

# Articulating SLCC-U Partnerships in Writing Studies

*Reimagining Relations, Making Change*

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*Throughout this document, first-person plural pronouns (we, us, our) signal when we are speaking collectively as faculty, students, and alumni. We use third-person to refer to experiences and positions specific to either faculty or students.*

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## Articulating SLCC-U Partnerships in Writing Studies

### *Reimagining Relations, Making Change*

## Statement of Purpose

This document is jointly authored by writing faculty and transfer students at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) and the University of Utah (the U). Its purpose is threefold: 1) to articulate a set of shared commitments; 2) to review the current collaborations between the SLCC English Department and the Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies (WRS); and 3) to codify our collaborative partnership and outline possible avenues for future collaboration.

## Context

As the two major public postsecondary institutions in the Salt Lake Valley, SLCC and the U have long-standing relationships. In many ways, we are highly interdependent. SLCC is the single largest originating institution for the nearly 40% of U undergraduates who transfer from other colleges and universities, and more than half of SLCC students pursuing a bachelor's degree transfer to the U. Thousands of students move between these two institutions each year, and most faculty and students at both live in or near the Salt Lake Valley. We are thus *neighbors* as well as colleagues, teachers, and students. The people in our classrooms are already active writers, in and out of school, and many will continue to build their lives and careers along the Wasatch Front after graduation. We are connected to one another as members of this regional community, and the work we do together will help shape our community, which is growing and changing rapidly, in the coming decades.

Despite the many interconnections we share, differences in institutional status and funding have sometimes marginalized SLCC within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE). Neoliberal assumptions about the role of community colleges—that they exist to support economic development and their sole function is to produce workers, not educate for democratic participation—constrain the academic freedom of SLCC faculty (see Blankenship, et al.). The distinctive professional identities, knowledge-making, pedagogical contributions, and community commitments of these faculty have often gone unrecognized by U colleagues, as have the inequitable material conditions and labor structures in which many community college composition faculty teach. Consequently, SLCC faculty have not always been positioned as equal partners in developing curricula and articulation agreements that bear directly on their teaching and program administration. Too often, our institutions have perceived themselves to be in competition for students, funding, and mission, and in those competitions, the U has been more powerfully positioned to advance its own interests. Memories of these slights and struggles persist among SLCC faculty, even when those at the U have forgotten (see Ruffus and Toth). The legacy of these power asymmetries has been periodic conflict, mutual stereotyping and mistrust, and sometimes resentment among faculty at both institutions. Such attitudes have been a barrier to inter-institutional disciplinary collaboration.

These tensions undermine the integrity of our local academic community, and, more importantly, can have a negative and inequitable impact on students. Institutional resource disparities and barriers to collaboration exacerbate the structural disadvantages that many SLCC students already face. These students are more likely than those who begin their postsecondary education at the U to be first-generation college students, low-income or working class, students of color, multilingual, from immigrant or refugee households, older/returning students, parents, and/or students with disabilities. Thus, failing to work across institutions to deliver on SLCC's promise of an accessible pathway to the baccalaureate perpetuates class- and race-related inequities. This outcome runs counter to the commitments to advancing social justice espoused by SLCC and the U, by our respective departments, and by our disciplinary professional organizations.

In 2014, the University Writing Program (UWP), which was autonomous from but closely affiliated with the U's English department, became its own freestanding Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies (WRS), a development that helped set the stage for our emerging collaborations. There is a long history of relations, both formal and informal, between the English departments at SLCC and the U, including statewide curriculum articulation, creative and community writing initiatives, and SLCC faculty members' experiences in U graduate programs. While relations between the English departments have not ended, the establishment of WRS—which has its own undergraduate major and minor, as well as graduate programs in Rhetoric and Composition—has created new opportunities to reimagine our disciplinary relations. Over the last four years, writing faculty and transfer students at both institutions have been working together to develop a mutually beneficial partnership grounded in shared scholarly, teaching, and community commitments. The following Vision Statement articulates our principles for partnership, documents our collaborations to date, and considers possible directions for future collaborations.

## Part I: Principles for Partnership

Over four years of iterative collaboration, program development, and community building, writing faculty and transfer students at SLCC and the U have arrived at seven core principles from which we agree our partnerships should proceed: 1) recognize inequities; 2) be colleagues; 3) value difference; 4) center students; 5) address material conditions; 6) educate for social justice; and 7) engage with communities.

### Recognize Inequities

Our hierarchical postsecondary system accords higher status and devotes more per-pupil resources to selective admissions research universities than to open-admissions community colleges. Those differentials have implications for the relative professional status of faculty, for the material conditions and labor structures in which we teach and learn, for the backgrounds and identities of the students at our respective institutions, and, most troublingly, for those students' access to educational, professional, and civic opportunities. Our inter-institutional partnerships must proceed from an open recognition of the power differentials and difficult histories these inequities have wrought and from a commitment to establishing more equitable relations as educators and students. Ultimately, our work together is motivated by a shared commitment to challenging the social injustices reproduced by the educational system in which we labor and learn.

### Be Colleagues

Forging more equitable relationships requires viewing and treating one another as colleagues. While faculty at both institutions have different ranks and roles, and a range of transdisciplinary interests, they are connected through the ever-evolving discipline of writing studies. As co-constructors of knowledge and pedagogy, transfer students are also colleagues. Together, we are working to strengthen writing relationships across and beyond our institutions. Through our local re-imagining of how we can and should relate to one another, we seek to effect change in community college-university relations across the national writing studies community.

### Value Difference

Faculty professional differences are partly a function of the distinctive institutional missions we have inherited. The U has long focused on research, graduate and professional training, and selective admissions baccalaureate education. SLCC has a comprehensive community college mission, which includes providing affordable local access to lower-division preparation for academic transfer, GED completion, and early college programs. It also offers preparatory education and English language instruction for those labeled "unprepared" for "college-level" coursework, vocational education and workforce development, and various forms of community education and enrichment. Our inter-institutional partnerships must proceed from open recognition of these differences in institutional mission and in our student demographics. We must value those differences, even as we seek to challenge the inequities that sometimes result. We must appreciate the wide-ranging pedagogical, professional, and disciplinary engagement demanded of writing faculty in our respective settings. Further, we must work together to honor differences among students and support their efforts to achieve their varied personal,

professional, and community goals. We must strive to build writing faculties and programs at both institutions that reflect and respond to such diversity.

## Center Students

Writing faculty at both SLCC and the U have legitimate investments in sustaining their distinctive professional, disciplinary, and institutional identities. Despite these investments, our inter-institutional partnerships must proceed from a shared recognition that the educational experiences and opportunities of students—particularly the often structurally disadvantaged students at SLCC—are more important than professional or disciplinary “turf.” Students enroll at SLCC trusting that our institutions are working together to offer an accessible, affordable route to a bachelor’s degree, and we have a moral obligation to center their interests and well-being. Fulfilling this obligation requires involving students, both before and after transfer, in collaborative program development and decision-making. Such involvement requires intentionally creating spaces for their voices and listening with intent to their experiences and ideas, even—*especially*—when what they say challenges faculty and department self-perceptions.

## Address Material Conditions

Recognizing inequities, being colleagues, valuing difference, and centering students will require us to work within, across, and beyond our institutions to address the material conditions that inhibit students’ access to learning and constrain faculty teaching and professional engagement. This work includes finding resources within our departments and institutions *and* collaborating to secure additional resources to support students and faculty. It will also require us to engage politically—within USHE, with state and federal policymakers, and with regional and national professional organizations—to address the broader labor structures, *especially the labor conditions of contingent faculty* (graduate students and adjunct instructors), that subvert academic freedom, professional engagement, and equitable access to the learning experiences we aim to provide for all interested students across our institutions.

## Educate for Social Justice

Both community colleges and universities are under pressures to deliver instruction that prioritizes the interests of employers, and such instrumentalism is particularly prevalent at community colleges. The desire for fairly compensated and personally meaningful employment is often the primary goal motivating students to pursue postsecondary education, and two- and four-year institutions have a shared obligation to provide students with well-designed education for rewarding careers in a rapidly changing economy. However, as writing teachers and students, we also have a common commitment to literacy education that prepares students to compose fulfillingly, read critically, and engage politically. In the face of neoliberal policy movements that would reduce postsecondary education to a narrow economic good, we must work together across institutions to defend our pedagogical commitments to address inequity through writing education for personal growth, community responsibility, democratic participation, and social justice.

## Engage with Communities

As faculty and students, we belong to a range of national and international communities, as well as multiple communities rooted in and around the Salt Lake Valley. These place-based relations connect us to one another, and how we tend to our relations with each other and our communities is always (re)making the places where we live, labor, and learn. Our inter-institutional partnerships must proceed from a shared commitment to listening and responding to our communities as we develop initiatives, programs, and resources. We must continuously ask ourselves, “Who *isn't* here?” And then we must act to address that absence, which will often require *us* to change. Such responsiveness demands humility and reflexivity, and, in some cases, a willingness to think outside the conventional values and reward structures of our institutions. It requires the community-based expertise of faculty at SLCC and the U, and, perhaps most importantly, the investments and insights of students at both institutions. Through these engagements, we can build a stronger and more diverse network of relationships that advance social justice for students, faculty, and our communities.

## Part II: State of the Union

This section provides an overview of strengths and challenges in our departments' respective writing programs, details our inter-institutional collaborations to date, and identifies key lessons we have learned in the process of implementation.

### Salt Lake Community College

The SLCC English Department includes faculty from all areas of English Studies, and is a nationally recognized leader in two-year college writing studies. The department received Conference on College Composition and Communication's prestigious 2016-2017 Writing Program Certificate of Excellence, and its faculty includes many active teacher-scholars and professional leaders. SLCC English faculty are historiographers of rhetorical education, writing assessment experts, specialists in multimodal and multilingual composition, scholars of community writing, disability studies, and online learning, and celebrated creative writers, book artists, and activists. As is the case at many community colleges, SLCC faculty often teach and engage professionally across multiple disciplines in and beyond English Studies.

Over the last two decades, the SLCC English Department has launched a number of innovative writing-related programs and resources. Its "developmental" and required lower-division writing courses (ENGL 900, 990, 1010, and 2010) have been redesigned around locally-articulated threshold concepts to facilitate writing knowledge transfer across and beyond the SLCC curriculum. It has developed its own Online Educational Resources (OER) that replace high-cost writing textbooks and promote faculty professional development (see Blankenship, et al). It has established a well-regarded Student Writing & Reading Center (SWRC) staffed by both student peer tutors and writing instructors (see Gardner and Rousculp). SLCC English faculty have been institutional leaders in developing community-engaged, service-learning, and social justice programming. The English department also heads an innovative, award-winning Writing Across the College initiative that supports writing among students and faculty across the disciplines, as well as SLCC administrators and staff.

SLCC offers a number of unique opportunities for students to develop academic and professional interests in writing. Their nationally recognized Community Writing Center (CWC) hires students from SLCC, the U, and Westminster College as writing coaches and coordinators (see Rousculp). The Publication Center provides students and faculty with experience in professional editing, print and digital publication technologies, and book arts. Every year, courses associated with this center produce student-authored anthologies, chapbooks, and digital publications. The department's Writing Certificate of Completion (WCC) offers a non-transfer credential for students interested in professional/workplace writing. Beginning in 2018, SLCC also offers an Associates of Science (AS) degree in Writing Studies—the first of its kind in the nation—as a transfer degree that articulates directly into the U's WRS major.

In sum, SLCC offers many rich educational opportunities for student writers, opportunities that emphasize hands-on experience and local community engagement, often with explicit social justice commitments. Most of these opportunities have no parallel at the U, particularly at the lower-division level. However, it is important to acknowledge that many students who attend SLCC have little awareness of and no involvement with these opportunities. These disjunctures are largely a function of material

conditions: students' work and family obligations; the institution's multiple campuses and commuter culture; SLCC's heavy reliance on adjunct faculty who may themselves have limited awareness of such opportunities and are therefore not positioned to refer students; and under-resourced and sometimes inadequate advising. SLCC's current move toward a "guided pathways" curricular model (see Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins), while subject to legitimate local and disciplinary critique, may provide targeted advising that enables more students to learn about and connect with writing programming (see Blankenship, et al.).

Transfer students also raise important concerns about racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity at SLCC. Like many two-year colleges, the overwhelming majority of the faculty in SLCC's English Department are white, particularly in the tenure-line ranks. Despite recent diversity hiring initiatives, in many ways SLCC English faculty do not yet reflect the demographics of the students they teach. Further, some transfer students who contributed to this document indicate that their experiences with SLCC's writing placement test (a multiple-choice exam of "standard" English usage), as well, in some cases, prescriptive faculty responses to their written work conveyed a narrow, raced and classed construct of writing that seemed disconnected from—or even devaluing of—students' lives, communities, and languages. These experiences can discourage many racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students from identifying as "writers," at least in school contexts, and inhibit them from seeking out writing-related opportunities. SLCC is currently piloting a form of guided writing self-placement, which has the potential to shift the messages incoming SLCC students receive about how writing and writers are valued within the institution. However, transfer students express a need for pedagogies and assessment practices that will encourage students from structurally disadvantaged backgrounds to identify and engage as writers.

## University of Utah

The U's WRS department is still young and relatively small, although its complement of tenure-line faculty has grown from four to eight over the last four years, and it now has eight full-time career-line faculty. WRS faculty have nationally recognized expertise in scientific and legal rhetorics, digital rhetorics and literacies, sonic rhetorics, multilingual writing, cultural and comparative rhetorics (including Mexican American rhetorics, Asian/Asian American rhetorics, Indigenous rhetorics, African American rhetorics, and Mormon rhetorics), as well as two-year college composition studies, writing assessment, technical/professional writing, and creative nonfiction. WRS oversees the U's lower-division writing requirement courses (WRTG 1010/2010) and offers a variety of courses that fulfill the upper-division Communication & Writing (CW) bachelor-degree requirement. The department also oversees the University Writing Center (UWC), which hires peer tutors and graduate students to support undergraduate, graduate, and faculty writing. WRS has longstanding interdisciplinary Masters and PhD programs in Rhetoric and Composition that currently admit students through the Department of English; WRS plans to bring its graduate programs fully "in house" in 2019.

In its first four years, the WRS major has exceeded its initial growth projections. As of Spring 2018, the program has 122 declared majors, a third of whom transferred from SLCC. The 36-credit major curriculum is currently anchored by three required courses. Students choose the remainder of their major coursework from a range of WRTG courses and up to three relevant electives in other departments. In addition to courses in specific disciplinary discourses, professional/technical writing, digital and

multimodal composition, cultural rhetorics, public rhetorics, community literacies, and grammar, stylistics, and editing, students can also earn major credits through UWC tutor training, on- or off-campus internships, and undergraduate research, including paid positions through the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP).

The WRS major is designed to be either a stand-alone major or a flexible double-major that emphasizes writing in conjunction with students' other areas of academic and professional interest. Current WRS majors are enrolled in a range of other U major, minor, and pre-professional programs. Graduating majors have gone on to careers in technical/professional writing, grant-writing and other nonprofit work, public administration, political campaigning, marketing, teaching, and instructional design, as well as law school and further graduate study in writing studies. Both during their time in the major and after graduating, WRS students have been involved in a variety of forms of community engagement and activism, sometimes as part of their coursework but often under their own direction. Department faculty strive to be supportive of student-led rhetorical engagement, both within and beyond the institution.

SLCC transfer students appreciate the relatively tight-knit community within WRS. In comparison to other, larger departments at the U, WRS faculty tend to be accessible and teaching-oriented, and students enjoy developing relationships with instructors and contributing to research and publication projects. Students also value the flexibility within the curriculum to pursue projects of personal, political, and/or professional interest that draw on multiple languages, genres, and modalities. However, some students express dissatisfaction with the balance between theory and hands-on experience in the major. Some struggle with the volume and complexity of theoretical readings, particularly when they have difficulties seeing the connections between those readings and their own experiences, interests, and goals. For some students, the workload and scheduling of WRS courses does not seem to account for the fact that they are often managing job, family, and cultural responsibilities in addition to their studies. Likewise, not all transfer students have the time, financial resources, or social connections to take advantage of co-curricular opportunities within and beyond the department. Scholarships and programs that require full-time enrollment are particularly difficult for working students to access. Finally, some transfer students express a need for more mentorship as they move from completing their bachelors degree to securing relevant employment or pursuing graduate study.

Questions of diversity and difference are also a concern in WRS, particularly given broader campus climate issues at the U, where students are differently racially and culturally diverse and, on average, more affluent than students at SLCC. These differences present an additional cognitive and emotional load for many transfer students of color, immigrant and multilingual students, as well as working class, first-generation, and older/returning students. In addition to long-standing, persistent problems with racial (micro)aggressions, the U has been the site of several overtly white supremacist incidents over the last year. As a department, WRS has worked to hire and retain faculty from a range of socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and language backgrounds, and its faculty is in some ways more diverse than many other departments on campus. It is, however, still majority-white. The WRS major attracts many older/nontraditional students, and classes tend to be relatively age-diverse. However, both faculty and students of color in WRS continue to struggle with the assumptions, stereotypes, discrimination, and unacknowledged privilege expressed in the U's predominantly white classrooms, its writing center, and in co-curricular and common spaces.

Transfer WRS majors who are first-generation college students, students of color, and/or from immigrant families have worked hard to build communities for themselves within the department. Many are regular attendees at departmental events. They collaborate with faculty on research, conference presentations, and curriculum development, and some engage in writing-related forms of artistic and civic engagement, both on and off campus. WRS has made an explicit public commitment to anti-racism, to challenging class-based institutional inequalities, and to affirming the value of linguistic, rhetorical, and embodied difference. However, living up to these commitments—both within and beyond the department—will require ongoing labor on the part of the entire WRS community. A key dimension of that labor is continuing to connect with SLCC students from a wide range of backgrounds and working *with* them to make the department a place where they can thrive.

## Inter-Institutional Partnerships

In the four years since WRS became an independent department, writing faculty at SLCC and the U have collaborated to create new resources and opportunities for transfer student writers, graduate students, and instructors. These efforts, while overlapping and mutually informative, can be described in six broad categories: research, articulation agreements, bridge experiences, material resources, graduate opportunities, and faculty professional community.

### Research

Faculty and transfer students at both SLCC and the U have been collaborating on inter-institutional research to better understand and support the writing transitions of transfer students.<sup>i</sup> In Spring 2015, SLCC and U writing faculty conducted a preliminary focus group with SLCC students preparing for transfer into the major. That fall, WRS professor Christie Toth and six transfer student research assistants reviewed institutional data and interviewed nearly fifty U transfer students about their writing experiences. This research has informed the articulation agreements and program development described below, as have assessments of the 2016-2017 pilot course emerging from our partnerships. We have presented findings from this collaborative research at SLCC and the U, at several academic conferences, in three academic journal articles, and in a book project. Thus, our inter-institutional partnerships are contributing to disciplinary knowledge-making and practice at two- and four-year institutions nationwide.

### Articulation agreements

In 2015, SLCC and the U signed an agreement articulating SLCC's WCC into the WRS major. Officially, this agreement guaranteed that WCC students could apply up to two approved 2000-level writing courses toward WRS major requirements. For SLCC, the agreement was useful for recruiting students into the WCC program. For the U, the agreement was beneficial for connecting with SLCC students who might be interested in the WRS major. For students, this partnership signaled a pathway from SLCC to the baccalaureate and demonstrated that WRS valued the presence of SLCC transfer students. In some cases, the agreement also performed a "warming up" function when students who had initially aspired only to the WCC decided to transfer to the U for a bachelor's degree. Practically, the WCC articulation agreement codified what had already been an ad hoc WRS practice of accepting those 2000-level credits as major electives when doing so would be useful to SLCC transfer students.<sup>ii</sup>

As our department-to-department partnerships unfolded, it became clear that an actual transfer degree—an AS in Writing Studies—would be a better fit for the growing number of SLCC students who aspired to transfer to the U and major in WRS. This realization resonated with broader institutional policy shifts: SLCC was moving toward a guided pathways model that required aspiring transfer students to commit early to a concentrated area of study—a “meta-major”—that would focus their coursework and advising. The idea of an AS in Writing Studies aligned with several principles driving the guided pathways movement: that students would be more motivated to persist to degree completion and transfer if they were able to take courses in their areas of interest sooner; that such engagement would enable them to better integrate their learning and prepare for upper-division courses in their discipline; and that more clearly defined pathways would help maximize the number of credits that transferred to four-year degree programs and majors (see Bailey et al). However, the AS in Writing Studies enabled SLCC English faculty to leverage their partnership with the U to retain disciplinary authority over the writing studies curriculum.<sup>iii</sup>

The AS in Writing Studies includes many of the same course options as the WCC, as well as a range of courses in creative writing and literary studies. It also includes two required courses that directly articulate into the WRS degree—ENGL 2040: Intro to Writing Studies and ENGL 2310: Digital Writing. WRS has added these courses to its own curriculum and is in the process of developing WRTG 2030: Intro to Professional Writing. Beginning in 2018-2019, students can apply credits from up to two of these three 2000-level courses—taken at either SLCC or the U—to the WRS major. In sum, these articulation agreements have increased the number of disciplinary writing studies courses offered at SLCC *and* the lower-division course options for non-transfer majors at the U.

## Bridge experiences

Another collaboration has involved the development of 3000-level “bridge” courses. We started from the existing Transfer Interest Group (TIG) model, a one-credit U course offered on the SLCC campus through Continuing Education (CE) that introduces students to university expectations and institutional resources. However, transfer students indicated that one credit is of little use toward a bachelor’s degree, and WRS wanted move beyond “socializing” students to the U and instead encourage critical examination of the classed, raced, and monolingual assumptions that often undergird university norms. In consultation with SLCC faculty, the WRS transfer team decided to reimagine the TIG as a three-credit course that would fulfill university degree requirements and offer students a more substantive “running start” at upper-division credits. Such courses would give students experience in a 3000-level course that would enable them to better anticipate the workload in upper-division courses while also reassuring them that their time at SLCC—and their other life experiences—had prepared them to be successful at the U.

We developed two such courses.<sup>iv</sup> The first, WRTG 3020: Write4U, is a Writing in the Disciplines course for transfer students *in any major* that fulfills the U’s Humanities Exploration (HF) and CW requirements.<sup>v</sup> Throughout the semester, transfer students critically investigate literacy practices in their major discipline, are introduced to a variety of resources and co-curricular opportunities at the U, and receive extensive feedback on their writing and opportunities to form supportive relationships with peers. In 2016, the U began offering regular sections of WRTG 3020 to newly arrived transfer students. The course has had robust enrollment and positive course evaluations. In Spring 2017, we piloted a TIG

version of this course at SLCC. While the course itself was well-received, enrollments were low. In 2018, we are experiencing greater success enrolling transferring students in a summer version of the course.

The second course, WRTG 3030: Writing Across Locations, was designed from the outset as a summer bridge course specifically for SLCC students *entering the WRS major*. This course is co-developed and team-taught by an SLCC faculty member, a WRS faculty member, and an undergraduate transfer mentor. WRTG 3030 is designed to bring students into our inter-institutional writing studies community while positioning them from the outset as disciplinary knowledge-makers. They read scholarship by writing faculty at both SLCC and U, and those faculty visit the courses to talk about their work: these visits enable students to get to know their future professors and prospective mentors as scholars (and humans) as well as teachers. Over the course of the summer, students conduct their own autoethnographic studies of writing while learning about WRS/U resources and opportunities. This course is the gateway to the Writing Studies Scholars program (see below).

Our 2017 pilot experiences lead us to three conclusions about offering 3000-level U courses to SLCC students pre-transfer. First, three-credit TIG courses appear to work best as summer bridge experiences. Second, the long-term sustainability of these courses depends on establishing student recruitment processes, tuition rates, and commitment of institutional funds to ensure faculty teaching the courses are fairly compensated. Third, providing equitable access to these bridge courses for low-income students requires raising both internal and external scholarship funding so that *all* interested and eligible SLCC students can participate, regardless of financial need or documentation status. We believe that the demonstrable value of these courses for connecting with diverse SLCC students, supporting their writing transitions, and bringing WRS majors into the departmental community is worth the investment of institutional resources.

## Material resources

Our research shows that the single greatest barrier many SLCC students face to transfer and degree completion is access to resources: financial resources to cover tuition and other costs of attendance; stable housing within reasonable commuting distance of campus; parking and reliable transportation (not just to campus, but between campus, off-campus employment, and home and family); consistent access to phone, internet, and computer; access to healthcare and nutritious food; adequate time to sleep, exercise, and connect with family and friends; assistance with child and/or elder care; and access to the kinds of social networks that will connect students to enriching co-curricular opportunities and rewarding employment, both before and after graduation.<sup>vi</sup> Throughout our inter-institutional collaborations, we have been mindful of the fact that even the most responsive pedagogies, well-developed curricula, and clearest transfer “pathways” do not pay students’ rent. We have recognized the need to address the material inequalities that perpetuate class- and race-related gaps in transfer and degree completion. We have sought to use our partnerships to garner additional material resources for SLCC transfer students, particularly those entering the WRS major.

These efforts have taken multiple forms. Based largely on referrals from SLCC colleagues, WRS faculty have made a point of hiring SLCC transfer students for paid internships, research assistantships, and writing center tutor positions within the department, and faculty at both institutions have worked with transfer students to secure other professionally relevant employment through SLCC, the U, and in the

community. We have pegged the “sticker” price of the WRTG 3020 TIG to the cost of a three-credit SLCC course—less than half of what the same course costs enrolled U students—and secured scholarship funding to cover that already-reduced tuition for students with financial need. Likewise, in both WRTG 3020 and 3030, we have built in opportunities for students to apply for U scholarships, and during their first year at the U, Writing Studies Scholars students receive coaching to apply for additional sources of funding on campus. WRS has also established a scholarship fund for SLCC transfer students who need assistance paying for summer courses.

One of the most positive outcomes of our inter-institutional collaborations has been support from the U’s College of Humanities for securing large grants from local donors to expand WRTG 3030 into a full-fledged bridge program for SLCC students. This program, called Writing Studies Scholars, has to date attracted support totaling \$135,000 over a five-year period.<sup>vii</sup> These grants make it possible to offer WRTG 3030 to prospective WRS majors for free, and to provide those students who successfully complete 3030 and enroll in the WRS major with an additional scholarship during their first semester at the U, as well as a free parking pass for the duration of their time at the U. In addition to scholarship funding, Writing Studies Scholars students experience the social and academic benefits of forming a cohort with other transferring SLCC students, specialized advising, and assistance identifying and applying for other U scholarships, on-campus employment, and off-campus professional development opportunities. Thus, the Writing Studies Scholars program offers financial, social and academic capital for SLCC transfer students who might otherwise miss the full range of opportunities at the U.<sup>viii</sup>

## Graduate education

There are longstanding connections between the U’s graduate programs and SLCC. Several SLCC English faculty have undertaken graduate work in English literature, American studies, creative writing, and/or education at the U. Likewise, several graduates of the Rhetoric and Composition MA program teach at SLCC as adjunct faculty. Over the decades, U graduate students have taught composition courses at SLCC to supplement their income, and, currently, one full-time SLCC faculty member is enrolled in the Rhetoric and Composition PhD program. Although there are not yet any formal agreements between SLCC’s English Department and the WRS graduate program, our burgeoning relationship has created new opportunities for graduate students.

SLCC colleagues have been institutional advocates for at least one WRS graduate student with a research interest in two-year colleges. When PhD candidate Justin Whitney sought to research the writing experiences of South Korean international students in community colleges, SLCC English faculty and administrators assisted him with the local IRB process, connected him with relevant institutional offices, participated in interviews and course observations, and allowed him to spend time volunteering in the then Student Writing Center. SLCC faculty also mentored Whitney professionally, providing job market coaching, reviewing his application materials, and helping him practice interviewing for community college teaching positions. These experiences have made him uniquely attractive on the job market: he ultimately secured a tenure-track faculty position at an associates-granting public university.

Over the last three years, several WRS graduate students have contributed to transfer-related partnerships between SLCC and the U. To date, two graduate students have been involved in paid research assistantships on the transfer research team and contributed to academic conference presentations and/or

publications. Likewise, two graduate students have had paid teaching assistantships connected to WRTG 3020 or 3030. These graduate students have become mentors to the transfer students in their courses and on the research team. Several of the transfer students involved in our inter-institutional collaborations have expressed an interest in pursuing graduate study, either in writing and rhetoric studies or adjacent fields, and two will be entering the U's master's program in Rhetoric and Composition in Fall 2018. The partnerships between SLCC and the U have the potential to help diversify not only the U's undergraduate classrooms, but also its graduate programs, the faculties at both SLCC and the U, and, ultimately, the disciplinary community of writing studies.

## Faculty professional community

Prior to the establishment of WRS, writing faculty at SLCC and the U had a loose professional network through statewide major meetings, involvement in community and K-12 writing initiatives, regional conferences and speaker events, alumni connections, and personal involvement in non-academic spaces in the Salt Lake Valley. Over the last four years, we have built on this foundation to foster an inter-institutional disciplinary community that supports the professional engagement of faculty at both institutions. Faculty have met formally and informally on one another's campuses and in community spaces; co-developed course curricula and materials; team-taught and guest-lectured in one another's classes; attended workshops and speaker events on each other's campuses; presented together at regional and national conferences; read one another's published scholarship; and co-authored publications.

This inter-institutional community has enriched teaching and program administration as well as research and writing for all of us. We have built social capital that creates new opportunities for faculty and students at both SLCC and the U. This is not to say that our evolving relations have been without tensions, conflicts, or moments when we have fallen short of our expectations for ourselves and each other. The inequities of our inter-institutional histories and our systemic power differentials remain with us in ways that we are still learning to negotiate. However, our shared investments in the well-being of students, and the real progress we have seen as a result of our collaborations, have strengthened our mutual trust and our ability to deal forthrightly with one another when misunderstandings or conflicts have arisen.

## Part III: Possible Futures

This section articulates possible future directions for our inter-institutional collaborations across three broad areas: undergraduate education, graduate education, and faculty professional community. We propose to organize these efforts under the banner of an inter-institutional Center for Urban Writing Ecologies, which will support the visibility and sustainability of our collaborations.

### Undergraduate Education

As “freshman” enrollment at the U increases along with dual enrollment and other programs that attract aspiring transfer students to SLCC, our shared stake in first-year writing requirement courses becomes ever more visible. We might seek to build on our current collaborations to create deeper partnerships around first-year writing that go beyond statewide credit articulation and curricular alignment. These partnerships could include creating designated “U” sections of ENGL 2010. These courses, which would be open to both current U students and SLCC students aspiring to transfer, would focus on academic writing in the specific contexts of the U while remaining grounded in the threshold concepts that undergird the writing curriculum at SLCC. This kind of collaboration has the potential to channel U financial resources to SLCC faculty and students, to facilitate SLCC student transfer to the U, and to help WRS address increasing demand for sections of first-year writing. It would offer U students the benefit of learning and writing in a more diverse (and, for some, more accessible) context while also providing WRS writing program administrators with the opportunity to learn from the curricular innovations of SLCC faculty. Ultimately, this could help us develop shared local threshold concepts for writing that would foster writing knowledge transfer across and beyond both institutions.

In the immediate future, our undergraduate collaborations will likely focus on strengthening the “pathway” from SLCC’s AS in Writing Studies to the U’s BA/BS in WRS. These efforts may include developing formalized major concentrations with linked 2000-3000-4000 course sequences in Digital and Professional Writing that span institutions. They will definitely include implementing sustainable processes for connecting with SLCC students from diverse backgrounds, for advising SLCC students interested in transferring into WRS, for assessing and improving course articulations, and for collecting longitudinal data on transfer, degree completion, and post-graduation employment and community activities, as well as measures of student learning and satisfaction.

We will also work to strengthen our bridge experiences for transfer students. We will continue to experiment with the TIG model to establish a sustainable approach to student recruitment, funding, and staffing. Likewise, we will continue to strengthen the Writing Studies Scholars program by routinizing recruitment and continuing to reach out to groups and programs at both SLCC and the U working with students from structurally disadvantaged backgrounds who might have received negative messages about their writing—and themselves as writers—in the past. We will develop long-term plans for securing sustainable, ethically sourced funding for scholarships. We will also support the work of other departments to create disciplinary bridge programs grounded in commitments to educational access and challenging structures of social inequality.

Likewise, we will expand efforts to connect SLCC students with writing-related employment and professional development opportunities, both before and after transfer. These opportunities include paid positions at the Publication Center, SWRC, CWC, UWC, and TRIO; SLCC's Multicultural Student Center and the U's Center for Ethnic Student Affairs; MUSE internships, UROP, and other paid work on faculty-directed research and teaching projects at the U. We will work with the U's Career and Professional Development Center to develop individualized professional development plans for Writing Studies Scholars and other SLCC transfer students in WRS, including paid internship opportunities off-campus and, when appropriate, mentorship from professionals of color in the community. We will strive to include students in conference presentations, publications, and other forms of professional engagement within our disciplinary communities. Working through the Publication Center, we may also seek to launch an inter-institutional student publication that will enable students to connect with one another as writers across our campuses.

Ultimately, we aim to create an inter-institutional disciplinary community in which SLCC students aspiring to transfer already see themselves as part of the WRS community, and students who have transferred to the U still maintain connections to the writing community at SLCC. This "ecological" approach has the potential to encourage more SLCC students to transfer, to mitigate the social, academic, and economic challenges some face during that transition, to honor the diverse language and literacies they bring, and to cultivate opportunities to adapt their writing knowledge while transforming both SLCC and the U through their presence and actions. Because many of these students are likely to stay in the region after graduation, an ecological orientation can help foster a committed local network of writing professionals, artists, and activists who will be resources for one another and create new opportunities for future SLCC/U students.

One way to sustain this network and ensure that transfer students have a consistent voice in our inter-institutional partnerships would be to create a Student Advisory Board made up of committed Writing Studies Scholars alumni, current WRS majors who transferred from SLCC, and current SLCC students who aspire to transfer into WRS. Working with faculty advisors from both institutions and a clearly articulated set of operating procedures, this Board would have a role in offering feedback to both departments and making staffing decisions for WRTG 3030 and in proposed programmatic and curricular changes that directly impact SLCC transfer students. It might also be involved in SLCC student recruitment and mentoring, as well as publicly representing the Writing Studies Scholars program. Charging a Student Advisory Board with a major role in steering our undergraduate partnerships would create a mechanism for keeping students at the center these collaborations.

## Graduate Education

Our initial, informal collaborations around graduate education suggest the potential for more extensive partnerships in the coming years, as WRS brings its MA and PhD programs entirely within the department. We have an unprecedented opportunity to build graduate programs that enact the recommendations of TYCA's 2016 *Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College*. As this process unfolds, we will continue to offer well-mentored teaching opportunities in the TIG courses for graduate students interested in two-year college careers. Likewise, our partnerships will continue to create opportunities for graduate research assistantships and facilitate thesis and dissertation

projects focusing on two-year college contexts. We might also consider creating mentored teaching and writing center apprenticeships at SLCC for graduate students desiring direct professional experience in these settings.

As WRS faculty review and revise graduate curricula, there is potential for creating a concentration at the MA or PhD level in two-year college composition studies and community writing. WRS is also considering developing a low-residency PhD program that would be suitable for current two-year college English faculty who do not want to leave their positions but are seeking further graduate education relevant to their institutional contexts. WRS graduate programs would be open to SLCC faculty interested in taking individual courses or pursuing a doctorate. For SLCC faculty who already have PhDs, these programs might also offer opportunities to teach graduate courses.

We are also committed to using our partnerships to help build a more diverse English faculty that better reflects the communities that SLCC serves. WRS is currently attracting talented teacher-scholars of color, some of whom are already experienced adjunct faculty, who have local commitments and would make excellent full-time SLCC faculty. We could work to develop explicit and well-supported pathways to such positions for these students. Likewise, we have discussed the possibility of collaborating to develop a funded “2+2+2(+PhD)” program specifically designed to support faculty diversity hiring in the SLCC English Department, as well as broader efforts to diversify the TYCA membership and writing studies professional community. In this program, SLCC faculty would work to connect with students of color who are interested in becoming community college writing instructors and have commitments to staying in the Salt Lake Valley. These students would complete the AS in Writing Studies while working as consultants or coaches at the SWRC, or CWC. They would then participate in the Writing Studies Scholars program and transfer into the WRS major, perhaps while pursuing complementary areas of study such as English, linguistics, world languages, or ethnic or area studies. While completing their bachelors degree, they would continue to work with writers in the SWRC, or CWC at SLCC. Those who are successful in the WRS major would be competitive for admission to the department’s MA program, where their curriculum could focus on issues relevant to teaching writing in two-year colleges, and they could undertake mentored teaching, writing center, and/or writing program administration apprenticeships at SLCC. Students who successfully complete this program would be competitive for full-time faculty positions at SLCC or other community colleges, as well as for admission to PhD programs, including WRS’s program, which they could complete part-time while fulfilling their community college teaching responsibilities. This kind of inter-institutional program would value local knowledge, community connections, and rhetorical and embodied difference as well as disciplinary knowledge and engagement with regional and national professional networks.

## Faculty Disciplinary Community

We see a great deal of potential to continue developing inter-institutional faculty community in ways that are mutually beneficial to teachers, scholars, and students. Faculty will, of course, continue to socialize informally and invite one another to relevant events on one another’s campuses and in the community. They will also continue to collaborate on curricula, teach together in WRTG 3030, serve as guest speakers

in one another's classrooms, share scholarship with one another, and collaborate on conference presentations and publications.

Going forward, we might look to collaborate more extensively on inter-institutional research and program development. For example, we might work together on a long-term longitudinal study of how transfer students transfer writing knowledge throughout their entire undergraduate education, as well as collaborative research related to areas of mutual interest, such as our writing centers (Student, Publication, and Community), Writing Across the College(s) programs, faculty labor and professional development, and inequities surrounding faculty and student identities and language backgrounds. We might submit jointly-authored external grant proposals for research and program development. Likewise, we could collaborate on community-based research or community-engaged projects that would bring together students and faculty from both institutions, as well as other secondary and postsecondary institutions in the region. We could offer inter-institutional teaching exchanges or paid faculty fellowships in which SLCC faculty receive support to work on research projects while offering talks or workshops for U students and faculty. We might work together to support our colleagues in other departments to develop their own inter-institutional (inter)disciplinary communities along principles of access and equity. Such partnerships have the potential to bring together the research infrastructure and funding available at the U with the distinctive scholarly, pedagogical, and community knowledge of SLCC faculty to improve teaching at both institutions and produce scholarship that neither institution could have undertaken alone.

Finally, we can and should work together across institutions—and, ideally, with colleagues at other USHE institutions—to address the systemic overreliance on undercompensated and, often, professionally under-supported contingent faculty labor.

## Conclusions

Both the SLCC English Department and the U's WRS department have national profiles as social justice-oriented innovators in teaching, program development, and scholarship in writing studies. Through our evolving inter-institutional partnerships, we seek to demonstrate—and discover for ourselves—the transformative possibilities of working together to tackle our troubled histories head-on in order to challenge inequities that have disadvantaged our students, marginalized our faculty, and constrained our scholarship. Change is already happening—indeed, it is inevitable. As teachers and students, we are committed to making *positive* change by fostering relations that challenge rather than widen inequality. As scholars, we aim to further a more racially, culturally, and linguistically inclusive vision of postsecondary literacy education for our local and disciplinary communities.

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<sup>i</sup> This research and program development has been supported, in part, by the U's Council of Dee Fellows, the Office of Undergraduate Research, the My Utah Signature Experience (MUSE) program, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, the University Teaching Grant program, and the Office of the Dean of the College of Humanities. The bulk of that funding has been used to compensate the nineteen transfer student researchers and interns who have been involved with the research team for their labor on our inter-institutional initiatives, as well as transfer students who have participated in interviews about their writing experiences. The SLCC English Department and more than a dozen individual SLCC faculty members and staff have also invested significant time, intellectual energy, and financial resources into these research collaborations.

<sup>ii</sup> For several reasons, however, the value of this articulation agreement was limited. First, the WCC is a certificate program, not a transfer degree, and, as a matter of institutional policy, SLCC prohibits students from declaring multiple degree programs. Thus, SLCC students intending to transfer could not simultaneously declare the WCC and an AA or AS, and confusion over this point could result in complications with their financial aid and/or degree audit processes. Second, SLCC students who transfer to the U must still complete a total of 40 *upper-division* credits as part of the total 122 college credits required to earn a bachelor's degree. Thus, while the application of 2000-level credits from SLCC to the major was useful for transfer students seeking a double-major in WRS and another field, those who were not double-majoring found that the application of those credits to the WRS major did not enable them to complete a bachelor's degree more quickly. On the contrary, some SLCC students were delaying transfer to the U in order to complete the WCC, a choice that could actually slow their time to degree completion and increase the costs of earning a bachelor's degree.

<sup>iii</sup> Developments at the U have also favored this kind of inter-institutional collaboration. The U's funding model historically awarded discretionary funding to departments on the basis of Student Credit Hours (SCH)—that is, the number of students enrolled in courses (or, in common institutional parlance, “butts in seats”). That model incentivized competition among departments for enrolling as many students in courses as possible and fueled the proliferation of courses that carried general education designations. However, a new U funding model launched in 2017 assigns 40% of discretionary funds based on the number of declared *majors* a department serves. This model incentivizes connecting with prospective majors early in their academic careers and working hard to retain them. While WRS was already collaborating with the SLCC English Department, the new funding model provided a compelling rationale to the College of Humanities for the value of initiatives that encourage SLCC students to identify as WRS majors prior to transfer.

<sup>iv</sup> Through the 2017 pilots of WRTG 3020 and 3030 at SLCC, we have found that the expanded TIG model has some clear logistical benefits. Students do not need to be enrolled at the U to enroll in CE courses, which means they can take upper-division TIG courses prior to transfer. This flexibility enables WRS to connect with them earlier in their academic careers in an institutional space where they are already comfortable. However, there are also key limitations to this model. SLCC students do not receive transcribed credit for CE courses unless and until they matriculate at the U. From the U's perspective, this makes TIG courses a useful recruitment mechanism: students may be more likely to transfer to the U if they know they have already-earned credits waiting for them. However, this model limits SLCC students' ability to transfer credits they have already earned to another university. In this sense, the TIG model prioritizes the U's institutional interests over student choice or life circumstances. There are also financial benefits and challenges to the TIG model for both students and faculty. Departments have significant flexibility in setting tuition for CE courses, so WRS is able to offer these 3000-level courses at a cost comparable to—or even less than—SLCC courses. The downside is that CE courses do not count toward students' regular credit load at SLCC, which is a problem for students who must enroll in a minimum number of credits to maintain full-time status to qualify for financial aid or other special programs. Likewise, the only way students can apply CE credits to their associates degree is to transfer to the U and then reverse-transfer the transcribed TIG credits, a cumbersome bureaucratic process.

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Furthermore, CE courses are not covered by federal financial aid or other regular scholarship funding at either institution, which means that even reduced-tuition courses may be unaffordable to low-income students. The expanded TIG model also presents issues of faculty labor. Institutional leadership at the U is unwilling to accept 3000-level SLCC courses for transfer credit, which forecloses the option of offering WRTG 3020 or 3030 through SLCC rather than CE (although it does not preclude WRS from hiring qualified SLCC faculty to teach CE courses as adjunct faculty on a case-by-case basis). However, because CE courses operate outside the U's regular funding mechanisms, these courses do not count toward full-time U faculty members' required yearly teaching load: faculty must teach these courses as overload.

<sup>v</sup> All U students must complete an upper-division CW course, so WRTG 3020 meets a requirement that SLCC students are typically unable to complete prior to transfer.

<sup>vi</sup> SLCC has long recognized these material realities and developed a range of student services, mentorship programs, and scholarship programs for its students. Beginning in 2016, this included SLCC Promise, a version of the "promise" programs emerging across the country that combine federal financial aid with additional grants and scholarships to ensure that qualifying low-income students are able to complete their associates degrees tuition-free. This program is making SLCC an even more attractive pathway to the baccalaureate for low-income students in the Salt Lake Valley, many of whom aspire to transfer to the U but face a significantly increased cost of attendance when they do.

<sup>vii</sup> The 2017-2018 pilot of the Writing Studies Scholars program was very promising. The 3030 course was co-taught by Christie Toth, Andrea Malouf, and Nathan Lacy. A total of nineteen SLCC transfer students majoring in WRS received \$2000 scholarships. Sixteen of these students were enrolled at the U as of Spring 2018, and three have delayed matriculation at the U until 2018-2019 for family or work-related reasons. Among the scholarship recipients, 68% identified as female; 42% as Latina/o, Hispanic, or Mexican/Mexican American; 26% as White; 16% as Asian American or Pacific Islander; and 5% as Black. 74% were first-generation college students, and 68% were either immigrants themselves or came from families where at least one parent was an immigrant. 79% had returned to college after some kind of break in their schooling, and 58% were age 25 or older. Six have applied for and received additional U scholarships. Eleven students indicated that they would have been unlikely to try the WRS major—or, in four cases, to transfer to the U at all—if they had not gotten involved in the Writing Studies Scholars program. Eight students are combining their WRS majors with other areas of study, including social work, nursing, political science, environmental studies, literature, and creative writing. The Summer 2018 course, co-taught by Christie Toth, Clint Gardner, and Joanne Castillo, enrolled 18 students: 71% were students of color, 71% first-generation college students, and 76% women. Thirty-seven percent were 25 or older. They plan to combine their WRS majors with studies in social work, psychology, history, English, linguistics, creative writing, education, the health sciences, and engineering.

The effectiveness of these initiatives has been due in no small part to the efforts of faculty and staff at both institutions to spread word of these opportunities to students. SLCC faculty, advisors, and peer mentors have shared recruitment messages via listservs and course emails, posted flyers around campus, and discussed the programs with students in class. Likewise, SLCC faculty have regularly permitted WRS faculty, advisors, and students to come talk about these programs in their classes, and, on several occasions, invited WRS faculty and/or students to be guest speakers. WRS faculty and students regularly table at SLCC transfer events and the U's transfer orientations, and they maintain strong relationships with advisors at both institutions. WRS has also built strong relationships with staff and student in programs serving first-generation college students and students of color, particularly SLCC's Amigos Mentores program and Multicultural Studies Center, as well as the U's Transfer Diversity Scholars program, the Crimson Transfer Honor Society, and the Office of New Student and Family Programs. With the help of SLCC transfer students on the research team, WRS continues to work to cultivate connections with other student groups and offices across both campuses.

<sup>viii</sup> While we have learned quite a bit along the way, SLCC and WRS's work to establish these articulation agreements and bridge program partnerships is now becoming a model for other departments

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in the U's College of Humanities. Indeed, these collaborations have anticipated broader policy movements at the U. In 2017, the U established a new Anti-Racism Task Force to address campus climate issues and their impact on students and faculty of color. In 2018, incoming president Dr. Ruth Watkins identified diversifying the U student body, reducing students' time to degree completion, providing targeted academic support, and building partnerships with community colleges as key components of her "Strategic Student Success Agenda." As teachers, scholars, and students of writing with shared commitments to challenging structures of social inequality and a track record of generative collaboration, we are well-positioned to be inter-institutional leaders in these efforts.