Writing Centers in the Managed University

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The last twenty-five years have witnessed a number of profound changes in the landscape of higher education, changes that have been collectively described as a shift towards the “managed university.” Although other terms have also been proposed to name this shift, there is wide agreement about some of the basic characteristics of the trend.\(^1\) The power of corporate interests to shape higher education funding and policy has grown, and many colleges and universities have themselves adopted overtly business-oriented models of management. Institutions are making aggressive efforts to cut costs and maximize revenues in the face of diminished state subsidies. Among the many results of such changes has been the emergence of a new kind of “academic capitalism” (Rhoades and Slaughter) that shifts resources away from a wide range of traditional, but economically marginal, university activities, and redirects them to activities that generate revenues and enhance the competitive position of US corporations in the global economy.

These changes may seem distant from the everyday work of writing centers, and they take widely different forms in different types of institutions. But whether we are aware of them or not, these forces are shifting the ground beneath our feet, so to speak, and the work of writing centers is as deeply affected as any other university activity. Indeed, one of my basic purposes in this essay is to show how writing centers have been shaped by the forces currently driving the shift towards the managed university, and to suggest ways we can exploit and resist these forces to create progressive change in the future. More specifically, I will illustrate the dynamics of these forces in the emergence of two new programs in the writing center at the

About the Author

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University of Missouri-Kansas City where I teach: the Community Narrative Project (CNP) and the Advanced Preparation Program (APP). While these initiatives are local and in some ways unique, they illustrate how emerging pressures in the managed university can complicate traditional alliances as well as some of the core values of writing centers. On a more hopeful note, the initiatives also illustrate tactical strategies whereby writing centers can appropriate dominant institutional rhetorics and contradictory institutional goals and turn them to serve the less powerful.

Because many of the shifts associated with the managed university seem incremental and ordinary, it is easy to overlook their cumulative significance. For myself, the tensions surrounding writing centers were highlighted in a very personal way when Lil Brannon asked me, and another of her former students, Derek Owens, to participate in a panel discussion on the cultural work of writing centers at the 2005 IWCA/NCPTW conference in Minneapolis. Both Derek and I had worked as graduate students in the writing center at SUNY Albany in the mid-1980s, while Lil was directing the center there. In her presentation, Lil showed photographs illustrating how she developed a writing center with Jeannette Harris in 1975 at Texas A&M University, transforming what had been a “writing lab” narrowly focused on grammar exercises—and comically located, as her blurry photograph showed, in a third floor’s janitor’s closet—to a bonafide “writing center” located on the first floor of the building that housed the English department.

In many ways, Lil’s story had the power of a myth of origin for me, illustrating in dramatic terms the vision of possibility that drew me to writing center work in the first place. The shift from writing “lab” to writing “center” meant that our work was not fundamentally about “fixing” this or that text, but about helping students develop a sense of agency as writers, helping them take charge of their own lives and educations. The writing center was a place where students could recognize that they had stories to tell and voices to tell them in, where the “student’s right to their own language” would be affirmed, and where students could come to “see themselves as writers already speaking within and against the university” (Brannon).

Partly through the leadership of people like Lil, Steve North (another of my teachers, and founder of the writing center at Albany) and many others, this vision of a writing center gained currency through the 80s on a national scale, and writing centers became crucial sites enabling widened access to higher education. In the 70s and 80s, writing centers increasingly came to function as places where marginalized groups of students could come to get personalized help as they struggled to negotiate the gap between the styles of thought and language they brought to school and
those favored by the university and the professions. Because these cultural gaps between students and the professions have often been shot through with class, gender, race and other biases, writing centers established themselves as a significant force for educational equity. Writing centers now have a strong foundation from which to carry forward this progressive legacy of access, having established their own research venues (such as The Writing Center Journal), as well as the definition of the center itself as a place for a spacious encounter with texts and ideas, rather than merely a place for linguistic purification.

However, revisiting the emergence of writing centers through Lil’s stories and photographs was, for me, much more than a celebratory trip down memory lane. For one thing, my own view of literacy has shifted, informed by an increasing body of scholarship that demonstrates how deeply literacy is intertwined with the reproduction of social inequality. As Deborah Brandt has argued, throughout the twentieth century the demand for literacy has been intensifying, and increasingly, the move into a “knowledge economy” requires that “literacy itself [be] capitalized as a productive force” (171). What Brandt means is that literacy has become more and more central and inescapable in the functioning of capitalist economies, and the consequences for workers of not developing literate abilities commensurate with the new demands are ever more dire. Literacy becomes a raw material, as information is bought and sold; it becomes an instrument of production, as more jobs require use of computers and manipulation of text and image as a matter of course; and oftentimes, it is the product itself, “as many people now work at making representations out of other representations” (170-71). While I am not suggesting we should abandon our idealism about the potential of writing centers, I would argue that Brandt’s work, and that of other scholars elucidating the economic forces at work behind our current literacy boom (see Stuckey; Ohmann; and Downing et al.), should compel us to take a hard look at why writing centers have proliferated on college campuses across the nation, and why the functions they perform have similarly multiplied.

The writing centers Derek Owens and I examined in our panel (at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and at St. John’s University in New York) were no longer simply marginal outposts at our respective institutions. Both institutions had considered, or were considering, plans to move the writing centers to central campus locations, and both had significantly expanded their functions beyond tutorials for assigned writing tasks. These plans at St. John’s have now been approved, and include a move to a prime location in the main library and a professional architectural redesign of the writing center’s space. Both Derek and I were concerned about
what such expansion might mean for the accessibility of writing centers and for the spacious vision of the center as a place for many forms of assigned and self-sponsored writing—a vision of the writing center as, in Derek’s terms, a salon, a coffee house, and a performance site, as well as a place to work on assigned writing (Owens).

The new institutional conditions for writing centers raise an urgent question: how can writing centers expand beyond their traditional role of providing tutorials for student writers, and given the pressures now shaping the managed university, what possibilities and dangers do they face in doing so?

I am convinced that defending the progressive legacies of writing centers will demand not only that we celebrate our visions of what writing centers should be, but also that we recognize the ways in which writing centers are also subject to forces that we cannot control. The myths of origin and visions of the future that we often associate with writing centers are valuable as a way to remember the past and to inspire future action. However, stories and visions that celebrate our past accomplishment and future agency also run the risk of deflecting our attention from the ways in which our daily institutional paths are often traversed by contradictory forces and demands not of our own making. As I hope to show, the managed university is a scene that is sometimes hostile or indifferent to our traditional values and aspirations. It is important that we address the forces operating on this new scene consciously, since ignoring them does not free us at all, and may even intensify their power over our work.

In many ways, writing centers are products of the same forces that enabled the emergence of the managed university. Writing centers emerged during the 1970s and 80s at a time when the managerial authority of universities over student access was rapidly expanding through newly professionalized offices of enrollment management, welcome centers, expanded recruitment and marketing offices, and the like. Universities began to go about the business of “crafting a class” in a much more
professionalized and deliberate way, partly because their economic well being depended on it. (See Duffy and Goldberg for a full account of the professionalization of “enrollment management” in universities). Just as a business depends on the cash of its customers, downsizing has meant that colleges and universities must depend more heavily on the cash of students (as well as sponsors such as corporations, grant agencies, and wealthy alumni), and less on state subsidies, to stay afloat. As students incur increasing levels of debt for their educations, and state grants and subsidies for housing and tuition diminish, students are driven to be more cost-conscious as educational consumers.

Because it is usually cheaper to retain students than recruit new ones, writing centers make cash sense from the point of view of university presidents and administrators. Writing centers are consumer-friendly in a cost-efficient way, providing personalized one-to-one contact at relatively low cost. Writing centers also help employers by helping to keep students in school, improving the literacy skills of the labor pool. Because of these auspicious conditions for growth, many writing centers are now getting competition in the retention game from other players. At UMKC, for instance, we now have video instruction (student discussion groups focused on the taped lectures of their professors), supplemental instruction, a new individualized peer “Coaching Program,” mentorship programs for specialized cohorts of students, and the like.

Looking towards the future, we might identify many reasons why writing centers will continue to be long-term beneficiaries of the shift towards a managed university. First, the turn towards customer service favors user-friendly innovations such as writing centers, especially when they demonstrably deliver a value-added product. Colleges are more aware than ever that if students don’t like how they are treated, they can take their business elsewhere. Secondly, writing centers produce value beyond consumer satisfaction, since their special product, namely improved writing, has an increasing value relative to other academic skills and forms of knowledge in the job market. This intensifying valuation of writing in the economy will likely continue to put pressure on academic disciplines to integrate writing more deeply into curricula. This outcome bodes well for writing centers in their collaboration and competition with other players in the retention game.

However, before anyone gets too puffed up with the thought of long-downtrodden writing teachers and tutors borne up to windowed offices at last, we should remember that benefits only come with strings attached. If the managed university has favored the growth of user-friendly innovations such as writing centers, it has also undercut writing instruction and the standing of writing teachers through the
growing use of part-time faculty, who are paid fast-food wages for professional work. The pressure to cut costs can be brutal, and teaching writing is labor-intensive. This does not bode well for improved working conditions in writing centers and can leave tutors in the position of picking up the slack for instructors teaching under conditions that may not encourage or even permit attention to individual students. Indeed, the major danger here is that writing centers could increasingly become a kind of fig leaf for universities wanting to claim the centrality of writing in their degree programs, but not actually willing to fund it.

In addition, the expanded province of writing in the university is itself teeming with new ideological pressures and agendas. As Brandt argues, we literacy educators have sometimes addressed economic forces in our work, but when we do, economic forces “appear primarily as generalities: contexts, determinants, motivators, barriers, touchstones. But rarely are they systematically related to the local conditions and embodied moments of literacy learning that occupy so many of us on a daily basis” (19). Brandt develops the concept of “literacy sponsors” to address this gap between literacy as an individual and an economic development. Sponsors are “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (19). Just as we have been accustomed to think of radio and TV programs as “brought to us” by commercial sponsors, “it is useful to think about who or what underwrites occasions of literacy learning and use” (19).

As public subsidy for higher education weakens, the space for private and commercial interests in literacy sponsorship increases. However, I would argue that the belief that higher education should serve democracy and the common good still has powerful appeal among educators and the electorate, despite the recent successes of neoconservatives in cutting public subsidies and representing a college degree as an individual private asset. What this means is that the ideological meanings of literacy remain up for grabs. As Brandt makes clear, while literacy sponsors deliver “the ideological freight that must be borne for access to what they have..., the sponsored can be oblivious to or innovative with this ideological burden. Like Little Leaguers who wear the logo of a local insurance agency on their uniforms, not out of a concern for enhancing the insurancy agency’s image but as a means of getting to play ball, people throughout history have acquired literacy pragmatically under the banner of others’ causes” (20).

Unfortunately, writing centers are often not in a strong position to publically critique whatever new “ideological freight” that sponsors of literacy in the managed university might ask us to carry. Typically, faculty in the disciplines are the most
immediate sponsors of student writing (although, of course, their work is, in turn, deeply tied up in the sponsorship of other groups or interests). This puts writing center tutors most often in the position of helping students succeed in writing tasks over which neither the tutor nor the student have direct control. Even if the limits of academic writing narrow under the pressure of new forms of ideological sponsorship, the work of tutoring must, for the most part, engage a rhetorical situation dictated from outside the tutorial encounter. However, tutors still can help students become more alert to the possibility of being, as Brandt puts it, “innovative” with the ideological burden of their sponsors. Even in fairly restrictive assignments, tutors can help students find openings where their own needs and interests can be engaged.

Moreover, writing centers are themselves, as Bonnie Sunstein has amply illustrated, “liminal spaces” where a kind of “in-betweeenness” holds sway. Writing centers are not typically tied to particular disciplines and usually don’t grade student texts; they are positioned ambiguously between literacy sponsors and the sponsored (students); they are obliged to serve all comers, although in many ways they also sponsor literacy activities themselves. Hence, writing centers are in an excellent position to observe and develop specific knowledge about how literacy concretely functions in students’ lives, and to use that knowledge in interactions with colleagues or administrators when it promises to promote our own values.

Considering writing centers in terms of literacy sponsorship suggests new ways of understanding the place of writing centers in the managed university, and new strategies for promoting more democratic visions of literacy. First, even though writing centers are partially bound by the terms of access to literacy set by sponsors in the work of tutoring assigned tasks, writing centers can also be prolific sponsors of literacy themselves. Writing centers sponsor literacy whenever they define and enact specific literacies in their own activities—that is, whenever they conduct or enable research, help tutors develop new understandings of literacy or reconceive their own identities as writers, or host events from colloquies to poetry slams. Beyond this direct function of literacy sponsorship, writing centers also can take advantage of their location at the intersection of many different types of literacy sponsorship. I would argue that this position enables a certain mobility and flexibility in fashioning alliances, and writing centers can exploit this position as they selectively appropriate institutional goals and missions that promote our own visions of democratic literacy. Unfortunately, the metaphors of corporatization and management applied to universities often seem to create clear heroes and villains—the bad corporate bureaucrat/administrator vs. the good teacher/tutor/student.
laboring in the trenches. But, as we will see, the scene of resistance to the managed university is more complicated, and sometimes produces strange bedfellows.

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to illustrate the scene for decision-making in the managed university more concretely by examining the history of our own writing center at UMKC, and particularly two recent innovations expanding the writing center's activities. The first innovation is the "Community Narrative Project" (CNP), a grass-roots initiative sponsored by the writing center itself. Through the CNP, writing center staff work with professors, students and community organizations to collect and archive oral histories of local neighborhoods. The second innovation is the "Advance Preparation Program" (APP), which unlike the CNP, was not initiated by the writing center itself. Under the program, the writing center provides mandatory tutoring to students who have been admitted to the university under a relaxed admissions policy, in an effort to boost the diversity of the student body and enrollments from local school districts and elsewhere. In different ways, both of these programs illustrate the contradictory forces shaping the development of writing centers in the managed university, and the ways our choices are enabled or constrained by those forces.

The CNP was initiated through the work of our writing center director, Thomas Ferrell, in collaboration with imaginative tutors such as Raseeda Plenty and Tracy Van Quaethem. The program has been valuable to faculty members like myself because it has enabled students, both first-year writing students and upper-division students, to examine issues of class and racial segregation in local neighborhoods, as well as historical practices such as redlining and blockbusting, through interviews with residents. Students learn to use writing to focus attention on shared community problems, and to make the richness of particular human lives visible. Students also explore the complex ways in which history is mediated by discourse, and how

Figure 2. Blockbusting shaped the local character of the neighborhood surrounding the university, as illustrated by this image from a city-sponsored anti-blockbusting pamphlet in the 1960s (Gotham 108).
narrative practices function to select and give form and meaning to human lives and events. The project has also opened up fruitful new partnerships between the writing center and community organizations such as the 49/63 Neighborhood Coalition, and with other campus units such as the service-learning program (Center for the City).

The development of the CNP illustrates how writing centers can sponsor richly democratic and participatory forms of literacy by selectively taking advantage of the often contradictory needs and impulses of the managed university. As I have been arguing, economic pressures are making colleges and universities ever more consumer-conscious as they market their services. However, the logic of consumerism does not apply to higher education in quite the same way it might apply to the market for toothpaste or automobiles. In some sense, students are consumers of higher education, and pay for credit hours, degrees, the “brand name” of the college or university, and so on. However, employers are also in some sense the hidden consumers of higher education, since they choose which schools and degree programs will supply their needs for labor, and how richly to reward particular segments of their workforce. Few students can afford to ignore the issue of what value their studies and degrees will have on job market when they leave school. Hence, they are much less “free” as consumers than they would be if they were buying an ordinary consumer product.

To cite a very specific example, Intel, the largest US computer chip-maker, has recently asserted its prerogatives as a consumer of higher education by excluding the University of Phoenix from its tuition reimbursement program for employees, due to the university’s overuse of part-time faculty and lack of “top-notch accreditation” (see Dillon). Of course, the University of Phoenix is a for-profit school that caters to midcareer students and is, in many ways, more vulnerable to the intervention of corporations as direct consumers of education because corporations are often directly paying the bill. However, this example makes explicit a power that is widely exercised, but usually behind the scenes. When employers decide to favor or avoid the graduates of any particular university, or when they weigh the value of courses or degrees in determining how much to pay workers, or when to promote them, they are commodifying the “reputation” of that institution and attributing a certain exchange value to that university’s degree. Being the alumnus of a prestigious university also grants access to social networks and opportunities that are often directly translatable into economic gain. Whenever universities market these elements of their reputation, or directly cite the job potential of degree programs to students, they are acknowledging this role of employers in determining the value of
their "brand." Indeed, this is the essence of "branding"—wrapping a product in images (in this case, images representing a prosperous future in the form of respect and a satisfying and well-paying career) that distinguish it from competitors and produce loyalty to that brand.

This logic of consumerism itself produces contradictory forces in the development of higher education. At the level of the student-consumer, institutions appeal to different needs and desires in students. At UMKC, the appeal often highlights the picture of an urban university, "a universe of knowledge in a city of opportunity," as the campaign designed for the university by the ad agency Bernstein-Rein puts it. However, at another level, the logic of consumerism demands that the university strengthen ties to employers and potential corporate or community donors, and build good will in the legislature and other governing bodies. At the very least, institutions cannot afford to needlessly provoke political opposition if they hope to stabilize state support and build up a "brand name."

One reason the CNP has enjoyed administrative support is because several years ago the university released an expansion plan to the press that targeted a number of established neighborhoods in the area for eventual demolition. The local neighborhoods quickly organized, pressuring state legislators, at least one of whom responded by threatening to revoke the university's powers of eminent domain. Since then, repairing relationships between local neighborhoods and communi-
ties has been an important goal. The writing center has strategically tapped into the institutional identity of an urban university and the imperative for building good local relationships and turned these forces towards progressive forms of literacy sponsorship.

Such openings for change are often short-lived, and even established changes are often quickly reversible. Current support for the CNP is precarious, especially since funding for service-learning has been recently cut back. More generally, the university's development continues to reflect impulses towards isolation and aloofness towards surrounding communities. The university's building plan, for instance, continues to strive to create interior spaces—parking garages linked to glassed in walkways, quadrangles, enclosed greens, etc.—that isolate campus life from that of the surrounding streets. This pattern of development suggests contradictions in the logic of consumerism itself—the attraction of urban diversity and opportunity in conflict with the contrary desire for the safety and predictability of suburban enclosure. In fact, the new openness to the surrounding community remains a contradictory and tenuous development.

However, that uncertainty has not prevented our writing center from selectively identifying institutional pressures that strengthen its democratic vision of literacy, thereby enriching the practice of writing on campus as well as the training of tutors in the writing center.

The second example I want to discuss, the APP, illustrates the complexity of social relationships that writing centers must negotiate within the managed university, and especially the difficult choices we face in developing alliances in this setting. Indeed, although the metaphor of corporatization suggests a clearly embodied threat that we must resist (corporate influence over education), the process of change also produces strange bedfellows. Indeed, as Gary Rhoades illustrates in his extensive study of the terms of employment of faculty in labor contracts with more than 200 institutions, one of the most striking and disturbing trends in the managed university is the tendency towards more stratification between different ranks of faculty, between different fields within institutions, and between institutional types (264).
Unionizing efforts have typically not reached out in any adequate way across these boundaries and in some cases has rigidified them (262-644, 268). What this means is that, while writing centers certainly need faculty as allies, it is becoming more difficult to specify exactly how the interests of faculty or academic departments align with those of writing centers, and what changes in the status and power of faculty or departments might mean for writing centers.

Obviously, tenure-track faculty have the most to lose from downsizing, and there are good reasons to think that the decline of tenure-track employment will degrade writing instruction in the university, putting more pressure on writing centers to pick up the slack. There are certainly good reasons to defend tenure, and good reasons to work towards improving the professional status of writing center directors, through tenure if possible. However, the interests of writing centers are not always identical with the interests of tenure-track professors, nor with that of the English department.

The development of the APP program at UMKC illustrates the difficulty of identifying and maintaining alliances in such a setting. As I have been arguing, the managed university focuses on student retention and survival, often myopically just to improve the bottom line. The APP program is part of an effort to expand enrollments, and to improve the retention and diversity of the student body, providing mandatory tutoring as a means of extra support for students admitted under a relaxed admissions policy. However, the idea of expanding enrollments through relaxed admissions standards is, at best, a highly controversial idea among faculty. Historically speaking, university faculty have often exhibited little solidarity with secondary teachers or with goals of mass democratic literacy in their conception of their own roles as literacy sponsors. Too often, faculty have conceived sponsorship primarily as enhancing the status and enforcing the standards of a specialized disciplinary community, and then only secondarily or not at all as contributing to the broad-based literacy of citizens in society as a whole (for examples of this tendency, see Rose 196-97; and Fox 43-45, 71-75). Although I have not done any polls, my sense is that if it were up to the majority of faculty at UMKC, the retention of marginal students that writing centers enable, and that administrations support, would be a very low priority indeed. Such students would be “better off gone,” I can hear many of my colleagues saying. So, in some ways, the corporatized focus on selling more product—recruiting and retaining students who wouldn’t ordinarily come to a university, and collecting their tuition and aid money—can, in a backhand way, be turned towards progressive goals of access. In fact, in the case of the APP program, one reason that administrators may have positioned the program in
The writing center rather than placing it directly within an academic department is because its purpose—to relax admissions requirements to expand diversity and local enrollments—would likely incite significant and vocal resistance among those faculty whose instinct is to see the new arrivals as unqualified intruders into the disciplines.

The writing center has traditionally resisted mandatory tutoring such as the APP program demands, arguing that the work of the writing center is most effective when students assert their own agency in seeking help and improving their writing. However, the writing center has made the best of the situation by carefully coordinating tutoring with APP curricula, and gaining a limited authority to grade students for their work in writing center supervised tutorials and small groups. It has also cultivated common interests with the English department, since the university has allocated several GTA positions to the English department to help with the APP tutoring load. At times, there has been tension between the English department and the writing center regarding GT assignments, since their work is directly supervised by the writing center director, but their appointments are decided upon and renewed through the English department’s Graduate Committee. Different priorities can sometimes guide the assessment of these tutors by the Writing Center Director, who is primarily concerned with the quality of tutoring, and the English department, which has sometimes seemed less interested in the actual work of tutoring than in the financial support the program provides the department’s graduate students. Nevertheless, despite these tensions, the writing center has negotiated both an effective pedagogy and social relations that further its traditional goal of expanding access to university education through writing.

Unfortunately, too often efforts to resist the corporatization of higher education have been narrowly focused on protecting the prerogatives of the most privileged faculty. If writing centers work to expand access to higher education, they will inevitably collide with interests unfriendly to that goal, and hence being on the watch for allies may be unsettling work, and often our allies may be unreliable. Key decisions about sustaining such alliances must be made with an eye on local contingencies, since the forces I have been describing take different forms in different types of institutions. In my view, what must be most vigorously protected is the writing center’s legacy of using writing to protect access to higher education for all students, including the most marginal ones, and defining writing in the most spacious and variable terms. Writing centers should seek to create a space for a culture that celebrates and supports students in popular, experimental or activist writing at the margins of the curriculum and beyond it. Just as important, writing centers need
to continue to help students perform assigned writing tasks, teaching them to critically decode the designs that institutions impose on them and their writing.

Finally, what I am arguing is that writing center advocates must do something similar to what students do when they succeed in academic writing. In her landmark essay, “Really Useful Writing: A Cultural Studies Agenda for Writing Centers,” Marilyn Cooper criticized the idea of minimalist tutoring, which emphasized “the student as sole owner of the paper and [the tutor] as merely an interested outsider” (136). What Cooper found problematic about this approach to tutoring is that it overlooked the contradiction between “trying to make the [student's] papers match as perfectly as possible the specifications of assignments while at the same time...trying to believe that in doing this students are asserting ownership over their texts and learning to write” (140). Cooper’s answer to this contradiction was to reconceive the notion of agency in academic writing. In her words, “[a]gency in writing is not a matter of simply taking up the subject positions offered by assignments but of actively constructing subject positions that negotiate between institutional demands and individual needs” (140). In this way of seeing, students gain agency not by ignoring institutional power but by examining “how various forces impinge on what and how they write and how they can negotiate a place for their own goals and needs when faced with these forces” (139).

In the same way, the struggle of writing centers to define themselves depends on a shrewd reading of the shifting terrain of higher education and on our ability to creatively fashion alliances in an increasingly fluid and unpredictable situation. We need to share stories of our past and visions of our future to solidify our common values, but we also need to be wary of dreams of absolute “ownership” of the writing center. Ironically, the most effective agency in shaping the future involves understanding how writing centers are partly the products of forces we do not control, and imaginatively exploiting those forces in places where they further our own values and visions. We have no choice but to search for alliances, even if unreliable ones, for there is certainly no shortage of actors on the new scene of higher education willing to make the writing center for us, if we do not continually and creatively remake it for ourselves.
NOTES

1 I have borrowed the term "managed university" from Bousquet, Scott and Parascondola, whose collection applies the term to an analysis of writing instruction in higher education. The term is previously used by Rhoades, but there are many competing terminologies to describe the multi-faceted changes wrought by the intensifying commercial pressures on higher education. Each of the competing terms to describe the process—such as "corporatization" (Nelson), "marketization" (Fairclough, see 163ff), "flexible accumulation" (Harvey), and "privatization" (Ohmann, see 95ff), to cite some examples—highlights different dimensions of the process. A good discussion of how these processes are shaping English curricula can be found in the collection Beyond English Inc.: Curricular Reform in a Global Economy, edited by Downing, Hurlbert and Mathieu. For the purposes of this essay, however, I have focused on a limited number of broad changes about which there is widespread agreement, and I have therefore avoided digging into the implications of competing terminologies. What may be more controversial is the way I apply the concept of the managed university to the politics of writing centers and the story of their history, but I will leave that assessment to readers.

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