

# Writing Notes

## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

At the Spring 2018 Graduate Commencement at Wells Fargo Arena, I had the privilege and honor of hooding Sarah Snyder, College of Liberal Arts Outstanding Graduate, whose dissertation I co-chaired with my colleague, Professor Paul Kei Matsuda, Director of Second Language Writing. (See a precis of Sarah's study on p. 5 of this newsletter and an [ASU Now](#) article about her.) This ceremony of investiture marked the completion of the highest degree of formal education by Dr. Snyder, who has played an important role in Writing Programs as Associate Director of Second Language Writing and more recently as Assistant Director of Writing Programs.

Later on that evening, as I sat with other faculty at the Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony at Chase Field, the Undergraduate Commencement speaker, Dr. Rafael Ruiz, President of MIT, told 15,000 graduates and their friends and families, "**If you have an education, you have the possibility of inventing your own future.**" I thought back to our Writing Programs Spring 2018 Convocation which focused on "Writing [In] the Future."

Several of the articles featured in this issue of our newsletter describe how our 200 or so instructors explored this theme in workshops and other sessions. As you will read, the critical connections between authentic writing experiences in their courses and students' engagement in their learning were a primary focus of our conversations. **Writing is an important means by which our graduates**

**will invent their futures** as they move forward in their professional careers, their community work, and their personal lives.

Dr. Ruiz told us, "Education opened a door that I have been privileged to walk through my entire life. I take seriously my responsibility to hold that door open for those who follow." That image of holding the door open for others captures well the role we play as educators and it is one I will carry with me. It's a privilege to be one of many holding the door open for Sarah and others. Thanks to all our Writing Programs teachers for helping to hold the door open for the 15,000 Spring 2018 ASU graduates, those who came through before, and those to come.

Dr. Shirley K Rose, Director of ASU Writing Programs



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Top: ASU Graduation Ceremony balloons  
Left: Dr. Shirley K Rose, Director of ASU  
Writing Programs

## Writing (in) the Future: Teaching and Learning Today for Tomorrow at Convocation By Danielle Alfandre & Laura Crusier

As Writing Programs teachers, why do we do what we do? What do we value, and what purpose do we serve? How can we best navigate the unavoidable ongoing changes to higher education in the US—and right here at ASU?

In planning for Writing Programs' Spring Convocation, held on January 19, 2018, we wanted to do something different.

During the first meeting of the Convocation Committee, we decided that convocation is a time for inspiration and positivity. We saw convocation as an opportunity to bring everyone together to foster a sense of community



*"...convocation is a time for inspiration and positivity. We saw convocation as an opportunity to bring everyone together to foster a sense of community..."*

often neglected in the day-to-day chaos of classes and grading. We determined our mission was to embrace the culture of the English Department and Arizona State University, the most innovative university in the country, but we wanted to acknowledge the changing world as well as our place in it. Instead of the same rote start to the semester, we were looking for optimism, community, and creativity. We wanted to connect and we wanted something to show for it. We were excited!

With a focus on what our lives at the University could be in five, ten, and twenty or more years, we got to work. Over the course of several meetings, the Spring Convocation Committee created a schedule that we hoped would not only include the necessary personal development and celebration of our students' successes with Digication, but also would put our beautiful, new space in Ross-Blakley Hall to good use.

Our intention was to begin and end the day with everyone together exchanging ideas, so we searched for a common thread. Chris Anson's CCCC Chair's Address "Climate Change" filled our needs perfectly as it explores some of the

concerns of our roles in the classroom and the university but culminates in a purposeful, hopeful determination. We transformed Anson's address into an interactive skit: a dramatic reading with pauses built in to allow convocation participants to engage in lively discussion of key points. In the face of current challenges that put the values and ideals of higher education at risk, how do we, as Writing Programs, meet the needs of both our students and ASU, now and going forward? While the current trajectory of higher education presents realities that can feel insurmountable at times, the exchange of ideas that came from these conversations was heartening and inspiring. Writing Programs teachers are a creative, dedicated bunch, and the breakout rooms were abuzz with all ranks of faculty sharing current classroom practices and ideas for the future.

We then set out to create breakout sessions with variety enough to be attractive to as many people as possible.

*Continued on page 8*

*Top: Danielle Alfandre and Laura Crusier  
Below Left: Laura Crusier leads the room in a "dramatic reading" of Chris Anson's CCCC Chair's Address.  
Below Right: Dr. Shirley Rose congratulates the winners of the Digication ePortfolio Showcase.*



# Doing Things with Difficult Topics

by David Boyles

At the Writing Programs Spring 2018 Convocation in January, we read and discussed Chris Anson's 2013 CCCC Chair's Address, entitled "Climate Change." In this essay, Anson envisions an out-of-touch art history professor getting woke to the various crises threatening higher education. Anson's fictional protagonist, Nathan, is prompted by a student essay and a conversation with his university's Writing Programs Administrator, Sylvia, to realize that his romanticized vision of higher education is being driven to extinction by the forces of technological change, public disinvestment, and the neoliberal takeover of the academy.

I was reminded of Nathan's discovery about a month after Convocation, while reading Slate writer Dahlia Lithwick's February 28 column assessing the burgeoning movement spurred by the teenage survivors of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. Lithwick argued that the seemingly preternaturally mature and well-spoken activist leaders who emerged from the tragedy did not come out of nowhere but were "the beneficiaries of the kind of 1950s-style public education that has all but vanished in America and that is being dismantled with great deliberation as funding for things like the arts, civics, and enrichment are zeroed out."

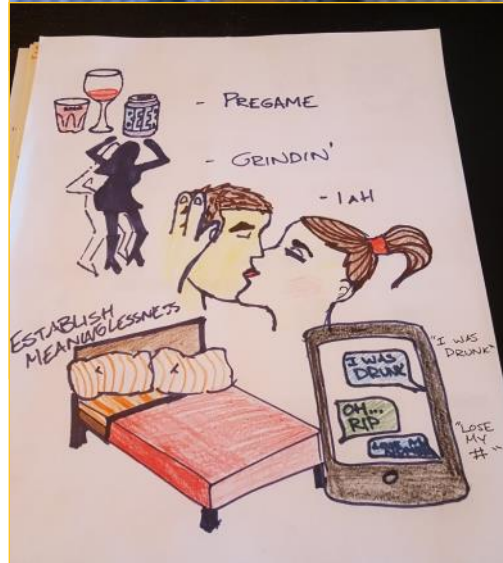
Owing to the community's relative affluence, Lithwick argues, the MSD students were exposed to opportunities in speech and debate, drama, and journalism, which gave them the skills to become strong public speakers and engaged citizens. Lithwick argues that schools like MSD are now an anachronism largely due to the same forces that Nathan is just now getting hip to: public disinvestment, a focus on measurable "outcomes," a belief that technology can replace flesh-and-blood teachers. These students, Lithwick maintains, and Nathan would probably agree, are part of a dwindling few getting the benefits of a true liberal education which consists of, as Nathan articulates it, "thinking, talking, writing, working with teachers, investigating things, researching things. And it's all happening in a vibrant social context, with lots of other students" (336).

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## KUDOS

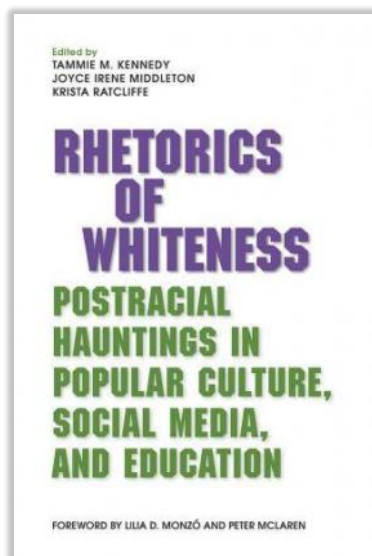
English Chair, **Krista Ratcliffe** is the winner of the 2018 Conference on College Composition and Communication - CCCC Outstanding Book Award for her co-edited volume, *Rhetorics of Whiteness*. (Pictured right)

**Sarah Snyder** was selected as the outstanding graduate for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and served as the gonfalon bearer in the Spring 2018 graduation ceremony. She was also featured in an ASU-produced Outstanding Graduates graduation video and an ASU Now article, "This Is Not a Solo Journey: ASU Grad Talks Linguistic Compassion." Sarah also gave a national TESOL Webinar about using technology in the writing classroom with her colleagues from the CCCC Second Language Writing Standing Group.



Top: David Boyles

Bottom: ENG 102 students create an infographic for a chapter of Lisa Wade's *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus* (2017).





# VISIONING THE FUTURE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING: MULTIMODAL WRITING ONLINE

by Abigail Oakley

Our first Spring Convocation was an opportunity not only to celebrate the work that students and faculty are doing on our Digication platform, but also an opportunity to have an open conversation about what we value as a department. Dr. Rose framed this discussion with Chris Anson's 2013 CCCC Chair address, "Climate Change." In his piece, Anson brings to the surface anxieties that some have about the future of higher education—as we increasingly have access to information, even specialized information, what incentive do students have to continue to attend college?

Framed as one Art History Professor's journey from grading a paper about the cost of higher ed and MOOCs to fearing for the future of higher ed, Anson makes several salient observations about the future of higher education. After learning about some of the more dire threats to higher ed, the main character, Nathan, speaks with one of his colleagues, Sylvia, about his concerns. Frustrated, and trying to articulate the value of the college experience, Anson's main character Nathan says: "It's the whole cumulative experience... that builds capacities for reflection, tolerance, imagination, an interest in ideas outside their own specializations that come back in to change their thinking... I can't give you one isolated little benefit. It's about the whole experience, the whole person" (336). Excited that Nathan has come to this conclusion, Sylvia enthusiastically agrees. Anson's ultimate conclusion is that, yes, our pedagogy needs to change to fit today's students, to make clear "that what students experience here can't be outsourced, can't be reduced to packets of information and tests" (339).

So, our breakout session about infographics was grounded in Anson's persuasive ideas about the "climate change" happening in not only our discipline, but in all of higher education. Part of the workshop focused on what an online class activity about infographics might look like, with a short lecture on visual

*Hae, Mark, Sayantan*

## Logical Fallacies in Ads



**Argument from Authority**

"studies have shown..."  
or  
"experts say..."

We shouldn't trust people who call on experts to prove a point when those experts have nothing to do with that field.

Marketers are also fond of dressing actors up in white coats to try and get us to believe that what they are selling is "scientifically proven".



Top: Abigail Oakley

Bottom Left: "Logical Fallacies in Ads" by Hae Ryun Park, Mark LaRubio, and Sayantan Mukherjee

Bottom Right: Infographic used to communicate navigation of the new building (Ross-Blakley Hall) to fit the 100+ people who came to Convocation by Sarah Snyder.

## Spring 2018 ASU WRITING PROGRAMS *convocation*

WHAT TO DO IF . . .	Follow the <i>directions</i> GO TO:
You get a green sticker	<b>9:00 Plenary in RBH 117*</b> 10:00 Showcase A in RBH 117 10:30 Showcase B in RBH 324
You get an orange sticker	<b>9:00 Plenary in RBH 324</b> 10:30 Showcase A in RBH 117 11:00 Showcase B in RBH 324
You get a pink sticker	<b>9:00 Plenary in RBH 115 or RBH 170H</b> 10:00 Showcase B in RBH 324 11:00 Showcase A in RBH 117
You get a combo sticker	<b>9:00 Plenary in RBH Atrium</b> 10:00 Showcase B in RBH 324 11:00 Showcase A in RBH 117

\* RBH 117 will be Livestreamed on the ASU WPs Facebook Page.  
Get a star sticker and avoid that room if you do not want to be recorded.

## ENJOY!

Continued on page 5

## SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

**Sarah Snyder's** dissertation focused on the second language (L2) writers in the Stretch Program, a program that “stretches” the two-semester first year writing requirement into three semesters. Snyder found that, across the board, student success rates in Stretch are the highest they have been in 20 years. Specifically for L2 writers, they are passing at the highest levels, even when compared to their peers. However, L2 writers, who are 98% international students, have the lowest levels of persistence. (This means moving from one class to the next class in the subsequent semester.) Specific reasons for the drop in persistence is unclear; however, a long-lived complaint about the Stretch Program is that it makes students lag behind their peers. Snyder's research also found that Stretch students, on average, take one semester longer to finish their degrees than their traditional peers, except for international students. National research done by a California community college system points to the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) model, in which students take the equivalent of two FYC classes in one semester, to help students get through FYC without losing time. This could be useful for L2 students who are paying a higher tuition and often living far from home.



## VISIONING THE FUTURE (CONTINUED) by Abigail Oakley

literacy. Visual literacy is an excellent concept to incorporate into an online course, as it is one of the pillars of digital literacy. Infographics and visual literacy pair well for a few reasons. For instance, students can enact visual literacy in their infographic design. This process can open the path for discussing the veracity of information we see on the internet, creating an easy link to information literacy, another pillar of digital literacy.

But this lecture was short, as I prefer them to be in my teaching. Like many of us, I believe that the learning is in the doing—in the gray area where we're making mistakes. This is especially true for technology. In order to use, teach with, and learn with technology, we need to be willing to roll up our sleeves, tinker, fail, and try again. So, we spent the majority of our breakout session fiddling around with infographic makers including Piktochart, Canva, and Venngage. Participants created inspiring, instructive, and sometimes humorous infographics that explained everything from writing projects, to self-care, to the future of higher education. I hope seeing some of our infographics inspires you to tinker as well.

### CLIMATE CHANGE THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

- 1. TECHNOLOGY**  
There is a need to consider new technologies and how to incorporate them into the teaching experience.
- 2. BUILD**  
Don't get too locked into traditions or old pedagogies, but use them as a foundation for new learning practices.
- 3. PEER PARTNERSHIPS**  
Interdisciplinary collaboration enhances/deepens/broadens the development of ideas.
- 4. BREAK TIME**  
Coffee is life...never forget it.  
(seriously, take care of your own needs)

“Climate Change the Future of Education” by Sarah Dean

## STRETCH WRITING PROGRAM HALLOWEEN WRITE-IN: 31 OCTOBER 2017

By Bill Martin, Meghan Kelsey, Ian James, and Susan Naomi Bernstein

The Halloween Write-In for fall semester Stretch cohort students and faculty took place on October 31st, 2017. With the generous support of Writing Programs and the Department of English, we were able to offer free, healthy breakfast food. The faculty collective served as mentors, and additional mentoring was provided by students from Susan's section of English 102, several of whom were Stretch alumni.

Since the 1990s, the Stretch Writing Program at ASU has offered a cohort-based, year-long course (WAC 101) in engagement with academic writing that Stretches English 101 over two semesters, with WAC 101 offered in fall and ENG 101 offered in spring (Glau). Nearly twenty-five years later, Stretch serves as a model example of "slow" pedagogy (Mountz et al). To build on and extend Stretch's institutional history, the four of us engaged in practitioner-inquiry research with our students, to propose and enact enhancements for the first-year transition to college for students in Stretch in the first semester of their cohort year.

Students suggested three major issues of concern for Stretch cohorts: social, financial, and educational. Socially, students enrolled in Stretch felt overwhelmed not only by leaving support from home communities, but also by the size of the university. Students described feeling lost and alone. Additionally, students discussed issues of economic inequality, specifically food insecurity. Finally, although students recognized that Stretch was beneficial to their overall development as writers and as students, they noted that their placement in Stretch felt "remedial," emphasizing their already contingent status to the university.

For their third writing project in the spring 2017 semester, some students in the 2016-17 Stretch cohorts chose to address how to ameliorate these conditions. The main focus of this work was on connecting socially, outside of class, with their classmates and other students enrolled in Stretch at large gatherings that would involve both free food and mentoring support from other students and from teachers.

Based on these suggestions, as well as further discussions with Stretch practicum participants and current and former students enrolled in Stretch, we created a proposal for "Stretch Community Writing Groups." Our collective submitted this proposal to the spring 2017 competition "ASU Writing Programs Engage the Charter," for which the proposal won first prize. From this proposal and our meetings in summer and early fall of 2017, the Stretch collective developed our plans for the Halloween Write-In.

A former Stretch student who mentored at the gathering noted the presence of Stretch teachers in costume offering free food, and suggested that this helped to break the ice, making it easier to talk with strangers. This student noted, "The stretch program looks good and helpful for WAC students, it makes me wish I had a chance to go to gatherings like this and improve my freshmen writing skills." One of us on the Stretch faculty collective noted:

"Conversations during this event included work on current writing projects, but I found most conversations among my students addressed matters outside the immediate goals of



From Top: Bill Martin, Meghan Kelsey, Ian James, Susan Naomi Bernstein

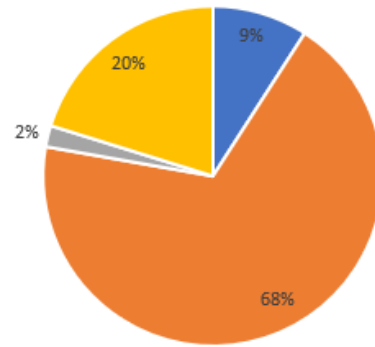
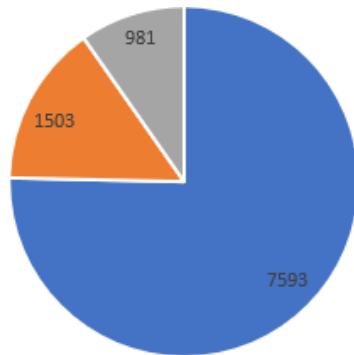
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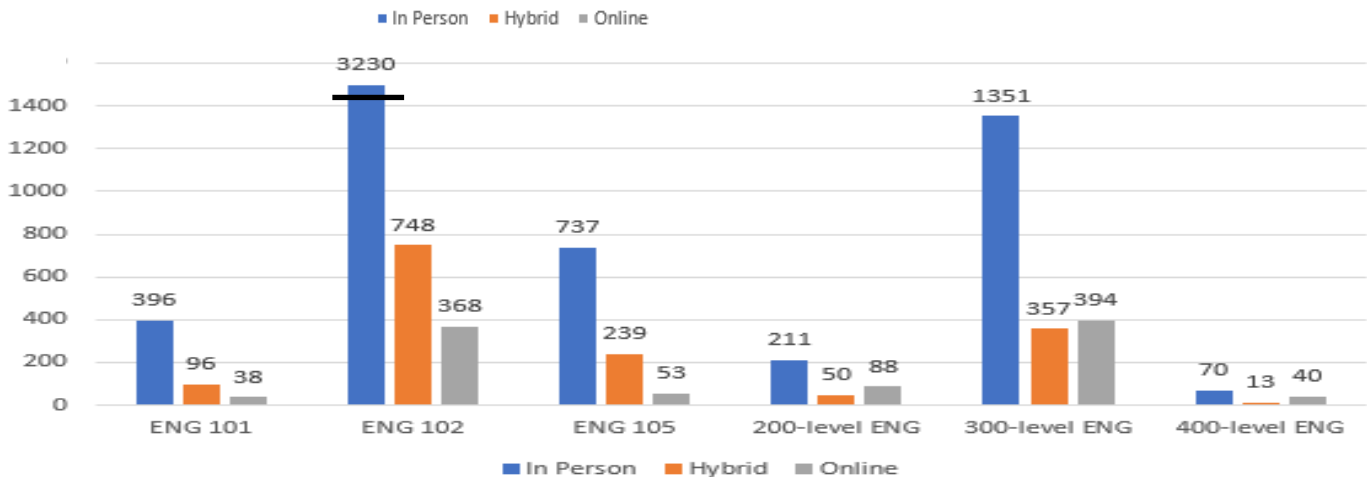
## WRITING PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

In Spring of 2018, 413 courses were taught. Full-time instructors taught the bulk of the sections, at 68%, and adjunct faculty has been reduced to teach only 2% of the workload. Almost one quarter of these Spring courses were taught in an online or hybrid format.

Spring 2018 Enrollment by Course Delivery Format



Spring 2018 Distribution of Classes by Faculty Rank



Spring 2018 Enrollment by Course Delivery Format\*

\*ENG 107, ENG 108, ENG 101 Stretch and ENG 107 Stretch are not offered online nor in hybrid format.

### KUDOS

Richard Hart, as he has been twice before, is a featured artist for a Bruce Hornsby covers project to be released May 6, all proceeds from which going directly to the ALS Association and the Merlin Centre for Multiple Sclerosis Care. From the official site, [www.tossington.com](http://www.tossington.com): "This is the sixth cover project from [www.Bruuce.com](http://www.Bruuce.com), following on from hugely successful ventures such as Salivate and Thick Custard. The premise is always the same – the music is free, but if you like what you hear, you are invited to make a donation to a very deserving cause." Timeframe: May 6 to eternity.

Shavawn M. Berry's essay, "The World Behind the World," is featured in *Goddess: When She Rules*, an anthology from Golden Dragonfly Press published in December 2017. She was also the recipient of a \$500 scholarship to Writing Down the Soul, a 9-month long online Memoir Workshop at Pacifica Graduate Institute in California starting in March and ending in December 2018.

## WRITING (IN) THE FUTURE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

### KUDOS

**Susan Bernstein** presented, "An Unconventional Education," a keynote speech at the Nebraska Developmental Education Consortium in Kearney, Nebraska on October 21, 2017. She and Ian James presented "Writing an Inclusive Future," an invited talk, at AADE in Tempe, AZ on January 26, 2018. Susan published with Shirley Rose and Brent Chappelow in *Writing Program Architecture*, and with Elizabeth Lowry in *Bad Ideas About Writing*, both in 2017. She continues to blog for [Bedford Bits](#).

**Jeremy P. Meyer** and **Soren Hammerschmidt**, in conjunction with Associate CLAS Dean **Paul LePore**, have used the 2017-2018 academic year implementing and facilitating an online course called the "Course in Effective Teaching Practices." This course, sponsored by the nationally recognized Association of College and University Educators (ACUE), has allowed faculty across all disciplines in ASU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to engage in best practices for preparing a syllabus, to engage students in class, and assessing their own classes at each stage of the teaching and learning process.

We were going for a something-for-everyone approach, all with a focus on tomorrow: "Teaching Future L2 Writers," "Adapting Writing Programs Courses for an Inclusive Future," "Visions for the Future: Higher Education in 2025 and 2050," "Visioning the Future in Teaching and Learning: Multimodal Writing Online," and "In re Millennials: The Case for Evolutionary Program Policies," just to name a few.

In addition to a vibrant exchange of ideas, we wanted to make something: a tangible product to exemplify our ideas and conversations. As such, in "Visions for the Future," in answer to the charge to depict the ideal future of higher education, participants used paper, modeling clay, crayons, miniature pompoms, and a multitude of other art supplies to create their visions. Looking ahead to the years 2025 and 2050, Writing Programs faculty worked to craft a future in which collaboration is key, options are plentiful, diversity is the rule rather than the exception, access is for all, and the natural world plays a vital role—just to cite a few of the varied and bright futures imagined in this session. Some participants chose to share their visions on video in an Antiques Roadshow-style Feedback Booth, rather than get their hands mucked up with glitter and glue.

At the end of the day, everyone gathered together for one last session. We wanted to finish with what we learned, where we should go from here, and how to continue the conversation.

We are currently compiling videos, pictures, and voices from Spring Convocation and look forward to sharing them with you. Although some glitches occurred in using our brand new workspace in this way for the first time, we think the day went very well and are glad we chose to host Convocation in RBH. Great conversation filled every neighborhood, hallway, and meeting room, and we were reminded and inspired throughout the day by the spectacular, diligent, innovative, passionate people we work with. It's obvious: Writing Programs can handle whatever the future brings.



*Left: ASU WPs faculty drawing their visions for the future at Spring Convocation.*



## SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI: RYAN SKINNELL, PH.D.

By Sarah Snyder

*Please give us a quick refresher on what you did while you were at the ASU WPs. When and how long were you the Assistant Director of WPs? What classes did you teach?*

I was at ASU from 2007-2011. I taught English 101 and 102 for the most part, but I also taught WAC 101 one year and a special topics class (ENG 394: What is English?). I actually taught less than many of my colleagues because I got course releases 3 of the 4 years I was at ASU because I was President of GSEA for one year, Assistant Director of the Writing Programs for two years, and on fellowship when I was dissertating. Even so, I was involved with the program throughout my time at ASU. I was Assistant Director for Shirley Rose's first two years at ASU.

*Where are you now, and what is your position?*

I am in my 3rd year as an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition and Assistant Writing Program Administrator at San Jose State University in California's Silicon Valley. Before I came to SJSU, I was an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX (about 40 miles north of Dallas). I didn't have any formal first-year writing program responsibilities at UNT, but I did get to teach the TA seminar a couple of times there. At SJSU, I am primarily responsible for TA coordination and program assessment, although I have lots of other administrative responsibilities, as well.



*Dr. Ryan Skinnell*

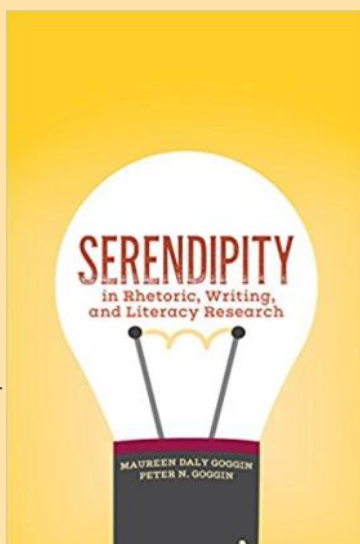
*What were some important Writing Programs initiatives that you either implemented or observed at ASU and have brought with you to your current position?*

One of Shirley's first major projects after coming to ASU was initiating a study of the program, which preceded a WPA Consultant-Evaluator Service visit. Basically, we did an intensive survey of what we did, what we did well, and what we thought we needed help doing better. It was an intense process—over a year, if I recall correctly. And I learned a lot about the program, but also about what counts for best practices, how to assess and evaluate at a programmatic level, and

*Continued on page 10*

### KUDOS

**Shirley Rose** co-edited a scholarly collection with Irwin Weiser, *Internationalization of US Writing Programs*, published by Utah State University Press in March 2018. She also published an article co-authored with Michael Stancliff, Erin Whiting, Lisa McIntyre, and Duane Roen, "Collaborative Assessment of Dual Enrollment: The View from Arizona" in the December 2017 issue of *Journal of Writing Assessment*. Her chapter co-authored with Susan Naomi Bernstein and Brent Chappelow, "Arizona State University Writing Programs in the



Department of English," was published in the collection *Writing Program Architecture: Thirty Cases for Reference and Research*, edited by Bryna Siegel Finer and Jamie White-Farnham and Published by Utah State University Press. She was elected ASU Representative-at-Large to the PAC-12 Academic Leadership Coalition to serve 2018-2020.

**Maureen Daly Goggin and Peter Goggin** published their book, *Serendipity in Rhetoric, Writing, and Literacy Research* with the University of Colorado Press in Spring of 2018.

## SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI: RYAN SKINNELL, PH.D. (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

make careful decisions about how to proceed given all the potential challenges in a program and university as large and complicated as ASU. I have taken those lessons with me everywhere I've been since. One thing in particular was developing goals for the program using Bob Broad's "Dynamic Criteria Mapping," during which Shirley asked us to focus on things that we valued rather than strictly on things we saw as problems to be solved. It was illuminating. I've tried to hold on to that as a valuable perspective in writing programs, as well as in universities more generally.

***What are/were the most unique aspects of your current writing program in comparison to ASU's writing program?***

I wouldn't say it's unique, but SJSU's writing program is definitely different from ASU's. For one, it's about 1/3 of the size. For another, SJSU is a regional comprehensive university, so we have MAs but no PhDs. We also don't have a rhetoric and composition program to speak of (though we have 6 full-time, tenure-track rhetoric and composition faculty). Ultimately what that means is that we have different

*... rhetoric has never been more important beyond the academy than it is right now*

circumstances in which we hire, train, develop, and support both students and faculty. That comes with

benefits and drawbacks, but mostly it's just a different experience that takes some getting used to.

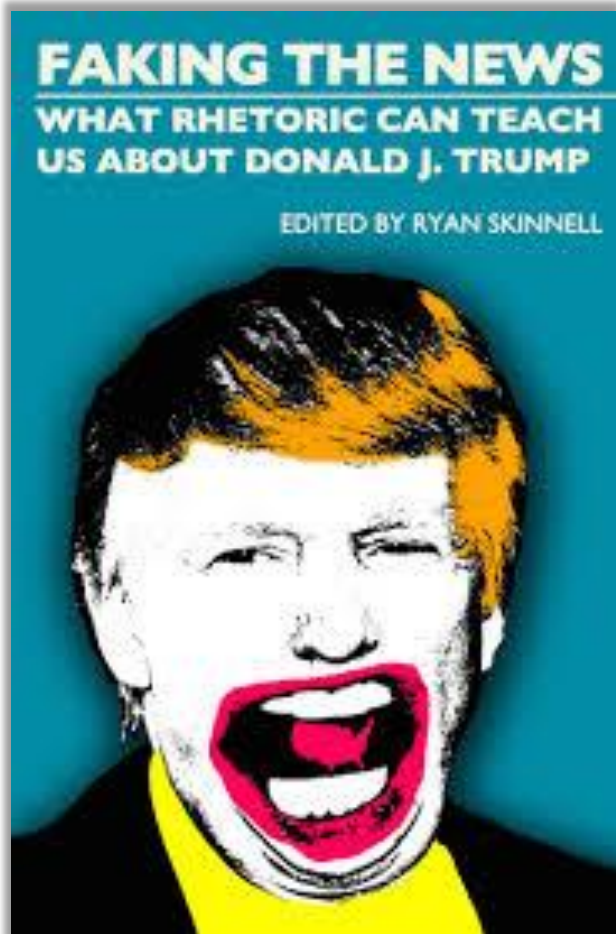
***We hear you're about to be famous for your new book, *Faking the News: What Rhetoric Can Teach Us About Donald J. Trump*. Congratulations! Can you give us a little bit of information about the book and perhaps how it could pertain to teaching first year writing?***

I'm really excited for the book to be coming out. *Faking the News* is a collection of 11 essays by rhetoricians (pretty evenly split between English and Communication rhetoricians) about how to make sense of Trump. It's intended to be understandable for a non-academic audience (we'll have to wait to see if we achieved that goal), with the idea that rhetoric has never been more important beyond the academy than it is right now.

As one of the contributors to the book says, now is not the time for disciplinary modesty. We've got something everyone can use!

Presumably it could be useful for a FYW class since it's supposed to be digestible. But the role I'd really like to see it play in writing classes is as an inducement to ethical argumentation. None of the contributors to the book is a Trump supporter, and we all have fairly critical things to say about the rhetorical state of the country (and world) in light of Trump's election. But I also think we're really committed to treating Trump and his supporters fairly. The book is not a polemic—it's analytical and pedagogical, and we take seriously the possibility that most of the people who are persuaded by Trump are engaged in the world in good faith.

*Continued on page 14*



## STRETCH WRITING PROGRAM HALLOWEEN WRITE-IN (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

the writing class. Students were interested in my own experiences as a college student (in the 1980s) and my expectations as a teacher. Stories about the academy were a means of considering their own potential opportunities in college. It became a method through which they could assess their own progress during their first year. The Halloween event was a place where these types of conversation were possible for this cohort.”

As a Stretch faculty collective, we observed that a writing community extends beyond a writing classroom. It is having a safe space to speak your story to your peers and teachers. It is accomplished by simple acts of physical presence-- by the sharing of food, music, and conversation. It is the exchange of ideas in a less formal atmosphere, where the power dynamic between teacher and student is less felt. If we believe that writing doesn't exist in a vacuum, it's time to challenge the space of writing classes, which are too often impersonal and insular. A community beyond the classroom must be created to support writers in their desire to discover, to support their own humanity outside of the educational institution. The Stretch Halloween Write-In offered one such community.



---

*a writing community  
extends beyond a writing  
classroom*

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*Top: Bill, Meghan, Susan, and Ian in their Halloween costumes*

*Bottom: Students share food and community at the Stretch Halloween Write-In*



## SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

**Karen Carter and Paulette Stevenson** report that the Writing Programs Committee formed a task force to conduct a study on the efficacy of faculty office hours and students' preferences in meeting with their teachers outside of class time. The task force consisting of Karen Carter, Ian James, and Paulette Stevenson asked Writing Programs teachers to circulate a questionnaire to Writing Programs students to discuss their preferences regarding faculty office hours. Preliminary results of 200 responses show that 51% of students would ask a peer via social media about an assignment or subject matter before emailing their instructor. 36% would email their instructor first. Visiting an instructor during office hours came in a distant 3rd at 4.93%. Reasons stated were that asking a peer was quicker, convenient and easier than e-mailing the instructor and waiting for a response or the inconvenience of office hours. These results suggest that students prefer their peers to their instructors because they can get answers quicker and move on with their assignments while they are thinking and working on them. However, additional data shows that student visits during office hours might also depend on the subject matter. For example, students in engineering and math courses might use office hours more than for writing courses because of the nature of working through problems. We anticipate a final report to be completed in Fall 2018.

## IN MEMORY OF DEBRA SCHWARTZ: PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

By Glenn Newman

It was just a little over two years ago that our Writing Programs' colleague, Debbie Schwartz, made a special request to Karen Dwyer that the Wildhorse Ranch Rescue be included in the list of CARE committee charities that Dwyer organizes. Karen happily took on the cause of this worthy 501 (c)(3) charitable organization and was able to deliver a check in the amount of \$425.00 dollars to the animal rescue in the fall of 2017, donated by students, staff, and faculty in ASU's English Department who continue a strong and robust tradition of community service and support. As we approach the two-year anniversary of Debra's passing, we wish to highlight Wildhorse Ranch Rescue, which is a local organization to which Schwartz donated both her time and her financial support.

The ranch, located at 11811 South Lindsay Road in Gilbert, has many volunteer opportunities and ways for people to get involved in caring for the horses, cats, dogs, birds, and burros that they take in.

Debra's commitment and service to



the community in which she lived was personal as we recall an exuberant colleague, a lively teacher, and a supportive friend. Back in our old home, the Durham Languages and Literature Building, Debra was always on hand to offer advice and guidance to anyone who needed it. She touched

many of our lives; not just our lives, but the lives of her students, too.

In the community Debra gave of her time and lust for continued learning. She volunteered at Phoenix's Justa Center, where she instructed home-

less seniors to write expressive essays. In addition, Debra cared deeply about the environment, publishing in 2006 a book about environmental investigative reporting.

For us who served the department alongside Debbie, we recall a strong voice, a voice that kept the ball rolling. With a natural propensity to lead and organize, Debbie was an energetic and enthusiastic team player, who never shirked the opportunity to serve the department, the university, or the community.

Top: Glenn Newman  
Middle: Debra Schwartz  
Bottom: Justa Center and Wildhorse Ranch Rescue' logos



## Doing Things with Difficult Topics (Continued from page 3)

by David Boyles

It might be tempting to stop there and despair with Nathan and Lithwick at the powerful forces destroying education in America for all but the most privileged. But there is another important piece to consider, one we classroom teachers have more direct control over. As Sylvia makes Nathan realize, shadowy bureaucratic forces are not the only culprits. Insulated, change-resistant faculty like himself are also part of the problem. His idealized “vibrant social context” does not actually happen in his classroom very often, and not just because of budget cuts and MOOCs. As she tells him, “students want agency and purpose. They want their writing to do some-

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*If empowered to actually do something meaningful, and supported by a vibrant learning environment, students have the ability to actually create something new and contribute to the conversation in a meaningful way.*

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thing meaningful, and here we are just making them jump through hoops” (337, italics in original).

Watching MSD student Emma Gonzalez give her speech at the March For Our Lives rally in March, we saw more than the fruits of a strong rhetorical education. We saw a student given a rare opportunity to be taken seriously and talk on something that mattered to her. Gonzalez’s speech is a masterclass in rhetorical awareness, but it wasn’t a rhetorical exercise for her. Students can have the benefits of an engaging curriculum, but it doesn’t mean much without the ability to apply the skills they are learning. Or, in Sylvia’s words, to “do something with their writing.” And as the Parkland students have shown us, doing something with your writing, having agency and purpose, often means responding to trauma and engaging in the kinds of difficult conversations we often avoid in the composition classroom.

Of course, we all hope that our students have not, and will not, have to live through something like a school shooting. But our students’ lives are often inextricably tied up with the various traumas our society is facing. Our student population includes many DACA recipients like student activist Belen Sisa, an ASU undergraduate who was arrested during protests in Washington earlier this year. Our Muslim students are directly affected by the rise in anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence, as seen in the recent attack on Tempe’s Islamic Community Center by members of a local hate group who posted video of the attack of Facebook Live.

And of course, as the reverberations of #MeToo continue to be felt, many of our students are directly affected by sexual assault and harassment. That is one of the reasons why this semester my students read, and built their writing projects around, Lisa Wade’s book on campus sexual culture, *American Hookup*. And while Wade deals with the issue of assault, she also puts it into a larger context of an exclusionary campus culture which reinforces sexual, racial, and class hierarchies and leads to early sexual experiences that, with some exceptions, range from unsatisfying to traumatic.

What happens in the dorm rooms and what happens in the classroom are usually kept separate spheres on campus, but Wade’s research made me ask what if it wasn’t? One of the main problems that Wade identifies is that students, and freshmen especially, lack the ability to think critically and reflectively about the sexual culture of their campus and the language to articulate their own wants and needs within it. This leads to students either diving into the hookup culture uncritically or withdrawing completely and feeling left out of “the college experience.” In other words, what students needed was that “vibrant social context” Nathan spoke of, with the ability to read, write and think critically about their own experiences within the campus sexual culture.

And at the same time, what our classrooms need, as Sylvia says, is students who have agency and the ability to “do something meaningful” with their writing. This is why my students, after spending the first half of the semester reading Wade and related materials, and writing and thinking critically about the issues raised, designed their own final projects aimed at “doing something” about the issues Wade raises. These projects range from educational videos to activist events to ethnographic research essays of their own.

With their writing and research grounded in a specific social context, and responding to real-world issues relevant to their lives, the students were able to define the purpose of their own projects, and choose genres and mediums appropriate to that purpose, instead of having those things determined by me.

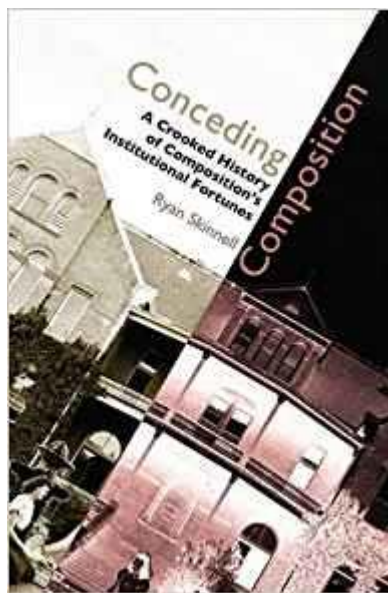
If empowered to actually do something meaningful, and supported by a vibrant learning environment, students have the ability to actually create something new and contribute to the conversation in a meaningful way. But meaningful conversations are not always comfortable ones, so we have to be OK with having difficult conversations in our class and provide safe environments for our students to have those conversations.

## SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI: RYAN SKINNELL, PHD (continued from page 10)

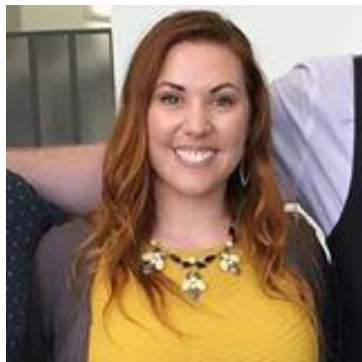
That's really what we're trying to understand as opposed to trying to show that he's bad or unethical or whatever. Ethical argumentation has to be about more than just winning arguments, and I think we're modeling that here. I hope that's what people take from it.

### ***What advice do you have for writing teachers in the current political climate?***

You can only do what you can do. The longer I have been a professor and administrator, the more I have noticed what seems to me to be a contrary impulse in writing teachers. On the one hand, we argue that writing entails a lifelong process of learning. On the other hand, we feel profoundly obligated to giving our students all the writing education they'll need in one semester (or two) for a lifetime of writing tasks. If we believe the former, we literally cannot do the latter. I think this contradiction has arisen from historical and political conditions, and even though it has not always served us well, it's a hard habit to break. One of the unintended consequences of the current political climate, I think, is that it has exposed the limitations of that mode of existence. We are learning the importance of coalitions, of working together, of staying vigilant but also trusting other people to help us carry our political, cultural, and personal burdens. It's been interesting for me to watch people who have been political enemies for years suddenly discover shared beliefs and values. It sucks that it's taken the chaos of the current political climate to get us to that point, but we're learning. In my most hopeful moments, I think that's a lesson writing teachers can learn that can be applied to the classroom—we need to learn how to prepare our students (and ourselves) to share the responsibility for circumstances way bigger than any of us. That's a rhetorical problem. It's a writing problem. It's within our domain, and it isn't easy or straightforward, but I think it's one of our most important challenges. And if we figure out a way to apply ourselves to the task, that could be a really good outcome of what we're living through.



*In addition to Faking the News: What Rhetoric Can Teach Us About Donald J. Trump (2018), Ryan has written, edited, or co-edited four books, including Conceding Composition: A Crooked History of Composition's Institutional Fortunes (2016). His academic scholarship also appears in Composition Forum, Composition Studies, Enculturation, JAC, The Journal of Veterans' Studies, Rhetoric Review, WPA: Writing Program Administration, and edited collections. He has recently published public scholarship in The Washington Monthly and the University of Colorado Press's blog. His academic website is: <https://ryanskinnell.com/> for more information.*



*Above: Book cover for Conceding Composition: A Crooked History of Composition's Institutional Fortunes*

*Left: Interview author, Sarah Snyder*



## 2018 ASU COMPOSITION CONFERENCE by Adelheid Thieme



On Saturday, February 24, approximately 60 teachers of writing came together for the 11th annual ASU Composition Conference. Writing Programs teachers from the Tempe campus were joined by participants from the Writers' Studio in Phoenix, Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, the University of Arizona in Tucson, and Mesa Community College.

Krista Ratcliffe, Chair of the English Department at Arizona State University, delivered the keynote address. In her presentation entitled "Teaching Rhetorical Listening," she argued that rhetorical listening requires a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture. She demonstrated that, through discourse, people share certain belief systems which

express themselves in attitudes and actions that are often used to justify and insist upon oppressive actions by individuals as well as institutional structures (e.g. legal, economic, social, scientific, moral, and religious). When listeners pause to consciously seek to promote an understanding of self and others, proceed within an accountability logic, analyze claims plus the cultural logics within which claims function, and locate identifications across commonalities and differences, they facilitate cross-cultural communication, especially when these communications are haunted by identifications troubled by history, culture, and uneven power dynamics.

After the plenary session, participants attended three concurrent sessions of individual and panel presentations. They engaged in animated discussions on teaching strategies, project-based learning, digital rhetoric, and curriculum design. Topics covered a wide range, as can be seen from the following selection of presentation titles: "The Lucrative Challenges of Collaborative Writing: Using Obstacles to Build Communication Skills," "Beyond the Screen: How Locally-Specific Pedagogy Can Redefine the Online Classroom," "Plasticity and the Brain: What Cognitive Neuroscience Tells us about the Student Writer's Mindset," "Best Practices in Digation ePortfolio Reflection," and "Perspectives on Teaching ENG 302: Business Writing."

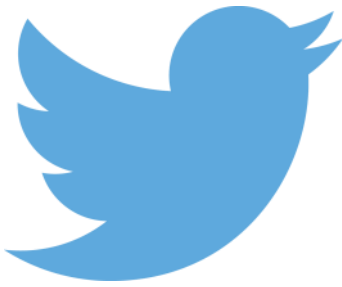
As in previous years, two Writing Programs teachers received awards for assignments that were innovative, adaptable, and conducive to fostering critical thinking and creativity. This year's winners were Aimee Blau and Sarah Hynes. Aimee Blau shared an ENG 105 assignment titled "Combatting Clickbait and Fake News" where students would have to write a fake news style article about a real event, thus showing their ability to recognize the specific features of fake news. Sarah Hynes presented a project called "From Then to Now" in which students were asked to identify a contemporary social attitude toward or stance on an issue that is very different from the social attitudes toward the same issue in the recent past. They needed to avoid making arguments about the social value of the change and instead focus on developing a causal argument about the change.

Many good conversations took place over breakfast and lunch. Those who came early in the morning were treated to a hearty German-style breakfast consisting of smoked ham, salami, and Gouda cheese sandwiches, complemented by Starbucks coffee. Those with a "sweet tooth" enjoyed cherry and apple strudel as well as fresh fruit. The catered lunch, as well as the beautiful cool weather of early spring in Arizona, contributed to a great day. The conference gave teachers of writing the opportunity to engage in professional conversation and connect on a personal level with colleagues from the Writing Programs and other institutions. We are looking forward to next year's ASU Composition Conference and hope that it will be as successful as this year's conference.

*Above: Adelheid Thieme*

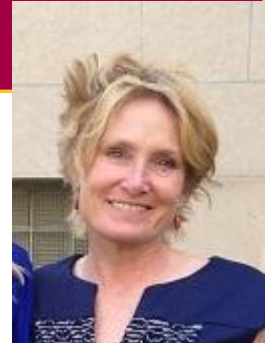
*Right: Ross-Blakley Hall, the new home of the English Department, and where breakfast and lunch were served for the ASU Composition Conference*





# AS SEEN IN ASU NOW

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## Teaching Business Writing with the ‘TOMS Effect’

English 302, Business Writing, is a sometimes dreaded, yet required course for all W.P. Carey students. However, one Instructor was determined for it not to be a burden or a bore. The required reading material that Dr. Elizabeth Ferszt had been using for her English 302: Business Writing course was expensive (“over \$100”) and “enormous; over 600 pages” and “so stunningly boring” that it didn’t seem like the kind of material she should be teaching students at the nation’s most innovative university, three years running. “I take very literally our innovation culture here,” she says. She decided to ditch the traditional textbook and try something new.

Beginning in fall 2015, Ferszt assigned her ENG 302 students *Start Something That Matters*, by Blake Mycoskie, the founder of TOMS shoes. What better book to use for her course, Ferszt thought, which is specifically geared toward W. P. Carey School of Business students. But what does a book about entrepreneurs have to do with teaching students how to write? The key is in the book’s direct connection to ASU – in fact, the last chapter (Ch. 8) features a five-page long letter that ASU undergraduate Tyler Eltringham wrote to Blake Mycoskie in 2011, about OneShot, his team’s project that won the first place (\$10,000) prize for ASU Changemaker Challenge. OneShot sought to use the TOMS one-for-one model to ‘give a shot, get a shot’ for the meningitis vaccine required of all ASU students matriculating in 2012.

This book serves as the inspiration to both reading about an extremely innovative business model with a blended-in giving component, and to write about the other example businesses included in the book (such as Method, Veev, Terracycle, and FEED). She didn’t want to teach students how to write memos, Ferszt says. She wanted to teach them how to use writing to do something. For every chapter, Ferszt assigned reading questions, which, she says, at first “appear to be traditional reading questions in terms of content, but what they really do is generate a lot of fast, specific writing.”

“I think that’s one of the values of business writing, is you’ve got to go fast, and it has to be good. And how do you do that? Well, you don’t talk around it, you talk right at it. And you say exactly what this thing is about, and you pay attention to details.”

### SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

**Tai-Min Tammy Wu’s** dissertation investigated second language writing teachers’ writing assessment literacy, by looking at teachers’ practices of electronic writing portfolios (e-WPs), as well as the sources that shape L2 writing teachers’ knowledge of e-WPs in the context of multilingual First-Year Composition (FYC) classrooms. Tammy found that among the sixteen participants, 37.5 % of the teachers use departmental e-WPs with the goal of guiding students throughout their writing process. 43.7 % of the teachers do not actively use e-WPs and have students upload their writing projects only to meet the Writing Programs’ requirements. The remaining 18.7 % use an alternative platform other than the departmental e-WP platform, throughout the semester. Sources influencing teachers’ e-WP knowledge included teachers’ educational and work experience, student reactions, technical issues and Writing Programs’ e-WP policies. Tammy argued that situated in the context of classroom assessment, institutional factors plus teachers’ insufficient knowledge of e-WPs limit the way teachers communicate with students, whose reactions cause teachers to resist e-WPs. Conversely, teachers’ sufficient knowledge of e-WPs enables them to balance the pressure from the institutional factors, generating positive reactions from the students. Students’ positive reactions encourage teachers to accept the departmental e-WPs or use similar alternative e-WP platforms.

**Blake Mycoskie** @BlakeMycoskie · 20 Nov 2017  
Love to see @TOMS inspiring a culture of innovation among the next generation at @ASU. #StartSomethingThatMatters



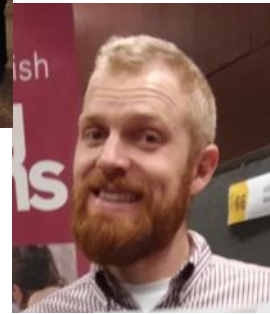
**ASU English professor inspires students to action ...**  
It started with a textbook. The required reading material ASU English instructor Elizabeth Ferszt had been using for her English 302: Business Writing course was “eno...  
[asunow.asu.edu](http://asunow.asu.edu)

Top: Elizabeth Ferszt  
Above Left: A screen shot of Blake Mycoskie’s Twitter feed with a tweet to Dr. Ferszt.



Left: A student tries out a virtual reality learning innovation.

Below: Sean Moxley-Kelly representing the ASU Writing Programs at the Learning Innovation Showcase in February



## WRITING PROGRAMS AT THE SECOND ANNUAL INNOVATION SHOWCASE

by Sean Moxley-Kelly

On Monday, February 12th, 2018 Writing Programs participated in the Second Annual ASU Learning Innovation Showcase. This yearly event brings together departments, programs and researchers from across the university. At more than 70 displays, participants demonstrated their innovative work. This is a unique opportunity to break down barriers between disciplines and find unexpected opportunities to push our work forward.

Writing Programs were represented at the showcase by Associate Director Adelheid Thieme and Sean Moxley-Kelly. We presented on our ongoing work with the Digication ePortfolio platform. Many attendees were interested in our use of Digication to collect a breadth of undergraduate student writing. Others asked about how they could use Digication in their own classes or research, whether it would work as a student publishing platform, and more. In fact, Writing Programs weren't the only ones talking about Digication - Chris Sheehan with Instructional Technology Integration & Support and Shannon Lujan were present to demonstrate the newly-designed Digication 2.0.

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*Many attendees were interested in our use of Digication to collect a breadth of student writing.*

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There were many other interesting presentations. Writing Programs teachers might be interested in learning about the English 101 MOOC, which is offered by ASU through the EdX online course platform. This course, which repeats every few months, was designed

by Dr. Duane Roen, Dr. Adam Pacton, and Jamie Marriman-Pacton. It uses an innovative cost structure to increase access to higher education, an important part of ASU's mission. Any student can enroll in the course and access all the content for free. Once the course is over, if the student has passed, they can choose to pay \$600 dollars to receive full college credit. ASU is researching this pilot program, trying to improve the system to maximize student success and keep the program sustainable. For instance, they're considering a sliding-scale cost system which might make the program even more accessible to those who need it most.

Many presentations explored innovative teaching approaches, including flipped classrooms, peer coaching in online courses, and ways of developing inclusive classrooms. It was particularly striking how many presenters were interested in breaking down barriers between STEM and Humanities, exploring how Humanities values and research approaches could improve STEM communication and teaching.

Of course, everyone likes getting hands-on with new toys, and some of the most popular exhibits provided opportunities to do just that. ASU Libraries were demonstrating their 3-D printing tools, available (for free!) to all ASU staff and students in the Library Makrspace. The School of Earth and Space Exploration were using VR headsets to let participants move around in and explore the inside of a cell.

The Learning Innovation Showcase is open to the public. Judging by the success this year, it seems certain that we can expect a 3rd annual event in February 2019. Mark your calendars!





## Writing Programs

### Department of English



Writing Notes again seeks contributors for the next issue.

We invite **book reviews** of approximately 500 words on pedagogical texts of interests to the Writing Programs. We also ask for 150-word submissions on “**Classroom Strategies that Work,**” a continuing segment devoted to sharing the practices we employ in our own classrooms with other Writing Programs teachers.

Additionally, 200-word summaries of Writing Programs-related research is invited, as well as suggestions for spotlights on alumni from the ASU Writing Programs.

Have any article submissions or suggestions? Please share them with us. And don't forget to submit your Kudos during the next semester.

Want to discuss what you've read in this issue? Visit any of our media outlets, including the Writing Programs Blackboard site, to provide your feedback and commentary.

Thanks for your reading and your input!

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