main Campus, Department of English
29. The University of Texas at Arlington, Department of English
30. The University of Texas at El Paso, Department of English
31. University of Washington-Seattle Campus, Department of English
32. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, English Department