CREATING SPACE FOR DIFFERENCE:
 USING AUXILIARY SPACES TO ENACT BORDER PEDAGOGY BEYOND THE
 CLASSROOM

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Beth Pearsall

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Abstract

of

CREATING SPACE FOR DIFFERENCE:

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The fundamental belief expressed in this project is that diversity is necessary for learning and that often mechanisms that assess and track students work to erase diverse perspectives from classroom populations. Such homogenizing practices make the enactment of a contact zone pedagogy in a composition classroom particularly challenging. The purpose of this project is to forward an argument in favor of mainstreaming basic writers and to propose a diversion of funding from the basic writing program to expanded and targeted support services available to students across all disciplines. These services, primarily in the form of adjunct tutorials and an expansion of the role of the writing center, are designed to not only address a wider variety of student writer needs, but also to create spaces where students can more freely engage in a critical questioning of academic discourse. This programmatic design honors diversity through
both the creation of more diverse classroom populations and an implementation of a multi-faceted network of writing support services.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Amy Heckathorn

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to the greatest loves of my life: To my freakishly intelligent and immensely talented husband, Miles Miniaci, for being a constant source of support and never doubting my abilities; to my daddy, for teaching me all about hard work and humor; and to my girl, Maya, for being the meaning of everything.
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I would like to acknowledge the contribution of all the people in my life who have supported me through this journey, my family, my friends, my teachers, and my peers, and express my gratitude for all you have done for me and mean to me. This accomplishment is not mine alone.

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Michelle; You have always been so convinced that I am smart and capable that I have finally started to believe it myself. You are my bosom friend.

Angie; You have taught me a great deal about taking risks and pursuing dreams.

Randeep; You are so nurturing I can feel myself grow in your presence.

Theresa; You keep reminding me of the reasons to love the whole wide world.

Jamie; You are my model of strength and make it all look so easy.

Amy; Your effortless honesty makes the world feel safe.

Fiona, For so long you have wanted more for me than I dared to want for myself.

Thank you.
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Creating Space for Difference: Using Auxiliary Spaces to Enact Border Pedagogy

Beyond the Classroom

In “The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Our Times,” Harvey Graff argues that the high rate of literacy in the United States in the early nineteenth century failed to produce the kind of “advancement of equality through education” one might think it would have; rather, he claims “literacy was also used for order, cultural hegemony, work preparation, assimilation and adaptation, and instillation of a pan-Protestant morality” (211). Historically, then, education has always operated along a spectrum of purposes with the aim of achieving order and stability through conformity at one end and creating new knowledge at the other.

In “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Mary Louise Pratt laments what she perceives to be the state of education today, which extends Graff’s historical perception of education as a mechanism that favors “order” and “cultural hegemony.” Pratt, too, sees education as promoting cultural hegemony through the promotion of conformity in education:

Those of us committed to educational democracy are particularly challenged as that notion finds itself besieged in the public agenda. Many of those who govern us display, openly, their interest in a quiescent, ignorant, manipulable electorate. Even as an ideal, the concept of an enlightened citizenry seems to be have disappeared from the national imagination. (39)
Pratt opposes the idea that the role of teachers is to “unif(y) the social world, probably in their own image . . . by means of a monologue that rings equally coherent, revealing, and true for all, forging an ad hoc community, homogeneous with respect to one’s own words” (39). Rather, she advocates enacting a contact zone pedagogy where “oppositional discourse, parody, resistance, (and) critique” are not merely permitted but recognized as essential to students becoming fluent in academic discourse (39).

However, as with all teaching practices, the ability of educators to enact a particular pedagogy in the classroom is often hamstrung by “those who govern us,” for teachers of composition are influenced in large part by institutional practices and, beyond that, socio-economic forces. At California State University, Sacramento, for example, our current admissions practices involve assessment and placement mechanisms that are largely if not wholly decontextualized from our pedagogical goals and purposes and removed from the participants most invested in the outcomes of those practices: students, teachers, and program administrators. Such a disjunction creates conditions in which teachers will find it difficult if not impossible to enact a contact zone pedagogy in the classroom, for the very function of standardized tests and tracked placements is to create homogenous classroom communities.

Yet, Pratt’s argument is that diversity is not merely good for learning but necessary for learning. Placement mechanisms that would deter students from diverse backgrounds from entering higher education and/or separate those students from “mainstream” students actually prevent higher education from capitalizing on the new knowledge that emerges from diversity and collaboration. If we are to enact a contact
zone pedagogy in the classroom, then we must avoid the practice of placement which limits the diversity of student populations in the classroom.

This is consistent with the principal, espoused by Pratt and many others, of using education as a means to create new ways of knowing which recognize difference and seek to understand and be transformed by it, rather than erase it. Such a pedagogical approach recognizes the reality that in the past 200 years in the United States, we have moved from a model of education that excluded all but white, upper-class male students to a model that few would argue should be accessible to all citizens. But accessibility is only half the battle, for incoming students with experiences and values divergent from those of the academy will find themselves the object of institutional attempts to acculturate and assimilate them. Ironically, the means most often used in these attempts is the very pedagogical model initially conceived to assist diverse student populations: the basic writing program.

In Representing the “Other:” Basic Writers and the Teaching of Basic Writing, Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu discuss the way in which basic writing pedagogy has either sought to acculturate or accommodate students deemed unprepared for academic writing. According to Horner and Lu, neither approach adequately meets the diverse needs of students as neither encourage an open dialogue about the similarities and differences between discourse communities, thus creating conditions under which academic discourse, already perceived as a respected, stable and powerful discourse, retains its position of privilege. Thus, Horner and Lu propound a “border pedagogy,” a
pedagogy that, similar to Pratt’s, sees the classroom as a contact zone in which privileging is questioned and difference negotiated.

Horner and Lu are not alone in their position that the classroom should be a place for identifying and negotiating the privileged position of academic discourse. But the contact zone in a composition classroom may seem contrived rather than genuine if students find that the high stakes exams they are forced to take at the university reward fluency in the discourse of the academy.

Some educators may argue that these limitations may be addressed by basic writing programs using a contrastive rhetoric approach. However, Patricia Bizzell, in “What Happens When Basic Writers Come to College?” suggests that teaching academic discourse as one of many discourses, in hopes that students will not feel compelled to abandon their home discourses and the values that inform them, is fruitless due to the nature of academic discourse: “the academic seeks to subsume other world views to which the students may retain allegiance. The privileged position of the academic world view in society makes it seem an even more domineering partner” (20). Here Bizzell challenges the notion that the privileged position academic discourse enjoys in the university can be so easily neutralized.

This is precisely why basic writing is a problem for Horner and Lu’s “border pedagogy.” students are, after all, placed into basic writing classrooms to learn the academic “moves” necessary to conform to the expectations of academic discourse. This is one indicator that basic writing exists to ensure the privilege of academic discourse. Thus, the presence of remediation makes it difficult for instructors of composition at any
level to suggest that academic discourse is merely one innocuous discourse among discourses.

This difficulty, in part, stems from the historical context of basic writing programs. In *Landmark Essays on Basic Writing*, editors Kay Halasek and Nels Highberg describe the sociohistorical evolution of scholarship in the field of Composition. According to Halesek and Highberg,
much of the scholarship between the early 1920s and early 1970s is dominated by complaints . . . on two separate but related issues: (a) the pervasive and recurring perception that students’ literacy skills were in significant decline and (b) the pedagogical and curricular difficulties caused by increasing numbers of immigrant, working-class, and non-White students attending college. (xiv)

Scholarly debates surrounding the ways compositionists can or should respond to declining literacy and the needs of increasingly diverse student populations still rage today.

Thus, diversity of both skills and culture, and the way it informs perceptions of academic preparedness, is at the heart of the divide over basic writing. Halesek and Hightberg report that “the conflation of race and class and remediation in particular gained considerable speed in basic writing scholarship during the 1960s and 1970s with the advent of open admissions in many colleges and the return of veterans from Vietnam” (xiv). The most significant impact of open admissions was to introduce a more diverse student population to universities across the country and force educators to question the
efficacy of using education as a force for homogenization. Liberal educators began to see
the ways in which diverse perspectives presented new opportunities for learning, but also
the way in which existing pedagogical approaches limited those opportunities, while
conservative educators began to decry a decline in standards and the way that diversity
might present a significant problem for their institutions. The primary response to these
conflicting agendas was a basic writing model that sought to address both sets of
concerns, but ultimately, in the view of many scholars, separated and marginalized this
diverse segment of the academic population.

Peter Dow Adams, in “Basic Writing Reconsidered,” elucidates some of the
specific ways in which this process of marginalization takes place:

- Students placed in lower tracks are often stigmatized in the eyes of
  their peers, their teachers, and themselves.
- Students placed in lower tracks may be demoralized by the
  experience and may perform to the expectation indicated by their
  placement.
- Students placed in lower tracks are often deprived of role models
  who are proficient at the subject matter and at the behaviors that are
  valid in schools; this danger is especially critical in environments
  using peer groups.
- Students placed in lower tracks are often then subjected to “dumbed
down” materials and instructional approaches that insure they never
  catch up with their peers in other groups.
In addition to the dangers listed above, students may be placed in lower tracks erroneously, compounding the tragedy. (23)

And while Adams presents a thorough account of the potential “dangers” facing basic writers, this is not the only group of students compromised by traditional basic writing approaches. For first-year composition classrooms, the “danger” is a lack of diversity, for if “students placed in lower tracks are often deprived of role models who are proficient at the subject matter,” then those who are proficient are deprived of the opportunity to think about and discuss ways in which they themselves have moved and continue to move toward proficiency. These first-year composition students are also deprived of the multiple perspectives that a more diverse classroom population can provide. To suggest that basic writers can learn from more advanced writers and not the other way around is to ignore the power of contact zones.

In order to convince educators and administrators of the necessity for contact zones, though, one must first examine the reasons for continuing basic writing programs: If they are so fraught with difficulty, then why do so many universities cling to this model? Simply put, basic writing is appealing because it appears to be an easy solution to a complex problem. If universities want to at least claim they are welcoming of diverse students, then they must accept them into the university. But if universities do not want the university changed by the presence of such students, then basic writing is the perfect way to either transform those students into something more palatable and less intimidating to the university, or weed out those students who refuse to be transformed. For educators genuinely invested in the academic success of diverse students, basic
writing is a way into academia. That is, basic writing is a place to become the kind of student the academy will accept. In recent years, scholars like Mark Wiley have pointed out the irony of the tug-of-war going on over basic writing and the way efforts to eradicate basic writing can be seen as serving the interests of both conservatives and liberals alike.

Many scholars proposing solutions to the basic writing problem, though diverse in their approaches, have failed to see that such a complex problem requires a complex solution. More often than not, academic programs such as basic writing that seek to address diverse needs of students, including the underprepared, are reductive. Thus, the institution itself models reductive thinking and homogeneity. This is often defended as necessary for maintaining fiscal viability, but developmental programs cost money too. We might, then, see these programs as over-simplified attempts to create the appearance of trying to solve a problem or as a way to feel good about ourselves for trying to address a problem we feel cannot be solved. But such an overly simplistic approach lacks the nuance required to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

One proposal for meeting the diverse needs of student writers is to see these needs as “local,” which can, in many ways, inform thoughtful pedagogy. But this can also be reductive, causing program administrators to look for signs of what they believe the “majority” of the students at their institution need rather than recognize the wide range of needs of individual writers. Thus, the diversity of needs of both underprepared students and students deemed ready for academic writing are being oversimplified.
Before offering alternatives to the basic writing approach, however, it is important to recognize attempts to modify or reform this model while still retaining its original intent of helping diverse students, and to examine why these attempts have been insufficient. Many of these modifications involve placement mechanisms. For instance, in an attempt to avoid the stigma associated with basic writing, some scholars have argued for directed self-placement (DSP) as a mechanism for determining placement. Proponents of this mechanism argue that DSP empowers students, promoting student investment and agency by allowing students to decide what kind of instruction they feel meets their individual needs. Two such proponents are Daniel Royer and Roger Gilles. In “Basic Writing and Directed Self-Placement,” Royer and Gilles argue that, by allowing students to choose which course to place into (a basic writing course or a “regular first-year writing course”), “writing placement can become an integral part of the educational process: students can be woven into the educational fabric, committed to the educational decision at hand, no longer an alien object in our placement procedures.” According to Royer and Gilles, DSP works because students “know their own histories and their experiences with writing. They know their own abilities, and their own needs.” Furthermore, they assert that students will be more motivated to succeed in courses they have chosen for themselves.

In “Informed Self-Placement: Is a Choice Offered a Choice Received?,” Pamela Bedore and Deborah Rossen-Knill criticize Royer and Gilles on precisely this point. They argue that “we must . . . ask ourselves how the student—the incoming freshman—can make an informed decision about the future (college writing) based only on the past
They make the powerful argument that such a move would “contradict what we hope to teach the student about academic work: that one should conduct contextually relevant research if one hopes to make an informed statement about an issue” (57). In other words, students need to base their self-placement decision based not only on their past experiences, but also on future expectations: knowledge they do not yet fully possess, as they have not yet experienced college-level writing firsthand.

Finally, we must also consider the way the placement options themselves inform the self-assessment process. That is, if students are assessing their own writing for placement in one of two or three options, the assessment will be informed not only by students’ evaluation of their own writing but also of what they perceive the placement in one of the options says about them as students—all options beyond a single semester, credit-bearing course will be perceived as remedial and if “remedial” or “basic” are labels that bear negative connotations, then DSP, in the context of such limited options, does not make the negative connotation go away, it merely shifts the responsibility of labeling from the institution to the student.

Another shortcoming of such modifications to the basic writing model is the reality that basic writing programs themselves may soon be obsolete. With the increasing corporatization of four-year universities, and in response to the recent economic crises, many universities are faced with cuts in funding which force them to route students to community colleges or mainstream uniformly without the opportunity to plan for the individual needs of basic writers. While mainstreaming all students into first-year composition courses was, at one time, a means of proclaiming the belief that basic
writing classes produce basic writers and that the marginalization resulting from the 
existence of such classes is intolerable, there is a risk that mainstreaming can solely 
become a means of reducing costs. Thus, writing programs administrators are faced with 
the unpalatable choice of either mainstreaming or shutting off access for many students.

In “The Road to Mainstreaming: One Program’s Successful but Cautionary Tale,” 
Anthony Edgington, et al., warn that writing programs administrators must be proactive 
in ensuring that mainstreaming efforts are effectively managed so that the needs of 
students rather than financial gain is the primary focus. The authors report that the most 
important lesson of their mainstreaming effort is that “a major programmatic change like 
mainstreaming is defined and valued in different ways by those who occupy different 
roles” (73). In the case of mainstreaming at the University of Louisville, the writing 
programs administration found that the efforts initiated based on concerns about 
programmatic integrity and serving the needs of students were used by the university 
administration as a way to reduce costs by trading smaller class sizes (basic writing) for 
larger ones (first-year composition). Edgington, et al., report “with the double whammy 
of being able to reduce the costs associated with remedial writing courses and bring 
recognition to the university’s increasing academic standards and stature, mainstreaming 
seemed like a good idea to various administrators for significantly different reasons” 
(74). Thus, if mainstreaming is to offer a viable alternative to a tracking system, its 
implementation must be managed by administrators who understand the way the 
conflicting motivations of cost efficiency and student success impact the mainstreaming 
effort.
While mainstreaming desegregates students, thus avoiding marginalization and making student agency a non-issue, mainstreaming alone is not adequate to meet the diverse needs of students. If two tracks are inadequate to address the diversity of needs of our students, one certainly will not do: One track is even more reductive than two. That is, while mainstreaming creates more diverse classroom populations, it can also reduce the amount and diversity of writing instruction and support student writers may want or need.

Even more thoughtful approaches to mainstreaming, such as contact zone pedagogy, which seeks to recognize and encourage diverse student populations, may still present limitations in terms of providing these varied instructional techniques and student support. To begin with, enacting a contact zone pedagogy in the classroom presents its own inherent challenges. Pratt herself admits that it was the “hardest” teaching she had ever done: She describes effective implementation of contact pedagogy as inciting in her students “rage, incomprehension, and pain” (39). To offset the volatility of a contact zone classroom, Pratt recognizes the importance of “safe houses,” which she defines as “social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression” (40). Of course, Pratt seems to imagine that these spaces, contact zones and safe houses, can and should coexist in a classroom, as they did in her Cultures, Ideas, Values course at Stanford University. But educators at other institutions and in other disciplines might struggle to promote both conformity and dissent in their classroom culture.
These limitations of the classroom space, then, necessitate the need for further exploring auxiliary spaces situated within the university, yet outside the traditional classroom space. Such spaces can develop, organically or through careful planning, into contact zones and safe houses that would supplement and/or balance the different pedagogical approaches employed by individual teachers. Such spaces already exist on many campuses in the form of adjunct, small-group tutorials and writing centers. Unfortunately, access to some of these spaces, such as tutorials, is often regulated by the same decontextualized and homogenizing assessment and placement mechanisms previously discussed; the services provided by other spaces, such as many university writing centers, can be limited by both cost and pedagogical conflicts: That is, many writing centers are driven by pedagogies too similar to the mainstream writing classrooms to which they purport to be an alternative. Thus, we must redefine not merely the function of these services, but also the ways in which students and instructors gain access to them.

On campuses where such focused efforts have been attempted, examples of more successful mainstreaming have emerged. In “Mainstreaming and Other Experiments in a Learning Community,” Mark Wiley reports on the successful implementation of mainstreaming at CSU Long Beach. According to Wiley, the primary factor for the success of the mainstreaming project at CSULB was the Learning Alliance, a multifaceted system of support which creates student cohorts, links writing classes to other classes across disciplines through faculty partnerships, and provides long-term opportunities to participate in the academic community beyond the classroom. While not
initially designed as a service to support mainstreamed basic writers, Wiley’s study of the program suggests that this kind of support system can improve retention of students that would be, under tracking conditions, labeled “basic.” Thus, in order to avoid the problems associated with providing diverse students with limited options for writing support (in the case of mainstreaming, support may be as limited to classroom instruction and, perhaps, access to a university writing center), we might attempt to take what we know about assessment, about DSP, and about our students, and create mechanisms to supplement student writing instruction outside the mainstreamed classroom.

One such mechanism already designed to provide support to student writers outside the classroom is the writing center (WC). Writing centers have become a mainstay of college campuses and have evolved into a kind of institution, so much so that a body of scholarship has emerged to define what is and is not the purpose of a WC. In “The Idea of a Writing Center,” Stephen North bemoans the perception on many campuses that the role of the WC is to act as a fix-it shop. North investigates the results of a study at the University of Pennsylvania that was designed to capture and compare faculty and WC staff perceptions of the role of the WC. He reports that “the two groups disagreed rather sharply about the reasons for referring students to the center. For faculty members the two primary criteria were grammar and punctuation” (35). North and other WC scholars are adamant that this is not the purpose of the WC, and they also insist that the WC is “not here to serve, supplement, back up, complement, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any external curriculum” (40). North claims, rather, that the primary aim of the WC is “is to make better writers, not necessarily—or immediately—better texts”
(41). But it is difficult to imagine how the aim to “make better writers” does not “serve, supplement, back up, complement, (or) reinforce” the curriculum of composition instruction and the writing standards all universities seek to uphold. This paradox, in fact, led North himself to later revise his own pedagogical notions in “Revisiting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center,”’ in which he acknowledges the reality that such spaces exist within the framework of the university’s curriculum: “I want a situation in which we are not required to sustain some delicate but carefully distanced relationship between classroom teachers and the writing center, not least because the classroom teachers are directly involved with, and therefore invested in the functioning of, that center” (88).

Current composition pedagogy strongly favors process and writing across the curriculum efforts have helped spread the influence of that pedagogical stance, so it would appear that on many campuses the aims of composition instruction, university writing standards, and WCs is “to make better writers, not necessarily—or immediately—better texts.”

But what about those texts? Certainly the vast majority of our assessment mechanisms at the institutional and even at the class level are determined by a product. And the expectation is that the product will express ideas with clarity, a clarity that can only be accomplished through the employment of specific skills and strategies that, for many, require direct instruction. In “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children,” Lisa Delpit expresses her concern with the trend in writing pedagogy that privileges process over product, a trend that has informed the practices of composition instructors and WC administrators alike. According to Delpit, “many liberal educators hold that the primary goal for education is for children to become
autonomous, to develop fully who they are in the classroom setting without having arbitrary, outside standards forced upon them. This is a very reasonable goal for people whose children are already participants in the culture of power and who have already internalized its codes” (88). Delpit argues that educators often hold students accountable “for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them” (90). Even students whose instructors do provide a certain amount of direct instruction in functional, product-oriented areas may find that the amount of such instruction does not meet their individual needs; the necessary balance between product- and process-oriented instruction will vary by student. Thus, universities that provide two-option or mainstreamed writing classes, supplemented only by a university WC that may similarly deemphasize product, run the risk of failing to meet the needs of the very students that most depend on such support. This alignment of purposes creates vast holes in the kind of support students can receive because, for example, no one believes mechanics is their “job.” Thus, students are getting similar support from various sources rather than diverse support.

The university’s ability to provide these diverse types of support can significantly impact student performance. In *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*, Marilyn Sternglass reports on the results of a long-term study conducted at CUNY in an attempt to identify the factors which impact student success. According to Sternglass, “students’ subjective lives are essential components to their objective lives, so it’s impossible to comprehend the nature of their academic experience or to contemplate educational approaches that will meet their needs without
understanding how integrated these aspects of their experience are” (xii). What Sternglass’s work demonstrates is the very complexity of the needs of our students; this complexity suggests that we might never be able to design a single course or mechanism for support outside the classroom to meet the distinct needs of each student writer.

Such complexity highlights the need for these support mechanisms to be diverse and flexible rather than monolithic. In Writing from the Margins: Power and Pedagogy for Teachers of Composition, Carolyn Hill seeks to redefine the liminal quality of the composition classroom as one that is fraught with possibility. Recalling Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Hill sees the composition classroom as a space where students from different discourse communities, including those significantly different from the academy, can grapple with the conventions each brings to the classroom, thus developing a familiarity with academic discourse while deepening an appreciation for diverse discourse communities. According to Hill, “texts always live in writers and the other people that touch their lives, and the ensemble created between them grows out of writers both controlling and being controlled, and out of their learning to create new life in the midst of involvement with others” (69). Because of the various challenges involved in creating such multivalent spaces solely within the composition classroom, it is a worthwhile pursuit to attempt to foster outside the classroom what Hill is proposing inside: to develop a system of support for student writers in which the mechanisms are diverse and are in dialogue with the classroom and with one another.

I propose, then, that only by thinking beyond the confines of the traditional classroom can we begin to capitalize on both cultural and academic diversity within our
respective institutions. We must progress beyond a mere embracing of diversity and redefine our stance as a fierce insistence upon it. Many educators such as Pratt, Trimbur, Lu, and Horner have come to realize that learning cannot happen in the absence of diversity. Thus, it is not enough to merely recruit students from diverse backgrounds. We must also foster diversity, both of students and methodologies, creating both contact zones and safe houses wherever we can, both inside the classroom and in our programmatic structure. We must seek to create a system of support mechanisms for student writers that is as diverse and complex as our students, their writing needs, and the act of writing itself, and to create spaces that allow students to question power and explore, compare, and contrast diverse discourse communities. To do so, we must apply what we have learned about composition instruction and student success from assessment scholarship, reports on successful mainstreaming projects, the pros and cons of DSP, WC scholarship, and beyond.

First, we must recognize that tracking is an unethical practice. Tracking mechanisms segregate both basic writing and first-year composition students from the valuable resource that is their peers, and marginalizes or otherwise degrades student confidence so that we must see tracking as unacceptable to meet the diverse needs of composition students. Thus, tracking acts only as an obstacle to higher education rather than a means of access. We cannot at once embrace diversity and implement a placement mechanism that segregates students. To do so in the name of helping those students is hypocritical. Open admissions must be truly open without the holding pen of basic
writing to keep some students quarantined from the rest of the writing students on campus.

We must also recognize that while mainstreaming students into first-year composition classes does expose students to opportunities to familiarize themselves with and practice the conventions of academic discourse, it simultaneously limits the ability of instructors to recognize diverse discourses. What “border pedagogy” demands is that the classroom instructor serve many purposes, the act of which might detract from the instructor’s ability to effectively meet any one purpose.

Accordingly, the expansion of auxiliary spaces beyond the classroom benefits instructors as much as students. Such a system of auxiliary spaces has been prefigured by the work of many educators in the field who have been involved with mainstreaming projects. Wiley talks of a “multifaceted” system that contributed to the success of mainstreaming at CSULB, and in “Repositioning Remediation: Renegotiating Composition’s Work in the Academy,” Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson describe the “Writing Studio,” a support mechanism which uses for placement a combination of writing produced in the first weeks of a first-year composition course and previous writing samples. But like the programs which preceded these, the models still limit the kinds of help students can access. At CSULB, the student cohorts attend the same classes, and students have the opportunity to build support systems that help them feel connected to the campus community, but these services do not ensure access to a variety of support services for writing. And the Writing Studio at CUNY still relies on a
placement mechanism that does not include student input and that excludes some students from participating in the services provided by the Studio.

A truly multifaceted approach to supporting the needs of writers in a mainstreamed environment would provide students with access to a wide range of support services that address specific needs; are staffed by diverse personnel including WC staff, graduate students, student volunteers and interns, and paid and volunteer tutors; and rely on student writers and their instructors for placement decisions. Funding for such programs would come from a redirection of funds previously used for basic writing programs. But the support programs developed would be accessible to all students, thus ensuring the security of these services as developmental programs continue to lose funding.

Furthermore, the programs would involve a system of “Informed Self-Placement” as described by Bedore and Rossen-Knill. Students would be mainstreamed into first-year composition, providing them with first-hand exposure to the demands of a college composition classroom. In context, students are able to see a syllabus, interact with a composition instructor, begin to participate in self-reflection through writing, and begin to get feedback on their writing from instructors and peers. Armed with this wealth of contextualized information, students work with their composition instructor throughout the semester to chose support services that will aid in their development as writers and their success in writing classes. Students are able to find the kind of help they need as individual writers and instructors are able to provide individualized instruction through placement, thus optimizing classroom instruction time.
When mainstreaming is combined with contextualized placement, the range of support services a university can offer is widened considerably; such an approach generates a dialogue between students and instructors with the specific goal of understanding and responding to the needs they identify. Thus, the support mechanisms are developed, enhanced, or suspended based on demand. Furthermore, unlike a semester-long placement in a basic writing class, support services can constitute anything from a single 2-hour seminar, to a semester-long standing tutoring appointment, to a 6-week small group tutorial.

Development of a multifaceted network of support mechanisms may only require minimal redesign and augmentation of existing programs. For example, at CSUS, one support mechanism designed to meet the needs of student writers is the one-unit small-group tutorial that students enroll in concurrently with first-year composition. Historically, students have been placed into the tutorial by the university’s placement test. But these tutorials offer exceptional writing support in a structured setting outside the classroom, the kind of support that could benefit many writers, not just those placed into them by the placement test. Furthermore, this kind of support may be all that students formerly placed in a three-unit basic writing class may need to be successful in first-year composition.

I have had students in my first-year composition class ask if they could elect to take this 1-unit tutorial, and I have often wished I could refer some students to these tutorials. Unfortunately, at one time, not unlike basic writing, placement was not determined by the student or by the teacher. This means that placement decisions were
made out of the context of the classroom and without the input of either student or teacher armed with writing produced in the context of a first-year composition class. It is the ultimate deficit model, in that placing students in basic writing or adjunct tutorials prior to the student taking the first-year composition course is a prediction that the student will fail first-year composition. But what if we changed the prediction? What if we predicted that all students will pass first-year composition if we provided them with enough support outside the composition classroom?

And what if we gave students some exposure to a first-year composition classroom before we asked them to decide what kind of support they would need in order to be successful in the course? With the development of tutorials and seminars that begin several weeks into the semester students, in concert with their instructors and armed with their placement scores, the course syllabus, and the student’s early responses to writing and other classroom assignments, students can make a placement decision that is more informed than any pre-semester placement could ever be.

The purpose of these tutorials can be varied so that students are working on various stages of the writing process depending on their individual needs and the demands of the specific courses they are taking. The tutorials can be tailored to guide students through other stages of the writing process beyond mere revision, such as prewriting, outlining, and editing, and can provide additional support in areas often deemphasized by the process-oriented pedagogies favored by many classroom instructors and writing centers, such as grammar, reading, and language skills. Such tutorials can be conducted in half-semester time frames, so that students have the opportunity to identify
areas in which they desire more support and, most importantly, they are conducted in conjunction with a writing class, so that the work in the tutorials is contextualized.

In response to North’s concerns, it could be argued that the WC becomes a fix-it shop because students struggling with grammar have nowhere else to go, since there is nowhere for composition instructors to refer them. The implementation of a specialized group of tutors, trained to assist student writers with mechanical problems, sends the message that the WC, too, is a place where students can exercise agency and seek the specific help they need to succeed in a writing classroom. Tutors for these positions can be recruited from all disciplines on campus to further promote a diversity of viewpoints and approaches to writing. Furthermore, the WC can implement small-group tutorials that focus on editing, and offer seminars on formatting conventions (MLA, APA, Chicago).

When we create a multi-faceted network of writing support services on our campuses, the diversity of these spaces allows an institution to accommodate the complementary environments of both contact zones and safe houses. For instance, students engaged in writing for coursework across disciplines may find themselves in classrooms with instructors looking to create as homogeneous a community as possible. But when such students attend the same small group tutorial, what will naturally emerge is a space in which students compare course loads, assignments, and instructor expectations, the kinds of comparison which give rise to institutional critiques of the varied methods and even inconsistencies of instruction across the curriculum. Conversely, other students may find themselves in process-focused composition classrooms guided by a critical pedagogy that openly encourages a critique of the
university. But, with expanded support services, these students would also have greater access to direct skills-based instruction; these expanded spaces then become a type of safe house where students’ similar needs, as well as the shared goals of skills-based instruction, foster homogeneity. Even in situations where the instructor already successfully facilitates both of these environments within the traditional classroom, the support system I propose still functions to promote diverse relationships between the university and students and among the students themselves.

All of these things could and should be happening so that students have choices, choices that address specific needs rather than assume that all students struggle only with one type of concern in their writing. Furthermore, such an approach employs a wide range of tutors and teachers so that much of the work students do for the classroom is done outside the classroom and therefore in spaces where questioning of classroom policies and values can happen more freely. Students interact more with the campus community at large and form relationships with peers outside the classroom, relationships that form the basis of the support system necessary for college success, and which is naturally comprised of members of various discourse communities all working toward proficiency in academic discourse. Furthermore, such an approach gives students a means of support as they grapple with the demands of academic writing without the stigmatization of segregated classroom. It also gives instructors a sense that there is support available outside the classroom for students struggling the most to succeed inside the classroom, and it honors the fact that writing is a process as complex as the diverse individuals who undertake it.
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