

Call for Proposals
Writing Program Administration in the Time of COVID
Special issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*
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This special issue seeks to help WPAs explore and offer new ways of thinking about our work and addressing the consequences of burnout, exhaustion, and low morale as we continue administering writing programs in the age of COVID. This issue is dedicated to exploring how WPAs responded and continue to respond to shifts in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic and the tumultuous sociopolitical landscape of the 2020s, with the intention of seeking pathways toward administrative practices that make space for carework and well-being.

Throughout all of the seismic shifts since the beginning of the pandemic, writing program administrators have sought to provide pedagogical, logistical, and emotional support for their writing teachers and tutors as well as students. In many cases, WPAs are doing more with less: leading programs whose faculty have concerns about teaching in spaces that may not be safe for in-person interactions, supporting online teaching with insufficient professional development, and operating under austerity measures and budget restraints that institutions are choosing to retain despite the return to “normal.” Additionally, social and political upheaval from 2020 to now provide emotionally fraught frameworks for administering writing programs, including protests of police violence against BIPOC, the January 6 insurrection, violence against AAPI, politicized challenges to critical race theory, and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. WPAs have always worked within complicated contexts, but our new normal requires an even greater material and interpersonal dexterity to successfully navigate the needs of our programs alongside the (sometimes competing) priorities of our institutions.

This issue will participate in a growing scholarly and reflective conversation about how writing studies and writing program administration is responding to the pandemic, including an in-progress edited collection on advocacy from Todd Ruecker, Sheila Carter-Tod, and Heidi Estrem. We particularly want to quote the CFP for a recent double special issue of the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics* (2022) for capturing a collective sense of the moment: “We don’t know about y’all, but we are tired.” Editors Ruth Osorio, Vyshali Manivannan, and Jessie Male curated two excellent issues that focused on carework and writing, exploring a range of personal topics that involved parenting, grieving, disability, and much more. We see our own special issue working within a similar framework of acknowledgement of overwork, exhaustion, and burnout.

During the pandemic, WPAs had to step up and do what in most cases seemed impossible. We think that much of a WPA’s sense of professional self-worth has come from being needed, and rarely have WPAs been more needed than during the pandemic. However, we must question that external source of validation as WPAs aim to re-establish boundaries between our work and personal lives. As Rebecca Pope-Ruark writes in *Unraveling Faculty Burnout* (2022),

[B]eing needed or relevant or productive is not a purpose for a career or a life. [It] wears on you over time, depletes energy, fatigues the reserves of compassion that were once so deep. So the walls start going up, little by little, the exhaustion, cynicism, martyring. And

the burnout creeps in slowly, then takes over in a flash when you can no longer see your purpose clearly or see your work as meaningful. (81)

We emphasize these points to acknowledge that the timeline for this special issue will be tight. We have designed the two categories for proposals with that in mind, and we want to emphasize that we intend to support writers throughout the process.

We invite proposals for two kinds of contributions to the issue:

- **Reflection pieces** (up to 2,500 words) grounded in the experience of individual WPAs or groups of WPAs that address specific changes to policies, practices, and philosophies in response to the pandemic
- **Research pieces** (up to 5,000 words) that examine and analyze trends in how WPA work has shifted in response to the pandemic

We invite responses from:

- general education writing directors
- upper-level and graduate writing directors
- writing minor and certificate directors
- writing center directors
- WAC/WID program directors
- assistant directors of programs
- graduate students involved in program administration
- NTT/staff administrators

Submit a **250-word proposal by March 1, 2023** as a Word document or PDF through this [Google submission form](#). You need a Google or Google-affiliated account to use this form.

Publication Timeline:

March 1: Proposals due

March 15: Editors respond to all proposals with decisions and initial feedback

May 15: Authors submit complete drafts to editors

June 8: Editors provide reviewer and editorial feedback to authors

July 1: Authors submit revised drafts to editors

Late August: Issue publication

You can contact the editors at babbjs@appstate.edu and blackburnjb@appstate.edu if you have questions about this call for proposals.