Grassroots Organizing and Inter/Disciplinary Sensemaking in Writing (Across the Curriculum)

Call for Proposals Special issue of The WAC Journal,
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On July 24, 2026, the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English voted to de-charter the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), dissolving a primary professional and intellectual home for composition and rhetoric after 77 years. In the days that followed, amidst feelings of uncertainty as members of the field were still processing this abrupt and distressing change, we also witnessed an all-hands groundswell of effort to respond to the moment: listservs and other online forums were created to share information and updates, individuals took steps to archive important organizational histories, and statements were issued by other organizations within the broader rhetoric and composition discipline. Many members of the writing studies community turned to a core strategy from the early days of writing across the curriculum (WAC): grassroots organizing through personal connections and regional proximity, aided by social media and online collaboration tools that the WAC founders never had available to them. The result has been a resurgence of cross-institutional mobilization focused on disciplinary sensemaking that likely seems familiar to WAC practitioners.

WAC practitioners routinely work across disciplinary, departmental, institutional, and professional boundaries to create spaces in which participants with different beliefs about writing, teaching, knowledge, and institutional priorities must develop shared understandings before determining how to act. This is the work of sensemaking, or creating opportunities for people to come to new understandings of their work (Kezar, 2013; Martin 2023). Engaging faculty in freewriting or discussing different ways to respond to a piece of student writing–among many other faculty development opportunities in WAC–were not just ways to help participants teach writing in their courses, they were opportunities to change how faculty thought about writing and its relationship to teaching their discipline. In fact, scholars have suggested that the most lasting outcome of WAC faculty development may not be changed pedagogical practice, but instead changed conceptions about writing, teaching, and learning (Walvoord et al., 1997; Glotfelter et al., 2022). Sensemaking, then, is not peripheral to WAC work; it is one of the ways WAC work gets done.

The work of WAC, however, sometimes sits in tension with the broader field of composition, rhetoric, and writing studies, which itself encompasses a wide variety of values systems. In the wake of the dissolution of CCCC, we find ourselves asking important questions: Who are we? What do we actually want or need from a governing body? What unites us as a field, and what barriers stand in the way of larger understanding? Absent a primary disciplinary organization to structure our sense of the discipline, we are now left to confront difficult questions that have long been simmering in the field, encapsulated in discussions about our status as a discipline (Malenczyk, Miller-Cochran, Wardle, & Yancey, 2018), about “bad ideas” surrounding the work we

do (Ball & Loewe, 2017), and about what ideas might structure our epistemological approach to our work (Adler-Kassner & Wardle 2015, 2019). The larger field seems to be brushing up against a question Barbara Walvoord (1996) posed about the diffuse goals for WAC programs thirty years ago: "The emphasis on writing as the answer allowed the question to be left vague: What sort of learning did WAC aim for? What were WAC's central goals, beyond getting more teachers to use writing?" (p. 63). Put differently, WAC scholars and practitioners have been doing the work of confronting competing ideas, beliefs, and values of writing in pragmatic, if imperfect, ways, and thus have much to offer the broader field in our current moment.

This special issue of *The WAC Journal* invites articles from scholar-practitioners to share insights on the relationship of sensemaking, WAC programming broadly conceived, and ways to move the field forward–regardless of how one might conceive of "the field." We welcome contributions from graduate students and junior faculty, from established scholars and faculty developers, and from institutional contexts within and beyond WAC. Contributions might illustrate what sensemaking looks like in current WAC programs, provide a space for authors to make sense of the relationship between WAC and composition, rhetoric, and writing studies, or could begin to demonstrate the results of sensemaking efforts at institutional, regional, and/or cross-regional levels. Authors might consider looking backward to make sense of their own disciplinary histories or looking forward, to imagine ways that WAC and other fields can work synergistically.

We are especially interested in pieces that consider the connections between disciplinary identities, sensemaking, and organizational or field-based infrastructure. As composition, rhetoric, and writing studies begins charting a new path forward, how and what might WAC contribute? And what could WAC as an area of scholarship learn from the precarious moment that surrounds the larger field?

Questions for Consideration

- ***Sensemaking as WAC Practice:*** How does sensemaking happen in WAC work? What practices allow people from different disciplinary, professional, or institutional positions to develop shared understandings? What can histories of WAC programs or initiatives tell us about successful–or unsuccessful–collective sensemaking?
- ***Sensemaking in Response to the De-chartering of CCCC:*** How is sensemaking taking shape in response to the de-chartering of CCCC and the uncertainty surrounding the field's professional future? How have organizers and facilitators of local and regional ideation or sensemaking sessions created spaces for collective reflection, deliberation, and possibility? What practices, challenges, or tensions have emerged through these gatherings? What ideas for new forms of organization, connection, or collective action are emerging from them, and what might these early experiments teach us about sensemaking in writing studies?
- ***Organizing and Coalition Building:*** What has WAC learned about building durable networks across departments, institutions, regions, or professional identities? How might WAC's often decentralized or grassroots organizational

structures inform writing studies at a moment when established professional structures are changing? What can WAC organizations, such as AWAC and the WAC Clearinghouse, do to support WAC/WID directors and practitioners or the broader field following the de-chartering of CCCC?

- ***Advocacy and Institutional Change:*** How have WAC programs made arguments to administrators, faculty, legislators, accreditors, community partners, or other external audiences? What can those advocacy efforts teach writing studies about communicating its purpose(s) and value(s)?
- ***Difference, Disagreement, and Power:*** What happens when participants in sensemaking processes do *not* share goals, assumptions, or definitions of writing? Who gets to participate in sensemaking, whose interpretations become authoritative, and what can WAC's successes and failures teach us about negotiating those differences?
- ***Looking Outward and Forward:*** What theories or methods of sensemaking might help us better understand WAC work? Conversely, what might WAC's experiences contribute to the broader field of writing studies as it considers new forms of association, collaboration, and collective action? What histories, practices, theories, and structures from WAC might help writing studies make sense of its present circumstances and imagine its possible futures.

Genres

- Full-length articles (4,000-8,000 words)
- Short vignettes (1,000-3,000 words) that reflect on personal experiences with WAC and/or sensemaking
- Praxis & Pedagogy (up to 2,000 words) explanations of a sensemaking practice that includes a theoretical framing, a description of the practice, and lessons and implications for others
- Interviews (length may vary)
- Retrospectives (length may vary) that revisit articles, ideas, or bodies of WAC work.

Abstract Submission Guidelines

Interested authors should submit an abstract or proposal of no more than 300 words. Your abstract/proposal should also indicate what genre you plan to submit and 3-5 keywords for your project.

Submit to:

Submissions can be made via the *WAC Journal* submission portal at *The WAC Clearinghouse*. Once you have created an account or signed in, choose the option to Submit Your Work to a Journal, and select *The WAC Journal* from the list. Include the tag [Special Issue on Grassroots Organizing and Disciplinary Sensemaking] in your title to be considered for the special issue.

Questions about the special issue can be directed to the special issue editors at Meghan.Velez@ucf.edu, tranp2@erau.edu, and MARTC148@erau.edu.

Questions about the submission portal can be directed to wacjournaleditors@gmail.com

Publication Timeline
October 5, 2026: Proposals Due
November 1, 2026: Proposal Decisions Sent
February 1, 2027: Full Drafts Due
March 29, 2027: Feedback/Decisions Sent
April 26, 2027: Revisions Due
July 2027: Anticipated Publication

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