

We Are Not Alone: Strategic Coalition Building Across (Contested) Spaces Serving Basic Writers

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Access to higher education has rarely been more important or more contested. In fact, colleges and universities across the nation find themselves no less vulnerable in this fight for dwindling resources than the struggling masses knocking at their doors. In many cases, BW programs are the first to go (Soliday 2002, 2004; Greene & McAlexander 2008; Otte & Mlynarczyk 2010). Long committed to serving writers otherwise denied admittance, such programs draw their very existence from increasingly contested spaces.

We are not alone. In fact BW's very survival may depend on an ability to recognize and build strategic coalitions across the same programs and services with which a great many of us now compete—student support services; TRIO, adult literacy and ESL programs; and others across institutions and communities. These services often identify with core objectives shared by BW programs, including:

- serving the literacy needs of first-generation, minority and other underrepresented students and making campus environments more welcoming and supportive to those students;
- offering individual and small-group support designed to improve retention and graduation rates;
- offering instruction that both recognizes students' existing strengths and promotes intellectual and literate growth, helping students to meet linguistic "standards" while cultivating linguistic and literate diversity.

This workshop will explore "ALL our relations." When establishing responses to what appears to be the systematic dismantling of basic writing programs across the nation, how can we build strategic coalitions with those we already think of as "our relations" and, perhaps, those we might currently think of as "beautiful enemies"?

CBW 2011 will be a working conference. Expert panelists will prompt participants' conversation toward specific recommendations for the future of the Council on Basic Writing, specifically in response to BW's increasing vulnerability. Featured Speakers and "All Our Relations" Panels (presentations drawn from an open CFP, available at CBW website) will alternate with interactive roundtable discussions.

"All Our Relations" Panels will include work studying the building of strategic coalitions around BW—including those not currently associated with BW: WPA's; adult literacy and ELL educators; WAC programs; international and adult-oriented college degree programs; policy-makers and activists.

Interactive roundtable discussions will be designed to move the Council on Basic Writing toward greater focus on serving its current constituents as well as broadening those constituencies and helping those constituents cross institutional, communal and theoretical boundaries. Roundtables may explore: As a field, what are BW's core values and objectives? How can we work with others who may not share all or even some of our core values, and what might all partners involved gain from strategic coalition building? What resources might these coalitions productively target together, and how? What can we do in coalition with under-served communities to improve and sustain access to BW for those who have lost it, especially communities that have lost the most? In what ways can the conversations and innovations of our field engage stakeholders in higher education reform (from taxpayers to legislatures to foundations to the Department of Education)?

9:9:45 SETTING THE STAGE: HISTORY AND FUTURE OF BASIC WRITING

Mary Soliday

This featured presentation will outline “where BW has been.”

Rebecca Mlynarczyk

BW professionals are once again being asked to do more with less. Many BW programs have been shut down or forced into community colleges at the same time that colleges are flooded with unprecedented numbers of “non-traditional students.” Data from BW students themselves—in this presentation, filmed interviews—starkly demonstrates the continuing need for BW programs despite widespread attacks on by state legislators and university administrators. However, by calling attention to some new models for providing more effective BW instruction within the college mainstream, the presentation will suggest what the future of basic writing may be.

9:45-10:45 “ALL OUR RELATIONS” PANEL 1: HISTORY TO AVANT-GARDE

Panelists will be selected from the open CFP, with a focus on offering a robust examination of the workshop theme from various historical, activist, innovative and theoretical perspectives.

Questions addressed might include:

- Studies like Ritter’s *Before Shaughnessy* and Soliday’s *The Politics of Remediation* remind us BW didn’t begin with Open Admissions. What can we learn by investigating different origin stories, perhaps those from which our own institution’s BW programs originated?
- Given increasingly scarce resources for all Americans, what might BW’s future be?

11:00-12:00 STATING OUR MISSION: THE MULTIFACETED WORK OF CONTEMPORARY BW PROGRAMS

Steve Lamos

This session will overview the ways in which CBW must redefine its mission in the current milieu, while not losing sight of BW’s core values, in order to acknowledge the multifaceted work of student support, retention, and diversity being performed by many contemporary BW programs. Facilitated discussion toward a new CBW mission statement will follow.

1:00-1:45 THE LOCAL MATTERS: DEFINING BASIC IN LOCAL CONTEXTS

Kelly Ritter

This talk will discuss the role of local curricula and learning conditions in the history and development of basic writing. The speaker will argue for an historical re-examination of “basic” writing as a local, rather than national, phenomenon.

1:45-2:45 “ALL OUR RELATIONS” PANEL 2: HEARING U LOCAL

Again, individual panelists selected from the open CFP, with a focus on presentations that balance the (realistic) institution-specific constraints often placed on BW programs and classroom practices with serious attention to the national context. Questions addressed might include:

- What has already been lost, who has lost it and what can we do to make these losses visible to our colleagues and the general public?

- What can we do to improve working conditions and opportunities for professional development for all BW and especially contingent faculty?

3:00-4:30 Roundtable Discussions: TOWARD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CBW

Roundtable discussion topics will include “Developing Regional CBWs,” “Partnering with NADE,” “Aggregating Online Resources for CBW,” and “Toward a CBW Mission Statement,” and others that arise during the day. Each table will offer specific recommendations for CBW.

4:30-5:00 Group Discussion: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CBW

Reports from “Roundtable Discussions” regarding next steps for an increasingly responsive and relevant CBW, and action plans for CBW Executive Board and membership.