I am not urging a return to the old focus on correctness at the expense of everything else, but surely only a dualist would insist that we have only two choices.

If it can be shown that correctness can take care of itself, then well and good. But if it cannot, then we need to find a new balance between the traditional concern for surface and the new concern for depth. I think the language of part and whole may serve us better here than surface and depth. To balance Aristotle’s concern for genre, for well-made wholes, for the mastery of the available means of persuasion, we need some of Longinus’ concern for the well-made sentence or phrase. Correctness is not a particularly thrilling war cry, but perhaps style could take its place in ways that could mediate between the external world’s demand for error-free prose and our own concern with other aspects of good writing.


Reviewed by William E. Smith, Virginia Commonwealth University

Writing program administration has long been characterized by poor planning, crisis management, borrowed program design, and slavish adherence to tradition. And not infrequently, writing programs flourish within an institution because a charismatic writing program administrator makes a program succeed through common sense and force of personality. Edward White’s *Developing Successful College Writing Programs* carefully examines the theoretical and practical issues necessary for organizational decision making and decreases the profession’s reliance on chance and crisis.

*Developing Successful College Writing Programs* departs from the scant literature of objective program descriptions, such as Haring-Smith’s *A Guide to Writing Programs*, Hartzog’s *Composition and the Academy*, and Connolly and Vilardi’s *New Methods in College Writing Programs*. White’s contribution is a candid, personal, and often witty appraisal of current theory and administrative practice.

White divides his book into three parts, each increasing in complexity. The first section, “Examining the Current Status of Writing Instruction,” emphasizes the importance of research knowledge and its necessity for long-range planning and growth. He analyzes six major research studies of college composition programs: the Kitzhaber study (1963), the Wilcox study (1973), the Austin Research Project (1983), the California Project (1983), and the two MLA studies by Hartzog and Connolly and Vilardi (1986). He also analyzes in depth two studies of instructional patterns in the writing classroom, the California study and the Hillocks study. The thrust of this section—indeed,
of the entire book—is White’s strong belief that a successful administrator is a knowledgeable administrator. Without a sense of history and of the literature of research, neither teachers nor administrators can explain to students, colleagues, or other administrators their programs or classroom practices.

The second section, “Providing a Basis for Effective Writing Programs,” explores the writing program administrator’s function within the social context of an institution. White argues that until the profession arrives at consensus over the content of the curriculum, writing program administrators would do well to view writing classes as “critical thinking courses fundamental to the liberal arts curriculum.” Program directors should design intellectually challenging composition courses that involve reading and that encourage discovery, serious inquiry, and development of thought beyond the self. He rejects the accumulation-of-knowledge model prevalent in undergraduate education, preferring the less fragmentary, more integrative process model of learning as the basis for a liberal arts curriculum. For White, writing courses that encourage the “unifying power of the mind” combat the departmentalized fragmentation of the American undergraduate curriculum.

In his discussion of writing assessment, White explains the rhetorical dynamics of a writing program in its context and the symbiotic relationship between educational and institutional goals. He observes that testing programs which involve teacher participation are worthwhile, regardless of the results, because such programs yield curricular benefits through faculty discussion of testing issues such as the training required for developing and scoring tests, establishing scoring criteria, and designing writing assignments. Testing designed for both institutional goals and instructional purposes serves students’ needs, motivates them, and places them at the center of the program. White encourages program directors to turn political pressure to measure student writing to their advantage by accepting it while simultaneously rejecting “behaviorist definitions of value or the simplistic measurement devices that are usually proposed.”

The final section, “Organizational, Staffing, and Teacher Development Strategies,” presents a brief plan for administrators faced with developing a writing program, supporting and rewarding its faculty, and evaluating its effectiveness. Drawing heavily on his experience as a national consultant, White carefully points out the political ramifications of program philosophies and goals. The realities of writing program development—the composition instructor’s workload, turf battles, the status of part-time faculty, the difficulty of defining “writing” or “quality,” the discouraging results of empirical program evaluation (and its strangle-hold on the profession)—cast a dark shadow across the final chapters.

But White, who is acutely aware of the tinge of pessimism creeping into these last pages, lightens his darkening tone with wit, humanism, and uncommonly good sense. He laughs at his own naivety at a hearing on testing
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before a California Senate Committee on Finance; defines "plagiarism" as a "denial of the integrity of the self"; and sympathizes with citizens, colleagues, and administrators who yearn for simple answers to complex human problems. Developing Successful College Writing Programs is the first book to treat candidly the uncertainties, complexities, and humanistic importance of writing programs. Edward White does not provide his readers with easy answers, but he does give them wise advice and some carefully conceived guidelines for making a successful writing program possible.


Reviewed by John Hagge, Iowa State University

Writing in the Business Professions should interest teachers of advanced composition. I encourage them to peruse the volume for themselves, since I can't analyze its contents at length here. I do, however, feel that I need to warn potential readers about several things that perplexed me when I read the book, especially since this book may help determine the future of business communication instruction in the 1990s.

First, Writing in the Business Professions suffers from a definitional problem. Myra Kogen, its general editor, wishes to define "business communication" broadly, so that it includes "all aspects of professional writing." Since she already has equated "professional writing" with "business communication" ("This book on writing in the business professions is part of a general wave of interest in an exciting new discipline usually called professional writing or business communication" [ix]), this definition is circular. Such circularity allows Kogen to bypass any principled criteria for selection in favor of including whatever she wishes while ignoring the fact that her readers will have been led by the book's title to expect articles dealing with business communication as traditionally conceived.

For example, although Gopen's piece on legal writing is one of the most cogent, literate, and well-documented in the collection, it will be relevant to only a tiny minority of readers. The same might be said for Dieterich's essay on how "academic professionals" write, which argues that we who teach advanced composition should help our colleagues improve their writing skills. Again, this essay has little to do with what we teach in business communication courses. Or with advanced composition in general, for that matter. It also appears based only on the author's opinions, buttressed by a few ad hoc quotations from academic writing; Dieterich mentions no research