Constructing Disciplinary Space: The Borders, Boundaries, and Zones of English

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It is early in the semester, and a teacher at an midwestern urban university sits reading his first student essays in the waning hours. The window is closed, but his attention is broken by the sound of wind and sleet rushing through trees. The comforting background voices of the TV are interrupted by a beep, and a flashing light appears in the lower right corner of the screen, scrolling a warning of ice storms followed by a list of counties. He notices the news story now: an elderly black woman voicing anxiety over crime in the neighborhood, and expressing thanks to a charitable organization that delivers her groceries. One more essay. He rehearses the name on the paper, and calls to mind the face of an enthusiastic student whose name has been difficult to remember. The student announces himself in his opening lines as a Kuwaiti student whose experience as an international student on campus, and as a citizen in a country where there is a large population of foreigners, gives him a unique perspective on the theme of "cultural borders," a term introduced in the first course reading. The teacher is interested in what the student has to say, but now the light and TV are flickering, then suddenly extinguished. The teacher wonders if the drive to school in the morning will be treacherous, and is relieved to see that the telephone is working. He will be able to call in to the university answering system in the morning to get official word on whether or not class has been cancelled.

The scenario that introduces this essay offers a commonplace illustration of how geographic relationships constantly insinuate themselves into even the most private moments of our teaching. Understandably, we often

ignore such fleeting, incongruous intersections of reality as appear in this scenario between the teacher, the elderly woman’s image, and the international student’s paper. And when we do reflect on such moments, it is not difficult to fit them into established frameworks that explain them in terms of globalization, time-space compression, our postmodern condition, and the like. New technologies of transportation, communication, and production have become so commonplace in industrialized countries over the last half-century that they have shrunk space and accelerated the motion of people, goods, and information both in local communities and across the globe. Among the frequently cited consequences of this compression of time and space are the internationalization of capital through lowered shipping costs and more flexible and mobile processes of production, the saturation of daily life with media representations, and the disruption of traditional ways of life as people negotiate new forms of cultural and economic contact often involving parties at great distances from one another.

There is little doubt that our work is profoundly affected by all this, whether we represent such changes as signs of a bright digital future or a bleak corporate takeover of public life. However, what we are troubled about is how our academic discussions of geography and space often obscure how individuals and groups are positioned differently in relation to the particular reconfigurations of time and space that present themselves in daily life. It is not unusual, for instance, to hear scholars talk about “contact zones,” “border crossing,” or even “our postmodern condition” as realities we all share. What often gets lost in such discussions is what the British geographer Doreen Massey calls the power geometry of time-space compression, a phrase she uses to explore the different ways in which groups and individuals are inserted into time and space, helped or hurt by the ways it is constantly being reconfigured. As Massey sees it, the issue is not only who moves and who doesn’t but “about power in relation to the flows and the movement” (61). On one extreme, “jet-setters” hold international conference calls, send and receive faxes and e-mails, and move investments quickly between nations. On the other extreme, immigrants “from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Caribbean . . . come halfway around the world only to get held up in an interrogation room at Heathrow” (61–62).

Massey’s concept of power geometry casts a different light on the issue of how we might be agents of change in our neighborhoods, institutions and classrooms. The problem is that reform discourse is often full of geographically-inflected language rallying us to negotiate the
“contact zone,” “redraw the boundaries,” “cross borders,” “break down the walls of the university.” And yet, despite this, the issue of power geometry often remains unprobed. While spatial metaphors appear to address the material conditions of contact between individuals, groups, and forms of knowledge, we are struck by how such language screens out the full range of forces that constitute place as a material process. In perhaps the most obvious example, the “culture wars” metaphor maps the university in terms of warring camps of teachers or scholars occupying different critical territories against one another. This may seem a hard-nosed, realistic view of our situations, but as we will show, it often works as a kind of utopian screen, diverting attention from the power geometries of our lived situations. Instead of attending to mundane realities such as institutional neglect, declining numbers of majors, displacement through outsourced programs, and so on, the culture wars maps an Adamic world where work has the meaning we give it through our teaching and writing. Materialist analysis drifts toward a method oriented study of ideology. Curricular content, classroom methods, and critical “approaches” to texts become focal points of reform debate. And as the focus narrows, the map of critical territories typically becomes more rarified and abstract, illustrating disciplinary work in terms of insider divisions between deconstruction, new historicism, gender criticism, and the like. What gets lost is how disciplinary knowledge functions in relation to built environments and the social and economic forces that assemble, delimit and circulate people in them. How do our institutions, neighborhoods, and classrooms embody different power geometries? How might we differently understand the metaphors of boundaries, zones, and borders so prominent in reform discourse if we considered them not as rallying cries, but rather as a challenge to understand how built environments actually mediate social interaction?

It is not enough merely to focus on representation because a built environment is always more than either its sensuous local character or its blueprint. That is, not only do built environments mean something; they also mediate the activity of people, patterning movement, connecting groups near and far, creating possibilities of visibility, social contact and privacy. Of course, no city, neighborhood, profession, or institution can be explained in terms of a single power geometry. A classroom, an office, a mall, and an urban street corner are all subject to overlapping and distinct social and economic forces, inviting us to recognize each place as unique and as constructed out of processes organized on a much larger scale. But this sort of mapping requires a broadly interdisciplinary view
not only of interpretive approaches, policies, or curricula, but also how social desires, informal market behavior, and planning interact in different venues (education, architecture, housing policy, for example) to design the use of space in society.

In this essay, we want to examine how life in urban universities and neighborhoods is shaped by different power geometries of time-space compression, and how this process of constructing space is typically elided by our commonplace geographical reform metaphors of border-crossing, redrawing boundaries, and contact zones. In the next section of the essay, we examine some of the forces that have shaped the urban geography of the major midwestern city where one of us teaches, with particular attention to the struggle over a major thoroughfare recently completed about a mile to the east of the university. We also read the physical geography of the campus, a mid-sized, state university, and its relation to surrounding neighborhoods to illuminate how the campus has responded to similar social and economic forces in its own expansion and development. Through this comparative analysis, we will show more generally how universities pattern the movement of persons and commodities in society in ways that are both similar to and different from how the physical environment establishes zones of privacy, contact, exposure, and separation between groups and communities. In the third section of the essay, we turn our attention to geographical metaphors now common in our reform discourses, examining what they allow us to see about our environments, and what they obscure. Lastly, in the final section of the essay, we focus on the role of the English department in negotiating change, showing how commonplace metaphors of border-crossing and interdisciplinarity have reflected and shaped changes at the two midwestern universities where we teach, and how our departments have responded. In this section, we argue that our responses to troubling changes in the power geometries of our institutions have often been weakened by our lack of critical terms to describe geography. Hence, our aim is to highlight how we might usefully challenge the apparently transparent rhetoric of "a university without borders," a rhetoric of interdisciplinarity and openness that, as we will show, often masks shifts in power geometry that we ought to be directly engaging in our critical discourse.

**Power Geometries of Public Space**

Considering our opening scenario in terms of power geometry invites us to consider what the momentary convergence of student, television
image, and teacher reveals about how each are inserted into processes of
time-space compression. The Kuwaiti student can choose to attend a U.S.
university because time-space compression has enabled the emergence of
an international market for higher education, and because colleges have
decided that international diversity in their student bodies is a good thing.
The elderly woman can have her groceries delivered and become visible
to the teacher on TV because of the mobility of charities and TV news
crews. And almost everyone can get warning of an approaching storm if
they are lucky enough to be tuned in. On the other hand, the elderly
woman can plausibly be represented as being more trapped than liberated
by these processes of time-space compression. If the lights go out, she will
likely have to face more worrisome questions than whether the local
university is closing its doors. After all, processes of time-space compres­
sion have likely been at least partly responsible for concentrating poverty
and crime, and evacuating businesses like groceries, from her neighbor­
hood. And although she appears on TV, far from having her say, her
presence as an image is virtual, unidirectional, and fleeting, part of a
standard news script for uplifting community stories. Similarly, the
Kuwaiti student’s choice to attend a U.S. school, and the particular forms
of diversity produced by the sum of many such student choices, is only
possible because her class position in a wealthy nation friendly to the U.S.
positions her to take advantage of an internationalized market for higher
education.

Examining this scenario in these terms suggests how time-space
compression transforms social life not only by overcoming formerly
insurmountable geographical limits, but also by establishing new bound­
daries, zones, and borders. Colleges rightfully celebrate on catalog covers
and brochures how they have “opened doors” to new populations of
students and faculty. But they seldom focus attention on the assembled
character of this diversity, and how different groups are inserted into it.
After all, it is clear that even in selective institutions that have strong
records on diversity, minority students are likely to be from middle- or
upper-class neighborhoods in the U.S., or from relatively affluent groups
abroad. Since international students are not eligible for U.S. federal aid,
more than eighty percent of foreign undergraduates, according to the
Institute of International Education, depend primarily on the wealth of
their families and home governments to provide access to the U.S.
education market. Perhaps more important, large majorities of these
students have had access to adequate or high quality primary and
secondary education, and almost all (with the notable exception of some
athletes in sports such as basketball and football) have avoided the prolonged stagnation, poverty and violence that have devastated primary and secondary schools for much of the underclass in the U.S. and third-world countries. What this means is that the opening of doors accomplished through internationalized access to higher education may in some cases have further solidified class boundaries, enabling colleges to show their commitment to diversity even if they squeeze out local racial communities in favor of students of color abroad with more financial and educational resources.

Our point here is not to diminish the importance of recruiting international students, but to foster a bifocal view of how the practice helps construct place in higher education. Whenever we step into a classroom, we always find ourselves in a unique place, faced with a unique gathering of students. But at the same time, this uniqueness is always a function of social processes that are organized, often invisibly, on a much larger scale. The way a university, discipline, program, or department goes about “crafting a class,” to quote the title of a recent book analyzing the subject, is not an accident but an act. This act, comprised of many smaller formal and informal acts, necessarily implicates our work within what architectural historian John Hancock has called the “ecology of social segmentation” in society. Hancock’s analysis specifically focuses on housing, showing how public policy and informal market behavior have produced familiar patterns of neighborhood segregation in U.S. cities. For instance, Hancock notes how segregation of housing in the U.S. long predates the establishment of zoning laws in the 1880s, and how cities such as Houston, which have never adopted a formal zoning code or citywide planning, have nonetheless created “the same apparently rational segregation of people and activities” as exists in other cities (155).

Both Hancock’s metaphor of ecology and Massey’s metaphor of power geometry emphasize place as a network of relationships, which, however informal or unspoken, can nonetheless produce rigid economic and geographical divisions such as segregated neighborhoods. Both metaphors are bifocal, but while ecology emphasizes the cooperative relationality of local processes, geometry emphasizes their hierarchical qualities and large-scale geophysical form. Hence, in the remainder of the essay, we will continue to use both sets of terms: ecology to emphasize the intricate dance of social affinity, architecture, and policy that produce local places, and power geometry to emphasize the positioning of these processes in larger processes often occurring on a global scale.
Universities are part of both local ecologies of segmentation and larger-scale power geometries not only because they house people, but more importantly because they provide a crucial infrastructure for controlling access to privatized networks of people, goods, and information. An education from a premier institution is, as parents and students usually recognize, a promise of access to often highly exclusive pools of labor, as well as to hidden networks of alumni, employers, and public officials. In Derek Bok and William Bowen's extensive study of selective colleges, for example, the mean income of graduates of selective institutions correlates closely with the institution's degree of selectivity. Indeed, for some groups, such as blacks, twenty years after entering college, graduates of selective colleges studied enjoy twice the average income of black baccalaureate graduates nationally (257; see also 138–40). While it is typically argued that such institutions attract only the "best and brightest" students who should naturally be expected to succeed, Bok and Bowen's study dramatically illustrates the power of college selectivity as a variable in predicting students' long-term earning potential, dwarfing other variables such as SAT scores (133, 140).

The social networks to which different universities or programs provide access are often part of local and regional ecologies, linking regional or urban employers with nearby sources of prospective employees. But increasingly, regional ecologies of segmentation are tied into national or international power geometries, especially in the higher paying or more prestigious fields or professions. Over the last twenty-five years, these trends have produced an increasingly rootless professoriate especially in doctoral-granting institutions where tenureable faculty are hired through national labor markets, which often require new faculty to relocate to communities where they have no prior experience or history (see Zencey; Owens 72–75). Ironically, it is part-time faculty who are most likely to be hired locally and rooted in the local communities in which they teach, even though our professional discourse typically represents them as in terms of rootlessness and marginality (part-timers as "gypsy scholars," "freeway flyers," or "temporary" labor).

In their internal structure, too, universities enact ecologies of segmentation, which have a complex relation to power geometries in the larger society. Most obviously, universities segment and circulate students by offering them a smorgasbord of schools, programs, and majors to choose from. But this consumer freedom is more apparent than real, since even if students can pay, schools and programs always have the right to reject them. This gatekeeping function may be rationalized as a
necessary means of quality control, but in fact, academic standards are often closely tied to the economic positioning of different schools and programs. Generally speaking, schools and programs with the strongest links to lucrative or high status professions (medicine, law, engineering) can typically count on attracting larger streams of interested and qualified students, and thus can afford to invoke more stringent standards than programs with links to lower-status or lower-paying professions (nursing or primary or secondary teaching, for example).

These differences in the character and function of programs and courses also help enact ecologies of segmentation among faculty. Faculty in disciplines or programs with strong ties to sought-after labor markets enjoy institutional prestige and gain leverage with administrations in the competition for faculty positions. Similarly, assignment to upper-division teaching typically marks status and privacy for the most senior or reputable members of a department. Such assignments promise smaller class sizes, an audience of students with stated interests in advertised subject matter, more professorial control over entry into the class, as well as freedom from the institutional supervision associated with large or multi-section lower-division courses.

The problem is that while faculty may compete for research support or choice teaching assignments, and while students may struggle for access to prestigious fields, programs, or job markets, our disciplinary discourse does not adequately consider the ways that social life inside the university can be understood by reference to the same desires for privacy and freedom from uncontrolled interaction that more obviously shape life outside the university. As Eve Sedgwick argues, it is difficult to come up with useful images of the "synecdochic relation of academic institutions to the larger world" because universities, as the very name suggests, aspire "to represent something huge in a disproportionately tiny space." The result of this drastic condensation is that the space of the university becomes "unreal or hyperreal." On the one hand, academic labor is "amazingly unrationalized" so that "the space of work for at least some in this industry can seem strikingly close to an idealized preindustrial workspace" where workers choose tasks based on desire, need, and aptitude. However, on the other hand, the construction of place as a material process—that is, the universities' constitutive relationships with labor, industry, government, and local economies—become hidden, or only visible through "repeated wrenching acts of re-recognition" (294–95).

Such acts of re-recognition become easier when we consider disciplinary work not only in relation to scholarly communities of discourse,
but also in relation to the physical space of particular institutions and their borders with surrounding communities. Even the physical layout of a university, for instance, often bodies forth its relationships with surrounding development, revealing something of the niches the university occupies (or hopes to occupy) within local ecologies of segmentation. For instance, at the midwestern public university where one of us teaches, the marquis entrance to the university, recently refurbished, faces out onto a beautifully landscaped waterway to the north of the campus. The waterway was once an eyesore, a lowly polluted urban creek, but it has been rapidly transformed in the last few years, through a massive public and private infusion of capital. Following this flow of capital, the university has positioned its most public face alongside the luxury condominiums, conservation center, and private biomedical research center that have sprouted up along the creek. By contrast, the university has configured its physical border with the boulevard to the east, a road with a much rougher urban feel and widely considered the main racial dividing line in the city, by situating along this border parking lots, a purchasing office, service entrances, and the physical plant. Meanwhile, most of the university’s recent building activity has been designed to create indoor and outdoor space for the university that insulates it from uncontrolled urban interaction.

These features of the university’s layout and growth are largely coordinate with the current ecology of social segmentation in the city. Recent planning and building initiatives on the part of both the university and the city have devalued the possibilities of community integration that could be achieved by developing the urban boulevard to the east, which we will call, for the sake of brevity, the Boulevard. Indeed, the university’s evolving architecture and growth activity has focused on presenting an attractive and aspiring face to the booming creek corridor, while creating interior spaces shielded from more mixed urban interactions. A copper-spired, stone-faced Science and Technology building forms the enclosing east side of a newly formed quadrangle, connected to other university buildings and to a new parking garage by elevated, glassed-in walkways. A block to the east, along the Boulevard, the university has spent much less money, renting out an aging, squat brick building, formerly home to the school of engineering, to a local charter school. These developments coordinate well with recent city planning, which is well illustrated by the opening of the urban highway passing about a mile east of the university. In many ways, this highway project represents a commonplace injustice in urban America, displacing and isolating the predominantly working
class black community it traverses, while benefitting relatively affluent suburbanites in the south by simplifying travel to the downtown and midtown areas of the city (where the university is located). Meanwhile, it has absorbed resources that might have been used to develop roads that already are tied into the social fabric of the city, like the Boulevard, which also happens to provide an alternate route from the south.

In many ways, the Boulevard is a site rich in possibilities of social interaction across boundaries of race, class, and gender. Traffic is slowed by lights, intersections, and business activity, and the roadway is flanked on both sides with residential neighborhoods, often neighborhoods that are among the most racially integrated in the city. A range of different businesses line the roadway—from pawnshops, and rent-to-buy centers targeting the poor, to businesses such as a music store, garden center, funeral parlor, hardware stores, and pharmacies catering to mixed middle- and working-class clienteles. However, in relation to the sort of cost/benefit analyses that typically drive urban as well as university planning, this heterogeneity of life along the Boulevard is exactly the problem.

Consider, for instance, how market logic often dictates the desirability of building urban freeways rather than developing multi-use urban roads such as the Boulevard. With the opening of the freeway, the drive to midtown is not only quicker for suburbanites, but also more private, involving only stopping at a light or two in zones where local inhabitants are mostly hidden behind fences, landscape greenery, and embankments. This privatization of space harmonizes the dream of suburban escape with the attractions of an enlarged job market and urban cultural amenities such as the university. And although city officials seldom admit that city planning gives priority to suburban desires and needs over those of urban residents, it makes economic sense that designers with an eye on market demographics will reflect the view of suburban shoppers, since they have more disposable income. If it can be shown that minimizing contact across borders of race and class can enhance flows of educated workers and shopping dollars downtown, then a project such as the freeway can be argued as making economic sense in spite of its social costs. Further, a design that produces value by rigidifying race and class borders can also work to reinforce the desire for, and the economic value of, social insularity.

The main criticism the project received in the local press was that it would establish an unwanted barrier in the heart of the city’s working-class black community, ripping “a tornadic ruin from the shadow of City Hall to the suburbs” in the words of a local editorial (“Time”). But as our
former discussion suggests, the project is also part of larger power geometries in which both the city and university are embedded. After all, the project not only divides and obstructs, it also connects and compresses time and space, and different groups are positioned differently in relation to the new zones and borders. For the university and many local businesses, the roadway provides new streams of potential students, customers, and educated workers. On the other hand, for the five thousand residents who relocated, the roadway has meant a loss of trust and intensified racial segregation. Even personal relationships have been reshaped as the presence of the roadway cuts across neighborhoods, sometimes transforming a five-minute walk to a friend or relative to a noisy and dangerous half hour trek (see Spivak).

Of course, both the city and the university are tied into national and international ecologies as well as the local or regional ones we have been discussing. The plush development along the creek reflects a much broader competition among cities, states, and nations for niches in emerging biotech and information economies. Because these economies are organized on a global scale, the most lucrative job markets and professional cultures they support are often defined in terms of sumptuous mobility. This can be seen in the residential component of the boom along the creek, which is largely comprised of upscale condominiums and apartments sprouting up along the creek, as well as the university’s recent attempts to develop large dormitories, even though historically most of the school’s students have been urban commuters. Attracting top out-of-state scientists, researchers, and students requires facilities that can sustain a mobile professional class, or those who are aspiring to this class, at accustomed levels of comfort and safety.

Indeed, as we briefly considered earlier, the relation between universities’ internal ecologies of segmentation and those on the outside is often deceptively complex. It is important not to underestimate the full range and complexity of positions that teachers and researchers occupy, even when we limit our view to one area, such as humanities disciplines. In research institutions with travel budgets, release time for research, and selective admissions, “star” faculty in the humanities are certainly in a position to take charge of opportunities afforded by mobility on a regular basis. However, in those same institutions, nontenure-track teachers or GTAs often have no travel support, or if they do, may find themselves one day at a conference hotel linked by glass tunnels to plush meeting rooms and restaurants, and the next day in an office cubicle sharing computers, phones, desks, and even desk drawers with co-workers. And with tenure
requirements stiffening at many institutions, even tenureable faculty at prestigious universities may experience the opulence of conferences and research travel as only an ironic reminder of their own precarious situations.

Over the last decade, universities have cut labor costs in the humanities by expanding the use of part-time faculty, outsourcing programs, and putting a lid on hiring for tenureable positions. These changes have deepened the segmentation of the humanities as a labor force. At most institutions, huge gaps in pay, benefits, and institutional standing divide full- and part-time faculty. In addition, faculty at major research institutions have become increasingly isolated from the populations of general education students that make up the lion’s share of enrollments of humanities departments at most institutions. In doctoral-granting English departments, for instance, the chances of an undergraduate encountering a tenure-line faculty in a first year writing course is now 1 in 20 (ADE 14–15). By contrast, tenure-line faculty in departments granting only bachelors degrees teach more than seventy percent of the undergraduate curriculum and staff forty-nine percent of first-year writing sections (15, 10). What this suggests is that different groups of humanities faculty, even limiting our consideration only to faculty at four year institutions, are coming to occupy increasingly divergent positions in the power geometry of higher education. And while the growing divisions between full-time and part-time faculty are much discussed in our professional discourse, even here the issue of how ecologies of segmentation internal to the university are related to those on the outside is often clouded by how we apply geographically inflected metaphors of race or class to explain the exploitation of faculty labor. Part-time faculty and GTAs may in some sense be, as our discourse often represents them, a “migrant” workforce or “academic underclass.” But their exploitation is mainly an issue of wages, benefits, and institutional status, not of race or class boundaries.3

If we turn our attention from faculty to students, we also find that a complex convergence of economic, social, and legal factors threaten to increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Among these factors are the geographical enlargement of markets for higher education, the increasing influence of mass media college rankings (which often feature mean SAT scores as the mark of a good college), the more activist roles of state legislatures, trustees and prominent alumni in policy, the shift from need-based grants to merit scholarships and loans to finance college costs, and the erosion of the legal basis of affirmative action.
While the effects of such changes are not entirely predictable, it is clear that the increasing sway of the "invisible hand" of the market over higher education policy over the last decade is eroding public discourse about how communities of higher education should be constituted, and privatizing decision-making about these issues. Indeed, while humanities faculty in all sort of institutions battle over multiculturalism and critical methods, the ground on which we stand is literally changing beneath our feet, and our standard ways of framing disciplinary issues and problems are ill-equipped to address the new conditions.

To briefly consider perhaps the most publicized issue on our list, affirmative action, consider how recent legal decisions have privatized decisions on the social and spatial character of the university, limiting not so much what can be said so much as where it can be said. Recent court decisions have increasingly instituted a policy of "color-blind constitutionalism" that limits how race can be considered in admissions and hiring decisions on campus. What this means is that at the same time that race issues have gained visibility in humanities classrooms and scholarship, such issues are also increasingly regulated as topics of speech in institutional policy. At the moment that our disciplinary discourse visibly elevates "marginality as not just the stakes or subject but the privileged site of cultural critique" (Gates 315), many forms of difference are becoming legally unmentionable in precisely those venues (such as admissions and hiring decisions) that are most directly involved in the planning of space and community membership in higher education. Of course, the erosion of affirmative action is only one factor working to such an end, but disciplinary maps that separate the "imagined space" of knowledge from the material places where we live and work are also complicit in the process. While many who decry the erosion of affirmative action still might justify mapping disciplinary change independently, the content of disciplines has always been profoundly dependent on the design of physical and social space in universities, which is shaped not only by high-profile legal concerns such as affirmative action, but also by
more mundane factors such as our ability to hire faculty, recruit majors, promise descent prospects of employment for graduates, and so on. Even though faculty have seldom exercised primary control over admissions and hiring processes in the post-WWII development of universities, there is little doubt that the power geometry of higher education is now shifting in ways that further dilute faculty control over flows of student and faculty labor. And there is little doubt that the future content of humanities disciplines will depend profoundly on how faculty address these shifts.

Reform and the Imagined Space of the University
Like our own analogy between city and university, metaphors of boundaries, zones, and borders in humanities discourse aspire “to represent something huge in a tiny space,” evoking images of the tense diversity of social life outside the university to account for the complexity of life inside it. However, as Sedgwick warns, such metaphors always run the danger of producing an “unreal or hyperreal” sense of the university, unless they recognize how universities and classrooms are built environments themselves. The image of curricula or classrooms as a microcosm of the larger world is just that—an image—accomplishing a kind of *representational* compression, but not necessarily addressing how material forces of time-space compression shape our programs, classrooms and identities.

In the early 1990s, for instance, Gerald Graff represented the university as an “academic citadel” transformed by the arrival of new groups, and suggested that his program of teaching the conflicts would help put the humanities at the center of the university’s ongoing transformation from a cloistered, segregated space to a democratic forum. This optimism was not only uplifting; it also seemed a strategy to address the bleak economic circumstances of the humanities in an increasingly corporatized higher education environment. We can no longer imagine ourselves working in a “conflict-free ivory tower,” warned Graff (6). With the end of the growth economy in higher education, peaceful coexistence, Graff warns, “is increasingly strained, since ideological challenges to curricula can no longer simply be accommodated, as in the past, “by painlessly expanding its frontiers” (7). Hence, Graff proposed making use of our conflicts in teaching and research as a way of legitimizing the humanities as a vital form of public discourse. In making this argument, Graff did not shy away from invoking synecdochal images of the university to represent its relation to the larger society. Teaching the conflicts promised to make
the university more truly representative as an institution, turning the curriculum into "a prominent arena of cultural conflict . . . a microcosm, as it should be, of the clash of cultures and values in America as a whole" (8).

Of course, Graff was right to marvel at the "mindboggling juxtaposition" in higher education of "corporate managers side by side with third world Marxists; free market economists with free-form sculptors; mandarin classical scholars with postmodern performance artists; football coaches with deconstructive feminists" (7-8). But by imagining these parties as potential partners in debate, Graff seems stricken with the same hyperreal sense of space that Sedgwick warned about, drastically condensing differences into an imaginary space that ignores the power geometries of the institution. After all, football coaches are often paid more than university presidents and will gain nothing from debating deconstructive feminists. Corporate managers and free market economists may enjoy an entertaining lecture from a third world Marxist, but they are not about to put economic policy, or even academic recommendations on economic policy, up for grabs.7

The hyperreality of the image of university as microcosm derives from its erasure of place, and specifically of the way places in higher education are constructed within an ecology of segmentation that directly shapes the rights of presence and movement of different groups. This erasure of place has become even more problematic in much of the reform discourse that has followed Graff, which has further developed his notions of disciplinary conflict through metaphors of boundaries and borders. One influential example of such disciplinary representation is Redrawing the Boundaries: Transformation of English and American Studies, a collection of essays published in 1992, the same year as Graff's Beyond the Culture Wars. In this collection, editors Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn proposed to map changes in English studies over the last twenty five years, linking their discussion of boundaries to daily institutional life, and freely admitting that their map could have been drawn in other ways. Overall, the contributors attempt to represent both traditional literary fields (medieval, eighteenth century studies) and newer arrivals (gender criticism, composition), mostly through the "new historical" critical perspective exemplified by Greenblatt's now well-known scholarship on Shakespeare. The collection itself tries to accomplish this by dividing English studies into twenty four fields and enlisting well-known scholars to explain recent changes. However, despite this breadth, the metaphor of change as a redrawing of boundaries has been arguably more
influential in shaping humanities reform than any of the individual essays published in the Greenblatt and Gunn's collection.

Although Greenblatt and Gunn admit that "all talk of boundaries sits in a complex relation to a recognition of the larger whole within which most of the profession operates," their focus is on boundaries as a way of ordering the discipline's heterogeneous objects and methods of study (7). Greenblatt and Gunn often represent this heterogeneity in the most charged geopolitical terms, drawing on images of warfare, frontiers, and militarized zones (6–7). The problem with such analogies is, again, that they suggest a synecdochal equivalence of disparate places, occluding the politics of place. What virtually gets lost in this disciplinary mapping is any accounting of the relative importance of different sorts of boundaries in shaping the rights of presence and movement of different groups in higher education. Difference between ideological specialisms in English may pose menacing boundaries in some situations. But typically this is true only in a limited range of situations, most often involving internecine struggles between permanent English faculty (such as in tenure decisions). As soon as we place ourselves within a wider range of circumstances, we find our work valued differently—in terms of critical thinking, grammatical correctness, productivity, writing skills, high-brow taste, and so on. (For a more detailed discussion of how our work is valued as "abstract labor" rather than in terms of its specific content, see Watkins). Indeed, when humanists do work in interdisciplinary research and teaching programs, or when they sit on campus-wide committees with colleagues in the sciences and social sciences, they often find that the complex methodological and ideological underpinnings of their research matters much less than the fact that they are humanists. In such settings, it is not unusual for colleagues to turn to the lone English professor for the correct wording of a committee document, whether he or she is a Shakespearean or a feminist theorist, deconstructionist or formalist.

In our view, it is simply remiss to attribute vast changes in scholarly knowledge to the arrival of new groups in academia, to propose that volatile issues of nation, race, class, religion, and sexuality have driven and continue to drive such change, and at the same time, to reduce the "imagined space" of literary studies to the issue of drawing the boundaries of critical approaches or fields. The problem with this view is that it promotes the Adamic view of autonomy that we mentioned earlier, and it screens out how developments in the discipline are always being shaped by our positioning relative to flows of persons, goods, and information. It is one thing, for instance, to represent "African American Criticism" as
a chapter in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, but it requires a much more complex set of changes to enable it to flourish as a field/space on a university campus. The ability of a department or campus to establish African American Criticism or Black Studies as a vital field is only partly a matter of ideological or methodological legitimacy. It is also related to regional demographics, the university's relationships with local black communities, minority student recruitment and retention policies, faculty salary considerations, and the reception of black faculty and students not only by other faculty but by the administration, staff personnel, and campus police.

In the last decade, a number of scholars have sought to move beyond the limits of “redrawing the boundaries,” searching for metaphors besides chronology, periodicity, or essentialized categories of race, ethnicity, or gender to guide our work in English studies. For instance, Patricia Bizzell argues for (re)organizing English curricula in terms of Mary Louise Pratt’s now famous metaphor of “contact zones.” As Pratt defines the term, contact zones “refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (qtd. in Bizzell 166). In her essay, “‘Contact Zones’ and English Studies,” Bizzell advances contact zones as a new organizing principle for English studies:

I am suggesting that we organize English studies not in terms of literary or chronological periods, nor essentialized racial or gender categories, but rather in terms of historically defined contact zones, moments when different groups within society contend for the power to interpret what is going on. (167)

The virtue of this approach, in Bizzell’s view, is that it treats “multiculturalism as a defining feature” of English studies, and frees us from having to try to “squeeze new material into inappropriate old categories, where its importance could not be adequately appreciated.” Instead of asking “prejudicial questions, such as whether Frederick Douglass was as ‘good’ . . . as Henry Thoreau,” we would “look at the rhetorical effectiveness of each writer in dealing with the matter at hand, for example, the need to promote civil disobedience in the contact zone created by white and black efforts to define and motivate action in response to slavery in the antebellum U.S.” (167–68). And, as Bizzell points out, since the focus here would be on historically contextualized
rhetorical problems, "boundaries between 'content' (literature) and its traditional inferior, pedagogy (composition) are usefully blurred (168). Student writing, too, can be seen as contending in contact zones, since our students’ lives and words embody negotiations of difference no less than the writers we study.

Bizzell’s approach provides a remarkably rich context for student reading and writing and is amply illustrated in her recent textbook Negotiating Difference, which includes casebooks of historical documents, narratives, and arguments, each centering on a particular contact zone in the past, such as “First Contacts between Puritans and Native Americans,” and “The Debate over Slavery and the Declaration of Independence.” Moreover, unlike Greenblatt and Gunn, Bizzell makes a serious effort to recognize students and the cultures they bring with them to the classroom as key to establishing the character of the classroom as a social space. However, despite such recognitions, Bizzell still conceives curricular reform in the traditional terms of content and method, offering new readings and new ways of organizing the intellectual work of English, but not analyzing how that work is institutionally embedded and constrained. If classrooms are contact zones no less than the spaces created by the abolitionist activists in Bizzell’s textbook, in what ways are they similar or different? How do contact zones within academia or elsewhere function, regulating what architectural theorist Amos Rapaport calls “unwanted interaction” (285, 293, 297)?

The problem is that even the most provocative and inspiring theorists often shift freely between the multiple senses of terms such as contact zones and borderlands, often leaving those slippages of meaning unanalyzed. For instance, in her famous essay “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Pratt uses the term contact zones to illustrate cultural interaction under conditions of colonial conquest in seventeenth-century Peru, Stanford general education classrooms, and her son’s elementary school. To be sure, this imaginative range is one of the things that makes the concept of the contact zone provocative. But leaving these shifts unanalyzed also risks the same hyperreality as that created by Graff’s use of the metaphor of university as microcosm. The danger is that the imaginative analogy between the contact zones of Peru, Stanford, and an elementary school will elide the materiality of each place in favor of an ideal of cultural negotiation (an ideal, incidently, not entirely dissimilar from Graff’s ideal of “democratic debate”).

Even the most provocative and inspiring theorists of the borderlands often make a shift similar to Pratt in envisioning borders as both a
consequence of violence and oppression as well as a fertile space for social imagination and activism. Drawing on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Chicana writer and activist Gloria Anzaldúa, and others, radical pedagogy has developed the idea of “borderlands” to describe how identity and space interact, both as a lived reality and as an ideal. For Anzaldúa, the borderlands of the U.S. and Mexico represent a real place “where the Third World grates up against the first and bleeds ... the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture” (3). But it also represents a cultural project, the formation of “a new mestiza consciousness” (77).

Anzaldúa’s Borderlands represents a hybrid of poetry, dream, history, and academic argument, and it addresses, at different points, specifically identified audiences of widely different educational levels, cultural orientations, and physical embodiments: Chicana workers, activists and intellectuals, lesbians, whites, heterosexual men, homeless people, and so forth. In its very form and imagined distribution, Anzaldúa’s work anticipates networks of interaction and communication that go beyond those now integrated through the university as an institution. For Anzaldúa, the borderlands is a lived and imagined space that challenges the normative range of audiences, experiences, and knowledge found in the university and academic discourse. Despite or perhaps because of this transgressiveness, the idea of borderlands has become a widely influential figure in the discourses of multiculturalism and humanities reform. In its adaptation to the institutional settings of university teaching and research, the concept has been used to represent what Abdul JanMohamed defines as “deeply invested spaces for hegemonic and counterhegemonic contestation,” where the “border intellectual” violates the “prescribed borders,” in the interest of representing a revolt against the exclusiveness of academic knowledge and institutions (248). According to Henry Giroux, “border pedagogy” advocates “people moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power” and encourages students “to develop a relationship of non-identity with their own subject positions and the multiple cultural, political and social codes that constitute established boundaries of power, dependency and possibility” (qtd. in JanMohamed 246). JanMohamed contends that as teachers develop the mobility to cross cultural boundaries and identities, and thereby help students do the same in academic study and daily life, they develop knowledge of and the potential for “forming counterhegemonic organizations” (246).
We believe there is much possibility in the kind of teaching and research JanMohamed envisions, but there are dangers of romanticizing this role, especially in the designed spaces provided for us by U.S. universities. Most four-year universities, even those located along the U.S./Mexico border, have not yet come close to integrating the range of border tensions that Anzaldua is exploring in her writing, or in her text’s projected networks of contact and interaction. Indeed, the questions of power geometry that need to be emphasized here are implicit in Wendy Hesford’s recent admonitions against romanticizing the fluidity of borders, since such borders also reflect “a deeply geographical and social history of exploitive migrant labor and forced movements” (49). As Hesford argues, we need to ask, “Who is crossing what borders? Who is in the position to create border identities? Are border crossers forced into such acts, or are such movements and crossings of their own choosing?” Hesford goes on to remind us that “the boundaries that define communities are freighted with radical inequalities and forms of domination” (52–53). While Hesford acknowledges that “it is possible to construct border identities as acts of solidarity with oppressed peoples,” she is also quite wary of how white and middle-class cultures, and more specifically, professional and academic cultures, have historically exploited borders as sites for “cultural tourism” and for producing new credentials and careers, often in ways that benefit traditional constituencies of the higher education marketplace.

To avoid falling into such a trap, we need to be much more skeptical of commonplace assumptions that border-crossing is inherently progressive or good. Indeed, our assumption should be that programs that attempt to create new forms of knowledge and new forms of social contact between campus and community, whether interdisciplinary or not, are always embedded in larger ecologies of segmentation already at work in the campus and city as built environments. In addition, we might assume that border-crossing is a phenomenon driven not only by the choices of students, teachers, and researchers, but also by social and economic forces that are commonly understood as non-disciplinary or extra-disciplinary. To illustrate this more complicated view of border-crossing, we want to explore some recent attempts to cross borders and create new forms of social contact in programs at the universities where we teach. While we want to emphasize a sense of possibility in these attempts, we also want to highlight how these initiatives are embedded, and in some ways reenact, the larger divisions and boundaries already at work in the campus and city as built environments. Indeed, we argue that the hope of
these initiatives depends on our vigilance about the power geometry of newly created spaces, and on our ability to counteract inevitable reassertions of older borders and identities. We also want to draw attention to how an increasingly commonplace, and generalized call to cross borders as well as to develop interdisciplinary programs often screens out exactly the sorts of developments we should be paying the most attention to.

**Crossing Borders as Action and Effect**

At the midwestern public university whose geography we have described above, the administration is now instituting the second phase of a “Blueprint for the Future” championed by the Chancellor, which has four major goals: building “academic excellence,” “a community of learners,” “a campus without borders,” and “an environment that unleashes human potential.” Faculty criticism of the blueprint process has focused intensely on its threat to academic freedom and faculty autonomy, and some have claimed that the “transformation workshops” sponsored by the Chancellor amount to heavy-handed propaganda or “corporate mind manipulations” (qtd. in Blackwood). The problem with such descriptions is that they picture the blueprint as a tightly coherent ideological project, rather than as a plurality of processes, each partly constituted by the actual place where the blueprint (or various oppositional appropriations of it) “happens.” By focusing narrowly on the ideological content of the workshops, such criticism leaves unscrutinized how the blueprint process is also a response to specific social needs and market pressures that any project for change, progressive or otherwise, would have to engage.

In many ways, the blueprint is a response to a major shift in the power geometries of public and private universities that lack huge endowments to sustain the status quo. In such institutions, the goal of a campus without borders is, among other things, a response to a bleak economic environment for higher education that has pressured administrations to expand enrollments and contract the number of tenureable faculty, especially in English and other humanities or social science disciplines. The decision-makers know that competition for students is likely to intensify in the next decade and that there is little likelihood that budgets will increase proportionately. Administrations also know that the most reliable projections suggest that a majority of growth in student enrollments will likely have to come through expansion of minority student populations. For instance, a recent large-scale study published by the Educational Testing Service projects that over the next two decades the numbers of students
attending college are likely to swell from seventeen to nineteen million students, with black, Hispanic, and Asian students accounting for eighty percent of the growth (Wilgoren 16). The study, however, also suggests that “while minority college enrollment is skyrocketing, it is not growing as fast as the black and Hispanic populations ages 18 to 24” (16). Hence, racial integration is likely to remain an elusive goal.

What this means is that campus diversity is not only a matter of social justice, but also the economic interests of universities. A “university without borders” promises more democratic access to education. But whether it achieves this aim or not, it is also an economic program articulated in an environment that demands “more with less.” In such an environment, the “excellence” of a program may well depend not on the kinds of borders it crosses, but how it cuts costs (for instance, by lessening the university’s dependence on tenureable faculty), and how it cultivates markets (for instance, by improving the university’s relationship with local constituencies, eliciting further philanthropic or alumni support, and tapping into various growth sectors of the market for students).

Two programs with significant ties to the English department that are helping the university achieve these ends are the High School/College Dual Credit program (HSCP), and the Advanced Preparation Program (APP). Significantly, these programs primarily involve the English department on account of writing, which tenureable faculty seldom teach. Nevertheless, these programs are reshaping the power geometry of the institution in ways that warrant far more attention than faculty usually give them. The High School/College Program, for example, targets students in area high schools for introductory college courses that yield dual high school/college credit. From 1996-2001, enrollments in this program increased by a factor of ten times, climbing from a mere 300 students to roughly twenty percent of total college enrollments (“Credit”). While this growth is astonishing, what is even more so is that many faculty in the college are not even aware of the program. The HSCP first-year writing program, which is the largest segment of the overall program, has developed independently of the on-campus composition program, and, although it shares the same course number, the curriculum is built around different textbooks and assignments and has an independent program of teacher development run by college administrators.

The “excellence” of this program, then, has been operationally defined mainly in terms of the potential to open up new streams of students and revenue and to cut costs. In some sense, the first year of
college is being subcontracted to local schools, where students are charged one-half tuition, and teachers are hired as university adjuncts even though they are paid by local school districts. With little cost for labor or space, and a new flow of tuition dollars, this is a lucrative operation for a cash-strapped college. It helps recruit students, and lessens tuition costs for students who can take advantage of it, and it provides an opening for some high school teachers to provide new challenges to students.

But how does such a major retrenchment redraw borders? By lowering costs, the HSCP may expand access to higher education for some students. But generally, these are students who are already academically well-prepared and college bound, students who local teachers, counselors and districts have already marked as qualified for, and worthy of being tracked to the program. Hence, although the program may enlarge the pool of local recruits, it also reenacts a class politics similar to that more widely enacted in traditional university admissions. Students who already possess the cultural capital and skills of the professional class are much more likely to be served by the program than those who do not. The program also redraws borders by allowing an increasing amount of instruction to be done off-campus. Although theoretically this change might seem to give humanities disciplines such as English a way to expand their sphere of contact and influence in the community, we would argue that the opposite is occurring. As more students take their general education requirements under programs like the HSCP, courses for underprepared students, first-year writing courses, and other general education courses are increasingly offered under the auspices of administrators and local school districts. If writing can be effectively taught by off-campus teachers with the limited involvement of English, or indeed of any campus faculty, then why hire more tenureable teachers on campus, or even risk the political tensions expanding the corps of adjunct teachers on campus? Without the oversight of campus faculty, the program can be expanded primarily with an eye on profits, and without developing adequate training, curricular focus, or opportunities for breaking down barriers between high school and college teachers. Indeed, in this program, despite its potential to open up dialogue between high school and college teachers, the barriers are formidable. College teachers are often hesitant to spend precious time in an academically marginal program, and high school teachers are often wary that colleagues in the university are less interested in dialogue than in dictating pedagogy and curriculum from above.
Another program attempting to cross borders and redraw boundaries on campus is the Advanced Preparation Program (APP). The program's stated aims echo the boilerplate blueprint rhetoric of "connecting to the greater community" and "celebrating a community of learners." But in this case the slogans sanction quite material changes, and in our view quite progressive changes, in the way the university "crafts a class." In particular, this program targets local public school graduates who are more than fifty percent African American and who have historically been drastically underrepresented in the student body, largely because of poor standardized test scores. As a recent program document describes them, these students are "a diverse group of students from local communities, who, though unable to meet the university's moderately selective admissions requirements, demonstrate potential to succeed academically." Almost forty percent of these one-hundred and nineteen "trial admits" in the first semester of the program were African American, and more than eighty-eight percent finished their first semester in good academic standing. In the second semester, the program has nearly doubled in size.

Like the HSCP, the APP program has received little attention in the English department, or the college, and has been initiated and developed primarily through administrative actions. In the program students typically receive academic advising not through disciplines, but through advisors specifically hired for this program. In certain subjects, these students take classes with the standard curricular designations but in special sections taught by instructors hired within the program. Interestingly, advertising of the APP program in academic disciplines has been quite discreet, and few faculty have shown much interest in trying to bring it under the auspices of disciplinary authority.

But why should faculty be concerned? One reason is because the APP and HSCP programs are one facet of the widescale development of "enrollment management" as a newly professionalized task in universities. Since the 1980s, universities have systemized and formalized the process of crafting a class. One result is that the political work of determining who will be part of academic discussions has been increasingly contained within a relatively insulated network of enrollment experts answerable primarily to the economic imperatives of university administrators. Faculty are becoming more distant from the process than ever, and seem content to be so, even though it is clear that by determining who may be part of dialogue, enrollment practices directly shape what is likely to become the content of those dialogues.
It is also important to consider that by opening the door for a new set of arrivals, the APP program has not only breached but has also activated new borders on campus. For instance, as the title of the Advanced Preparation Program suggests, teachers and students in the program must counteract the stigma that attends their association with the program, as well as persistent patterns of racism, sexism, and classism on campus. As students from the program circulate on campus—in non-APP courses, in shared spaces such as the writing center, and in dormitories and meeting places—they inevitably encounter borders that can be intensified by the expanded presence of underprepared or underrepresented students on campus. Indeed, administrative advocates of the APP program may have a progressive motive in mind for not circulating information about it among faculty, since to do so might arouse public resistance, either out of racist or classist attitudes about the new students admitted, or out of legitimate concerns about the lack of resources available to teach these often underprepared students.

By ignoring programs such as the APP and HSCP, English departments are ignoring how their work is embedded within a shifting power geometry that demands an analysis as close as the one we give to the texts our students read or write. Programs such as the APP and HSCP define a different domain of border negotiations that nonetheless are likely to have powerful effects, even on faculty whose research and classrooms are comfortably remote from such programs. When faculty encounter new populations of students in courses, offices, advising, informal interaction, faculty will inevitably have to make choices—preferably informed political choices—about how to accommodate the widened range of students’ needs, levels of academic preparedness, and cultural expectations. However, because reform discourse has so often framed issues of border-crossing so abstractly or idealistically, we fear that faculty choices are now too likely to be made in isolation or by default, uninformed by a shared discourse that brings to the surface the political meanings and consequences of our decisions.

Reform discourse has typically invoked the rhetoric of borders and border-crossing to a much greater degree in addressing curricula, teaching, and self-governance than in engaging program innovations such as the APP or dual-credit programs. However, even in these matters, where faculty often do have more direct control, rhetorics of border-crossing have often been invoked in ways that romanticize the fluidity of borders, to use Hesford's phrase, and ignore how innovations in curricula and teaching also involve forced movement. Indeed, while reform often touts
globalism, interdisciplinarity, and community-service as inherently positive terms, how these terms function in institutional change is often a far more complex matter.

For instance, one of us teaches at a private, midwestern, comprehensive university that is currently in the midst of implementing decisions derived from an extensive “Academic Program Review.” Administrative statements explaining the review have been framed in a typically progressive language that emphasizes the familiar themes of campus and community partnership, globalism, and interdisciplinarity. Specifically, the “operational statement” (which announces itself as “decidedly an internal document”) names goals such as “excellence,” “external connections” (connections between “academic studies and the non-academic world” and between learning and “real-world tasks”), “internal connections” (“connections to other fields” through, for instance, “participation in multi-/interdisciplinary programs”), the “global nature of knowledge, of the workplace, and of human society,” and “multiple access points to learning” through “community service,” “experiential learning,” as well as “technology-based learning” (“Vision” 2).

These may seem progressive and democratic goals, and in fact, the review, while strongly recommended by the university President, also received the faculty senate’s endorsement. What soon emerged from the review was that these apparently progressive changes would require a redistribution of resources with some programs and academic units being enhanced and others eliminated. Each department would provide reports on their own currency, innovation, and essentiality to the mission of the university based on enrollment data, number of majors, faculty-student ratios, faculty credentials, and graduates’ job success. Based on reports of this data to the Provost, programs would be slated for preservation, enhancement, or possible elimination. Moreover, only twenty percent of programs could be recommended for advancement, and at least twenty percent had to be recommended for further examination and possible “phasing out.”

In essence, the rhetorics of globalism, interdisciplinarity, and border-crossing have proven decidedly double-voiced, functioning both to legitimate curricular innovation and to rationalize a thinly-veiled assault on faculty self-governance. The mandate from the Provost that has developed from this program review calls for reduction in the number of academic units in the college of arts and sciences from sixteen to seven or eight. Modern languages, sociology, and rhetoric have already lost status as independent departments, and many faculty have found them-
selves faced with either pressure to leave the university or find a new departmental home. Some of these faculty are now seeking to forge new interdisciplinary connections and they are crossing borders, but of course, it is often more out of a need to survive than a desire to explore. Interdisciplinary departments, such as the new Department for the Study of Culture and Society (SCS), have arisen, as displaced faculty consolidate around shared interests. The SCS department, for example, now is an umbrella for fields such as sociology, race and ethnic studies, rhetoric, and media studies, and has signed on faculty with such expertise from a number of eliminated or consolidated departments.

The emergence of the new department shows how easily interdisciplinarity and border crossing can be appropriated to serve the new power geometry of higher education. The new department allows a consolidation of resources by conserving space and supplies, streamlining the workforce (eliminating the need to maintain tenured or tenureable faculty, secretarial support, and so on, in many small departments) and enhancing executive control over faculty (submerging the diversity of faculty interests by forcing their representation in larger units). It also presents a major challenge to the English department, which maintained its departmental status despite being criticized in the review process for following its own course “without consultation with other units in the University.” Many of the forms of study that are now central to SCS’s mission—including multicultural studies, critical studies of media, and cultural studies—have historically had strong roots in English. What formerly existed dispersed across many disciplines, including English, now is grounded in its own physical space and curricular designations. These changes enhance the SGS’s authority over the specialisms it has consolidated, and correspondingly, the English department’s claim on them is weakened. For this reason, the English department is now under pressure to develop new narratives legitimating its claims to departmental status in the college.

Ironically, faculty in English have often represented writing as the disciplinary area most vulnerable to definition by ‘outside’ forces. However, in this case, we would argue that writing offers the English department one of the best strategies for maintaining its departmental status and autonomy. Indeed, developing a new interdisciplinary writing major, a process that has recently been begun, has the potential to address institutional concerns in ways that cannot be achieved through support of multicultural or cultural studies tracks housed in SCS. The writing major, which allows twelve hours outside English, highlights the English depart-
ment as the center of the teaching of reading and writing. Hence, development of this program reinforces English's claims to departmental status by drawing on the general perception that English should be the central institutional space for developing writing programs and courses. This claim has been further strengthened by a recent national survey that suggests that the phasing out of the university's first-year writing requirement (Eng. 001) over the last few years, and its replacement by first-year seminars offered by departments across the college, has diminished the amount of practice first-year students get in writing and oral communication. For example, the survey showed that first-year students had received less experience developing class presentations, in speaking clearly and effectively, and in writing multiple draft assignments than first-year students from the four-hundred and sixty-six colleges also included in the sample (National Survey of Student Engagement).

However English departments handle their historically vexed relation with writing, there is no doubt that scarcity of resources demands that English selectively choose how to involve itself in interdisciplinary projects, rather than simply assume that interdisciplinarity and border-crossing are inherently good. Developing effective responses to the reorganization of the college is a key task for the English department, and the situation we have described likely represents circumstances that will become increasingly common in the future in many comprehensive and research universities. Our account of the situation emphasizes the degree to which border-crossing by faculty is perhaps more a matter of forced movement than choice.

However, we are aware that our use of border images to represent negotiations of disciplinarity and expertise among faculty is in many ways quite typical. There are a number of important issues that are left unaddressed by such a limited conception of border-crossing as the negotiation of difference and affiliation in our research or teaching, including demographic issues similar to those we discussed in relation to the APP and dual-credit programs. How will the reconfiguration of disciplinary borders affect the circulation of students within the power geometries of our institutions and the labor market? Will alteration of departmental boundaries change the way different forms of expertise such as cultural or multicultural studies link to the workplace? Will the English and SCS departments attract enough students to warrant their survival? How employable will their students be?

Answers to these sorts of questions will have a role in determining the long-term viability of both the English department and new departments
created by retrenchment. It is too early to answer them at this point in the reforms we have described. But we would note that the ethnic and racial composition of the university's student body has remained relatively constant over the last six years, with the entering class of minority students holding steady at eleven to fifteen percent, and with four to five percent of these students being international students. While many scholars have claimed that the shift toward cultural studies, multiculturalism, race and gender studies, and so on in the humanities has affirmed the cultural capital of underrepresented groups in ways that enhance such groups' access to college, we argue that it remains to be seen if programs like SCS, or the redesigned English department, will open up the university to students who have historically had limited access.

How far can curricular and organizational reform affect the development of new patterns of community membership in higher education? In an economic, political, and legal environment that is making equality of opportunity in higher education harder to achieve, and even the survival of English departments harder to ensure, this question is more important than ever. But we will never achieve even an adequate discussion of the issues unless we examine our teaching and research in relationship to larger ecologies of segmentation in the university and beyond. If we hope to sustain the possibility of critical democratic discourse and action in our classrooms and campuses, we will have to broaden our vision beyond romanticized ideals of border-crossing, contact zones and interdisciplinarity, and come to grips with the full range of factors that construct place in our universities and communities.8

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Notes

1. For instance, the environmental impact statements used in the court battle over the freeway say little about social costs, prompting the Legal Aid lawyer representing residents to comment that the "real issues of this case have never been litigated," even though the court struggle was then five years old (Nelson; see also Carroll).

2. For example, the most visible public spending for urban development has gone to projects such as Science City, a Jazz museum and Negro Leagues
baseball museum, and inner-city shopping centers—all geared to attracting large flows of tourists and customers from the freeways into interior spaces, rather than interweaving their activities into local neighborhoods.

3. Indeed, labor exploitation in universities might arguably select in favor of faculty who already enjoy middle-class status. This issue has been little studied, but according to one study done by David Leslie, a professor of education at the College of William and Mary, only about ten percent of part-time faculty report household incomes under $25,000, while more than half report household incomes over $55,000 (qtd. in ADE 20).

4. For instance, in the case of Hopwood v. Texas, the Fifth Circuit court ruled that the University of Texas could not consider race in law school admissions, repudiating earlier Supreme court precedents. For a fuller account of this ruling, and of the broader legal underpinnings of “colorblind constitutionalism,” see Race and Representation: Affirmative Action, particularly Reva B. Siegel’s essay, “The Racial Rhetorics of Colorblind Constitutionalism: The Case of Hopwood v. Texas.”

5. Judith Butler argues this case in refuting statements by the California Board of Regents in 1995 that justified the banning of race as a consideration in university admissions in California. Butler argues that the regents shape disciplinary communities and conversations not so much by discouraging discourse about race, gender, and ethnicity so much as by “circumscribing the proper domain of their mentionability” (157).

6. For instance, the Board of Regents resolution stipulates in section 5 that “not less than fifty percent and not more than seventy-five percent of any entering class on any campus shall be admitted solely on the basis of academic achievement” (Post 400).

7. Of course, Graff’s reform program proposes more realistic debates, but it still downplays the gap between curricular ideas and the social and economic forces that construct higher education as a material place. Reform alone can never turn the curriculum into “a microcosm . . . of America as a whole” without a corresponding revolution in the economic and social forces that determine who will be part of the debate, where it will be held, and on what terms.

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