

Re-Defining Boundaries: Exploring Writing Program Administration Identities

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This call emerges from our understanding that over the past five years, *something* has changed about how writing program administrators relate to their work.

Or maybe *we've* changed.

Maybe it's both.

In some ways, everything has changed and in others, our work looks the same. We navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent emphasis on working from home or working under potentially dangerous conditions. We still have colleagues doing the important work of teaching writing on our campuses for wages that do not sustain them, often without a viable option for healthcare coverage. We continue to work under austerity conditions as governments aim to invest less in higher education, leaving us always expected to do more with less. Recently, many of us have been expected to provide comfort and guidance to faculty and students in the aftermath of the 2024 elections at the same time as we're being called to be the campus experts on generative AI.

We recognize that examining and re-defining our boundaries between our work, our lives, and our professional identities is not new to those of us who do writing program administration. Through our own research and our conversations with WPA colleagues, we know that our boundaries and priorities are shifting (or at least that we're trying to shift them). This collection aims to examine what those shifting boundaries look like, their exigencies, and what they mean about our relationships with our labor, the labor of others, our scholarly communities, and our professional and personal goals.

In many ways, we see this collection as a spiritual successor to *GenAdmin: Theorizing WPA Identities in the Twenty-First Century* (2011), which introduced the concept of GenAdmin—the idea that many currently serving WPAs professionalized for WPA work during graduate school, giving shape to an identity rooted (at least in part) in WPA. As WPAs ourselves, we found this particular work to be kairotic and powerful in shaping how we think about our own professional identities. We were happy to find this term that we felt defined our relationship with writing studies, and we continue identifying with that term even as our own work has changed since that book was published.

With that important book now almost fifteen years old, we think it will prove fruitful to the field to reflect on where and who we are now. *Is GenAdmin still an accurate and productive lens through which to view our professional boundaries? Are we shifting toward something new and, as of yet, not quite named?* We invite WPA scholars to help us to think through how our redefined boundaries have affected our professional identities.

We see much productive work happening in writing program administration scholarship that bears direct connections to the kinds of questions we plan to explore in this collection. We'll get the indulgent self-cite out of the way first: A collection that we co-edited with our colleagues Courtney Adams Wooten and Kate Navickas, *The Things We Carry* (2020), explored strategies for navigating emotional labor, and that collection raised questions about our professional boundaries that we have been pondering ever since. In *Toward more Sustainable Metaphors of Writing Program Administration* (2023), editors Lydia Wilkes, Lilian W. Mina, and Patti Poblete argue that the toward making our labor sustainable is "difficult and constant, yet, if we are invested in the health and well-being of all, it must be done, and done with care and compassion" (9). Melissa Nicolas and Anna Sicari's collection *Our Body of Work* (2022) investigated how our physical bodies affect our administrative labor and our work as scholars in writing program administration. Leigh Grazino et al.'s *Making Administrative Work Visible* (2023) argues to bring our lived labor experiences into conversation to advocate for data-driven administrative strategies. Holly Hassel and Kate Pantelides's forthcoming *There Are Writing Emergencies* invites us to consider how our labor intertwines with loss and with how we respond (or don't respond in some cases) as WPAs to different kinds of emergencies. These are only some of the recent works in writing program administration to point to what we see as a recognition that *something* is changing in how we as WPAs relate to our work and define boundaries between our professional and personal lives.

A list of questions to prompt submissions:

- In response to *GenAdmin*, what does it mean at this moment to "choose WPA" as an avenue of scholarship, your profession, a fixed-term role you take on, a course of study for your graduate students. etc.?
- What does WPA work look like in different positions (director of composition, writing center director, WAC director, etc.), or in no specified job position? How is WPA work different when done by tenure-track or non-tenure-track faculty or staff?
- How is the concept of "WPA" expanding to include new kinds of roles, work, and labor structures? For instance, those who are assuming administrative roles in relation to general education reform efforts, generative AI, and broader faculty and student support?
- In what ways are WPAs called to respond to sociopolitical forces, how do we navigate those calls, and how do these calls and our responses shape our positions, identities, and the field? For example, pressures to remove DEI offices, curriculum, and programming from universities. In what ways have social, linguistic (Baker Bell), and disability justice efforts shaped WPA in recent years?
- What do we as scholars and administrators owe our institutions and our discipline? How do we calibrate our own expectations for the boundaries of our labor, in consultation with departmental/institutional expectations?
- When we feel disappointed by our organizations and networks or when we see new potential career developments on our horizons, how are we seeking out new avenues for professional development, mentorship, and inspiration?

- Recognizing that many former WPAs move into other administrative roles such as chairs, deans, and provosts, where do we direct our professional goals once we are no longer actively engaged in writing program administration? How does our work as writing program administrators prepare us for other administrative roles and help us to establish different kinds of professional boundaries when we change positions?
- If you've read this far, it's likely that you were not swept away from the field by the Great Resignation wave that rippled through multiple areas of work, including higher education, but you may have found yourself being asked to take on more or do more with less as a result of it. How do we push back against the vicious cycle of doing more, more, and feeling like we're not doing enough? What if we are already doing our best?

We see these questions as a starting point, not a limitation on what we hope to see in submissions. We invite authors to reflect on these questions or to submit proposals that examine other perspectives re-defining our identities and boundaries as writing program administrators. We know that writing program administration as labor is not always performed by those who are identified specifically as WPAs, and we want to invite anyone who engages in the labor of writing program administration to consider submitting a proposal.

We are looking for proposals of 350 words that describe the focus of the project, research methods, and potential connections of the project to the broader theme of the collection. Proposals should be [uploaded via this Google Form](#) **no later than February 21, 2025**.

Authors whose proposals are accepted can plan on producing chapters of around 5,000 words, using CMOS author-date citation style. If you have any questions about this call or want to run an idea by us if you are unsure if it fits this call, feel free to email us at kcstell@odu.edu and babbjs@appstate.edu.

Our tentative timeline: We will provide more precise dates for contributors at later stages.

Proposals for consideration: February 21, 2025

Decisions to authors: March 7, 2025

Initial chapters from contributors: July 11, 2025

Proposal to publisher: August 2025

Revised chapters: November 2025

Full draft submitted to publisher: January 2026