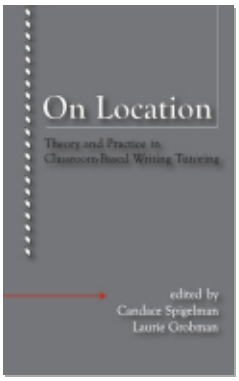
# 14 Tutors' Voices—Institutional Change and the University of Wisconsin–Madison Writing Fellows Program



# 14

# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON WRITING FELLOWS PROGRAM

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Writing fellows are a unique brand of peer tutors who work closely with both university faculty members and other undergraduates. Writing fellows are chosen from a diverse pool of applicants in many majors and serve in many disciplines. They are carefully trained to work across the curriculum helping other students improve their writing skills. In their first semester, fellows enroll in a special training course on the theory and practice of teaching writing. A writing fellow works with twelve to twenty students in a course whose professor has requested fellows' support. Writing fellows comment extensively on student drafts and meet individually with each writer to collaborate on possible revision techniques and strategies. The student is then given time to revise before turning in a final draft to his or her professor. Students remain the authorities of their work, and professors evaluate final drafts without any input from fellows, although professors generally review the first drafts and fellows' comments. The first writing fellows program was started at Brown University in 1982, and in 1997–98 the University of Wisconsin–Madison selected its inaugural class of writing fellows, who began training and work with great success.

The official rhetoric of Madison's writing fellows program does not generally include the notion of institutional change. The program describes itself as beneficial to students, professors, and fellows who gain, respectively, feedback; more polished papers; and community, leadership, and skills. However, some of the program's participants, particularly its founders and fellows, believe that significant institutional change occurs on campus as a result of the work they do. Unfortunately, concepts like "institutional change" lend themselves to abstract generalizations that

may inconspicuously fail to materialize. Despite the euphemistic claims and goals of these writing fellows program participants, it remains unclear if and to what extent their visions of institutional change are realized within the university. The following research, interviews, and analysis consider the proposition that Madison's writing fellows are agents of institutional change in the university.

## THE INSTITUTION AND ITS CHALLENGES

Before evaluating whether these alleged changes have been realized, I want to provide a working definition of the term *institutional change* as I use it in this chapter. In the following discussion, *the institution* will most concisely refer to the body (students and faculty) of the University of Wisconsin and the ideas and practices that shape their experiences within the university community daily and over time. To supplement this initial distinction it will be helpful to keep in mind the more extensive definition of *institution* that Kenneth Bruffee develops in *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge*, where the "institution" is "precisely the interests and goals of these people [who, for the time being, walk the quad, teach the curriculum, and enforce the catalogue], what they value, what they know and how they know it, what they learn and how they learn it, what they teach and how they teach it, what they think of one another, and the whole fabric of human relationships that exists invisibly within the walls and bricks and mortar" (1999, 109).

Together these definitions create a picture of the institution as simultaneously comprised of people and practices as well as "interests and goals," and identify these as four potential mediums in which change may occur.

Notably, this definition can be applied both to the university as a whole and to the teaching of writing within it. This study closely examines the institution through the second, more narrow view, but evaluates possible change in the institution at both levels. Specifically, interviews with professors who have worked with writing fellows are the sources of primary research; they address interviewees' experiences teaching writing. Therefore, I assess institutional change most narrowly by examining the long-term impact on the way the professors teach writing as a result of their work with writing fellows and their adoption of the writing fellows program's values and practices. Institutional change more broadly includes potential and realized changes in professors' attitudes about teaching writing and about the typical professor-undergraduate hierarchy

that usually subordinates the undergraduate to the professor. Bruffee again provides a helpful definition, this time of the potential changes that peer tutors can help colleges and universities bring about, specifically "changes in human relations—among students, among professors, and between students and professors; changes in classroom practice; changes in curriculum; and even (often the last domino to fall) changes in the prevailing understanding of the nature and authority of knowledge and the authority of teachers" (1999, 110). Challenged hierarchies, redefined social relationships, and other alterations in attitude are among the types of potential change anticipated by definitions such as this one.

Professors are a particularly useful gauge of change because they are a more stable part of the institution than the constantly changing student body. Their individual and collective practices, interests, and goals persist along with their physical presence and remain a critical part of the institution. Their relationships with the writing fellows program are also significant in evaluating the program's impact on the university. Changes in faculty practices, interests, and goals, along with their "human relations" after working with the fellows, can reveal whether Bruffee's potential changes have materialized as a result of the program.

Arguably, the writing fellows program also has the potential for limiting change by reinforcing current practices and hierarchies. Moreover, it may subvert its own institutional change potential while assimilating participants into a kind of static illusion of change that blindly prevents real change from occurring. This may be visible if professors and the writing fellows program, despite the unique relationships they foster, continue to enforce typically rigid hierarchies and attitudes. For example, if fellows fail to assert themselves as partners in teaching with the professors they work with, they may encourage the generally accepted position of undergraduates as totally subordinate to professors. Similarly, if fellows do not approach and respect the students they work with as peers (rather than as authorities), they may jeopardize the delicate and unique collaborative position they represent. Clearly, the examples are endless, involving possible failures by professors, students, and fellows. In any of these cases, Bruffee's "changes in the prevailing understanding of the nature and authority of knowledge and the authority of teachers" (1999, 110) could be threatened.

The structure of the writing fellows program introduces additional challenges in achieving potential changes. Many challenges in detecting, assessing, and perhaps even enacting institutional change through

the writing fellows program result from the structure of the program. As mentioned above, the program does not include institutional change among its asserted goals; it defines neither change nor a specific method for achieving it. When fellows are told that they are participating in a program that is capable of effecting institutional change, administrators imply that they are participating in change by simply participating in the program. While this may be true, the context reduces their role in change, rendering it ambiguous, unasserted, and difficult to assess. Similarly, in written descriptions of the program, change is often mentioned in passing or as a final euphemistic statement that ends an article on a high note. This allows claims to evade critical explanations of how the alleged change actually occurs. For example, in his article "The Undergraduate Writing Fellows: Teaching Writing and Much More," which appeared in *Time to Write,* the WAC newsletter in the Letters and Science program at the University of Wisconsin, Bill Cronon, history professor and director of the L&S Pathways to Excellence Project, discusses the usual impacts of the writing fellows program, such as assisting faculty in teaching writing, providing undergraduate writers with useful feedback, and giving fellows a unique opportunity to learn by teaching (1998, 1). After presenting participant quotes expressing satisfaction with the program, the article jumps to a generalization alluding to institutional change. The final sentence of the article states that "the Writing Fellows Program is ultimately about changing the culture of undergraduate education at UW–Madison" (2), although no concrete examples of change are actually presented.

The glossing over of this assertion is likely justified by the intentions of this article (presumably to inform generally and positively about the program). It also illustrates the program's general treatment of its notion of institutional change. Without a clearly defined notion of how the semester-specific, individual impacts of the program lead to a "changing culture" or even how that culture changes, it is hard to determine if Cronon's asserted change is or is not occurring. Unfortunately, the goal or agenda for change remains as ambiguous for the writing fellows program as the alleged achievement of it does for the enthusiasts publicizing it. In "Why Feminists Make Better Tutors: Gender and Disciplinary Expertise in a Curriculum-Based Tutoring Program," Jean Lutes, one of the founders of the UW's program, articulates her own understanding of this fact as a barrier to identifying and realizing goals for change. Lutes states: "In retrospect, I can see that in order to meet my expectation that the Writing Fellows act as agents of change, the program would have to articulate that

expectation more explicitly and involve students much more directly in discussion about what kind of change they want to bring about and why" (forthcoming, 29). This also raises the question of whose responsibility it is to define the kind of institutional change desired by the program. An awareness of the kinds of change participants are supporting is necessary to ensure that it is something they even want to or can support.

The writing fellows' role in institutional change must also be considered in light of the participants making up the program. Professors and fellows, two major agents of potential change, are voluntary participants. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that, specifically in this study, the professors interviewed may have already shared many of the writing fellows program's ideals about teaching writing. This may create a closed system of ideology where participants begin with similar ideas and goals, leaving less obvious room for possible modifications. In that case, it would be expected that minimal or no change would be detected in a professor's approach to teaching writing. At the same time, in these relationships, the writing fellows program may still be a catalyst for change within the greater institution where, although the fellows and professors may remain unchanged, as a catalyst they may simultaneously provide the necessary interaction for a reaction within the institution. For example, a writing fellow may be the agent necessary for bringing a professor's teaching philosophy to light for students, or a writing fellow may help even the most perceptive professor understand more accurately the struggles of his or her students. Thus, in addition to potentially challenging the attitude of any given participant, a writing fellow may help a more receptive individual break less obvious barriers in his or her existing relationships or practices.

With the above considerations in mind the following analyses of interview responses will illustrate two examples of institutional change occurring at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as a result of the undergraduate writing fellows program. In both instances, the changes are specific to the professors involved and intimately related to their preexisting relationships to the institution of the university and to teaching writing. The first interview, with a professor of Scandinavian studies, shows how writing fellows influenced her methods for explaining assignments, commenting on work, and communicating with her students. The second interview, with a professor of English, reveals fewer definitive changes because the professor's teaching philosophies were in agreement with the program even before he worked with writing fellows. The interviews are primarily

guided by open-ended questions about the professors' experiences with writing fellows and their personal teaching philosophies before and after working with fellows. Professors' names have been changed.

### INTERVIEW: LESLIE DUAMES, PROFESSOR OF SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES

At the time of the study, Leslie Duames, professor of Scandinavian studies, had worked with the writing fellows program twice, in the same course, and indicated that she would continue to do so in the future. She recently began teaching the course as a Communications-B class, which means writing has become a required focus of the curriculum in order to meet the university requirements for Communications-B credit.

According to Duames, she has always valued writing as an important tool of education, always basing courses on writing rather than examinations. She has a well-developed sense of writing as a tool for life, and believes that teaching students to write well—with strong, well-supported arguments, clarity, and critical thinking—is crucial to her role as an educator. Fitting with writing fellows program pedagogy, she has always commented extensively on student work with a strong focus on high-order concerns such as argument and analysis. Before working with fellows, turning in early drafts for her response was only an occasional option for her students.

Professor Duames considers herself to be approachable to students and views undergraduates as her collaborative partners in learning. When asked how she would describe her writing fellows' position in relation to her students and herself in view of the fact that writing fellows are not teaching assistants who determine grades and that they are undergraduates, she said, "I think this all connects to how I see myself as a teacher. I don't think that I'm a sage on the stage. I work with my students. We work cooperatively and we help each other learn, my students often teach me very, very much. So I would just say that the writing fellows just fit into that pattern of all of us learning together, and that's how I want them to be viewed by the students. . . . Really just part of our group learning project."

This notion of her fellows joining a preexisting collaborative learning structure shows that she values undergraduates in the learning process. It also reveals that she views the typical professor-undergraduate hierarchy more flexibly than some, in her words, "sage on the stage" professors. As a result, the program did not change her perception of undergraduates

altogether. It also explains how receptive she has been to the possibility of learning from writing fellows.

With Professor Duames's values and goals, there was not much at stake to change in terms of writing fellows program goals. However, although her values and goals about teaching writing and approaching her relationship to the institution might not serve as significant measures for the type of change writing fellows allegedly foster, specific changes in her writing instruction provide a useful starting point for gauging the impact of the program. When asked if working with writing fellows helped how she teaches her class, she responded:

> It helped me organize the writing assignments better, and realize kind of what was needed for students to be able to understand what I was looking for in a writing assignment. So I think I was much better organized. . . . Possibly, the writing fellows' comments sometimes really made me think to and look at, I think I've become in all of my classes now much more critical of the writing process—I mean, I always look at content, but now I'm very aware, I explain to students I need a thesis statement, need a conclusion. I'm very critical if they don't give me that and I'm looking for topic sentences and all those things. I think it's made me much more aware of that in every class.

Her response reveals that the process of working with writing fellows alerted her to the need to clarify her assignments. Needing to "explain to writing fellows what I wanted from writing assignments" specifically suggested to her the importance of preparation, organization, and clarity. Although the writing fellows program did not set out to change her instructional values, it did provide the catalyst for the change to occur.

Isolated moments of reflection like this depict one type of change occurring through the writing fellows program, specifically, Bruffee's "changes in classroom practice; changes in curriculum" (1999, 110). The program does not conspicuously or even actively set out to alter the way professors write or present writing assignments. It does, however, take credit for a part in the institutional change Professors Duames's new assignments represent. The unidentified missing step here is the change itself: a change in the nature of how one professor thinks about giving assignments and her students' need for clarity. Seeing fellows' comments seems to have helped her grasp where her students were struggling to meet her expectations. Explaining her assignments to undergraduate writing fellows as collaborative teacher figures, rather than as students producing the work, allowed her to see the importance of articulating not only her assignments but also

her expectations to her students as a way of helping them produce better work. Through her own reflection on working with fellows, she developed a more useful approach for assigning papers.

This type of change at an individual level is not unique to Professor Duames's experience, nor is the realization of its significance unique as an indicator of institutional change. In *Collaborative Learning*, Bruffee cites similar instances of change occurring through a peer tutoring program as described in a 1988–89 report by Robert L. Hess, then president of Brooklyn College: "Peer tutors have a potential to act as agents of institutional change, as revealed by . . . [the] faculty's acceptance [in one course] of the tutors' request for an all day faculty review of an experiment that proved to be an enormous success and [in another course, the] professor's comment that a presentation to the department by the tutors resulted in changes in the way the course is taught" (qtd. in Bruffee 1999, 81).

Although in Bruffee's examples professors were responding directly to peer tutors' suggestions, they underwent the same types of reflection and instructional revision that Professor Duames illustrates. Bruffee points out that the assertion that "peer tutors can be agents of institutional change . . . is not referring to all kinds of change. It is referring to a particular and crucially important kind: professors changing their course structure and *teaching practices*" (1999, 95; emphasis added). Notably, Professor Duames's revised assignment strategy resulted from standard interaction with writing fellows, rather than a direct "challeng[ing of] traditional prerogatives and assumptions about the authority of teachers and the authority of knowledge" (Bruffee 1999, 95). Without challenging the professor's authority, fellows illustrate in a less aggressive way that through their position alone, "peer tutors can help change the interests, goals, values, assumptions, and practices of teachers and students alike" (95). Thus, it can be argued that Professor Duames changed aspects of how she relates to the "institution" as she thinks about, gives, and evaluates assignments.

In another statement, Professor Duames revealed that her attention to the written work of her fellows influenced her teaching process. She said that she began to "comment more on style" after observing writing fellows at work. Although writing fellows may not describe focus on style as a specific concern of the program, Professor Duames now emphasizes the effects of style on structure and argument presentation, where before she focused solely on content. Thus she indicates increased concern

specifically for teaching writing in conjunction with teaching content. While writing was always a tool for teaching content in her classes, she now includes writing itself as a skill that she helps students develop. While many professors use writing to teach in their classes, far fewer actually work to *teach writing* along with their subject matter. The benefit of developing writing and content simultaneously is often overlooked; in this case it seems writing fellows helped Professor Duames see some of those benefits.

In addition, Professor Duames explained that fellows' comments have provided her with new methods for effectively explaining concepts to her students, stating: "[T]heir comments are generally really useful just to look at and sometimes I've used the way that they explain things. . . . sometimes as a professor . . . you're not really communicating with them [the students] very well, so sometimes it helps to look at how a student communicates with another student." This echoes Bruffee's notion of potential change in "the prevailing understanding of the nature and authority of knowledge and the authority of teachers" (1999, 110). While it may be common for a professor to value undergraduates in the classroom, it is another step to learn teaching methods from them. Fortunately, Professor Duames recognized the unique position of the fellow—a student communicating with another student—and learned from her observations of the interaction.

This situation may also involve issues of authority. The nature of peer tutoring removes some of the authority from the "teaching" position a writing fellow assumes. As Professor Duames indicates, there is value in this position, and professors may learn not only from the specific ways fellows communicate, but also from the positions they assume as collaborative learners rather than ultimate authorities.

These examples also represent the potential influence of writing fellows in a variety of situations. While Professor Duames is particularly receptive to learning from writing fellows, other professors encountering similar writing fellow work may be surprised or hesitant, even rejecting the opportunity to learn or change. However, Duames's experiences reveal that although institutional change may not occur across the board, the opportunities for such change do arise. Furthermore, in the instance of professors unlike Duames, the opportunity for change is actually greater because it may instigate reevaluation of not only practice, but also ideology.

### INTERVIEW: SCHNIDER MARQUEE, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

At the time of the study, Schnider Marquee, professor of English, had worked with the writing fellows program once and said that he intended to work with the program again in the future. His ideas were always very much aligned with those of the writing fellows program. His practice of teaching writing has always involved many program strategies, such as requiring drafts, commenting extensively, and conferencing with students. This leaves little room for fellows to change his teaching practice but offers fellows a role in the type of change he may already be enacting at the university. From the researcher's perspective, his approach to teaching writing is itself a change from the overwhelming trend of the institution, although statistically supporting this would mandate an evaluation of all writing instruction at the university beyond the scope of this study. However, personal experience with many instructors of writing-intensive courses at the University of Wisconsin gives me confidence in asserting that Professor Marquee's writing pedagogy is not typical practice. Although many professors may agree with his ideas about the value of teaching writing and even of using process (including revision, conferences, etc.), his ambitious and dedicated practice is unique. He, therefore, may represent an individual change within the institution—the addition of a professor intensely involved throughout his students' writing process. As he shared his well-developed philosophies and methods with fellows, Professor Marquee was interacting with students on a different level, and because of fellows' training in current teaching theory they may have challenged him to rethink some of his practices.

Aspects of Professor Marquee's practice in teaching writing and his attitude toward fellows are revealed in his response to questions about why he wanted to work with the writing fellows program:

> I wanted it to save time. . . . One absolute reason was to save time. I was spending an hour per paper, on thirty plus papers, times several drafts of each paper, times several assignments, so I was looking to reduce the time I was spending over drafts of papers. . . . That to my mind was the first way it was going to be useful. . . . [B]efore I started working I could imagine it being useful that students would receive other students' comments, not necessarily better than they would receive my comments but differently in a healthy way.

It may at first appear negative that his initial goal with the program was to save time, as writing fellows are not intended to be a time-saving device for professors. However, Professor Marquee was already doing the tasks

writing fellows take on in any class. When he declares that he wants writing fellows to save him time, he refers to time that many professors never bother to take, before or after working with writing fellows. Professor Duames, for example, cited time as a significant factor in her choice not to use mandatory drafts or conferences with her students. In the same way that she has not changed the process she uses to teach writing, neither has Professor Marquee. The difference is that he already used a process consistent with the writing fellows program, a close conjunction with the type of change writing fellows may encourage among other professors. He states, "Writing fellows did not change [the] structure of my assignments. . . . I had drafts, I had conferences, all kinds of things before; that's what was useful and profitable but really burdensome for my time." Thus, at the level of attitude toward and process of teaching writing, no change occurred from working with writing fellows.

Moreover, when asked specifically if working with writing fellows changed anything about the way he commented or taught, Professor Marquee clearly stated: "No. It's not that it didn't; it's that it actually served, rather than my changing, it actually served how I did things quite well." The writing fellows fell in line not only with his specific approach to teaching writing, but also with his rigor and goals. They also did not significantly change his methods; they did not "make me reflect globally on teaching or on writing." He's taught writing for a long time and "published something on writing instruction." He did comment, however, that "[the] writing fellows [program] served me, I don't know that my teaching or notions about writing changed that much. What did change, something did change, I'm quite fond of the program, so what changed is it's something that I'll use and I'm quite happy to have."

While his language throughout the interview represents his declared position of using writing fellows as a tool, he also demonstrated an awareness of how their goals lined up with his own along with his respect for the ambitions of the program. When asked if he had any method that he wanted his fellows to use or if he had discussed ways to help their tutoring fit his style, he responded:

> Yeah . . . it was quite respectful and obedient to the mandate and the mission of the writing fellows, so I don't think my advice to them, or my counsel, or my expectations, or my goals were in any conflict. . . . [I]t wasn't so much having them do certain things that I wanted them to do because I think the writing fellows program trains them to do the sort of things I wanted them to do, but how they went about doing it. I thought I could teach them something and I

> think I did; and I gave them ten to twelve pieces of counsel . . . one of them was what it takes to write comments . . . in writing comments you are doing less thinking about students' writing than you are about your own thinking, because it's easy to comment on an A paper, easy to comment on a D paper. What's hard is writing on a B paper and a C paper that's confusing or slightly off . . . because you're not sure . . . you thought it was saying one thing or another . . . your own mind is confused . . . comment involves look[ing] back on your own thinking . . . self-scrutiny.

Thus, he indicates his respect for the goals of the writing fellows program, which he describes as "to help them [fellows] help students develop the strategies to learn how to become successful writers . . . not helping them necessarily become good writers, helping them to *learn* how to become good writers, and not just helping them . . . learn to become good writers but how to develop the skills to become good writers."

His discussion of how to write comments involves a perhaps unrealized awareness of an aspect of writing fellows' training. Writing fellows are exposed to a range of considerations about how to approach commenting and its purpose. Most significantly, during their training they engage a variety of ideas and philosophies about writing, teaching writing, tutoring, commenting, and more. By sharing his ideas with fellows, Professor Marquee not only clarifies his goals, but also provides them with another perspective on the issues they ideally are striving to develop their own sound philosophies about. He is contributing to writing fellow training and providing them with another forum for developing their "interests and goals . . . what they value, what they know and how they know it, what they learn and how they learn it, what they teach and how they teach it" (Bruffee 1999, 109). Professor Marquee stated, "[T]hey were aides to me, they were coteachers in some sense. They were also obedient to me, I clearly had authority with them but they were also doing their job with me and for me; in some way they were peers; in some way they weren't. In some way I took seriously the idea that I was mentoring them so in some way they were students of mine, at least that's how I took it."

Professor Marquee's effect on the fellows' portion of the institution has many possible implications: writing fellows not only gain his insights, but also see professional examples of how some of the teaching theories that they have studied come into practice for him. In this case, change is occurring for fellows because of Professor Marquee's mentoring. Writing fellows who were willing to learn from Professor Marquee's strategies, even by critiquing them, could reap personal benefits from working with

him. But this opportunity to learn could not occur without a change in how undergraduates and faculty interact with each other. In peer tutoring programs that remove the professor from the process, opportunities to learn from an instructor are lost to peer tutors. While his mentoring may be useful to any tutor or educator, Professor Marquee's writing fellows are in the unique position of working with the teacher and interacting with the students he teaches. This gives them a view of the writing and thinking his practice produces and an opportunity to work within his well-developed system. As writing fellows continue to bring their knowledge and experience to diverse aspects of the institution over time by working with many students, cofellows, and professors in a range of disciplines, Professor Marquee's philosophies and practices may be shared with a wider range than otherwise possible. Moreover, fellows who reject Professor Marquee's practice will have had a semester to understand why and refine their own philosophies and perhaps encourage Professor Marquee to reconsider aspects of his theory and pedagogy.

Professor Marquee's involvement with the writing fellows program reveals that Professor Duames's experience is by no means isolated or individual. Although Professor Marquee's teaching style, philosophy, and practice remained static over the course of his experience, he demonstrates another avenue for change: his potential impact on fellows and their potential to influence his thinking. He is very conscious of his developed beliefs—where they came from and why they are valuable; it happens that his beliefs are also closely aligned with those of the writing fellows program. Along with his respect for his students and writing fellows, however, Professor Marquee in a way upholds the typical professor-undergraduate university hierarchy, confidently proclaiming that his students "would always prefer if I would look at a first draft." It remains questionable if his opinion about this will ever change, or even if it should. Significantly, he also recognizes that writing fellows' comments may have "profited them [his students] in ways I couldn't have, and then the other way around." This recognition, of the unique value of peer tutoring, may or may not be attributable to writing fellows, but perhaps in time Professor Marquee will understand more specifically the benefits he alludes to and, like Professor Duames, perhaps he too will profit from them.

## ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Change comes in at least two forms: realized and potential. Realized changes in practice, such as those directly evidenced by Professor Duames's experience, are happening throughout the writing fellows

program. Potential for philosophy refining and sharing is demonstrated by Professor Marquee's involvement with the program. With every relationship forged, a new development occurs. In the hands of anyone attempting to enact change based on these potentially abstract ideals, the evidence presented here may be used as an instrument for measuring change. These examples demonstrate that reflection on the part of participants and case-specific use of such reflections translate into action that may be as mechanical as clarifying assignments or as ideological as sharing philosophies. Both are tangible ways to change the face of the institution at some level; both are occurring through the writing fellows program. Considered in the challenging framework of actual change while maintaining their relationship to the loftier goals of the program and at times failing to align exactly with them, these analyses also provide the complex framework for shaping the way institutional change is discussed while exemplifying how it may be assessed, itself a step toward implementing change.

Change most frequently occurs at the lowest level, that of individual reflections and interactions. If widespread lower-level change happens, the institution will change in an increasingly conspicuous manner. As the writing fellows program grows, many small changes will occur at the levels of practice and potential. Openness to these changes, though individual in many circumstances, will predictably develop patterns: many professors over time may be challenged to clarify how they write assignments; many may share their strong, well-developed philosophies about teaching and writing with fellows and recognize the power they may have. This movement of ideas creates the space for change in many directions. The absence of one given direction for institutional change in the writing fellows program will allow it to progress through the ideas and practices shared by its members. It will encourage personal development that may or may not proceed to impact the greater university. However, identification of these changes and potentials will not eliminate what seems to be one of the most significant difficulties: without a realistic determination of goals, this multidimensional change cannot develop according to the desires of participants. Only by identifying those desires and goals can writing fellows become true agents of, rather than unknowing participants in, institutional change.