Statement of Administrative Philosophy

I envision my primary purposes as a writing program administrator (WPA) are to collaborate, facilitate, reflect, and lead. To achieve these purposes, I remain focused on the local needs of students and teachers while remaining sensitive to the programmatic, institutional, and historical contexts in which I work. Serving in a first- and second-year writing program at a large, state university and developing a writing-enriched curriculum program at a small, private college highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptation. As I moved between institutions, my understanding of and approaches to administration and curricula shifted to fit the commitments and structures of the population and institution. My previous experience also highlighted that an effective WPA must not impose an outside or top-down agenda but, rather, work with people and within contexts to shape and guide a program.

Several actions allow me to achieve my purposes. I conceptualize my administrative work in terms of action because it serves as an important reminder that actions largely define a program and influence those who work within or interact with it. As a WPA, then, I seek to:

- **Build relations through listening and collaboration.** An effective WPA builds relations with faculty, staff, and other administrators both within and outside of a program. In fact, a program’s success is often dependent upon establishing and nurturing relationships and, more simply, working well with others. Rhetorical listening, as defined by Krista Ratcliffe, and collaboration are the primary ways in which I build relations. To rhetorically listen, I work to identify claims and their underlying cultural logics within others’ statements and then create productive identifications through similarities and differences (Ratcliffe). To collaborate, I approach projects and tasks with others, learning and adapting along the way. These two skills have allowed me to work with graduate teaching assistants and full- and part-time faculty to revise writing program outcomes and to develop a writing-enriched curriculum with the Department of Graduate Nursing.

- **Encourage and support others to take ownership of their teaching and incorporate writing into their classrooms.** Whether I am working with graduate students or faculty members, my goal is to empower them to make decisions that are best for their programs, departments, or classrooms. I facilitate this process by providing knowledge and information to help others make informed and purposeful decisions. While I am prepared to strongly advise against particular actions or provide a firm “no” when necessary, control and decision-making needs to lie to varying degrees with all individuals within a program or department, not solely an administrator.

- **Advance a strong vision for a program while remaining open to innovation.** One of the primary responsibilities of a WPA is to develop and carry out a vision for a program that is sensitive to the contexts in which the program resides as well as the program’s values, responsibilities, and outcomes. The vision, however, must be open to revision in response to new developments in the field, feedback from those in the program, institutional changes, and assessment results. As such, any vision that I develop is open to innovation and change in order for the program to remain strong and vital.
• **Engage as a scholar within the field of writing program administration and, more largely, rhetoric and composition.** While the daily tasks of administrative life can feel all-consuming, I find it essential to remain immersed in current research. Being an active participant in researching, presenting, and publishing only serves to help me strengthen a program and develop more persuasive arguments for it. This kind of engagement also provides insights into the administrative process and program development as well as an outlet for collaboration among colleagues. It allows me to share a program’s successes and gain recognition for it in an attempt to generate more security and funding for future pursuits.

• **Develop and participate in a research agenda for a program.** Evaluating current practices and developing new initiatives provide a rich and on-going research agenda for a program. My experience developing and executing an assessment of a first- and second-year writing program allowed me to view assessment as an opportunity for research and community building rather than merely a requirement. It also reinforced that assessment must be summative and formative, contributing to both external evaluations and the development of a program. As an administrator, I help to develop, guide, and participate in assessments and other forms of research as well as motivate others to contribute. However, I also believe that a research agenda, if well developed and documented, should extend beyond a single WPA. Others must be able to contribute to the research, and the research should be able to continue in the absence of an individual.

• **Advocate for a writing program and a culture of writing.** A WPA must be prepared to serve as an advocate in every opportunity that presents. To be an advocate is to protect the interests of a program but also to promote it and a culture of writing to students, staff, faculty, administration, and the public. More practically, it means attending meetings, serving on committees, documenting program activity, developing public-relation campaigns, and, simply, getting out and talking to people. Since advocacy is a central means to secure funding for a program, it is especially important in a time of shrinking budgets. Moreover, advocacy of both a culture of writing and a writing program are equally important because without a strong culture of writing at an institution, a program will experience limited success.

Of course, these actions are not mutually exclusive, as often a WPA must perform several simultaneously. I find that a good sense of balance, patience, humor, and humility are essential for me to function in this capacity. While I strive to perform the actions that I outline above, I also recognize that an administrator is not and should not be the writing program. A truly effective WPA seeks to build strong structures, processes, and relations so that the writing program can operate and grow without her presence.