

The Writing Program Retreats, 2007-2014: A Flavor

Doug Hesse
Executive Director of Writing



The University of Denver Writing Program began in September 2006, and in September 2007, it had its first annual retreat, at the Boettcher Mansion, on Lookout Mountain. Every year since, some 21-27 program faculty have met for a day to discuss ideas that filled a larger time canvas than was afforded by usual faculty meetings—even the two-hour weekly meetings held throughout the fall quarter. We’ve gone to Golden several times, to a downtown hotel once, and stayed on campus twice, in years of fallow budgets. In 2015, we’re headed to shore of Lake Evergreen. Gathered here are various announcements, schedules, activities and artifacts from over the years. These aren’t a complete representation but, rather, what was quick at hand. Still, they give a flavor. Thanks to Lauren Salvador for helping put things together. --DH

University of Denver Writing Program
<http://www.du.edu/writing>
dhesse@du.edu | 303-871-7448

Writing Program Retreat

Tuesday, September 4

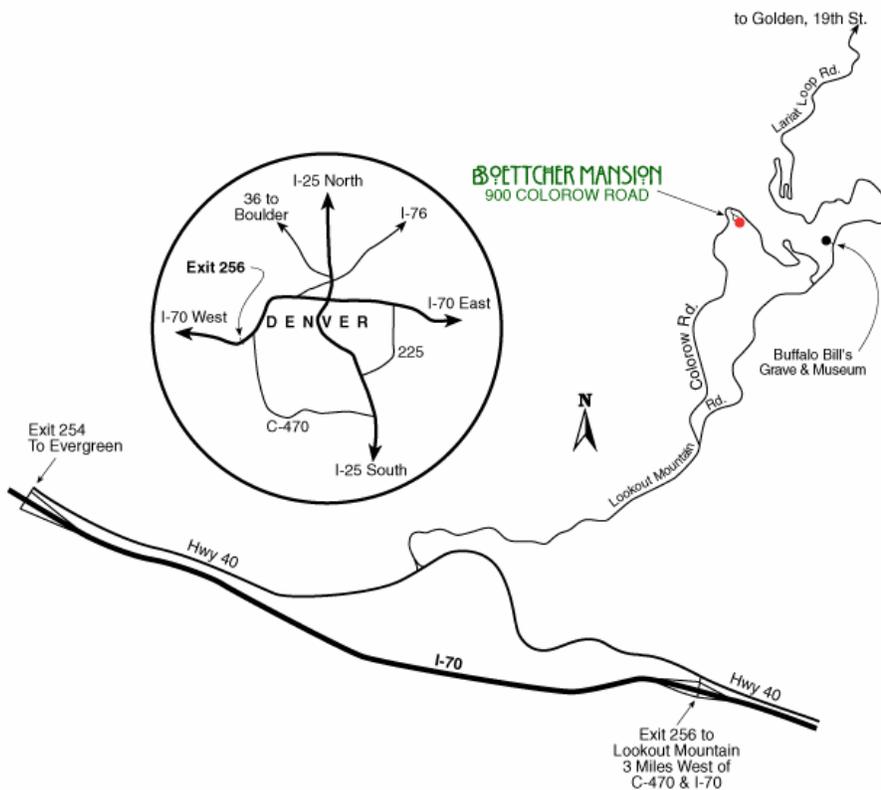
Boettcher Mansion

Lookout Mountain

Schedule

- 8:30 Continental Breakfast
- 9:00 Mapping Exercise (Eliana and Alba)
- 9:30 Idea generating: How best to use times together in the fall
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Discussion of Professional Service Roles
- Noon Lunch, followed by free time, walks, etc.
- 1:15 Reflections on the first year, inspired by student writing
- 2:15 Break
- 2:30 Time for individual writing and looking ahead
- 3:00 Sharing ideas
- 3:30 Retreat is finished. Trails, Nature Center, Buffalo Bill gift shop, etc. on your own.

For information on Boettcher Mansion, see <http://jeffco.us/boettcher/index.htm>



The Mansion is located at the Lookout Mountain Nature Preserve just 20 minutes west of downtown Denver. The address is 900 Colorow Road, Golden, Colorado 80401.

From Denver ~

Take I-25 to 6th Avenue west; 6th Avenue to I-70 west; I-70 to exit #256 (Lookout Mountain/Buffalo Bill exit). Follow large brown signs for about four miles.

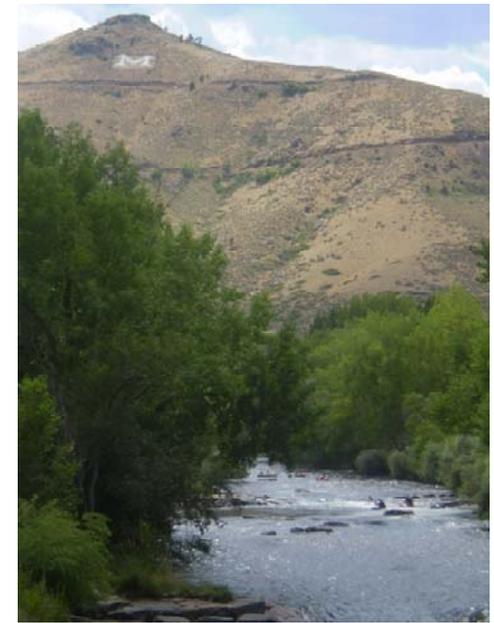
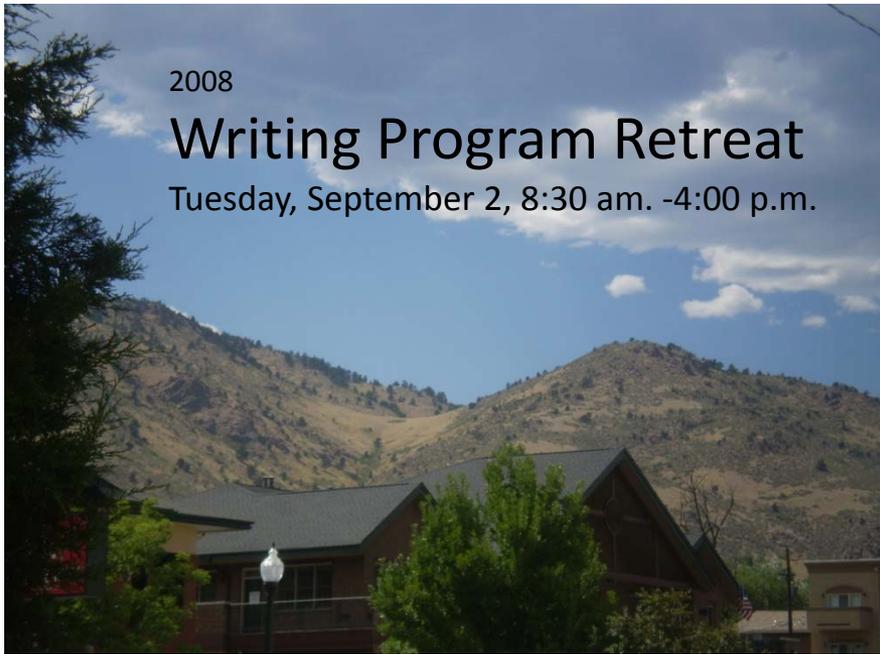
Phone: 303-526-0855

Doug's Cell: 309-287-8960

2008

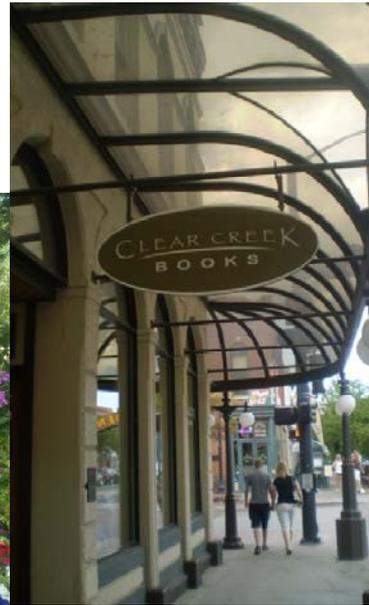
Writing Program Retreat

Tuesday, September 2, 8:30 am. -4:00 p.m.



University of Denver

...details to follow



American Mountaineering Center
Washington and 10th Street, Golden

Writing Program Retreat

September 2008

American Mountaineering Center
10th and Washington, Golden, CO

8:30-9:00 Light Breakfast available

9:00 Picture Show.
Everyone invited to submit one image or one PowerPoint slide that conveys something of their summer. Submissions to Doug by noon, 9/1, who will compile them. We'll project; folks can narrate. 1 minute per slide!

9:30-11:15 *Inventio*. How do we best imagine the writing program at age 5?

[It is fall 2011, and the writing program wants to make the case for more resources, based on how well it has accomplished its mission. What are things that the program points to as signs of its success and promise?]

11:30-12:30 Lunch at Table Mountain Inn

1:00-2:30 *Dispositio*. What structures and practices best achieve our goals and vision?

[Before you is a list of the committees and initiatives that organized our work in 2007-2008. What is vital, what is not? What is missing? What will characterize the successful workings of these structures and practices?]

2:45-4:00 *Pronunciato*. What professional identities and roles will I happily have in 3 years?

[Part 1. Imagine yourself professionally three years from now. What are you doing that keeps you professionally and intellectually vital? That supports/enacts a career you find satisfying and sustaining? Part 2: Share #1 with a partner or a group and get feedback impressions on the following question: In what ways is this personal vision concordant and discordant with ideas generated through the *Inventio* and *Dispositio* exercises?]

--Doug Hesse

September 2
Writing Program Retreat Overview

Morning Menu—9:00-12:15

Sound Saute

Alba and David will lead a hands-on workshop in recording sound, editing it, and uploading the results to portfolio.

Video Vichysoisse

Jennifer² will lead a hands-on workshop in recording video, editing it, and uploading the results to portfolio.

Barbecued Broadside

Doug will lead a hands-on workshop in designing works that incorporate words and images, in Word, PPT, and Publisher.



Choose 2 entrees, one for the 9:00 to 10:30 slot, one for the 10:45 to 12:15 slot. Each workshop will be limited to 7 participants. (We will reprise them during the fall.)

Unmetaphorical Lunch—12:15-1:00

Catered in Chez Chan

Floor Show—1:00-1:30

We invite participants to share results from their morning efforts.

Pure MSG—1:30-3:00

The Multimodal Study Group presents its August work, culminating in the new recommended course goals and features. We'll then break into small groups to share ideas, including possible assignments and strategies. We'll also survey our collective experience and expertise.

Retiring to the Drawing Room—3:00-4:00

Broad discussion of the broad position of multimodality in composition studies. What are arguments for and against—and in what circumstances?

Cigars—4:00-4:30

Looking ahead to fall, with committees and projects.

See the back for more details
about the morning workshops

September 8, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

I'm writing with information about the Writing Program's first week of activities in what, for 20/23rds of us, is the beginning of our fifth fall together.

In the Gnomon of the Retreat

The university continues to proscribe off-campus retreats. I had identified external funding to pay for a substantial portion of an off-campus event, but even that option got vetoed. I discussed this situation with the steering committee, and we decided that there would be more productive events than an all-day, on-campus retreat. Therefore we will meet from noon to 3:00 on Tuesday, September 14, for our initial gathering. Let's meet in the Mountain View Conference Room of Ruffatto Hall. Ruffatto is the new College of Education building on Evans Avenue, diagonally across from Jerusalem.

Let's do a slide show again! Please send me one PowerPoint slide that conveys a corner of "What I did on my summer vacation." Send by Monday, 9/13, 10 pm.

Fall Professional Service

You'll recall in May that, instead of assignments coming centrally from me or the steering committee, this fall lecturers will propose their own professional service projects/activities. Please send those to me by the end of the day Thursday, September 16; a sentence or few, in email, will be sufficient. Folks teaching FSEM: your professional service will almost certainly simply be, "I am teaching a section of FSEM." Folks working in/with/through the Writing Center will almost certainly write, "I am working in the Writing Center, where I plan to X, Y, Z." A description of the fall service initiative is included in a document on the program's portfolio site, "DU Writing Program Teaching and Annual Review Process 2010-11."

During our Tuesday meeting, there will be time available for people to share ideas for fall professional service. You can individually decide whether you want to share or not. Possibilities: suppose you have a project in mind that would work better if you had a collaborator or two; you can pitch your idea on Tuesday and recruit folks. Or suppose you have an idea but would simply like some feedback; here's a chance to hear from your colleagues. Or maybe you just want to explain your cool idea.

Fall Committees

All committees should plan to meet on Thursday, September 16. Chairs will arrange the time and place. The steering committee has determined fall priorities, and we'll communicate them before the meetings.

Doug

An Afternoon of Writing

Writing Program "Retreat"
September 14, 2010
Morgridge College of Education
Doug Hesse, Instigator

Noon-12:30	My summer vacation Looking forward
12:30-1:15	Writing on prompt 1, followed by sharing in small group
1:15-1:30	Break
1:30-2:15	Writing on prompt 2, followed by sharing in small group
2:15-2:30	Break
2:30-3:00	Reading

Choose one of the following prompts. Write for thirty minutes.

That Alley behind the Drug Store

All of us have memories of places that have been significant to us in our lives. Maybe it was a grandmother's house, or the kitchen where we learned to cook, or the study where we wrote our first book, or a beloved garden, or a home we had to leave but were sorry to do so. For your next writing, recall a place that has been significant to you at some point in your life. It could be in your childhood, or more recently—a place you've worked, or lived, a place you find yourself returning to in memory or dreams. Recreate that place for us, making clear in what you write why and how this place is or has been important to you. Take us there.

Our Endings are Our Beginnings

We experience endings: the end of a relationship, the end of a period in our lives, or the end of a life. Sometimes we don't know how to go on or what will come next. Write about a time when you experienced something ending. It might be from long ago or last week. List some possible topics. Then choose one and write a piece that puts us there. Give us a filmable scene, maybe a half hour late one afternoon. What food was on the table? What was the light like? What happened? What did someone say? How was this also a beginning? See where the writing takes you.

Objects that Evoke

In *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, Sherry Turkle writes, "We find it familiar to consider objects as useful or aesthetic, as necessities or vain indulgences. We're on less familiar ground when we consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought. . . . We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with." Her book, then, consists of short essays, mostly narrative and memoir and reflection, in which people write about a personally evocative object. Perhaps even something mundane or easily overlooked, these objects mark a relationship (to people, ideas, places, or times) or they mix intellect and emotion. They evoke. Turkle's authors write about cellos and rolling pins, bracelets and slime mold, a yellow raincoat, a stuffed bunny, the Melbourne train. Here's an invitation to write about an evocative object of your own.

How Many Questions Does a Cat Have?

Can you produce a sustained piece of writing entirely in questions? Who would you be questioning? Why? Would you ask about things seen or things unseen, desired or feared? Would baseball come up? Would Tom Tancredo? Where would these questions lead? Whose house would they pass by? Whose music would be playing? What if you actually asked the questions? Would my mother like the answers? Are you brave enough to try? Why did Pablo Neruda write *The Book of Questions*?

Venturing Back

Think through the past four years at DU. What have been the times you have been most energized and excited? Pick one of them or, maybe two, if you absolutely must and write about that time. Set the scene as richly as you can, trying to recreate what it was that energized you. Then think of times when you've been depleted. Pick one or two and write about it, richly recreating. If you have time, what do you make of these two writings?

Four Years Forward

It's four years from now, and everything has worked out in the best possible fashion in whatever aspect of life you'd like to imagine. What's the situation? What happened to bring everything about? Tell the story of those next four years—or at least the portion on which you're focusing—narrating specific scenes and events that were pivotal in your getting there.

The Future of Composition

It's 2015. After several years of rich intellectual debate about the nature of composition studies—including the future of writing in a digital age, the nature of first year composition courses, the most pressing research questions, among others—the field is finally reaching some resolution. In fact, your work in those intervening years has contributed to this situation, so much so that you've been asked to explain your perspective on one or more facets of composition studies. Congratulations! Begin to draft your remarks.

--Doug Hesse

Writing Program Retreat

September 1, 2011

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Table Mountain Inn





A Clay Street Marvel -- dh



Writing Retreat
Table Mountain Inn, Golden
September 1, 2011

Sliding
☞
Tidings
☞
Readings
☞
Soliciting
☞
Lunching
☞
Expertising
☞
Desserting
☞
Committing
☞
Wrapping
☞
Libating
☞

Questions from the Writing Program Retreat

September 1, 2011 in Golden

Collated by Amy, Organized by Doug

Curricular Questions

1. What is it I'm trying to teach? How can I better assess my success as a writing instructor?
2. I wish I could help students understand how writing will be important after their first year and after college.
3. I wish students saw the value of 1122 like they see the value in 1133. Research seems to equate to more important while 1122 equates to high school writing.
4. How are we perceived by other faculty and administrators—because my sense is that we're doing great and are perceived as great—and I wonder if they expect/want these additional forms of outreach—for whom are we doing this? For ourselves—which is totally good—it just crosses my mind sometimes—I personally like the outreach—but sometimes I hear outside faculty surprised that we do it, and without tenure, I guess, what are the stakes?
5. Seniors in 1133. I had another senior in 33 this year, and he was, I think, the first to complete the course. With a C-. Is it worth investigating the creation of a course that helps meet their needs? Or, tough luck, senior, should have taken care of this four years ago?
6. Things to be solved at DU: sustainable programs to support international students. I am curious as to whether and how, this will be implemented beyond our collective goodwill.
7. I wish I had the answer to how I can better balance time with international students vs. native speakers, and whether international students should be graded on a curve or asked to “sink or swim.”

Expanding Purview

8. Hmm... I guess the question that lingers for me is how we as a program can expand our scope to work with more advanced, older students—that is—as much as I enjoy working with our first-year students, I continue to wonder how we might create opportunities like some of the ones we just discussed to expand our own teaching repertoires but also to ensure that students, are being challenged as writers throughout their 4 years at DU.
9. How can we create a minor (or at least a certificate) in Writing, and in the process negotiate campus turf, curricular politics, and student interest, all the while expanding WRIT faculty teaching opportunities and promoting writing across campus?
10. I really see the value in a writing/rhetoric major and/or minor and/or certificate, so a problem that I'd love to see (re)solved is to create one of these. At the same time, having writing faculty teach the 3rd year advanced writing course makes sense especially if combined with a portfolio designed to move forward with the student (perhaps a digital portfolio?!?) that they revise in their senior year and then have to take with them for jobs.
11. I have a question about the future development of further writing courses at DU. It would be nice if we could offer an advanced level of writing course, I would also like to know what will happen with the new writing course we are developing for international students and whether this will be

made part of the regular writing curriculum. The development of online and hybrid courses also opens avenues to different approaches to teaching.

Visibility Questions

12. Thinking about the Outreach committee, how might we increase faculty engagement in workshops and other development activities? We don't have the resources that CTL has, for instance, so how might we recruit faculty interested in learning about teaching online? Also, how do we get more faculty to attend lectures (such as when Paul Kei Matsuda's talk was sparsely attended) or student readings?
13. I would like to have this question answered: In addition to all the excellent work discussed today, and without necessarily mandating activity, how can we help each other produce more "traceable artifacts"? The answer might be writing/thinking groups and/or more opportunities to present our work on campus—or just to each other. Short talks, etc. In Duluth, there was a monthly lunchtime discussion—one faculty member, adjunct, or even grad student would present (informally) work-in-progress, it was called Word Association.

Role and Identity Questions

14. Being new here, my questions are many and somewhat ambiguous. I'm mostly trying to orientate myself, learn the scope of the Program, the intricacies, and what I can contribute. So my question is more personal: How best can I get my bearings, and any particular suggestions for somebody new to the program?
15. How does the University's mission—private U for the public good—figure into lecturer's roles, both in teaching and service? And how should/could it?
16. Problem: I wish we weren't "contingent" faculty, that we had some permanence and more opportunities to teach varied courses.
17. Question: What do faculty across campus imagine our role to be?
18. Okay—these are two big ones that I'm not anticipating solving: non-tenure line status; the necessity to teach primarily freshmen in primarily (or exclusively) required classes. With regards to these it seems that there are some avenues for developing greater and broader responsibilities—that is for professional development and promotion if you can connect to other segments of the University, as John and Geoffrey have, but I don't know how widespread those opportunities will be.
19. My main question—as we enter our 6th year is... where do we go from here? Especially in terms of our faculty development. How do we do this in productive ways? How do we reach the differing levels of passion and apathy? Perhaps unsolvable, but...

Beyond our immediate purview

20. What can this university do to attract and retain more students of color and first-generation college students? The percentages have been very poor for a long time, as everyone knows, but after a period of improvement, it appears that we're dropping again. Why? And what can we do?

Notes from Committee Meetings at Retreat

1. Technologies, Teaching, and Learning
2. Working with international students
3. Promoting student writing beyond our current first-year curriculum
4. Enhancing broad faculty awareness across campus about writing and other literacies and how they're best developed.

Outreach notes from Amy

1. Technology: how we can collaborate with other groups on campus? How we could evolve into a department where other departments can come to use for help in online teaching without stepping on the toes of CTL. Expanding on the resources we have already, writing center short courses, etc.
2. International students- white paper from the program about how to teach international students. English Language Center.
3. Showcasing student work, how we might showcase writing beyond first year, beyond the awards. How might we incorporate more student reading?
4. Undergraduate Student Research symposium- a lot of money for undergraduate student research projects. Money for faculty to have a paid research assistant? One credit class could dovetail with research grants, we could be associated with those classes. Undergraduate Research Center.

Here's what Geoffrey jotted down:

- 1) Given the relative success of the first round of UWC online short courses, and our collective expertise, might we develop workshops on how to teach online effectively? Could we offer to gear workshop offerings to departments that are introducing more online classes?
- 2) Outreach is interested on working on a white paper on ESL best practices, perhaps drafting one in conjunction with other committees and then facilitating a larger campus committee to revise it. Certainly the campus needs a better collective policy on grading ESL students.
- 3) Outreach also plans to make the existing faculty development workshops a priority. Geoffrey and Alba are able and interested in helping with those and they and Eliana will be happy to work to help other faculty develop skills in leading those sorts of workshops. The committee plans to approach Doug early in the fall to get the schedule and provide assistance.

WRIT notes from Amy

1. Technology: thinking about collecting materials that have worked for other faculty. Trying to make survey or go back to see what's working, what's happening. Even the topic of the white paper, maybe produce a 5-10 pg document "best practices," text book recommendations specifically addressing technology.
2. Following up with International Students, the special sections? Advising? Follow up with students who took it last winter?

Professional Development notes from Kelli:

Tech, Teaching, and Learning:

We saw this as one of our most important areas to address. We discussed ways in which we might be able to share the teaching of/with technology with those on the faculty who have less experience; we discussed practical follow-ups to theories about teaching and learning; we discussed logistics for the "Chan Meetings" for the quarter (for this and other topics).

ESL/multilingual:

We also discussed sharing practical and pedagogical expertise with those less experienced. (Here and above, we will be asking for input from outside the committee as well.)

Making student work visible:

We did not discuss this as a key focus of professional development. However, we did discuss ways to increase our own professional writing and productivity so that we might be models to students.

Cross-campus knowledge:

We discussed how we might work with Outreach to make those increased professional activities well known.

2012 Writing Program Retreat



- Personal Writings
- Development ideas
- Break
- Fall projects
- Issues
- Lunch
- Reading Groups
- Break
- Committees




Group 1: Juli, Lance, Carol, David
Group 2: Doug, Angie, Megan, Blake, Kara
Group 3: Eliana, Amber, Geoff, Kamila
Group 4: Jennifer, Melissa, Casey, Liz
Group 5: Eric, Cydney, Richard, Mindy
Group 6: Brad, LP, Matt, Rebekah

This fall . . .

What are things you'd like to learn,
skills you'd like to gain,
conversations you'd like to have,
things you'd like to share?



Book Discussion Groups

A. Rebecca Dingo

- Matt, Juli, Megan, Mindy
- Amber, David, Rebekah

B. Tom Miller

- Cydney, Melissa, Doug, Casey, Geoff

C. Jody Shipka

- Kara, Brad, Angie, Liz
- Eric, Carol, LP, Blake, Eliana,
- Richard, Kamila, Jen, Lance




Write a 50-100 blurb about yourself for the program's website. Background? Teaching interests? Scholarly interests? Publications? Hobbies or involvements?



Committees

WRITING PROGRAM RETREAT
SEPTEMBER 13, 2013
MAGNOLIA HOTEL, DENVER
Doug Hesse, Wrangler

A PROGRAM RETREAT CASE STUDY

The writing director at Lamb University finds the program at a sort of juncture. The program is well established and respected, both in the profession and on campus. In recent years, for example, it has been awarded additional faculty lines when those lines have been hard to come by elsewhere. It has prime office space in a showcase building, and at a time when other campus programs have had to raise course section enrollments by five or more students, the writing program has been able to hold increases to one or two. With justification, the campus community perceives a high quality of teaching in the program and in general education classes to which several faculty contribute. Some faculty are highly visible across campus, even having leadership roles. The program's writing center is serving thousands of students and providing teaching development and support in several dozen classes across campus. Over 120 Lamb University faculty have by now completed multi-day WAC workshops, and that many have also attended short seminars, lunch events, and speakers or other activities.

Still, the director wonders if things could be better. He's given to worry, so he might be unreliable, but he's paying attention to several developments.

1. Like many private universities with modest endowments, Lamb can no longer casually depend on enrollments and funding sources that it could in the past. Some of this may be due to local conditions at Lamb, but the university functions in a vexed larger climate. All of American higher education is undergoing a transformation, with questions raised about costs and returns on investment. In response to these questions—or perhaps generating them, actually—political and corporate interests are proposing new models for delivering instruction. No longer is higher education in general automatically treated as an inherent good by a besieged middle class. Several indicators that Lamb follows with its comparison group, which includes Boston University, Syracuse, and USC, could be stronger.
2. As a result of #1, there may emerge competition for departmental and programmatic resources at Lamb University. While faculty positions in the writing program are secure, the amount of funding for travel, professional development, speakers and events, even technologies and operating budgets may be increasingly scrutinized in every program on campus. The university seems to be focusing on high visibility/high impact programs that can attract attention, enrollments, and funding. It has just recently reallocated \$2 million of funds in a project called Renew Lamb U to a handful of new initiatives. While the writing director was a member of the committee that awarded these funds, the writing program was not part of any of these initiatives.
3. Whereas the writing program in its formative years was a campus golden child, touted in administrator speeches and campus publications as a showpiece of undergraduate education, it no longer enjoys quite that lofty status. Of course, falling from glory is a common phenomenon in contemporary higher education, as the next shiny new thing attracts excitement, and yesterday's news is yesterday's news. A few years ago, the writing director met with the president of a high profile liberal arts college after conducting a writing review. The director proposed that rather than developing new initiatives, X College should consolidate recent changes. The president dismissed the suggestion, saying, "X College is like a shark; if it stops swimming forward, it dies." Some of that is going on at Lamb, but knowing that the writing program is experiencing a common phenomenon is cold comfort.

4. There may be concrete manifestations of the status in #3. In recent years, the program has produced quality publications, of both student and faculty work, has hosted quality events, brought important speakers. However, these haven't received the kind of attention and campus participation that was present in the founding days. Perhaps they're the wrong activities? Perhaps they're not handled well? Perhaps the program isn't pursuing them with the right energies? The director had expected by now some higher excitement about writing across campus, among both students and faculty. He'd even imagined that Lamb University would start appearing in such things as the *US News* list of top writing across the curriculum programs. No doubt he was unrealistic. Still, the writing program seems to have found a certain status, reputation and level among Lamb's administration, faculty, and students. It's a solid level, but it seems not to be climbing the campus charts.
5. Everything seems to be running well in the required writing courses. Goals and features demonstrate best practices. But, with important exceptions involving many individual faculty, there seems not to be high excitement across large swaths of courses. Now, two things could be true. First, there could be all sorts of energy and innovation going on, but it just isn't visible to the director even though it's clear to most everyone else. Second, it may be unrealistic to expect anything beyond what's happening now. Teaching writing isn't necessarily sexy. For every new P90X workout routine that hits late night television, there are still fundamentals of diet and exercise. Perhaps writing is like that, too.

In light of these observations—whose veracity and implications, after all, remain suspect—the writing director at Lamb is wondering what might or should be done to invigorate the program. Beyond an important reality check, three factors complicate things.

1. Most crucial is the situation of the faculty. The program's staff is dedicated and hardworking, but their ability and willingness to make changes or do more is understandably uncertain. Salaries, after all, are modest, at best, in a metropolitan area where housing is expensive. The director understands that it's reasonable to take compensation in time (consciously or not) in exchange for missing salaries. (It's little consolation that salaries, benefits, and loads in the Lamb program are comparable/favorable to those on other campuses.) Perhaps more significantly, some faculty feel professionally stymied, absent a conventional tenure track and membership in a major degree-granting department. Others are seemingly happy with these situations. A significant core of the faculty does a large share of work on behalf of the program, takes on new projects, spends substantial time on campus and professional initiatives, and keeps quite visible, internally and externally. Other faculty are collegial and responsive, performing well-defined roles with what seems good cheer, even if at a less energetic level than their colleagues.
2. There may well be limits to how grand or important writing can seem on this campus. Writing might be only so interesting or vital in the minds and imagination of external faculty or administrators. Might it be the case that the gap between the existing program and the best one that could be imagined is actually fairly small? Writing might never be STEM, for example. The horizon of potential may be nearer than the program would like it to be.
3. The writing director recognizes his own skills and limitations in this environment. Maybe he has a fixed repertory of ideas. Maybe he's exhausted them? Maybe he's spending time and effort in the wrong way? At the very least, he recognizes without broader program ownership of initiatives, not much can happen. Initiatives that are only "about him"—or even perceived to be—are dead in the water.

THREE QUESTIONS, THEN.

1. What might be the indicators or evidence that, in fact, conditions warrant trying to enhance the visibility/energy/identity of the Lamb University writing program?
2. What are the important considerations for effecting change, provided that the answers to question 1 show a need? What are available broad strategies, especially given complicating factors?
3. What are specific actions that the Lamb U writing program might consider?

NOTES AFTER THE RETREAT

Friday's retreat generated lots of great discussion and provocative ideas. I especially appreciated the reminders that the program continues to be well respected and there's no pressing need for dramatic action (I agree); the questions about the sphere(s) in which "visibility" might be enhanced—or might not; and the cautions that any initiatives need to be sustainable (indeed). I've thought quite a bit about the problematic term I introduced—visibility. At the very least, I might have articulated some sense of visibility through demonstrated quality and centrality to the university's mission; after all, a near cousin term, notoriety, also implies visibility. Just as the empty signifiers of "excellence" or "branding" can be vacuous excuses for organizational churn, so too "visibility," especially if pursued for its own sake and without any clear benefits for people participating in the act.

[Note: at this point, I'm sounding like Tom Cruise at the beginning of Jerry MacGuire.]

Without yet assuming we should take on new efforts of any scale, I would like us to consider possible sites of "visibility" activities, expecting that success in any of them would cascade beyond.

1. We talked about our bread and butter courses. It's the place where we meet almost every undergraduate. Are there actions that might enhance student enthusiasm for the courses, generating for them and the campus a sense that these are important and exciting? One set of answers is "mostly no." That is, students generally find the courses fine and their instructors good. Further, first year writing courses per se are rather like elemental iron, with the amount of energy required to kick electrons from one quantum state to another one being exceedingly large and troublesome. There's a practical limit, then, to how fond we can make students. Last, there's the argument that enthusiasm isn't the point anyway; writing is tough stuff, and if courses are achieving their goals, we need to be able to articulate and defend them to students and others.

On the other hand, if it's possible and desirable to generate student enthusiasm, what categories of action are available? Well, one might be for individual lecturers somehow to up their game, in ways that make the quality of students' experiences richer. Another might be to modify in some fashion the course goals and features; if the masses want haiku, then haiku they shall have! Another way might be to do something more with student texts, making them more visible and celebrated. Another way might be to change how/when the courses are offered, perhaps moving 1133 to the sophomore year, or so on.

2. We talked about campus activities or events. Are there kinds of initiatives or offerings we could/should pursue with either faculty or students that might create interest or excitement or might seem particularly valuable? Celebrations, lectures, presentations, performances? Workshops and how-tos? Publications? Research projects? We noted the ambassadorial function

each of us plays whenever we're on a committee, at an event, meeting a group of colleagues from across campus, and so on.

3. We talked about off-campus identities. Are there things we should do in Denver or on the Front Range? Outreach by hosting writing project activities or community-based writing activities, even publications? Are there things we should do in the profession, publishing in additional or different ways about our program, seeking certain kinds of conference opportunities, etc.?

4. To these things, let me add a fourth possible area of action, one implicit in some of our conversation last week but not explicitly arising: writing lecturer interests. Are there things that the writing program could do to stir and "channel" the interests of individual lecturers? One might imagine programmatic visibility significantly enhanced as a "by product" of attending not to working on matters "out there" but, rather, on enabling an engaged, happy faculty, the resulting glow shedding light on the larger program enterprise. I'm serious and don't mean this as flakily as it might sound; I just ran out of time to word it better.

--*Doug Hesse*

Writing Program Retreat

December 4, 2014
Table Mountain Inn

- 8:30-9:00 Breakfast
- 9:00-9:15 Warming Up (Group 1)
- 9:15-9:50 Notes Toward (Group 1)
- 9:50-10:05 Break
- 10:05-10:40 Small Picture (Group 2)
- 10:40-10:55 Break
- 10:55-11:30 Big Picture (Group 3)
- 11:30-1:00 Poster Making, Lunch, etc.
- 1:00-2:00 Poster Session
- Frolic thereafter

1. In groups: 20 minutes for writing, 15 minutes for sharing and talk.

2. Using the available affordances and constraints, create a poster that presents one idea from one of the morning prompts.



Writing Program Retreat, December 2014

Table Mountain Inn, Golden

Doug Hesse, Convener

Warming Up: Choose 1

1. Think of what you very likely would have been doing on this day 11 years ago. Or 22 years ago. Tell us about that day.
2. Tell us about a time you got in trouble.
3. You're working on your third novel. Tell us about the main character, with as much about the setting as you choose to include.
4. Who was your favorite (or least favorite) relative when you were a kid?
5. What is a risk you've never been brave enough to pursue?
6. What is a current guilty pleasure?

Notes Toward a Writing Program Scrapbook: Looking Back to Look Forward

Think of an initiative you've been a part of at DU that you're especially proud of, and that you enjoyed working on. This could be a fall project, an ongoing research initiative, a collaborative effort with a community partner, a class or assignment you invented, a committee event you spearheaded or helped with, a document or series of documents you wrote or had a hand in writing, a presentation you gave at a conference, or anything else at all that involved a significant amount of your effort. Take a few minutes to write about the nature of that initiative, and the nature of your involvement in it. That is, why did you choose to work on it and what made it seem worthwhile to you? Consider what artifacts exist (including the one you might bring with you to the retreat) as a record of that initiative--how might juxtaposing those artifacts with your writing here today help create a shareable record of that initiative?

Keep in mind as you work that the larger, group goal today related to this writing will be to create a kind of scrapbook of the Program's first 8 years, one that might be shareable to a larger campus audience. Toward that end, consider what audiences and exigencies there might be for a document like this.

We might also use this writing as a kind of reflective moment--that is, by determining what we feel as a program have been our best moments, we might then try to create similar initiatives or use them as starting points for future endeavors.

Small Picture: Inventing Mini-Courses, Reinventing Current Courses

This prompt (and you'll have a choice among four options) grows out of two strands of conversation: 1) the expanding range of delivery systems for our first-year courses, and 2) the ever-on-the-horizon minor in [writing studies].

- 1) Our default course unit at DU has been 40 hours in 10 weeks. But this is only one of many teaching units in place: the 20 hour face-time + 20 hours of online hybrid course, the 1- or 2- hour workshop, the 20-minute conference, etc. And this year, of course, we are offering a limited number of 30-hour MWF courses.
- 2) Our default course offerings have been WRIT 1122 and 1133, and their variations 1622, 1633, and 1733. We also have two other courses: WRIT 2040: Memoir and Personal Writing and WRIT 2050: Rhetorical Grammar.

The potential and actual changes in both delivery structure and content prompt us to wonder about other possibilities for our courses. Choose one of the following options.

1. What might be a radically different way of teaching our existing WRIT courses? We already have a few options, as noted above. What about having a consortium of, say, 3 instructors each developing course units that they then teach for each other? What about classes meeting entirely in tutorials of 3-4 students

once a week, with a single hour lecture? Have some fun thinking of what might be better ways of offering our courses than our current range of options.

2. Imagine that the Writing Program decided to expand our range of options further by offering some even smaller courses. Let's say, for example, that as part of our minor, we wanted to offer 2-week mini-courses that focused intensively on some specific aspect of writing. Or perhaps we wanted to offer some 1-week courses during the winter and spring intersessions. These courses might meet for a commensurate number of hours each week or in some other configuration, and undergraduates would choose from a menu of short courses. Given two weeks, the responsibility of contributing to the larger curricular structure of the minor, and some willing undergrads, what is a course you would propose? What would be its focus, its goals? What sorts of assignments would it include? Why
3. There is some interest among students in 1-credit specific courses focusing on specialized topics that they would find either of direct practical value or of particular interest. (Chancellor Chopp reported this interest a few weeks ago to the faculty senate.) What is a specific 1-credit course that we might develop to meet student interests and needs?
4. The program might achieve some goodwill, serve a good purpose, and enact some personal interests of some of its faculty by offering some one-time workshops or seminars: not for credit but simply to meet an interest. What is a specific workshop or event that you might design to meet a student interest?

Big-Picture: What are Current Issues in Composition?

Take a look a current journal in composition or engage in discussion on the WPA-listserv, or take a glance at Malenczyk, Miller-Cochran, Wardle, and Yancey's latest call for their new edited collection (*Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity: Shadows of the Past, Issues of the Moment, and Prospects for the Future*), and you can begin to get a sense of the conversations happening in and around the field. It seems clear that we are invested in what's come before, what's currently happening, and where we are headed. But what are the issues that are most important to talk about? To think with? To implement into teaching? It is this juncture that we want to explore today as a way to acknowledge, explore, and connect what the issues surrounding the field mean for writing faculty at DU.

Some questions to think with:

- Ø What are the current issues in composition that directly relate to our work at DU?
- Ø What issues in composition should we be thinking with, talking about, and implementing in our classrooms?
- Ø How can we connect some of these important issues together in meaningful and productive ways?
- Ø How are they already represented in our teaching, in our scholarship, and in our conversations?

Our goal today is not to necessarily come up with *answers*, but to engage with our colleagues in productive discussions about ways in which we engage these current issues in our work at DU. In other words, how are we staying current with what is happening around us in the field?

Groupings 1				
Kara Brad Rob Jennifer Carol	Sarah Richard Allan Kamila Polly	Blake Rebekah Liz Amber Doug Teresa	Juli Geoff LP Heather Angie Eliana	
Groupings 2				
Kara Richard Liz Heather Geoff Eliana	Sarah LP Rebekah Rob Doug	Blake Heather Jennifer Angie Brad	Juli Carol Polly Amber Allan Teresa	