

Statement of Administration Philosophy | Courtney Werner

As an administrator, I work hard to foster programmatic growth while meeting the needs of the student body, the faculty, and the staff I interact with on a daily basis. An actively evolving program that meets the needs of a diverse constituency needs to be staffed with cutting edge researchers and invested teachers. I have held several administrative positions at various institutions, including writing program administration roles at a liberal arts university and a small liberal arts college. I have also taken on administrative duties on various university committees and organizations. By consistently incorporating student and faculty needs, I have been able to develop strong programs with inertia to continue developing after I have left the positions. In future administrative positions, I seek to bring my energetic approach to developing strong programs for various constituents.

The best writing program—whether it is a first-year program, a WAC/WID program, or even a writing center program—is one that grows with the institution to meet the needs of students and faculty. One way programs might grow is through expansion: when programs out grow their old spaces or need to expand due to more students or faculty, a director who can not only stand up for the needs of the program but has the abilities to receive grants, funding, and support from the institution's larger faculty body *and* administration is of absolute importance. Through my work as the Associate Director of First-Year Composition at Monmouth, I have helped the program grow in several ways, including a push to offer at least six sections per semester designated as service-learning sections of first-year composition. This initiative is particularly supported by the Office of Transformative Learning, and it has helped craft truly immersive and memorable opportunities for students while also helped them consider what it means to build a professional skill-showcase portfolio. Additionally, I organized the first annual celebration of the International Write-In at Monmouth. The Write-In has been made popular by Swarthmore's writing center. I have brought this international event to Monmouth in order to champion writing (and practice and instruction) across campus. Students, faculty, and even staff are participating in the write-in, and various offices of the administration have offered financial support to the event. Finally, at Hope College, a small liberal arts college, I was able to grow the program from a first-year writing program only to one in which writing in the disciplines was celebrated and emphasized in disciplinary curricula across the campus. Taking the initiative to make useful changes that enhance both the environment and the academic integrity of the program is the first step in building a strong, lasting writing program that grows with students' shifting needs.

The growth of a writing program is not the only thing that makes a program strong, though. A careful investment in the work, learning, and research being done by the people who comprise that program is integral to the program's vitality. During my work at Monmouth, I have helped redesign our professional development workshop series for composition faculty. In this role, I have organized workshops, facilitated workshops, and crafted new approaches to workshops. For example, when I began at Monmouth, faculty presenting at workshops did not have to do much but propose a topic, show up at the appointed time, and rant about that topic. Now, faculty topics are vetted, and every full-time member of the composition faculty facilitates at least one workshop on current trends in the field, focused around a recent scholarly article that the workshop group reads and discusses. At Hope, I collaborated with the Klooster Center for Excellence in Writing to support faculty's own writing goals by refashioning the popular NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) and creating a Hope-branded AcaWriMo (Academic Writing Month). We crafted this program as a series of faculty-writing workshops and workspaces (stocked with coffee and brain-foods) to help faculty meet their scholarly goals. By supporting faculty through these two initiatives, I helped craft stronger writing pedagogies and stronger teachers of writing by generating more conscious awareness of the craft of teaching and the craft of writing.

Finally, every strong writing program needs sustained momentum. The energy that a director or assistant director brings to the office engages all members of the program—from incoming students to emeritus faculty. With a positive attitude focused on change that benefits students, faculty, and staff, a program director may craft a sense of workplace camaraderie. This camaraderie enhances the working environment, making the program constituents feel comfortable to take risks that will ultimately enhance the program. It also opens doors to collaboration. Without collaborative projects (in regards to teaching, research, and other projects), no program would be able to sustain its momentum. A true collaborative spirit divides the strong programs from the weak. By maintaining a positive, approachable, collaborative ethos, an administrator brings up the program as a true community, staffed with committed, hard-working individuals ready to achieve the program's mission.