

Chapter 9

The Writing Fellow/Faculty Collaboration in a Community College: Paradigms of Teaching and Learning Across the Curriculum

Linda Hirsch and Andrea Fabrizio

The Writing Fellow Program had been described to me as an exciting opportunity to work with faculty members and students . . . to explore the various ways writing can be incorporated into the learning process. Equipped with a BA in English, a host of Graduate level English courses, and three years of teaching experience, I felt fully prepared for the job.

Andrea Fabrizio, former CUNY Writing Fellow (2003–2005)

Steps away from the brand new Yankee Stadium, Hostos Community College/CUNY is an urban, bilingual college established in 1968 to serve the needs of New York City's impoverished South Bronx community. Its mission is to provide educational opportunities for first- and second-generation Hispanics, African Americans, and other New York City residents who have encountered significant barriers to education. In addition to its allied health career programs and a rich liberal arts curriculum, Hostos also allows English-language learners to enroll in college-level courses in Spanish as they gain proficiency in English. The planned outcome is that eventually all of a student's courses will be taken in English. The student population is diverse and poor, with the largest numbers coming from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Central and South America. Nearly 99% receive some form of financial aid. Significantly for a college implementing a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) program, 55% of students place into developmental composition on admission, and 43% of freshmen require developmental regarding classes.

Prior to the 1999 CUNY Board of Trustees resolution establishing a CUNY-wide WAC Initiative, research at Hostos, sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE), had established the pedagogical effectiveness of WAC practices for advanced and post-ESL students mainstreamed into English-language content courses (Hirsch, 1988), but WAC activities relied on

L. Hirsch (✉)
Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY, USA
e-mail: lhirsch@hostos.cuny.edu

external funding and were discontinued when support ended. Having already explored teaching and learning models that used “language-to-learn” across disciplines, Hostos was poised and primed for CUNY’s new WAC Initiative.

To assist in the implementation of WAC, CUNY provides each of its 16 members campuses with six Writing Fellows, CUNY advanced Ph.D. students representing a range of disciplines. Their duties are as varied as the campuses and may include collaborating with a faculty partner on curriculum, working with students to develop writing abilities, supporting student preparation for entrance and exit writing-related exams, conducting faculty development workshops, and undertaking research into aspects of WAC at CUNY.

CUNY’s reliance on advanced Ph.D. students rather than on the undergraduate “Writing Fellows,” “writing associates,” or “writing mentors,” referred to in much of the literature (Haring-Smith, 1992; Leahy, 1999; Mullin et al., 2008; Soven, 2001; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006; Zawacki, 2008), is a unique aspect of the CUNY WAC Initiative. This difference in the traditional status of the Writing Fellow, from undergraduate to graduate student, results in a very different set of challenges, particularly in establishing the collaboration between faculty and fellow. Many fellows have taught college classes as adjuncts within the CUNY system and/or on other college campuses prior to their WAC appointments. As our work at Hostos demonstrates, the challenges to traditional academic hierarchy are much more profound and their effects much more pronounced in this new collaborative model.

The Writing Fellowship program is intrinsically one of transformation. It is expected that successful implementation of WAC will ultimately lead to transformation of pedagogy and of student learning and writing. While each campus has its unique WAC Initiative, the partnership of fellow and faculty is inherent to many. What does this pairing look like, and how does it function in the academic environment? What does it teach us about the forging of professional identities and professional development? How can this pairing lead to improvements for students who enter the college setting with deficiencies in reading and writing? What are its assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning?

We sought answers to these questions by examining our previous relationship and experiences as WAC coordinator and Writing Fellow and our current collaboration as co-coordinators of WAC. In “Conducting Research in the Gray Space: How Writing Associates Negotiate Between WAC and WID in an Introductory Biology Course,” Jill Gladstein (2008) posits that, “The work of the WA [Writing Associate] does not fit within the binaries of generalist/specialist or content/writing, but rather the work takes place in gray spaces between these binaries. Writing fellows programs challenge us to explore the gray spaces of the binaries that are our reality” (p. 2). While the narrative in this study also recognizes the existence of this gray space, our focus is on the ways in which this collaborative relationship creates new spaces for conceptual development, professional identity, and pedagogical change. We examine the shifts in the multiple spaces that exist in the collaboration and how they in turn add new dimensions to the fellow/faculty collaboration.

This chapter presents Andrea’s narrative as she reflects on her 2 years as a CUNY Writing Fellow at Hostos Community College in partnerships with two

history professors. She describes her journey assisting in the creation of two Writing Intensive (WI) sections for “US History Through the Civil War.” These specially designed sections involve the use of both formal and informal writing and are taught by faculty who work with Writing Fellows as well as attend professional development activities on campus. Her narrative provides a singular opportunity to observe the various factors that influence these interactions and the multifaceted interplay of teaching and learning among faculty, fellow, and students as she collaborates with one professor who is a long-time adjunct committed to providing students with opportunities to write but not familiar with WAC and the other a newly appointed professor who had been a CUNY Writing Fellow at another campus. Her story is supplemented by the voices of other Writing Fellows and our own reflections gleaned from Linda’s 10 years as WAC coordinator and Andrea’s new role as co-coordinator of WAC.

The voices heard here demonstrate the ever-evolving and shifting nature of the Writing Fellow/faculty collaboration within the context of a teaching/learning paradigm in which both partners assume the roles of teacher and learner at different times and to varying degrees. Andrea’s account lays bare the reciprocal teaching and recursive nature of the novice/expert roles played by fellow and faculty and the emergent process of creating a space that enables fellows and faculty to develop constructions of WAC for themselves. To capture and represent this dynamic relationship of novice/expert, the chapter presents not only one fellow’s experiences but also the insights and experiences of the coordinator and the voices of other fellows at the various stages of their teaching and learning. Throughout the narrative we have included additional textual spaces that appear as text boxes within the chapter entitled either “Other Voices/Other Spaces” or “Between the Spaces.” “Other Voices/Other Spaces” allows us to hear the voices of other Writing Fellows and underscores the commonality of the Writing Fellow’s experience in navigating the fellow/faculty dynamic. By delving “Between the Spaces” of Andrea’s narrative, Linda provides further insight into Andrea’s experience as a fellow and uncovers and garners key concepts about successful Writing Fellow/faculty collaborative models in the college setting. In punctuating our narrative with these other voices and reflections, the chapter mirrors the very collaborations of novice and expert we are examining.

If settings are contexts for human development (Vygotsky, 1978), then the space of the faculty/fellow partnership is both physical and psychological. The faculty office is often the physical space in which transformations occur, but once the fellow crosses its threshold, the space itself is often altered in a variety of ways. Building on this change of the physical space, the collaboration between fellow and faculty creates a new psychological space that transforms the definition and role of writing, the goals of a course, and the professional development and identities of both faculty and fellow. The give and take, passivity and activity, and teaching and learning that occur between faculty and fellow require and create a fluid, always-changing collaborative space for the development and exchange of ideas. Creating and maintaining this transformative space is the major challenge of the fellow/faculty relationship.

Andrea Fabrizio: The Teaching and Learning of History

At the time I applied to be a Writing Fellow at the City University of New York (CUNY), I was taking courses toward my Ph.D. in English and teaching composition classes at a 4-year college within CUNY. My roles as teacher and student had clearly defined spaces: I was a teacher on one campus and a student on another. While it was exciting to take on what I then perceived as two very distinct roles, it was also becoming increasingly clear to me that the life of a graduate student was at times stifflingly compartmentalized. Teach composition in the morning in one place, study literature in the afternoon in another. Once at home, the compartmentalization continued: Grade composition papers, and then switch gears and write seminar papers and conference papers. I saw very little connection between my teaching and learning. I applied to be a Writing Fellow because it had been described as an exciting opportunity to work with faculty members and students in disciplines other than English to explore the various ways writing can be incorporated into the learning process. I saw it as an opportunity to learn about the teaching of writing, and I was hopeful that through the Writing Fellowship I would start to see the interconnectivity between my work as a scholar and as a teacher. Though I wasn't exactly sure what a Writing Fellow did, equipped with a BA in English, a host of graduate-level English courses, and 3 years of teaching experience, I felt fully prepared for the job.

Once I was notified that I had been hired as a Writing Fellow at Hostos Community College, I began to envision what this role would entail. I was expecting to continue to teach, but in a different capacity. When the job was originally described as a pairing with faculty in disciplines that do not usually use writing, I pictured being paired with a math professor and brainstorming ideas for an essay on sines and cosines. I thought a Writing Fellow was the resident writing guru who would generate ideas for solving any pedagogical problem with a writing assignment.

The first step in my professional development as a Writing Fellow was a 3-day orientation led by senior Writing Fellows and WAC coordinators; it took place in August before the start of the fall semester at our graduate school campus. I could already see that the compartmentalizing that was frustrating me as an adjunct was no longer an issue. In this large meeting hall, all the fellows assigned to the different campuses came together. We weren't isolated at our individual colleges, and we bonded over our mutual ignorance of what a Writing Fellow was. On the first day, questions rumbled through the group: "What are we going to be doing?" and "What exactly is a Writing Fellow?" We had gathered in this space eager to hear a definition and explanation of our job title and responsibilities. What followed was an introduction to principles of WAC, clarification of what our roles would be, and exposure to the various attitudes toward writing that we could expect to encounter. Though hired to infuse writing into the curriculum, we were instructed not to crank out writing assignments at a professor's behest; we had been hired to work collaboratively with faculty to generate long-term changes in a professor's pedagogical approach. With my misconceptions cleared up, I walked away from this 3-day workshop series feeling like a WAC expert.

I had not been hired as a teacher; I was a Writing Fellow. My job was to engage in a collaborative relationship with professors to determine the most effective ways to use writing to get students to learn and improve their writing proficiencies. Yet anxieties soon arose. If I am working with a faculty member outside of my discipline, I wondered, how much of the subject do I have to know? How do I develop assignments or revise assignments for a subject I have little knowledge of? How do I tell a professor, an expert in the field, that an assignment requires revision? How do I get a faculty member to reevaluate his/her pedagogical approach without coming across as critical? I could feel my earlier confidence slipping away.

The collaborations described here explore the tensions inherent in the faculty/fellow relationship and the shifting and evolving roles played by fellows and faculty. At times I would be the teacher and the faculty member would be the student. Other times the roles would reverse. These changing relationships created many challenges. The complex nature of my position would transform course development and pedagogy as well as the faculty/fellow relationship. This became clear to me after working with two different professors on two different sections of the same course.

In the spring of 2004, I was assigned to work with Professor S to transform his US History class into a WI section, and in spring 2005, I collaborated with Professor B to develop her own WI section of the same course. In the process of developing these WIs, I became increasingly aware of my unique position within academia; I was both a teacher mentoring a faculty member about WAC and a student learning a new discipline. Initially, I saw this unfixed position as an advantage because it provided me with a new perspective on academic life. But I also came to see that the ambiguity of my role and even my title, “Writing Fellow,” could cause confusion and uncertainty for others. After a summer of WAC workshops and a semester of productive and supportive meetings with my WAC coordinator and the other fellows, I saw my function in the classroom and the faculty member’s academic life as completely positive. I was there to enrich course content, help students learn the material better, and foster pedagogical development. Who wouldn’t want to work with a Writing Fellow? But I couldn’t be sure the professors would feel the same way. Working in a position that constantly changes makes it difficult to anticipate how the faculty will react. Would I be welcomed as someone who could help them enhance their classes, or would I be seen as an outsider and barely let into their pedagogical space? As a new fellow, I was determined to overcome any reluctance that I might encounter.

Crossing the Threshold

Other Voices/Other Spaces

“When I started working with Professor V, the Chair of Humanities . . . we were to infuse writing into an online art history course. I walked into her office and admit I was completely intimidated. She offhandedly said, ‘Okay, now what

am I supposed to do with you?' Frankly I felt like an intern. I didn't know what I was doing . . . I also didn't know anything about modern art or online courses, or for that matter, writing across the curriculum."

John Sorrentino, Writing Fellow

"With a cheerful introduction, Professor Drago ushered me into the office of department chair, Professor Ruiz. During the previous semester Professor Ruiz had worked with another Writing Fellow to develop the WI syllabus for 'Professional Practice Issues in Diagnostic Imaging' that Professor Drago would now be teaching. Though Professor Drago had shared in these discussions and attended WAC workshops, this was his first semester teaching this course, and moreover, this was my first semester as a Writing Fellow. I was admittedly nervous."

LeRonn Brooks, Writing Fellow

The first meeting between faculty and fellow is a significant moment in the anticipated transformation of pedagogy. Though much attention has been paid to the hierarchical tensions involved in faculty collaborations with undergraduate fellows (Mullin et al., 2008; Zawacki, 2008), graduate Writing Fellows, in their fluid roles as both teachers and students, compounded by their own status as Ph.D. students, have even greater potential than the undergraduate fellow to disrupt the status quo of the academic hierarchy. The initial meeting, then, is key for setting the tone and pace of the collaboration. When there is no clear demarcation of a role or a position, it becomes difficult to know how to proceed. If there is no defined role, then what is the script? While this uncertainty and liminality allows for the dynamic exchange of ideas that can take place between faculty and fellow, it also creates tensions for both members of the collaboration. As a fellow, it was not only key that I assume varying roles, but it was also vital that I recognized when they were shifting and could adjust my contributions accordingly.

Meeting Professor S

When I began working with Professor S, I was in the second semester of my Writing Fellowship, and I had not yet worked on a WI. I had spent the fall semester at weekly meetings with the WAC coordinator and six Writing Fellows, learning about WAC and reviewing syllabi for WI courses. When I was assigned to work on Professor S's history course, I was excited to have an opportunity to put all I had learned about WAC into practice. I expected to walk into Professor S's office as an emissary of WAC, ready to show him how great it is to use writing in a

class. Before even meeting Professor S, I started to brainstorm ways of including writing into what I was sure would be a class dominated by short answer questions and fill-in-the-blank tests. But once again my expectations were off the mark.

At my first meeting with Professor S, I entered one of the primary spaces for fellow/faculty collaboration, the professor's office. As a fellow new to the campus, I expected to walk into office space allocated for a single professor, a space that would afford the quiet and privacy necessary for discussing pedagogy, assignment development, and students. This was not Professor S's office. His was an adjunct office with six or seven desks, none of which belonged to any particular faculty member, and several of which were occupied. I felt suddenly uneasy for both myself and for Professor S. Because I had been teaching as an adjunct the semester before, I thought it must be somewhat uncomfortable for Professor S to have to share the goals and challenges of his class with other colleagues listening in, and on my part, it occurred to me that if this meeting went badly, there would be witnesses.

Much to my relief, Professor S was very warm and welcoming and shortly after introductions we began the business of WAC. Though I had been thinking about writing and history for several days, I knew that the meeting should not start with my ideas, so I began by asking Professor S to tell me about his course. His response marked a pivotal moment in our collaboration: "This class is pretty much writing intensive already." This was certainly not the response I was expecting. At first, I felt a mixture of deep relief coupled with sharp disappointment. I was relieved that he seemed to be familiar with WI courses and the uses of writing in the classroom, but I was also frustrated that the class on which I had been looking so forward to working did not really need me. What kind of change could my involvement produce if he perceived the class as satisfactory?

I walked into this space with ideas and responses somewhat prepared in my mind, but I had nothing for this. I had to flip the script in my mind in order to make this a successful meeting. We weren't going to talk about new ideas for writing assignments on this day, but to ensure that our collaboration would pick up steam at this first meeting, I wanted to walk away with one or both of us having something to do or bring to our second meeting. Instead of transforming assignments, I would review them. I shared my enthusiasm that he had already been using writing in the classroom and my eagerness to see his assignments and syllabus. He gave me half of the work at that moment and the rest via e-mail in the following week. I gave him the college's guidelines for a WI section. This one conversation led to two very important realizations about collaboration. In this dynamic, Writing Fellows are not professors regardless of their teaching experiences; therefore, they cannot make a lesson plan for a meeting with a professor; they cannot control the direction in which the collaboration will move or set the goals for the relationship. Second, Professor S' statement made me very aware of how many meanings there are to the word *writing*. When Professor S said his class was already WI, I envisioned a class that met all of the college's requirements for a WI, but I was soon to discover that was not what Professor S meant.

Between the Spaces—the Office

Andrea underscores the isolation in which most faculty work and the benefits of a collaborative model that not only generates ideas but also fosters responsibility and enables work to reach fruition. For many faculty, the opportunity to collaborate with a fellow is an opportunity to emerge from the isolation the academic world often imposes on its teacher/scholars. Though professors are constantly surrounded by students and running to and from meetings, the work of teaching usually takes place in isolation. Professors largely design their assignments and grade papers alone and prepare the day's lessons alone. The narratives described here demonstrate the ways in which collaboration with a fellow changes all of this. As we began pairing faculty and fellows, the disruption of seclusion often ignited creativity and provided faculty with immediate feedback and a sounding board for ideas. Initially it seemed that everyone would welcome a second pair of eyes. Yet over the project's 10 years, we learned that for some there is comfort in working alone. Solitude provides a space in which professors can experiment with new resources, techniques, and approaches without criticism. From this perspective, it becomes easy for faculty to see a Writing Fellow as an intruder. For others, faculty isolation also provides the comfort of sameness and the opportunity to do nothing new—to continue with syllabi and assignments that have not undergone revision for many years. Thus, the fellow's entrance into the faculty teaching space (and office) can be both creatively transformative and intrusive.

As I reviewed Professor S' syllabus and assignments, I once again became a student of WAC as I learned that the sheer number of required written pages is not sufficient to effectively use writing or to create a WI course. At Hostos, a WI class follows guidelines that are drawn from University recommendations and the definition of writing that emerges from WAC principles. In "Why We Teach Writing in the First Place," Toby Fulwiler (1983) asserts, "On the one hand, humans use language to communicate ideas and information to other people; on the other hand, humans use language to express themselves and develop their own articulate thought" (pp. 275–276). He categorizes these two types of writing and communication as the "communicative" and the "expressive" and argues, "Few curricula recognize, implicitly or explicitly, that writing can have an equally important role in generating knowledge (the expressive function) as in communicating knowledge" (p. 276). Professor S and I were both talking about writing, but what did we mean by it? Would Professor S value the idea that writing can be an opportunity for students to create meaning? In order for us to have a successful collaboration, we needed to reach an agreement on the definition and role of writing in the classroom. Would it be defined by the number of assignments or their difficulty or length? Would it be free writing? Journal writing? Essay writing? Grammatically correct writing?

Professor S did require his students to complete writing assignments throughout the semester, but they were fact focused and teacher oriented. Professor S wanted students to have a strong grasp of difficult material, to be able to apply and analyze difficult concepts, and he wanted them to demonstrate their ability to do so in writing. To that end, his syllabus included a research project and weekly summaries. In addition to writing assignments, WI sections require that students have opportunities for revision. Professor S explained that students could rewrite the summaries as many times as they wanted until they were correct. For the research project, students would submit a draft that he corrected and returned. Then they were to submit an error-free version.

I detected a distinct difference in our definition of writing. To Professor S, writing was a way to demonstrate what was learned, and one of the aspects measured in writing was “correctness,” or how well the students wrote grammatically. Professor S admitted he often felt he was doing the work of an English teacher. I would observe that for faculty, correctness is one of the key terms for evaluating student writing. Professors often interpret good writing as writing that requires the least amount of red ink. In my role as Writing Fellow, I recognized that Professor S’s concerns about his students’ writing were reasonable. When they moved on to senior colleges or to their careers, a certain level of proficiency in their writing would be expected, but I also felt that part of my role was to aid in the expansion of Professor S’s definition of good writing to equally weigh meeting the goals of the assignment, developing a point, staying focused, understanding and working with difficult texts, and mainly demonstrating a grasp of the discipline-specific content in the assignment. The conflict that was playing out between us is the same debate surrounding correctness and process that Shaughnessy (1976) recognized early on as CUNY began to grapple with issues of basic writing (p. 237). It would be less frustrating for Professor S and for his students if the purpose of writing in his course was to write well as a history student. As Shaughnessy explains, “Somewhere between the folly of pretending that errors don’t matter and the rigidity of insisting that they matter more than anything, the teacher must find his answer searching always under pressure for short cuts that will not ultimately restrict the intellectual power of his students” (p. 237). This was the delicate balance that Professor S and I had to work toward. For this transformation to take place, Professor S needed to articulate the purpose and goals of his course and of his assignments in order to shape a grading rubric based on content and understanding, and not only on correctness, and I had to acknowledge that his concerns about grammar were legitimate.

I left our first meeting with more mixed emotions, relieved that the course could in fact benefit from the work of a Writing Fellow, but concerned that Professor S and I seemed to have two different ideas of the role of writing in the class. I was uncertain as to how to reconcile these different conceptual spaces of thinking about writing. As much as I saw myself as a WAC expert, I knew I was not a historian, and while familiar with the US history, I was not going to influence the content of this course. Rather than focus on our differences in viewpoints, I needed to find a proactive way for Professor S to value not only learning to write but also writing to learn while I learned more about history and his goals for the class.

Although I had some apprehensions, I was pleased that Professor S welcomed me and did not see me as an intruder. He invited me to visit his classes and was open to having weekly meetings to discuss the course work. Our initial conversation made me keenly aware of the transformative potential of a fellow/faculty collaboration. I had walked into an office with several professors coming and going, each one going about her/his individual business. Though Professor S was not alone in the room, prior to working with a Writing Fellow, he was in many ways isolated. Though teachers are often surrounded by students and colleagues, it can be a lonely profession:

We close the classroom door and experience pedagogical solitude, whereas in our life as scholars, we are members of active communities: communities of conversation, communities of evaluation, communities in which we gather with our invisible colleges to exchange our findings, our methods, our excuses (Shulman, 1993, p. 6).

The opportunity to work with a fellow inspires a new approach to pedagogy, one that bridges the isolation of teaching and the community of research by providing an opportunity to discuss, analyze, and workshop a course on an ongoing and collaborative basis. This dialogue, as Mullin et al. (2008) note, offers more choices and opportunities to students and faculty. Because Professor S was so willing to share the work that he had done, it seemed clear that he saw the potential for community that our collaboration offered, and he welcomed this disruption.

Meeting Professor B

A year after working with Professor S, I was assigned to work with Professor B, a new professor in the History Department, who had been a CUNY Writing Fellow as a graduate student and who wanted to develop her own section of the same history class I had worked on with Professor S. As a second-year fellow, I entered this collaboration with more confidence. Her previous experience as a fellow and my knowledge of this experience changed the shape of our collaboration. I was less concerned about being perceived as an intruder and expected that Professor B would have fewer reservations. Though Professor B had mainly tutored students as a Writing Fellow, she was very interested and invested in the idea of using writing as a way of teaching and learning.

Although I was comfortable with the idea of collaborating with Professor B, I did approach the task with some trepidation, fearing that in applying WAC principles and in following Hostos's guidelines for a WI, we might end up creating a course that looked just like Professor S's, thereby undoing each professor's unique pedagogical perspective. However, I was to learn that writing enriches a course and allows professors to present the material in ways they see fit.

In preparing for my first meeting with Professor B, I took a much different approach than I had with Professor S. I did not try to think of history assignments before I spoke to her. I did not try to create our agenda. From my work

with Professor S, I had learned that a Writing Fellow needs to listen to the goals the professor has set. Before devising ways to include writing into her class, I needed to understand how she defined writing, what role she wanted it to play in her classroom, and what she hoped to obtain from our time together. Though I had been eager to provide direction for my work with Professor S, at the start of this new collaboration with Professor B, I understood that a more productive role would be that of listener and facilitator.

Walking into Professor B's office space was a very different experience than walking into Professor S's office. Because she had been hired as an assistant professor, and not as an adjunct, instead of six desks in her office, there was only one. Because it was her space, it was furnished with her filing cabinets and bookshelves, which in turn were already full of papers and stacked with books. Unlike Professor S, Professor B was surrounded by her teaching resources. As I sat down to speak with her, I quickly realized this was going to be a very different collaboration. Instead of presenting WAC to her, she presented her class to me. She was already aware of the strengths and weaknesses of her course. She had a clear set of goals in mind and was eager to use writing to accomplish them.

This first meeting with Professor B was another epiphany for me as a Writing Fellow. The transformative energy that a faculty/fellow collaboration generates is fueled by the personalities of those involved and the dynamic that exists between them. The eagerness and activity that Professor B brought to our first meeting indicated that she would be the driving force in this collaboration.

As we spoke, another difference between Professor B and Professor S was revealed. When Professor S and I discussed student writing, he always placed an emphasis on correctness. Though Professor B also wanted her students to write well, she prioritized writing's potential as a vehicle for working through complex ideas and for gaining access to different perspectives. While she knew that writing could be used as a demonstration of knowledge, she did not want students to only write about a topic or an idea; she wanted them to write as if they were a part of it. WAC and the collaboration that accompanies it meant something different to Professor B. In her class, writing would not only improve the students' writing ability, but also help students write as historians, and in doing so, to learn history.

Other Voices/Other Spaces: Learning the Language of a Discipline

“We both started from the position that it is the instructor who has the responsibility of providing a space for students to write themselves into a common language—the junction between the understanding of the language with which they enter the course and the discipline specific language to which they are introduced in the classroom.”

LeRonn Brooks, Writing Fellow

Transformative Dialogue

Other Voices/Other Spaces

“As we went along, the reciprocal process of both my learning and Professor V’s provided a forum for us to examine the dynamics of our partnership. It required us to be open to each other in our work. We asked questions of each other all the time—questions of theory and vision.”

John Sorrentino, Writing Fellow

In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) describes the dialogic nature of conversation in which each participant’s view evolves and recreates itself in response to the input of the other. Once I had crossed the threshold and disrupted the isolation in which the professors had been working, I realized that the collaboration would successfully create pedagogical change if fellow and faculty exchanged expertise and learned from each other. I also realized that I could be the most effective teacher of WAC by learning what these professors needed in order to improve their classes. By simply asking them questions about their goals, challenges, and expectations, I could learn the best ways to teach them about WAC.

Professor S: The Collaboration

After our first meeting, I took Professor S’s assignments and syllabus home and tried to put myself in his place. From my own teaching experience, I knew there are moments in every course that can be frustrating. Students may not understand important material or may not successfully complete assignments. The isolation that comes with teaching makes it difficult to devise an approach to penetrate the brick walls that often seem to stand between the student and comprehension. After 3 years of teaching, I knew that it is not easy to admit when a class is “not getting” the work because it seems like a direct reflection on you.

Though working with WAC and a fellow creates opportunities for reflection, the self-evaluation involved also requires some degree of vulnerability. In order to be the catalyst for change in Professor S’s course, I had to present myself as consultant, as someone who could help make his experience of teaching the class better. I was not there to police his class and impose a set of arbitrary changes onto his syllabus, and I had to make sure he saw that. To navigate this liminal and shifting position as Writing Fellow, I decided the best way to convey my role would be to ask questions that would help him articulate what he wanted from our collaboration, thereby allowing him to set the goals for our work together. I needed to know what the challenges in his classroom were. I asked about difficult chapters and concepts, about typical stumbling blocks for students in the course. I wanted to know what kinds of assignments he would like to create and how he wanted to implement them.

As we began to talk about these issues, it became clear that Professor S had a lot to say. I hurriedly took notes as he spoke about his frustration with student research projects, his hopes that students could have a better understanding of the social changes that took place throughout the American history, and his goal to make them stronger readers and writers. As we talked, and as Professor S spoke more and more freely, I saw that he recognized that I was there to enrich not only his students' learning but also his experiences as a teacher. His answers enabled me to understand what he wanted to achieve, and that included introducing his community college students to the writing of the discipline of history. The questions helped him (and other faculty with whom I worked) to pinpoint what students have difficulty learning. I came to learn that in articulating their concerns, frustrations, and goals, professors begin a process that leads to several transformations: Faculty become more aware of their goals, assignments become clearer, and students become better writers. Asking questions and listening closely to a professor's answers enable both participants in the collaboration to view the pedagogical space in similar ways. After this conversation, Professor S and I were on the same page; we established goals for course development, including a revision of the research paper assignment.

In answering the questions I presented, Professor S identified a problem echoed by many professors: Students were turning in disappointing final papers. Professor S's final paper was a family narrative research paper. Though he felt students enjoyed doing the assignment because it required them to interview family members about their cultural histories, students were submitting papers that were poorly written and disorganized. While he provided guidelines on how to conduct interviews and properly use source materials, many students were not completing the assignment as instructed. Professor S wanted students to see a connection between their lives and history. The assignment was already scaffolded. The interview material was due on a certain date, as were the bibliography and the rough draft, so students had many opportunities to receive feedback. Since it seemed like a rich and well-developed assignment students might actually enjoy doing, I was surprised that the papers he received were disappointing. Clearly, something was getting lost in translation. Professor S felt students could do a better job conducting the interviews, utilizing sources, drawing connections between their experiences and the material, and writing correct and well-developed papers. I was perplexed too, so I asked to see a copy of the assignment. I was handed a 12-page document entitled "Family Narrative Research Project."

"I tell them exactly what they need to do," Professor S assured me. And it was true. In 12 pages, Professor S covered the general directions of the project—how to conduct an interview, how to use APA style, how to write an introduction, how to write a conclusion, how to create an organizational checklist, and a breakdown of steps students should take to complete the assignment. It was all there.

I took the packet home, and as I looked at it alone, outside of the space of the college, I tried to look at the assignment as a history student might do. I flipped through the 12 pages, and I knew that this document, as well intended as it might be, would confuse me. It was as if there were too many directions about what the paper should include, and they were broken up and separated by specific directions

about research and sources. Though Professor S had scaffolded the assignment, the due dates for the different sections of the paper were scattered throughout the 12 pages. Furthermore, while Professor S had generously included a handout about conducting an interview, the connection between the sample interview questions and the main goal of the paper was not explicit. I did some mental cutting and pasting to figure out what the professor wanted the finished paper to look like. As a student, I would have liked to receive an assignment whose goals were clear and that had all of the paper requirements on one page, the due dates and research hints on separate pages, and more coherent interview guidelines. Because I approached this assignment with the eyes of a student imagining that I was going to complete this task, I was able to pinpoint exactly what was confusing me. As a Writing Fellow, I was able to transform the confusion I felt as a student into strategies for revising the assignment as a teacher.

After looking over Professor S's assignment, I began to devise an approach that would help both him and his students. But as I sat at my desk, with Professor S's assignment covered in scribbles, corrections, and suggestions, a wave of panic came over me. How was I going to tell this professor the next day that his assignment was overwhelming and that I thought I had a way to make it better? I put myself in his place. If a young graduate student came into my office after spending 3 or 4 days looking at an assignment I had been using for years, and started listing all the ways it could be improved, I would be resentful. At the same time, it was my job to do just that. Randy Bass (1999) has observed that though faculty are comfortable submitting their research for peer review, they are often reluctant to seek an outside perspective on what goes on in the classroom.

In one's teaching, a "problem" is something you don't want to have, and if you have one, you probably want to fix it. Asking a colleague about a problem in his or her research is an invitation; asking about a problem in one's teaching would probably seem like an accusation. Changing the status of teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about (p. 1).

In my brief experience as a teacher, I was already aware that criticism of one's teaching can easily be interpreted as an accusation of incompetence, and my life-long career as a student seemed to imply that novice/expert roles in the classroom were fixed and unyielding. The very nature of the classroom space indicates that the person standing in front of the room talking is the expert and the people sitting silently in their chairs are the novices. Professors have studied and mastered a discipline, so there is a general expectation that they also know the best way to teach the material. But as a graduate student who had taken dozens of English classes and one seminar on pedagogy before teaching my first class, I also knew this expectation was off the mark. In my new position as a Writing Fellow, I was learning to appreciate the vast differences between mastery of a discipline and mastery of pedagogy. Teaching, as Bass explains, is an "ongoing investigation," and as a Writing Fellow I was there to push the investigation forward. I had to remind myself that I was not fixing a problem in Professor S's class; I was critiquing this assignment as a means to pedagogical growth for both Professor S and myself. Together, we were students of the scholarship of teaching.

The next day, I took Professor S's assignment to our weekly Writing Fellow's meeting. I wanted to share the assignment with the other fellows and with our WAC coordinator to make sure I was raising valid concerns and to seek advice for sharing them with Professor S. As the assignment went around the table, the pens came out, just as mine had at home, and then the conversation began. The group agreed that the assignment was too lengthy and confusing. They made several other suggestions for wording and clarity. Linda, our coordinator, suggested that I present these issues using the same lens that I had used to discover them: the eyes of a student. This was another key moment for our collaboration.

Between the Spaces—Professional Development

An integral part of the success of fellow/faculty collaborations is the support network offered by the other fellows and the coordinator. The group serves as a sounding board for each member. In the space of our conference room, the fellows are able to share and generate ideas, thereby constantly reflecting on and learning the principles of WAC while also honing their pedagogical philosophies. The group discussions also provide the fellows with strategies for navigating sensitive situations with faculty tactfully and professionally. These elements of the fellowship not only affect the collaborations under discussion, but should also have an impact on future collaborations that will take place when the fellows move on and become members of the professoriate. It is expected that as a result of the fellowship they will be more attuned to the needs of their colleagues and better able to collaborate in positive and productive ways.

The advice worked. I told Professor S that I had tried to do the assignment, and as a student, I arrived at several puzzling points. Not unlike an undergraduate writing mentor, my perspective as a student in this class enabled me to “embody and give voice to the internal dialogue in which students are engaged, uniquely articulating for instructors what students and mentors are experiencing” (Mullin et al., 2008, p. 3).

To my relief, Professor S was receptive and agreed that the assignment needed to be revised. He gave me the go-ahead to make whatever revisions seemed necessary. This was another defining moment in our collaboration. I realized that Professor S valued my role as a consultant for his course. At that moment, I knew for certain that I was not perceived as an intruder into his work and classroom. But his comfort in letting me take the reins in the revision of the assignment was problematic. On the one hand, I didn't mind taking the initiative because he was invested in the changes I suggested and he realized they would make his assignment better. On the other hand, I was concerned that I was taking on the greater burden of work in our collaboration. I came to see that this very concern and the ways in which Professor S and I negotiated the workload and the responsibilities of our project are essential components of the fellow/faculty dynamic. Though at times I felt as if I was

completing too much of the grunt work, I also had to remember to draw on my role as a liminal figure in academia and recognize why the balance in workload would sometimes tip. Professor S was teaching a full course load and still managed to meet with me an hour or two each week to discuss the goals and plans for his assignment. Part of what made my function as a Writing Fellow so valuable to Professor S was that I was able to help him give concrete form to projects he might not have the time to address. He would often say that he enjoyed our collaboration because I understood his vision for the class and was able to put it on paper.

I read through the packet and developed a draft of a revised assignment. I managed to transform the project from a perplexing assignment to one that was clearly presented and provided a space for the students to explore and write about the discipline of history. Not only did the revision group together and clarify the most pertinent information such as due dates and requirements, but it also explained to students why they were completing the project and how it connected to their course work in history. Students knew not only what they needed to do but also why they were doing it. In this way, Professor S did not keep his goals and intentions a secret; knowing what their professor wanted them to get out of this assignment also created more student interest in doing it.

Other Voices/Other Spaces

“By meeting with the students regularly and occasionally attending class, I became an intermediary between the students and the professor. This was helpful to everyone involved. The students got extra help breaking down a writing assignment; the professor could work with someone who could share the students’ collective concerns about the writing assignment; and I had the opportunity to reinforce and demonstrate WAC writing methods that were helpful to both students and faculty.”

Dorinda Tetens, Writing Fellow

After collaborating for several weeks, we produced an assignment that Professor S felt confident handing out to his students and of which I was proud to have been a part. I also had the opportunity to tutor some of his students who were working on the paper. I observed that while there were still points of confusion with the assignment, they usually resulted from students not reading the whole packet. In tutoring sessions, I played the role of both teacher and learner. I showed the students how to approach the assignment, but I was also learning how they viewed and understood the assignment, an opportunity that professors do not often have. This is one of a Writing Fellow’s most valuable roles. In working closely with a professor and his/her class, we not only develop assignments, but are also able to see firsthand how our work ultimately affects students. Fellows can serve as welcome go-betweens, enabling professors to hone assignments to more effectively communicate with their students and gain perspective on how theory aligns with practice.

Between the Spaces—the Flux

While the fellows' experiences evidence the dialogic nature of these collaborations (Bakhtin, 1982), it is often the fellow who initiates the process. These relationships bear witness to the effectiveness of an ongoing dialogue between Writing Fellow and professor, in which participants take turns assuming the role of learner and teacher. Andrea's narrative demonstrates how slippery and fluid these roles can become. As a Writing Fellow who assumed the stance of student, she was able to help Professor S recognize the limitations of his assignment in meeting his goals. Yet at the same time that she was student, she was also teacher to Professor S's student while he still retained his stance as teacher/expert of the discipline. In these and other collaborations between faculty and fellow, we often observed participants assume multiple roles simultaneously.

The novice/expert relationship between professor and fellow is thus always in flux, and perhaps that is what makes it so successful. Neither party is pressured to stay in an assigned role. Each one assumes the role of learner and teacher at different times and to varying degrees as their interactions inform the contributions of the other. This relationship can often be confusing, and both faculty and fellow reflected an unease and uncertainty as to the role they should play viz. the fellow. Yet it is this very tension that pushes both parties to recognize and challenge the factors that shape their thinking.

Professor B: The Collaboration

From my work with Professor S, I learned that the dialogic approach to collaboration is "the first step in developing the mutual respect necessary to generating the reciprocity that marks a successful mentoring relationship" (Mullin et al., 2008, p. 5). When working with Professor B 1 year later, this dialogic method of collaboration enabled her to articulate many goals and plans for her course. Like Professor S, one of Professor B's central plans for the course was to have students recognize that even though history happened in the past, it still has relevance to our current society. She wanted students to use writing to acquire a sense of the cultural shifts that take place in history and their connections to our present day. For Professor B, writing was a means to gain knowledge, to work through concepts, and to create ideas.

The first assignment she set out to design was an analysis of the Salem Witch trials. Her aim was for students to come away with more than the knowledge that a community had falsely accused many of its members of witchcraft but that they understand the different cultural and social issues that contributed to this tragedy. How to accomplish this was the problem.

We began to brainstorm. She wanted to bring in something besides the textbook. Her interest in working with a variety of sources indicated that she valued voice.

For her students to become better writers and students of history, they needed to be aware that history, while often condensed into single textbooks, is not univocal. She wanted her students to hear and shape other voices and perspectives in their study and analysis of history. Hostos Writing Fellow Dave Pier has noted, “Intertextual reading—understanding how a text fits in or clashes with other texts—may be the most important intellectual skill students can develop in our information overload age. When class readings are taken exclusively from a single, authoritative textbook, students get no practice in comparing sources that coexist in an open, intellectual market” (Pier, 2008, p. 4).

Our conversation ricocheted back and forth. Perhaps we could have students read another article or book? Maybe they would benefit from some sort of documentary or movie? After a lively discussion about all of the possible ways students could engage with the concepts of the Salem Witch trials, we decided on a reading of Arthur Miller’s drama, *The Crucible*, along with a viewing of the 1996 film version directed by Nicholas Hytner. Students would be required to look for points of comparison/contrast with these artistic renderings and other textual materials they were reading, which would enable them to view the event through the multiple perspectives of the law, the church, the women, and the townspeople. This vision for the assignment was the product of our first meeting.

I walked away energized. In less than 60 minutes we had identified a goal for the course and devised a way to achieve it. In this collaboration, it was no longer obvious who was the fellow and who was the faculty, since we had such an open and balanced discussion of the material. Because we were thinking of a new assignment and not revising an existing one, I did not have the same sense of uneasiness about making suggestions. Professor B invited them, and I was more than happy to provide ideas.

Writing took on new meaning for Professor B, not only in her assignments but also in their generation. Unlike my previous collaboration, in this partnership I did not go home, draft an assignment, and then wait anxiously as she looked it over. Instead we each went home, drafted assignments, compared notes, and generated an assignment that reflected both of our ideas and contributions. Not only did Professor B teach her students to hear the many voices in history, but she also valued the product of our voices in collaboration.

Our first co-authored draft of the Salem assignment asked students to summarize the text’s major points regarding the causes of the witch scare and compare these points with those addressed in the film. Professor B realized that we needed to guide students in film analysis since this was a task with which they had little experience. She was able to anticipate the problems her students would encounter because she was able to put herself in their place. Again, perspective was important to her. She approached the design of an assignment in a way that assured that students had the tools to meet her goals. Professor B sat at her computer drafting assignments and making revisions while we spoke. When working with Professor S, very little of the actual revision and writing took place during our meetings, but Professor B saw composition as an integral part of our work. Because this catalytic process took place in her office, with both of us contributing to creation and revision of the work,

I felt no uneasiness about critiquing her assignments. Our conversations always felt more like fellow to fellow instead of fellow to professor. She already knew what she wanted to teach and the role writing would play in this endeavor. I was a sounding board, not a guide. We would discuss an idea for an assignment, and she would write it and e-mail it to me within 2 days for suggestions for revision.

My collaborations with Professor S and Professor B were in many ways very different, partly because of their divergent personalities, pedagogies, and practices, but also because they represent two very different points in time on the continuum of my development and growth as a Writing Fellow and as an educator. While I was working with Professor S, I was a novice learning the ropes of working with faculty, understanding WAC pedagogy, and defining my role as a fellow. Professor S's willingness to welcome me into the revision process of his research assignment enabled me to have a clearer understanding of the relationship between project goals, assignment design, and the student's understanding and needs. Working with Professor S to bring the revision of his assignment to fruition taught me to be consistently aware of the transformative potential of an assignment to create tension and oftentimes confusion between a professor's expectations and a student's understanding. As a Writing Fellow, it was part of my responsibility to work with the faculty member to design an assignment that would instead transform the professor's expectations into meaningful opportunities for students to think, write, and learn. The collaboration with Professor S helped me to progress as a Writing Fellow so that when it came time for me to meet with Professor B, I had a clearer understanding of my role as a consultant in the fellow/faculty dynamic, which in turn enabled me to more confidently contribute to the collaboration as an expert.

Between the Spaces—the Fellow's Unique Perspective

As previously discussed, the CUNY Writing Fellows occupy a unique position in academia. Neither peers nor TAs nor tutors, they are both graduate students and teaching faculty on their way to becoming scholars. While supported by CUNY, they belong to no official administrative area on their assigned campuses. Yet this outsider stance, including their unfamiliarity with many of the disciplines with which they work, enables the Writing Fellow to provide an original perspective, or as one fellow said, "a fresh eye," unencumbered by preconceived notions but informed by the academic and life experience of a knowledgeable graduate student.

Through their interactions with students, we have observed how fellows are able to share with faculty their insider's view as to how students are learning and responding to assignments. By attending professors' classes, the fellows not only glean faculty expectations but are themselves placed in the role of learners of the discipline experiencing the dual roles of novice/expert but practiced enough to more readily discern problems with assignments they must now fulfill.

What Have We Learned?

As their Writing Fellow, I had provided both Professor S and Professor B, two very distinct personalities, with the opportunity to brainstorm with someone who had been guided to effectively use writing in the discipline and who recognized that as much as the role of student and teacher shifts during the fellow–professor interaction, the professor is the expert of the discipline. Though at certain moments I was able to be the writing guru I had envisioned in my first days as a fellow, I was always observing and learning how to be a professor and researcher focusing on the effect pedagogy has on student learning.

In the end, even though Professor B and Professor S worked on the exact same course, they produced two completely different syllabi. Both adhered to the Hostos WI Guidelines, but their courses were similar only in content and the use of writing as a means of teaching and learning. Both collaborations produced assignments that creatively and thoughtfully allowed students to analyze and interpret history, and both professors are still incorporating WAC into their courses and overall pedagogical approaches.

Transforming Pedagogies: Professor S

The refinement of the research project was one of the major successes of the collaboration with Professor S. Yet as our work ended, I ruefully recognized that I had not accomplished all of my goals and that Professor S' shifts in pedagogy would go only so far. Though he had gained increased awareness of the need for clarity and goals in assignment, his definition of "writing" was still different from mine. For Professor S, writing was always a finished product, a means of demonstrating knowledge rather than a vehicle for creating it. When I brought up the idea of ungraded, "writing-to-learn" assignments, he voiced his concern that this type of writing would not serve his students in the long term. He felt the inclusion of these practices set up false expectations of what is acceptable writing in the professional world. He believed his weekly summaries were sufficient writing-to-learn assignments even though they were expected to be polished pieces that articulated a student's complete understanding of the text. He resisted suggestions that called for writing that allowed students to respond to difficult concepts or ideas raised in class by "thinking aloud" on paper. I remained discouraged that I was unable to develop this aspect of the course. Yet while these pedagogical issues remained unresolved, in working with the Hostos WAC Initiative and a Writing Fellow, Professor S became more aware of his own pedagogical practices and sensitive to the need to create coherent and effective assignments. Our collaboration thus attained one of the Hostos WAC Initiative's major goals—a transformative effect on a professor's pedagogy. Professor S played an important role in brainstorming ideas for assignments, but as the fellow, the WAC expert, I composed most of them. Though this was initially worrisome, through my modeling of more effective assignments, Professor S was able to internalize much of the work we had done together and could ultimately

create it on his own. To date, he has developed five WI sections and has plans for working on a sixth.

In retrospect, we recognize that any genuine shift in pedagogy, including WAC, is a process that takes time and requires willingness on the part of faculty to reevaluate their own biases and beliefs about teaching and learning and to move beyond them. At the start of this chapter we stated that the Writing Fellowship program is intrinsically one of transformation. Yet if faculty members are not willing to become learners and revisit and revise their approaches to teaching, there is very little chance that any meaningful and substantial pedagogical shifts will occur. Though Professor B and Professor S differed in many respects in their approaches to incorporating writing into their classes, they both welcomed new perspectives and ideas, and it is this openness that made both collaborations successful. In the three semesters I worked with Professor S, he made major changes in his pedagogical approach. The reflections of other fellows who continued to work with him after my fellowship concluded indicate that he became more receptive to expanding the kinds of writing activities he provided students.

In my work with Professor S, the triangulation of the classroom, his office, and weekly meetings with the fellows and our coordinator led to the transformation of all three spaces. Professor S's course became more than a series of tasks designed to test the students' knowledge. It became a well-plotted map designed to make students aware of his vision for them and for the course, and it provided them with the means to reach these goals. These changes in the classroom occurred because of the conversations that took place in the office. Professor S became increasingly cognizant of why he was asking his students to complete certain assignments. The catalyst for this transformation was the collaboration that took place in the meetings of the fellows and coordinator. Through the guidance, support, and multiple perspectives offered by my WAC coordinator and fellow graduate students, I developed a sharper eye for the strengths and weaknesses of a course and/or assignment and learned how to effectively and collegially collaborate with faculty, abilities that were transforming and shaping me, as well as the other fellows, into the teachers we would become once we left the program.

Transforming Professional Identities: Professor B

Other Voices/Other Spaces—Beyond the Fellowship

“In general, my experiences as a new WF have been very positive . . . When I begin teaching again, I will be a much better instructor—certainly one more open to sharing my work with colleagues for critique—due to my experiences with WAC. Furthermore, my approach will include less rigor in correcting grammar and mechanics and more in looking for clear expressions of ideas and arrangement of arguments.”

Paul McBreen, Writing Fellow

Before working with Professor B, I was concerned that I would be merely duplicating the work that I had done with Professor S since we would be working on the same course, but I was mistaken. As part of my professional development as a fellow along with my own emerging professional identity, I was learning that the key to working effectively in a collaboration is to recognize that every partnership is different. This was one of the most difficult aspects of my fellowship to negotiate, but the one that prepared me the most for entering the professoriate. As I continued to work with faculty, I came to realize that each collaboration is a space, and like a room, each comes with different views, points of entry, and parameters. Part of being an effective fellow and colleague is being aware of the qualities of the collaborative space and devising a template for navigating it.

Throughout my collaboration with Professor B, I often felt as if my role and presence were not really necessary. I couldn't see why she needed me there. She had most of the ideas for the assignments, and she was willing and ready to write them herself. Yet as we continued our work together, I came to understand why she wanted to work with a fellow. In this relationship, I was both teacher and student, but mostly facilitator. While as a Writing Fellow I often functioned as a "teaching mirror, reflecting back the interior dialogue often not expressed by students" (Mullin et al., 2008, p. 5), my experience as a graduate student with college-level teaching experience, and our shared backgrounds as Writing Fellows, enabled me to contribute more than the student's viewpoint. I was bringing three perspectives into our collaborative space: student, teacher, and fellow. My presence provided an answer to the question I have come to believe many professors wish they could have answered on a regular basis, "So what do you think?"

Professor B provided me with an example of a successful assistant professor with qualities I could emulate. She was a specialist in her discipline, an eager and energetic teacher, and a willing student of pedagogy. She saw the value of collaboration, of discipline-specific writing, and of revision. Watching her grapple with these aspects of her course demonstrated how openness to ideas and theories enriches the teaching experience for the professor and the learning experience for the students. Professor B also knew exactly what she wanted her class to accomplish, and her vision for her history class was engaging, challenging, and alive with rich opportunities for learning through writing. As a Writing Fellow, my job was not only to encourage a reluctant faculty member, but also to know when to hold back when a professor takes the reins. There was no need to feel I wasn't doing enough; the success of our collaboration was right before my eyes.

Now a new faculty member myself, I believe that Professor B's stance as a recent hire also contributed to her dynamic role. She was excited about her class and eager to experiment. She had not yet had the time to become accustomed to working alone. Though she was the teacher in the collaboration, she was still an enthusiastic student, wanting to learn more about WAC and using writing and history to enable her students to become better learners. It was valuable for me to work with a newly hired faculty member because I viewed the professoriate as my next step after the fellowship. Our work together, like my work with Professor S, served as a model for my own pedagogy.

Between the Spaces—Joining the Professional Community

A major contribution of CUNY's Writings Fellows/WAC program is its anticipated long-lasting effects on pedagogy for both faculty and fellows. Both acquire comprehension of and experience with WAC principles and practices. A number of professors go on to produce additional WIs incorporating formal as well as informal writing assignments and improving their responses to student writing. Fellows who continue with academic careers report a comfort with using writing in their classrooms and a greater tendency to do so. These transformations will have profound effects on the future of the profession and academia.

Andrea observes how her work as a fellow has enhanced her empathy and taught her to look through the eyes of the other people in the room. As a fellow, she observed firsthand how much teaching is enriched when a professor is receptive to learning. The faculty we work with model a willingness to reevaluate and revise course goals as well as how to best implement them. They either explicitly or implicitly ask themselves, "What can I do to make my students learn better and to make this class better?" The opportunity to read another professor's assignments and to talk about his/her goals, allows fellows to reexamine their own teaching. Andrea, now a professor at Hostos, continues to use the questions she developed for Professor S when developing her own course materials. Other fellows note how they revise essay assignments that they hand out to students for greater clarity. Working so closely on the revision of formal assignments, they report a greater tendency to view assignments through a student's eyes and are more likely to clearly state an assignment's goal, along with instructions for how to complete it.

Writing Fellows have the privilege and unique vantage point of seeing all that is lost in the translation from a professor's brilliant idea to the student's complete state of confusion. When making a case for an academic culture that values teaching, Lee Shulman (1993) observes, "We could begin to look as seriously at evidence of teaching abilities as we do at research productivity. We could no longer have merely to pray that this good young scholar can educate. We would have evidence of his or her abilities as an educator in the disciplines" (p. 7). The reciprocal discussions between faculty and fellow explore approaches to teaching and learning. As fellows and professors make this work visible through publications and presentations, they contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning in meaningful ways.

The Writing Fellowship program exposes both fellow and faculty to the philosophy and study of pedagogy. Looking through the lens of both teacher and learner produces stronger teaching and richer learning; navigating both roles defines a Writing Fellow.

Conclusion: Transforming Future Collaborations

Other Voices/Other Spaces

“Though the role of the Writing Fellow is not always clearly defined, it does provide Ph.D. students with the opportunity to work with faculty as a faculty member. In contrast to being an adjunct, Writing Fellows work more deeply within the structure of the college, providing an invaluable experience for doctoral students to understand the more complex aspects of academia including the dimensions of faculty responsibilities and advancing curricular change. WAC and the Writing Fellowship provide a rare experience of professional development that adjuncting simply cannot provide.”

John Sorrentino, Writing Fellow

Andrea’s story depicts how she learned to be a colleague and how the Writing Fellow experience profoundly affected her own teaching and future career. She and her peers came to recognize the Writing Fellowship as an opportunity to learn the “academic ropes,” ranging from getting courses approved by college-wide governance bodies to balancing the demands of teaching and research. Her narrative also reveals the tensions, challenges, and successes inherent in the faculty/fellow relationship. Her experiences, along with those of the other fellows over the 10 years of the WAC Initiative, indicate that there is no single model of a successful collaboration between faculty and fellow. While Professor S may have been more passive in the generation of ideas and assignments than Professor B, he was no less invested in the project. The varying levels of passivity and activity evidenced by faculty member are not the sole measure of success in the collaboration, and we have experienced successful partnerships with faculty and fellows of widely varying personalities and backgrounds.

Other Voices/Other Spaces

“In the end, I found that writing-across-the-curriculum issues in the content-focused classroom vary from discipline to discipline and even from course to course, but the imagination and flexibility displayed by the Professors I collaborated with made me realize that there is no one answer to all of these questions.”

Kathy Harris, Writing Fellow

Yet certain features do appear to enhance the relationship. Fellows’ weekly meetings with the WAC Coordinator and other fellows plus weekly meetings with faculty partners lent support to each. Oftentimes, fellows credited “just showing up” as instrumental to their success while their meetings with the coordinator gave them

the strategies they needed. While faculty also attended professional development workshops, close collaboration with fellows seemed pivotal. Fellows too had to confront and resolve issues related to their status in the collaboration. Some had greater difficulty in not being viewed as peers by professors and resented what they perceived as a diminishment of their professional identities. Defining themselves vis-à-vis faculty and/or accepting their ambiguous roles was an important step in their development and satisfaction.

The debate in the literature as to whether fellows should be generalists or specialists in a discipline (Gladstein, 2008; Mullin et al., 2008; Zawacki, 2008) is a less pressing concern with fellows who are graduate students. Representing a broad range of academic disciplines and having completed work well beyond the BA/BS levels, the CUNY fellows had fewer struggles with unfamiliar academic disciplines and undergraduate work in general. Whatever they did not know, they were able to pick up rather quickly by attending the classes taught by their faculty partners. The only exceptions were advanced courses in math, biology, or chemistry, which proved daunting and led to the need to assign fellows familiar with this material.

The collaborations described here and the insights gleaned from the experiences of other Writing Fellows illustrate the transformative potential of the faculty/fellow collaboration. Ultimately, the success of the collaboration requires certain interpersonal and academic skills to ensure a productive relationship and seems dependent on the participants' adaptability in moving between novice/expert positions. As the partnership gains momentum, the assumed roles of teacher/student begin to blend, giving way to a new learning space in which there is no one teacher and learner. Fellow and faculty learn from each other, pedagogical changes occur, and a course is reimagined and reconceptualized. New spaces for reading, writing, and thinking emerge. As the narratives reveal, the liminal, shifting, flexible nature of the faculty/fellow collaboration is the engine of pedagogical transformation.

References

- Bakhtin, M. M. (1982). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin: The University of Texas Press.
- Bass, R. (1999). The scholarship of teaching: What's the problem? *Inventio*, 1, 1.
- Fulwiler, T. (1983). Why we teach writing in the first place. In P. L. Stock (Ed.), *FFORUM: essays on theory & practice in the teaching of writing* (pp. 113–125). Upper Mont Clair: Boynton Cook.
- Gladstein, J. (2008, March 29). Conducting research in the gray space: How writing associates negotiate between WAC and WID in an introductory biology course [special issue on Writing Fellows]. *Across the Disciplines*, 5. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/fellows/gladstein.cfm>.
- Haring-Smith, T. (1992). Changing students' attitudes: Writing fellows program. In S. H. McLeod & M. Soven (Eds.), *Writing across the curriculum: A guide to developing programs* (pp. 123–131). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hirsch, L. (1988). Language across the curriculum: A model for ESL students in content classes. In S. Benesch (Ed.), *Ending remediation: Linking ESL and content in education* (pp. 67–89). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

- Leahy, R. (1999). When a writing center undertakes a writing fellows program. In R. W. Barnett & J. S. Blummer (Eds.), *Writing centers and writing across the curriculum programs* (pp. 71–88). Westport CT: Greenwood Press.
- Mullin, J., Schorn, S., Turner, T., Hertz, R., Davidson, D., & Baca, A. (2008, March 29). Challenging our practices, supporting our theories: Writing mentors as change agents across discourse communities [Special Issue on Writing Fellows]. *Across the Disciplines*, 5. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/fellows/mullin.cfm>.
- Pier, D. (2008). Turning gobblers into gourmets. *From the Writing Desk*. Hostos Community College/CUNY, pp. 4–5.
- Shaughnessy, M. P. (1976). Diving in: An introduction to basic writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 27, 234–239.
- Shulman, L. S. (1993). Teaching as community property. *Change*, 25, 6–7.
- Soven, M. (2001). Curriculum-based peer tutors and WAC. In S. H. McLeod, E. Miraglia, M. Soven, & C. Thaiss (Eds.) *WAC for the new millennium: Strategies for continuing writing across the curriculum programs* (pp. 200–232). Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Thaiss, C., & Zawacki, T. M. (2006). *Engaged writers, dynamic disciplines: Research on the academic writing life*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Zawacki, T. M. (2008, March 29). Writing fellows as WAC change agents: Changing what? Changing whom? Changing how? [Special Issue on Writing Fellows]. *Across The Disciplines*, 5. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/fellows/zawacki.cfm>.