

Carolinas Writing Program Administrators (CWPA)

Fourth Annual Fall Conference

Writing Research: Sharing What We Know

September 24 – 26, 2007

Wildacres Retreat, Little Switzerland, NC

<http://www.wildacres.org>

Conference Theme and Design

In February 2007, many writing program administrators met in Charlotte, with the leadership of NCSU's Chris Anson, to look at the need for conducting research into ways to improve student writing and writing programs at our universities. As a follow-up to that discussion, this year's CWPA meeting invites participants to draw on their particular areas of expertise in order to assist like-minded colleagues from across NC and SC to better understand the state of research in a particular area of rhetoric and composition.

The discussion led by Chris Anson in February not only encouraged a "return to research" as something we do, but it also encouraged a "return to research," as in a thorough, scholarly review of the research that has already been done. So much research has been done in rhetoric and composition that we often lose track of what can inform our thinking/actions as we face current problems or opportunities.

This fall at Wildacres, our discussion will be very research-oriented: we will frame situations we are experiencing or expect to experience in our institutions that could be informed through research. As good researchers, though, we know that our research must not only be guided by a clear problem-statement, but it must be informed by the research that already exists; to "solve problems" or approach opportunities without a firm understanding of the state of scholarship surrounding those problems/opportunities is uninformed, at best, and reckless and counter-productive, at worst.

As we focus on the problems or opportunities we are experiencing or expect to experience in our institutions, the conference is encouraging us to ask the question, **Has such research already been conducted and recorded?**

On one level, we will ideally come away from this conference with plans to begin research, having been assisted with some of the initial background reading that precedes undertaking a project. On another level, we will ideally come away with a broader sense of the state of scholarship in rhetoric and composition, especially as it pertains to specific institutional problems, needs, and opportunities.

Pre-Conference Preparation for Participants

The format of the conference encourages full engagement of all participants, who represent a broad variety of institutions and programs. To facilitate collaboration and networking, **please submit to Marsha Lee Baker (mlbaker@wcu.edu) the following information by July 1, 2007.**

- A one-page statement detailing a problem or opportunity that you are experiencing or will expect to experience at your institution, and a research question or set of questions relevant to that problem/opportunity. These might include issues relevant to WPAs or to specialists in professional writing, computers and composition, writing centers, or any other sub-area of composition and rhetoric. Example topics may include adding online consulting to a Writing Center, enhancing the assessment of a writing program, or better serving ESL student populations.
- An annotated bibliography of works (10-12 items) that have addressed that or similar problems or opportunities.

Since this conference is a "return to research," as in a thorough, scholarly review of the research that has already been done, the one-page statement and annotated bibliography will be what is presented at the conference, instead of a "typical" paper.

Review of proposals will start July 1 and participants will be notified of acceptance via e-mail by July 15.

Conference Format

The conference **will begin at 5:00 pm on Monday, September 24**, with an opening session and a social hour and **will conclude at 10:00 am on Wednesday, September 26.**

On **Monday night**, following a brief opening presentation arising from the conference proposals and led by Tim Peebles of Elon University, participants will discuss their problem- or opportunity-statements and research questions with the whole group. Participants will sign up for small discussion groups, with the idea that one outcome of the evening's group work will be a more robust definition of their problem- or opportunity-statement and a clearer research question or set of questions. The aim of these groups will be to challenge and problematize, the ways researchers challenge one another in supportive ways.

On **Tuesday**, there will be concurrent sessions where conference participants will discuss their problem/opportunity statements and deliver their annotated bibliographies. We foresee the focus of conversation on how we might address actual problems or opportunities at our home institutions knowing how research done elsewhere has addressed these issues. One outcome from the morning's session should be a more robust sense of the research that might inform one's particular research project, as well as possible cross-institutional research

opportunities. There will be a break in the afternoon to relax, take a walk, and do some schmoozing.

On **Tuesday night** we will break into groups to discuss potential research projects on our own campuses. This will be the time when conference participants have time to start creating broad-stroke plans for a particular research project or for a set of research projects.

Wednesday morning we will continue working and will try to develop strategies about how to proceed with research plans. We hope that at the end of this meeting there will be incentives to write grants to win support for several research endeavors.

Registration and Cost

The registration price of \$160 includes lodging and meals at Wildacres as well as all conference materials. The **registration deadline is August 31 with no refunds after September 7**. Prior to September 7, you may cancel and receive a full refund.

Space is limited to 45 participants. We will maintain a waiting list if you pay the registration fee, which will be returned in full if no openings become available. Send your check with the accompanying registration form to the CWPA Secretary, Paula Rosinski at

Paula Rosinski
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2550 Campus Box
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Questions or Comments?

Contact CWPA Co-chair Marsha Lee Baker at Western Carolina University
mlbaker@wcu.edu.

**Carolinas Writing Program Administrators has been an affiliate of the
National Writing Program Administrators since 2003.**