

The English Composition Board/Sweetland Center for Writing: A History

George Cooper, Winter 2013

A January 3, 1978 memorandum from B.E. Frye, Dean of the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, to College faculty indicated the principal item of business for the January 16 meeting would be to review and vote on the most recent proposal for the English Composition Board (ECB). The proposal, if adopted, the memo said, would provide “an opportunity for the faculty as a whole to make a truly significant educational innovation in the area of writing instruction” (Frye, 1978). The minutes of the January 16 meeting show that when put to a vote, the proposal “carried overwhelmingly.” Bernard Galler, Associate Dean for Long Range Planning, said “he didn’t think the Faculty fully appreciated the amount of effort that had been put forth by Professor Fader and his associates on the Board. He suggested a round of applause, which the Faculty participated in vigorously” (Minutes, 1978).

The role of writing in education, especially the first-year writing course, had been a topic of interest for a long time, both at University of Michigan and nationally (Fader, 1980). In 1960 Warner Rice, Chairman of the Department of English, published an article titled, “A Proposal for the Abolition of Freshman English, as It Is Now Commonly Taught, from the College Curriculum.” Rice argued that new college students should already possess good communication skills, the first-year course in composition was expensive, excessively burdensome to those who taught it, students were not motivated to take it, and to have it in the curriculum gave a false sense that other faculty need not be responsible for helping students to write better. This last point, that writing should happen in all disciplines, was one, among others, that English Professor Daniel Fader, and other Michigan faculty in Warner Rice’s departmental influence, held dear in conceiving of and developing the English Composition Board.

As part of an internal review of LSA curriculum the Graduate Requirements Commission (GRC) undertook in 1973 and completed in 1975 a series of open hearings in which students and faculty offered opinions on graduation requirements and suggestions for their improvement. In writing about the GRC in *The New Hooked on Books*, Fader indicated there had been dissatisfaction with the level of literacy among

undergraduate students. By the same token a greater variety of faculty had shown an interest in doing something about it. Fader (1976) quoted one member of the Commission as having observed that “For the first time in his long career in this and other schools ... he had actually heard teaching scientists to declare that undergraduate literacy had to be everybody’s business ...” (p. 39). Such sentiment found its way into an initial proposal for the English Composition Board:

According to testimony taken by the Graduation Requirements Commission, many [College] faculty have perceived a significant decline in the quality of their students’ literacy during the past two decades. When asked to characterize the nature of that decline, our colleagues often used descriptive terms and phrases summarized in the word “unpracticed.” Faculty members repeatedly told the [Commission] that many of their students appear to be unaccustomed to the demands of literacy, that they seem to be unfamiliar with both perceptive reading and careful composition. (Fader, 1976, p. 39)

In response the GRC recommended a requirement in English Composition for three courses, two of which be taken in the first three semesters of students college career and from among those “numbered below three hundred and chosen from those offered for certification in English Composition by any unit in the College” (Fader, 1976, p. 40). The third course would be elected in students’ major field “in either semester of the junior year or first semester of the senior year, which is numbered three hundred or above and chosen from those offered for certification by any unit in the College” (Fader, 1976, p. 40). As a last testament to the variety and multidisciplinary emphasis for written composition, the Commission proposed the Requirement in English Composition would be fulfilled when “three different instructors teaching three separate courses ... have declared themselves reasonably satisfied with the quality of a student’s English composition (Fader, 1976, p. 40). But this proposal was not the one that passed, having given way to one more amenable to a faculty unconfident in its ability to effectively teach written composition in addition to the subject-matter of their discipline.

Nonetheless, the 1978 proposal that faculty approved altered significantly the educational experience of students entering the University of Michigan. As a result of the new writing requirement, students sat down to write an impromptu essay during their

summer orientation. Each writing sample was evaluated holistically and scored by at least two trained readers. Based on the evaluation, students were either placed in tutorial—a writing-intensive course with much individualized instruction; introductory composition—a standard first-year writing course; or they were exempted from composition. No matter which avenue of placement students underwent in their first year, to fulfill the Michigan writing requirement, all students would complete a writing course after sophomore year, preferably in their area of concentration.

The English Composition Board was to be composed of six faculty members, two from the Department of English and four from other departments or programs within the College. One member of the Board from the Department of English would serve as the Board's Chair. Over the years, the Board itself went by a number of titles and took on various shapes and obligations. For a time it was called a Policy Committee. For another time an Executive Committee. In design it was to be a visionary group: as Patricia Lambert Stock (2012) wrote, the ECB was charged with furthering a progressive literacy initiative, "administering the first writing across the curriculum program in a large research university and a program in keeping with the spirit of the Michigan educational system that its founders conceived" (p. 16). In practice, the operation took shape as a seven-part program, three of which were accomplished by an ECB faculty of lecturers: administration of the entrance essay, teaching of the tutorial course for students whose writing evaluation placed them in it, and writing workshop support available for every student who sought help with writing.

The fourth part of the program, Introductory Composition, Stock wrote, was accomplished in the Department of English, initially under the direction of Bernard Van't Hul, who composed and published in-house *English 125* "textbooks" for use during the years he directed the first-year writing course. The fifth part of the program was the Junior/Senior-Level Writing Requirement, the embodiment of Michigan's writing across the curriculum initiative. The Board reviewed and approved upper-level writing courses proposed by departments. For faculty and graduate students in the disciplines who were unfamiliar in strategies to teach writing, the Board offered development seminars (the fifth charge), led in the early years by lecturer Barbra Morris, Assistant Director of the ECB. Professor of English Richard W. Bailey, who in later years was named the Fred

Newton Scott Collegiate Professor, conducted the sixth part of the program, research into the program's effectiveness.

The seventh part of the program extended beyond the University, into the public and private school communities, feeder schools, whose students might one day choose to apply to Michigan, or, for that matter, any college or university. In an interview with George Cooper in December 2008, Bailey spoke about those outreach efforts and the spirit with which they were conducted. "We saw this as an attempt to revolutionize the teaching of literacy, and ... we intended to do this in collaboration with schools and teachers [because] we believed in students and teachers," Bailey said. In Bailey's view it was important to affirm the work of teachers because "blaming schools is a very familiar American theme. And it is disheartening and wrong. In fact most people who teach work extremely hard and do their absolute best to impart skills and learning to students. We believed that."

Supported with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, ECB's early outreach activities connected the teaching of writing in secondary schools and community colleges to the writing program in the University. Writing conferences and workshops occurred on the University of Michigan campus as well as sites across the state and country. The ECB published *forum*, a journal of essays and communication among theorists, researchers, critics and teachers, which was, as Stock (2012) wrote, "intent on developing a scholarship of the practice of teaching writing" (p. 17).

Dean Frye asked Dan Fader to be the first director of the English Composition Board and Jay Robinson, then Chairman of the English Department, to serve as a member of the Board. The minutes of the LSA faculty meeting of January 16, 1978, list four other names to complete membership of the ECB: Peter Clarke, Journalism; Thomas Dunn, Chemistry; Wilbert McKeachie, CRLT and Psychology; and Harriet Mills, Far Eastern Languages and Literature (Minutes, 1978). Neither Fader nor Robinson began their careers in composition or rhetoric. Fader studied the British Renaissance at Stanford University, but while at Michigan his attention had turned to literacy learning practices, especially among troubled, incarcerated and inner-city youth. In *The New Hooked On Books* (1976), he relates a discussion he had with the head of one of the largest juvenile correctional institutions in the United States. Fader had been called in at the request of the

institution's desperate Director of Education. Fader wrote, "I argued that the difference between many boys and girls on the street, and some of those in his [the warden's] prison was a matter of bad luck rather than weak mind, and that young people who had been put away by a world they didn't understand, often had pressing reasons to want to understand that world much better than they did. Literacy was one means to that understanding" (p. 14). His years of literacy work with troubled youth and the writing and reading program he had developed for them led Fader to think such a plan feasible with broader, older and more privileged populations.

The ECB's second director, Jay Robinson, earned his Ph.D. in Medieval Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. At Northwestern University, his first faculty position, teaching the history of the English language, he became interested in linguistics. He wrote that he encountered the work of Noam Chomsky and found something familiar beneath the linguistic algebraic proofs and tree diagrams. "There was also something familiar in certain of the claims that Chomsky and his colleagues were making: echoes of more humane conversations in which humans were conceived as shapers of the meanings they make with language," Robinson wrote (1990, p. 3). He also had been involved in National Defense Education Act summer writing institutes, a group of teachers teaching teachers. In this role he was invited into school classrooms and caught his first glimpse of the inside of an inner-city classroom in 1963, one on Chicago's near-north side. In this racially, linguistically and socioeconomically mixed high school, Robinson discovered that he "got into the middle of conversations very different from my academic ones, conversations I am still trying to understand even as I try to continue them in classrooms and hallways in other cities" (1990, p. 5).

ECB early years were full of ambition, optimism and work. Professor Michael Clark of the Department of English and the English Composition Board wrote that as opposed to using standardized test scores or grade point averages to determine writing ability and to determine the level of placement, the English Composition Board developed a test specifically to measure aspects of academic argument within an academic setting. The test's "focus is motivated and informed by an emphasis on the connection between the written text and the institutional structure of the functions it must serve" (1983, p. 171). In 1981, 4700 students sat and wrote for 50 minutes during their

orientation. Two experienced composition teachers who had undergone training in holistic reading evaluated each essay. If the two readers disagreed about the essay, a third reader would resolve the disagreement, placing students in tutorial, introductory composition, or exempting them from the requirement until junior/ senior year. Fader reported that for the first summer assessment (1978) seven percent of students placed into tutorial, and two percent exempted.

Research in those early years indicated that the undergraduate writing program was successful. Professor Bailey reported to faculty in 1981 that an analysis of writing samples showed that “those students who were regarded as skilled writers on admission to the University maintained their relative rank through the first two years of college work. Students who received instruction through ECB tutorials, however, make the greatest absolute gains in writing skills” (1981). Enthusiasm for the educational effort was palpable. In a *forum* article Fader (1980, p. 37) wrote that in the month of October, 1979, on each of five Tuesday afternoons from 4 to 6 p.m. some “60 to 70 faculty members and teaching assistants from perhaps twenty departments—humanities, natural sciences, social sciences about equally well represented—gathered to discuss their own writing and that of their students.” The lure? one might ask. Fader answered, “A few small posters placed strategically around the campus and a letter of invitation sent to each department and program in the college” (1980, p. 37).

In the early years, ECB faculty conducted two summer workshops for teachers, the first in May 1978 that attracted 550 representatives from 250 schools, the second in December 1978 attended by 350 teachers and administrators who had also attended the May Conference and were interested in more. Following these initial planning conferences, the ECB conducted 272 in-service seminars in secondary schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities. Two hundred and twenty one of these seminars occurred in the state of Michigan. This intensive outreach program, designed to create better articulation between high school and college and to provide professional development for high school teachers, diminished after 1982, although ECB continued to pay attention to and cultivate a relationship with the educational world beyond University borders.

In July 1985, Deborah Keller-Cohen, Professor of Linguistics, took the director's chair at the English Composition Board. Her tenure did not have the buoyancy or heady thrill of the early times, but she served a steady seven years, helped the program focus on its central tasks of assessment, instruction and administration of the junior/senior writing requirement, and hired important and long serving lecturers, among them Liz Hamp-Lyons, who would direct the writing assessment; Emily Jessup (Decker), who would later direct the writing assessment into its portfolio phase; William F. Condon, who would direct instruction of the developmental course (known variously as Tutorial, Practicum and Transition to College Writing) and later, as a lecturer, become director of the program; Sharon Quiroz, who would direct the junior/senior writing program; Rebecca Reed, who would collect and manage research data, and, a decade later following Jessup's departure, direct the assessment; and George Cooper, who would spend the rest of his career in this unit, providing continuity and gaining historical perspective. From the beginning, lecturers conducted much of the day-to-day operation of the English Composition Board. Barbra Morris and Fran Zorn, who held title of assistant director, were among the first. And into the 1980s, Joel Nydel, Helen Isaacson and Phyllis Lassner played integral roles. All of these faculty, and all who followed, were non-tenure-track lecturers, but those who came later benefitted from a compensation schedule, system of evaluation, and career trajectory stabilized by the Lecturers' Employee Organization (LEO) implemented in 2004.

Much of the work initially charged to the ECB continued, although approaching its second decade, the unit needed fine-tuning and focus. Well-funded outreach and ambitious ideals bring risks of distraction, and varied initiatives can obstruct an organization's central purpose. During her tenure as director, it was understood within the College that Keller-Cohen had done a fine job and that she had improved faculty morale. She spent considerable time finding and hiring qualified people into lecturer positions to help run the program. Keller-Cohen developed a liaison program between the ECB and departments within the disciplines so as to establish better communication and firmer commitments to writing. This program included two separate multi-day seminars for representatives from all departments in the College, regular contact with individual liaisons, and periodic meetings throughout the year.

In December 1987, Keller-Cohen circulated the results of a faculty survey conducted with Arthur Wolfe, Research Associate at ECB, *Extended Writing in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts*. The survey was to “obtain a picture of the use of extended writing in the undergraduate curriculum,” ... “to explore faculty attitudes toward the use of extended writing,” ... “to understand what characteristics of writing faculty feel are most important,” ... and to “discover with which features of writing students have most difficulty” (p. 1). The report provides an insightful look into aspects of faculty attitude and practice regarding undergraduates and the teaching of writing. Out of 894 faculty who received the survey, 722 completed it—an 81% response rate. Because the questions were directed primarily at faculty attitudes and feelings, the report does not provide data on students’ actual writing ability. The Discussion and Recommendations section, however, concludes that there is a “considerable amount of extended writing in LSA courses.” Moreover, “since 1978 LSA faculty demonstrate heightened awareness of the importance of features of good writing” (p. 36). Figure 2 of the report indicates that features of development, support and organization were valued in 95% of the courses in which extended writing was taught. Punctuation, citation and spelling, while no doubt important, were valued at a lower level, at 64%, 58% and 54% respectively (p. 28).

The overall impression of student writing, however, was still rather dim. When asked whether faculty thought student writing had improved since the ECB started, half the respondents had “No Opinion,” whereas 4% thought it had “Improved Considerably.” Twenty-one percent thought it had “Improved Somewhat” and 20% thought it had “Stayed the Same.” These percentages jibe with some of the open-ended comments in the survey. “Faculty who commented on student writing, bemoaned its quality. Said one political scientist, ‘The poor ability to write is quite discouraging. Mostly student writing is lifeless and mechanical, with no source of animating ideas’” (p. 36).

Keller-Cohen and Wolfe discuss the possible reasons for these variations indicating that there is a mismatch between “our perceptions and the results of the survey.” While faculty seem to be assigning writing at greater levels and appreciating higher order features such as development, organization and support, they still had a dismal perception of student writers. This mismatch might have been due to the large

number of students and possibly poorly prepared teaching assistants, a combination of which might have made “the unpleasantness of poorly written papers [seem] worse than it might to someone outside the context” (p. 36). But, too, it might have been that, in spite of their comments to the contrary, faculty persisted in their annoyance at sentence and surface level mistakes. “One mathematician lamented, ‘...still the poor quality of grammar and spelling was transparent’” (p. 36). Finally, the study did not account for all possibilities, one of which would be to determine the consistency with which students were taking courses that involved a lot of extended writing beyond that which was required. While there might have been a larger and commendable number of courses that offered significant extended writing, the fact might have been that few students elected a broad range of these courses, other than the one they took to fulfill the requirement.

At any rate, Keller-Cohen and Wolfe suggested, “If we want a more precise measure of the level of student writing, we will need to involve faculty in a more intensive study of writing in their disciplines. This might consist of teams of faculty (compensated for their effort) reading portfolios of papers from students in courses at the 100-400 level in their department. The purposes of these panels would be to look more closely at just how a cross-section of students in their discipline is performing” (p. 36).

One activity that English Composition Board faculty did regularly and well from its inception was to read student writing, to read it in groups, to evaluate it, to wonder about it, and to enjoy the interaction among colleagues that such sessions provided. It was no small matter. This activity continued into the 1990s. In fact it flourished. Every summer a team of evaluators would read thousands of student essays, and in the first decade these were hand-written essays. Every day of reading would begin with a “normalizing” session where the group would read a few essays selected specifically for qualities the discussion of which might lead to consistent and unified evaluations among a varied group of readers. Normalizing sessions contributed to increased validity, or accuracy, in evaluating each essay, as well as increased reliability, or consistency, in reading over a string of days and even months. While to an outsider, such reading might sound tedious and extreme, to those who did the work and shared in the discussion it provided valuable insight into how students wrote, the good reasons why their writing

might go awry, and how readers' expectations (sometimes faulty) can lead to writing that seems "lifeless and mechanical, with no source of animating ideas."

During the Keller-Cohen years the assessment and junior/senior writing program, the writing workshop and the tutorial continued more or less as they had since the beginning. The name "Tutorial" would be changed to "Practicum," and the "Junior/Senior" moniker would be changed to "Upper-Level." Outreach, however, could not be maintained at the level of the early years without outside money to support it. Nonetheless, there were, in small-scale conduits, collaborations with public schools and some effort to interact with under-resourced schools and communities. Barbra Morris led a collaboration between the University of Michigan and Detroit Public Schools that lasted in some shape and form for more than 15 years. At Mackenzie High School, Morris worked with a variety of teachers doing everything from writing in the disciplines, to creative writing, to helping to fund the purchase of books for the library. With the ECB, Morris also introduced high school students to the idea of post-secondary education, bringing Mackenzie students to Ann Arbor for daylong campus visits. The ECB also initiated a program with the Social Studies Department at Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor, using writing as a vehicle for discovery and analysis rather than a mechanism for simply assessing the exact material students had learned.

Innovation occurred on campus as well as in outreach programs. In 1986, the ECB Peer Tutoring program began under the guidance of Phyllis Lassner. Preparation of tutors consisted of a single three-credit course, but by the fall of 1990 the curriculum included a second course in directed peer tutoring, and the program had steady increases in enrollment. The ECB began investigating the role that computers played in the process of written composition and initiated collaboration with University of Michigan's Wade McCree Scholars, a program designed to support college preparation among Detroit students. With regard to issues of diversity, faculty of the ECB, Comprehensive Studies Program and composition instructors in the Department of English started a "Sensitive Issues in Writing" group that met regularly. And to mark the occasion of the relatively new holiday celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr., the ECB sponsored an edition of *Prism: Diverse Perspectives from a University Community* (1992).

In her year-end report of 1992, her last year as director, Keller-Cohen wrote about how the unit had developed a research base for using computers with writing instruction, and it sought project partnerships with university faculty who shared interests in writing issues and who saw the ECB as a program with which they or their students could conduct research. As director, Keller-Cohen had developed a new system for training and observing faculty, and under her watch a pilot program had begun using portfolios for entrance assessment and placing students in their first writing courses (Keller-Cohen, 1992). The ECB was upbeat, looking forward and running on an even keel.

Yet, within the College there were rumblings of discontent. After Keller-Cohen it had been difficult to find a director for ECB. It was a service unit and, according to accepted definitions of the time, did not really have a curriculum of its own, the Practicum having been understood to be remedial, even though it carried college credit. The assessment and upper-level writing program were in many ways administrative functions, and Writing Workshop was categorized as service, in spite of the fact that each one of these areas influenced undergraduate student experience and instruction. The College felt there were few people qualified to do the job of director, and, moreover, few people wanted it. There was a suggestion to combine the English Composition Board with the English Department, but this, too, was no perfect solution as it was thought the Department would have to hire a senior person in composition to run the program, and it was not known what would happen when that person fulfilled a typical three year or six year stretch of leadership and wanted to pursue research and teaching since the Department had no tradition of scholars in composition. (LS&A Correspondence, 1994-95).

Following Keller-Cohen, Jay Robinson returned as ECB director in the summer of 1992 to what would have been a three-year position as director, but would last short of two. The University and academic climate was different from what it had been ten years before. The faculty members who, along with Robinson, had brought so much passion and energy to ECB, were reaching the ends of their careers. Robinson himself suffered ill health and before two years took leave of absence. His leadership was not without reward and positive direction, however. In line with contemporary trends, ECB faculty experimented with various computer and online practices in writing pedagogy. They

hosted the Computers and Writing Conference in May 1993. A second edition of *Prism* had been published. New faculty, Wayne Butler, Barbra Monroe and Todd Gernes, proved to be very effective teachers and leaders, taking up a variety of roles during their years as faculty. In his 1993 end-of-year report, Robinson indicated that there were in place plans to improve the college writing program and modify English 125 to be more like a Gateway Seminar—a course that would be more integrated with content from the disciplines. ECB would improve peer tutoring and formalize the use of portfolios for entrance assessment of writing for student placement in the fall of 1994. In a paper he delivered at Michigan School Testing Conference Robinson wrote, “We will look to portfolio assessment as a means to learn more about what schools are doing with writing instruction and about the kinds of writing that students are doing in schools. We want to improve the articulation of our program with programs in schools” (Robinson, 1992-1993).

In July 1994, the College appointed lecturer Bill Condon to be Acting Director of ECB. Condon, hired by Keller-Cohen, had been Associate Director for Instruction, advocate for better relations with English and other departments, and a resource for writers and writing teachers interested in the implications of an increasingly computer-mediated culture. In January 1995 the “Acting” diminution was dropped. The work of the program went on as before. The entrance portfolio had been adopted as the official means of writing assessment. With this adoption, Michigan positioned itself in a national spotlight and developed collaborative efforts with prominent assessment programs, Educational Testing Service and American College Testing. Faculty worked on computer technology projects to support and extend writing instruction and most of the faculty taught in computer-equipped classrooms. Wayne Butler introduced the software *Daedalus*, created at the University of Texas, which provided many conveniences to computer classroom instruction, one component of which, “Interchange,” allowed for real-time, interactive written exchanges.

Outreach with schools continued, and even increased, insofar as the build-up to portfolio assessment included many conversations between ECB and high school faculty in the state. Barbara Monroe initiated a writing exchange with students at Murray Wright High School in Detroit. The project involved developing a forty-station computing center

at Murray Wright. Using the technology, Murray Wright students would communicate with University of Michigan peer tutors about writing and writing projects. The hope was that the project might increase the acceptance rate of applicants from Murray Wright to U-M and that once on campus, Murray Wright alumni would act as mentors to their high school colleagues. With the support of the Ponting Foundation, Barbra Morris and George Cooper taught a graduate-level seminar, *Writing to Learn, Learning to Write* for teachers within the Detroit Public Schools. Helen Fox conducted a writing group for homeless and at-risk clients served by Prospect Place Shelter in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

In many ways, the mid-nineties was a brilliant period, especially as the unit, a unit staffed by lecturers and now directed by a lecturer, came to understand itself as populated by equals. A series of memos between Condon and ECB associate directors discuss the merit review process and refer to a point system by which faculty pay raises would be calculated. Points were awarded according to work accomplished by each individual and then divided into the total amount of money the unit possessed to allot raises. While some faculty in the end received larger pieces of the pie than others, the system was intended to sustain a collaborative and cooperative spirit rather than cultivate a competitive one (ECB Merit Pay, 1993-94).

The collaborative spirit should not indicate ECB was without ambition. On the contrary, a program of lecturers directed by a lecturer had considerable vision, as evidenced by a January 31, 1995 document “A Plan to Institute a Certification in Writing and an Undergraduate Concentration in Writing” (Writing Plan, 1994-95). The proposal grew out of an ongoing discussion, in part originated in Keller-Cohen’s Faculty Survey, regarding the relative dearth of writing courses offered between the required first-year composition course and the upper-level writing requirement. It also reflected the ECB’s persistence to earn “academic” rather than “service” standing within the College. Keller-Cohen and Robinson had tested these waters during their time as directors, without success. The time now seemed right, and the ECB proposal suggested a number of new courses that would be taught by ECB faculty: ECB 310 (rhetoric and new technologies), ECB 320 (A study of rhetoric and writing) and ECB 380 (Special Topics—topics that might include literacy, visual literacy, issues of race and gender, discipline-centered writing, and writing in the workplace). The minutes of a February 15, 1995 ECB faculty

meeting show that when asked for an update on how this proposal was faring in the College, Condon replied that he had talked to Michael Martin, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, who was considering the matter. “Condon’s sense is that creating a certificate would be relatively easy, but creating a concentration would be more difficult and would meet with more resistance,” the minutes indicated—an assessment that proved accurate (Faculty Meetings, 1994-95).

An October 17, 1994 memo from English Department Chair Martha Vicinus had evaluated the pros and cons of merging the English Department Composition Program with the English Composition Board. It was a difficult situation, there having been persuasive arguments on both sides. If one thing was clear, the College saw a need to “scale down” ECB (ECB Transition, 1994-95). It had become an unwieldy unit, seeming to want to be more of a department than a program or service unit. No doubt the proposal for a Writing Concentration a year-and-a half later accentuated the sense of ECB ambition. As notable, and also noticed by the College, was the increase in the number of students the portfolio assessment had placed in the ECB practicum. The fall 1995 practicum placements had risen to 18% from earlier years’ four or five percent and even the seven percent that resulted from the first year of assessment in 1979. Surely 18% of Michigan applicants couldn’t need remedial instruction in writing, the College thought. Even Bill Condon was amazed and reported to Dean Edie Goldenberg ways to mediate the number. Readers could be trained better. The assessment leaders could insist on a stricter application of the criteria and placement levels (No one considered that the entrance portfolio with its enhanced examples of student writing experience, a collection that included students’ assessment of their own ability to write, might reveal a need for a longer, more intensive writing experience than one course in college composition—the first-year writing course alone—could deliver).

During the fall of 1995, the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts invited review of its various writing programs. David Bartholomae (University of Pittsburgh) Lynn Bloom (University of Connecticut), and Gail Hawisher (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), all from English Departments, joined Michigan faculty Jean Krisch (Physics) and Thomas Tentler (History) in the undertaking. The ECB’s Self Study, published in August of 1995, laid out a number of visionary and hopeful proposals for a

new writing curriculum, some of them the same as those voiced in the 1994 Plan to Institute a Certification in Writing and an Undergraduate Concentration in Writing. The reviewers found much to praise about how ECB operated and about how the faculty conducted themselves and the ambition they cultivated, especially in the untenured, relatively short-term and underpaid positions they inhabited. The English Department received some criticism, especially insofar as tenured faculty had eschewed the composition classroom and English Department course offerings in writing for the second and third year were slim. But the more ambitious ECB proposals were not met with approval. Among other of the reviewers' recommendations were the following: the ECB should not expand the nature or number of courses it offered; the ECB should not expand its offerings to include a full complement of writing courses leading to an undergraduate major or concentration, when such courses could be offered not only in the English Department, but in a variety of other areas; there should not be a junior-level writing portfolio assessment; the ECB should not assume sole authority over the first-year writing requirement.

For ECB faculty and leadership, the disjunction between ECB culture and this response was difficult to recognize and accept. The leadership of the unit began to leave. Sharon Quiroz who had directed the Upper-Level Writing Requirement went to the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Emily Jessup (Decker) went to Evergreen State College in the state of Washington and Bill Condon went to Washington State University. In July 1996, Wayne Butler moved into the position of Acting Director. In the fall of that year ECB faculty developed a plan for an LSA Writing Center. It would be both a physical and virtual space that would embody the best of ECB's national reputation and culture to create a "collaboratory where administrators, writers, writing teachers, and scholars from the disciplines could work together to provide outreach to the schools and community, to assess entrance and exit writing portfolios, to develop writing curriculum within and across disciplines, to provide professional development for current faculty and GSIs, and to support writers as they progress through a connected and unified LS&A writing curriculum" (ECB Consolidation, 1996-97).

In response, the College folded the ECB into the English Department in 1997. That ECB faculty did not see this coming and then when it was clearly coming did not

easily comply with the order is testament to a certain naïveté as well as a certain idealism, energy and hope among them. However, the idealism was dissipating and, in fact, had not been shared entirely inside and outside the unit. One critic wrote,

ECB has a long history of refusing to assume its responsibility to teach basic, remedial skills such as grammar. I had major trouble with ECB (and I'm not just talking about tutors; I'm talking about the associate director) last summer when teaching a 125 section with 18 non-native speakers enrolled. For too long ECB thought of itself as an "alternative English department," when in fact it never should have been allowed to be anything other than an auxiliary, remedial support for our department. (ECB Critics, 1996-97)

In an article reflecting on her experience as an ECB faculty member Sharon Quiroz (1998) described two conceptions of the ECB, an early one of cooperation and a later one of collaboration. In the effort to exercise an ECB culture of democracy and shared leadership, collaboration had become, paradoxically, a dogma and buzzword for everything, even the idea of composition itself: "The ECB sought to define composition as a set of collaborative practices in every way" (p. 84) At the heart of this self-conception were portfolios and using assessment to drive curriculum reform: "So we used portfolios to define ourselves and our work collaboratively" (p. 85). Central to the process was the normalization of assessment, the conversations among faculty to agree about what made some writing good and other writing bad, the development of criteria, and establishing an identity. But with all this ostensibly good stuff, Quiroz wrote, "We were too focused on our internal issues. Most ECB faculty spent very little time examining the larger institution surrounding us—in fact we could rarely see over the English Department" (p. 88). In a phrase remembered by everyone who worked there at the time, but attributable to no one in particular, ECB had become "insulated and isolated."

The ECB was transformed when on Wednesday, November 19, 1997 the new Gayle Morris Sweetland Writing Center was dedicated. Gayle Morris Sweetland had been owner and publisher of *U, the National College Magazine*, which featured the work of hundreds of student journalists, photographers, and artists. According to the pamphlet prepared for the dedication, Gayle was John Sweetland's lovely and revered wife.

Sweetland said that “Gayle was unique, electric There was no one like her—she lit up a room whenever she entered” (Sweetland Dedication, 1997). John Sweetland had received two degrees from Michigan and had donated generously to his *alma mater*. The Sweetland Writing Center would be another entity his contributions made possible. Separate in idea from the ECB, it undertook some ECB functions. But for the first months of its existence Sweetland ran concurrently with the ECB before one effectively ended and the other effectively began. While Wayne Butler finished his year, July 1996 to August 1997, as Acting Director of ECB, Theresa Tinkle began her leadership of the Sweetland Center. Beginning July 1996, Tinkle directed Sweetland, among other duties meeting with Butler and ECB faculty to facilitate the closing of ECB and the opening of Sweetland. Ejner Jensen held the title of Interim Director for a year as Tinkle took a Duty Off Campus term, working behind the scenes with Butler between January 1997 and August 1997, at which time the organization once known as ECB was effectively finished, its Acting Director, Wayne Butler off to a new job in Texas, and the fall term began with the transition to Sweetland Writing Center complete. Tinkle returned to Sweetland in January 1998, and stayed in that position until completing her directorship in June 1999. Upon Tinkle’s leave, Jensen returned for two-and-a-half years, thus completing in two parts what would have been a typical three-year directorship.

These transitional years, the ending of the ECB and the beginning of the Sweetland Writing Center, required finesse and grace, qualities Tinkle and Jensen brought to the project. In some ways the two were as different as night and day. On the other hand, they both had a steady interest in and commitment to the English Department as well as helping the cause of student writing. Jensen was calm, even-tempered, slow to anger. He had been at Michigan since 1964, specialized in Drama of the English Renaissance, had served the University in many capacities, and directed the English Department’s program in First and Second Year Studies in between his stints at Sweetland. Tinkle, a Medievalist, was a talented and creative teacher, a solid scholar, and, too, she had directed the English Department’s program in First and Second Year Studies.

With the attention and support of a benevolent donor, Sweetland faculty and staff were ready to take a positive look forward. Among the things to look forward to was an

invigorated effort in writing in the disciplines. One vehicle in the undertaking would be the Sweetland Writing Center Fellows Seminar. It released faculty from a course (and, since 2003, offer a stipend instead) and supported graduate students so that they could work with visiting scholars to enhance their writing pedagogy. Seminar members were then contracted to teach a writing course using their own subject area knowledge and their new writing pedagogy, in order to prepare courses to meet the Upper-Level Writing Requirement, briefly known as the Advanced Writing in the Majors Program. In the first volume and number of the *Sweetland Newsletter*, April 1998, Todd Gernes, the new Director of the Advanced Writing in the Majors Program (supporting the Upper-Level Writing Requirement) wrote, “This seminar, offered by the Sweetland Writing Center/English Composition Board, is designed to prepare participants to teach content-based, writing-intensive courses and to support faculty in their initial writing-intensive teaching experience” (p. 2). Other articles in this Sweetland communiqué reminded readers that just as the ECB did before, the Sweetland Center would continue with its writing workshop for those who wanted conversation in the process of writing, and there would be continued high school outreach.

Because writing assessment had garnered so much attention in the preceding decade, the complete lack of any mention of it in the newsletter would be significant to anyone who noticed. And it was significant. Although Sweetland was to continue much of the old ECB work, it was not going to continue assessment as usual. The high Practicum placement rates were one thing, a pattern that if continued might recreate a situation not seen since the 1950s—a good many students taking a full year of required coursework in written composition. Moreover, the work of reading so many portfolios had come to appear “grossly inefficient.” In a February 2, 1998 memo Tinkle wrote, “we are required to assess all students in order to identify the very few who need the Practicum (estimates will range, but I’d make it 4 percent of the incoming students) or those (similarly few) who show unusual proficiency in English [and] may be excused ... from further work in English Composition.” Tinkle agreed that writing portfolios had value for “diagnosis of student needs, for teacher development, and for high school outreach.” She wanted to keep them in some form, but the summer of 1998 would be the last time they were used for writing assessment and student placement (Tinkle, 1998).

Using the model of Directed Self-Placement created by Daniel J. Royer and Roger Gilles at Grand Valley State University, Sweetland developed a series of questions for incoming students to use in rating their own writing abilities and experience so as to make an informed decision about which writing course, Practicum or Introductory Composition, would be best for them in their first semester, making U-M the first large public university to adopt this system. In this new system of assessment all students had to take at least one first-year writing course, with no exemptions. While there was concern about the viability of this model, one virtue was that it would retain the Practicum, an ungraded course with much individualized attention, designed especially for writers with special needs or those whose bad past experience led them to want a safe place to try writing well again.

In these years Phyllis Frus was hired as Associate Director and she possessed a wide variety of faculty, administrative and writing experiences. Dennis McEnnerney came to Sweetland with a Ph.D. in Political Science and was hired as a part of the Center's effort to strengthen its ethos as a multidisciplinary unit. In the spring of 1999 Sweetland hosted "Writing Across the Millennium," a one-day conference of high school teachers and representatives from 13 of the top feeder schools to UM. A second conference of this type would be held the following spring. Volume 3, number 1 of the *Sweetland Newsletter* indicated that "Reports from participants suggest that this opportunity to discuss the place of writing across the disciplines brought a new awareness of shared purposes and shared problems" (p. 2). In the 1990s the Peer Tutor Program had begun an Online Writing Lab, or OWL, by which students could receive holistic written responses to their writing from peers online. Increasing attention was being paid to online writing, and the word "multi-literacy" made numerous appearances at faculty meetings. David Sheridan, a Lecturer III hired in 2000, received a \$22,000 grant from the LSA Instructional Technology Committee to equip a multi-literacy center within Sweetland. Writing environments were becoming more complex and diversified, and the unit was trying to keep up with these changes. As it turns out, it was only a beginning.

The September 2001 *Sweetland Newsletter* announced a new Associate Director, Caroline Eisner. In speaking of her, Jensen wrote that she "took up her role on August 20" and already by September she had "begun to make a difference" (p. 1). Other new

members of the faculty included Charlotte Pagni, Nicholas Harp, Lizzie Hutton, Patrick O’Keeffe, John Ponyicsanyi and Jess Row. In the fall of 2001 members of the Sweetland Fellows Seminar began investigating how various programs of the Rackham School of Graduate Studies prepare their students for writing a dissertation. Sweetland faculty member Helen Fox had had a long time interest in determining the kind of support that would keep graduate students moving forward in their writing, and Fox’s work dovetailed nicely with the work of the Seminar Fellows. The 2003 Long Range Plan indicates that a basic aim for the Dissertation Institute would be to more consciously socialize graduate students into the professional practices of an academic research community: with frequent opportunities for writing; early familiarity with the discipline’s common genres; clarity about audience and purpose; informal settings or small course sizes; peer as well as faculty participation and interaction; early and continued involvement in such settings; participation of students at every level; incentives for participation of both faculty and students; accountability—registers of progress (Long Range Plan, 2003).

In January 2003 Martha Vicinus, former Chair of the English department, well-known and respected scholar in Victorian Literature, and seasoned professional in the ways of University administration, took the baton from Ejner Jensen. The transition was over. Sweetland Writing Center would be once again a unit standing alone within the College, separate from the English Department. In the long-range plan of May 2003, Vicinus (and Jensen) wrote, “the Sweetland Writing Center has been able to re-think its functions and purposes” (Long Range Plan, 2003). In helping to conduct the rethinking Vicinus met with each member of Sweetland, faculty and staff alike, and asked them to relate what each would like to be doing in five years. Vicinus concluded that the unit had been well managed and had high morale, but she was disappointed to have lost ground in large-scale outreach and in research, both areas in which she would like to see growth. Sweetland had recently become involved in the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program, a living/learning community, and it looked forward to further integration with the Health Science Scholars Program. Graduate students had significant needs, and the Dissertation Writing Institute had been very successful since its institution in 2003, running well under the direction of Sweetland lecturer Louis Ciccirelli (Long Range Plan, 2003).

Among the changes in the new Sweetland was the increased visibility of the expertise of a number of MFA graduates who had been hired as lecturers in 1999-2002. In describing this cohort in her May 29, 2008, year-end report Vicinus wrote, “They are deeply invested in the process of writing, keenly aware of how words work, and committed to working closely with students on their revisions” (Long Range Plan, 2003). She continued to say that under the direction of these MFA faculty, Sweetland helped to sponsor a day-long conference “From Writer to Writer: The Creative Imagination and the Writing Classroom”. Developed and conducted by Louis Ciccirelli, Raymond McDaniel, Alex Ralph, Lizzie Hutton, Nick Harp, Jennifer Lutman, Margaret Dean, Patrick O’Keefe, and Kirk Davis, all graduates of Michigan’s MFA program. The conference and its topic describe well the character of Sweetland faculty at this time.

The idea of conferences, the use of Sweetland’s local talent and resources to generate discussions on a larger stage seems to have had appeal, for the Center sponsored two more significant conferences under Vicinus and in these undertakings conducted a kind of outreach as grand as many efforts of the past. In September 2005, Sweetland held a national conference titled “Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: A Cross-Disciplinary Conference on Writing.” Not only was the topic cross-disciplinary but it addressed straight-up some sticky issues that have dogged writing teachers and writers for decades and which were, because of the Internet and digital writing environments, oscillating into normality. An official description of the conference stated, “This conference will draw local and national attention to issues of concern to educators, students, and the general public, namely the widespread perception that much written work for academic purposes and general consumption is no longer original, but is imitative or plagiarized” (2005, p. 5). The conference drew scholars from across the country, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand, and a selection of papers was published by University of Michigan Press under the title *Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: Teaching Writing in the Digital Age*, edited by Vicinus and Caroline Eisner.

Within months after the “Originality” conference, Sweetland faculty and staff, especially Laura Schuyler, were at work planning for the 23rd National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing scheduled in November 2006. The conference theme was “Negotiating Authority in the Writing Center,” addressing the ever delicate, ever

powerful relationship between peer tutors and writers. Over 300 participants engaged in wide ranging discussions about the specialized power relationships in tutoring. In reflecting on the conference in the Fall 2007 Sweetland Newsletter, head of local arrangements, George Cooper, wrote that tutors are often chosen for the job because of having “excellent writing skills and have long played the role of editor and expert in their classrooms and with their friends. But in the course of training, these same students are advised to subordinate such skills to the authority of the writer and learn to think of themselves as collaborators, facilitators, coaches, and guides rather than as authoritative instructors” (2007, p. 4).

During Vicinus’s time as director, Lecturer III Matt Kelley was hired. Kelley would become a much beloved teacher, working with the Peer Tutor program and with the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program where he developed a course focused on the PhotoBook that combined writing and photography and was very popular among students. Tragically, in February 2011 Kelley collapsed and died leading a workshop for graduate students. In his memory, and as a tribute to his ability as a teacher, the Matt Kelley Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing is awarded as part of the yearly recognition of student writing in the Sweetland Center for Writing prizes, which recognize students writing in the first year, writing within a portfolio context, and writing in the upper-level years.

Vicinus completed her time as Director at the end of 2008. In her *Newsletter* farewell she reflected on her time at Sweetland, proud of the Dissertation Writing Institute, of development of a new one-credit course Advanced Writing for Graduate Students, of the two conferences, the book of essays from the first of them, and of having paved the way for the Sweetland Writing Center’s move to expanded office space in the newly constructed North Quad. In closing, Vicinus gave thanks to a number of people important to her years as Director but also important to the history of ECB/Sweetland, important enough to quote Vicinus’s words here:

Special thanks to Colleen LaPere, who has been an outstanding key administrator; I would have been lost without her these past five years. Teri Ford’s warm welcome at our front desk has reassured hundreds of students; Carrie Luke’s commitment to peer tutoring has been a model for

all of us; Laura Schuyler has served as assistant extraordinaire in the planning of our conferences and visitors, as well as helping me in innumerable ways. Their good will and spirit are a vital part of Sweetland. (2008, p. 1)

In her closing, Vicinus also mentioned Dr. Naomi Silver, who would bridge from the Vicinus era to the era of Anne Ruggles Gere, who took the seat of Director in 2008. Silver was hired by Vicinus in 2004. She was a Lecturer III and promoted to Associate Director in the fall of 2007. The Sweetland Newsletter column announcing her new appointment said Silver came to Sweetland with considerable experience in teaching writing, at both the high school and university levels. When she became Associate Director, she had taught most all of the courses Sweetland offers and served on several pedagogically oriented committees at Michigan. She had recently been elected to the LSA Curriculum Committee. In describing her goals for Sweetland, Silver pointed out the unit's increasing involvement with learning technologies that include multimodal materials involving the visual, written and aural. She would work toward upgrading the website, adding digital resources for teachers and students. She would take charge of outreach to departments and faculty, provide assistance for those seeking help in preparing writing intensive assignments and would take a lead in preparing for yet another national conference once the move to North Quad was complete.

Anne Gere's first article in the Fall 2008 *Sweetland Newsletter* began, "New media writing, quantitative reasoning, writing in the sciences, and institutional research—these were some of my priorities as I became Director of the Sweetland Writing Center on July 1, 2008" (2008, p. 1). Amazingly, it seemed that much of that work had been begun and some of it completed by the time the Newsletter came out in the fall. She had hired Alan Hogg, who possessed a BA in English, a BS in Chemical Engineering, and a Ph.D. in Atmospheric and Space Sciences. She had proposed SWC 200, a course in new media writing. That course had been approved and now offers topics spanning many areas of new media and digital literacy. These are all writing courses, at bottom, designed for students to take in their middle years of matriculation at Michigan, but they all push the boundaries of what once was singularly understood as literacy: writing and reading words. Gere had begun an initiative to combine written literacy with quantitative

literacy, the goal being to develop and offer courses that would fulfill all or part of both the Upper-Level Writing Requirement and the College's Quantitative Reasoning Requirement. Associate Director Silver and Sweetland Lecturer Danielle LaVaque-Manty were collaborating with representatives from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT), supported by a grant from the Teagle and Spencer foundations, to examine the relationship between "meta-cognitive" practices (i.e., reflective thinking techniques) and students' understanding of disciplinary content in their upper-level writing courses.

Research on writing became more prominent during Gere's tenure. In agreeing to be Director, she requested and received partial funding for two resident graduate student research assistants, the first of which, Laura Aull and Tim Green, (along with her, Silver, Hogg, LaPere, and staff member Patrick Manning) formed the SWC Data Group with the aim of developing "an understanding of how undergraduates experience writing instruction on this campus so that we can create courses and support services that will help them become effective writers" (2008, p.1). The two graduate student positions allowed for broader research in many areas of the Center's purview. Sweetland examined its Directed Self-Placement assessment, an inquiry that resulted in adding a reading and writing component that, on the one hand, ramped up the rigor of the assessment, and, on the other hand, provided a firmer basis for incoming students to make accurate judgments of their writing and reading abilities. With support from the Gilbert Whitaker Fund, Christine Modey, George Cooper, Naomi Silver and Judy Dyer, researchers from Sweetland and the English Language Institute, had undertaken a study of the Writing Workshop, identifying and coding the changes students made in their drafts after their writing workshop sessions. In this same edition of the Newsletter, Sweetland Lecturer Paul Barron and Peer Tutor Coordinator Carrie Luke reported on a trip to South Africa they took to collaborate in the Isithunzi Writing Workshop, exploring how cultural context and community engagement programs affect the work of a writing center. The work in Peer Tutoring was going well. In Winter 2008 alone 96 tutors conducted over 3000 face to face writing conferences and 350 online conferences. The new faculty hired included Jennifer Metsker, who first served as Peer Tutor Coordinator, left that position to take an MFA in poetry, and then returned to Sweetland as a lecturer.

Such a circle or cycle for Metsker was not the only one in Fall 2008. Anne Gere was making a return of sorts. She had received her Ph.D. in English Education in 1974 from University of Michigan. Jay Robinson had been one of her teachers and a member of her dissertation committee. In those years when Robinson, Fader, Bailey, and Van't Hul distilled their ideas and experiences with literacy and the Graduate Requirement Commission examined writing at Michigan, when they were creating the environment that germinated the English Composition Board, Gere was in the very next room, listening through the door, so to speak, and observing in her own way the many implications of literacy and social responsibility. She worked first at University of Washington but returned to Michigan in 1986 as an Associate Professor in the Department of English and in the School of Education. Her professional accomplishments are many and varied, most all of them, however, adding up in *Curricula Vitae* fashion to a person who would direct a top notch center for writing. And that is what the Sweetland Writing Center became in 2010: The Sweetland Center for Writing—a seemingly simple change of word order that invites all writing endeavors to grow in Sweetland.

Gere knew that from which she came, and, as her publications in the history of writing groups and writing across the curriculum will attest, she has appreciated history. And she knew that 1978 was 30 years removed from 2008, and it was time to convene some participants from the past so as to better prepare for the future. “(Re)viewing Sweetland” was the title for a full-day conference on November 7, 2008, a day of discussion of writing, writing resources, and a little bit of reminiscing. Four past directors closed the day with reflections on what they had learned from their experiences at Sweetland. Robinson claimed that he had learned the value of early retirement. Condon said, among other things, he had come to think that first-year students were not so much unskilled at writing as they are negotiating writing in a new culture. Vicinus asserted that the experience of observing Sweetland faculty at work helped her to be a better teacher and that focusing on the teaching of writing taught her to think in new ways about everyday ethical issues. Jensen said that as a result of directing Sweetland he had begun to shed bias against composition studies as a field and had come to recognize its intellectual richness and theoretical sophistication.

The work at the Sweetland Center for Writing continues, much of it in line with its 1978 design, and much of it enhanced by changes in technology as well as some evolution in what the College might expect from and allow for its writing center. A visit to the Sweetland Web site, www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/, will reveal a wide variety of initiatives from the recent past, many in progress and some projected for the future. In 2010 Sweetland moved to a location in the new North Quad, a residence hall and academic complex designed to better incorporate living and learning experiences for undergraduate students. North Quad offers the most recent developments in technology to support digital learning environments. In 2011 Sweetland once again hosted the Computers and Writing Conference focused, fittingly for the field of writing studies and for Sweetland itself, on the topic of “Writing in Motion.” Technology also shaped Peer Tutoring, with SyncOWL, an audio-video tutoring environment, joining the OWL, one of several innovations led by Lila Naydan, hired as Faculty Director of Peer Tutoring.

Between 2011 and 2013 Sweetland conducted a review of the Upper-Level Writing Requirement, generating data that is guiding curricular reforms in a number of departments and reinforcing the centrality of writing for students and faculty alike. Coming full circle from the discussions of a Writing Certificate Program in the 1990s, in 2011 Sweetland developed a Minor in Writing, framed by gateway and capstone courses, requiring students to create an electronic portfolio of writing they produce in the program as well as a substantial capstone writing project.

Sweetland offers a variety of new courses, among them are the following: Writing 200: New Media Writing, wherein students analyze and apply rhetorical principles in their writing with new media; Writing 350: Excelling in Upper-Level Writing, which is designed for transfer and upper-division students who seek support to meet the expectations for writing in upper-level courses; Writing 400: Advanced Rhetoric and Research, an advanced critical writing and research course wherein students analyze the strategies, rules, conditions, and genres that enable communication within particular discourse communities; and Writing 410: Quantitative Analysis and Writing in the Disciplines, designed to help students learn to conduct and evaluate basic quantitative research and become skilled interpreters and users of quantitative rhetoric.

Along with course offerings, continued work with peer tutors and one-to-one consultations, Sweetland Center for Writing sponsors a number of research and collaborative initiatives. Among them is the Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, created in 2012. Along with University of Michigan Press and MPublishing/MLibrary, the Collaborative publishes a book series focused on born digital and digitally enhanced projects, hosts a community website and wiki, and shares resources for instructors interested in teaching digital media and rhetoric. Furthermore, as part of its cross disciplinary mission, Director Anne Gere and chemistry postdoctoral researcher Ginger Schultz have received a Third Century Grant from the U-M Provost's Office to investigate and propose how to infuse writing into introductory science courses. It is a two-phase project that will look at assignment prompts, research techniques, communication technologies and how variations of them affect student engagement in gateway science courses.

The Dissertation Writing Institute is beginning its second decade. An October 2012 report for the Rackham Graduate School at University of Michigan indicated that in its first decade the Institute enrolled 178 participants, growing from an average of 12 students per summer from 2003-2008 to 24 per summer in the recent four years. The results have been positive. In an article in the *University Record Online* commemorating the Institute's first ten years, Kevin Brown wrote that, compared to national averages, completion rates for participants are impressive, 88 percent as compared to 50-60 percent nationally. As quoted in that same article, Louis Ciccirelli and Paul Barron, the Institute's co-directors, indicate the process for them is not fundamentally about subject area expertise. Ciccirelli said "We become an open audience to what they've written" (Brown). Barron said that as writing faculty we "seek to build students' confidence in their writing, and encourage them to view themselves not just as scholars but also as writers" (Brown).

The history of the English Composition Board and the Sweetland Center for Writing is now in its fourth decade. Centers for writing are about writing well and clearly and accurately. They are about correctness in many matters of mechanics, arrangement and style. But they are also about providing a real and invested audience for student writers, the recognition of which might instill in young writers a pressing reason to write

with authenticity, with life and with animation, matching their experience in scholarship with a passion to communicate that experience vividly.

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