



Rhetoric & Writing at BGSU

Rhetoric & Writing Notes - Spring 2010

Alumni Reflection Notes

BGSU Footprint at CCC's / Alumni Updates/ Honors and Awards

SOME ALUMNI REFLECTIONS ON THE R&W PhD PROGRAM

2010 is the Thirtieth Anniversary of BGSU's doctoral program in rhetoric and composition and it is the year of the Bowling Green State University Centennial. With both celebrations in mind, alumni of all the department's programs were invited to send notes of reflection about their years on campus. Here are the reflections sent by a dozen or so graduates of the Rhetoric & Writing PhD Program. Another anniversary item appears on the welcome page of the website, the orange presentation link under the "Celebrating Our Thirtieth Anniversary in 2010" headline. This is a Power Point presentation about the program that was running during the English Department Centennial Event in April.

Elizabeth Fleitz (2009) Southwest Missouri State University

"What I appreciated most about the program was the variety of additional opportunities we got--the chance to teach an advanced writing course or other upper-division course, chances to tutor in the Writing Center, mentor in the GSW program, or perform administrative roles within the department. All of these diverse experiences--in combination with our assistantship, coursework, and research--helped me to grow as an academic. I also liked the level of encouragement we got to attend and present at conferences, which helped me get into the habit of talking about my research with others as well as networking with colleagues outside East Hall."

Jennifer Almjeld (2008) New Mexico State University

"I really cannot say enough wonderful things about my experience at BGSU. The faculty, coursework, and my amazing and talented peers and friends made my time in Bowling Green one of the most precious and valuable times of my life. One teacher, in particular, was and continues to be a role model for me professionally and a gift personally. Dr. Kris Blair was my teacher and dissertation chair and she is now my colleague and good friend. Her work ethic and caring for students and their ideas has been a model to me and I can only hope to be as open, supportive, and inspiring to my own students. From the first moment I stepped into Kris' computers and writing course I was immediately infected by her enthusiasm and seemingly endless knowledge about the field and soon found myself changing my specialization to multimedia. Kris also taught me, by example, the joys and challenges of outreach work. Through her work with the Digital Mirror Camp and within the computers and writing field her influence is felt far beyond the classroom and into the Bowling Green community she serves and the communities across the country where her students continue such work."

Florence Bacabac (2008) Dixie State College

Dr. Kristine Blair, my dissertation adviser and professor in English 728: Computer-Mediated Writing Theory and Practice and English 726: Research in Rhetoric & Writing, has always been a valuable source of encouragement to me. Her superb instruction and excellent scholarship in the field of computers and writing has equipped everyone in the program to join the academic discourse community. My interest in collaborative online invention, for instance, which started as a dissertation topic has taken me into several directions since I graduated because Kris made sure I was exposed to the best and most current research and adroit theories in computer-mediated communication. While in the process of doing research, there were times when I'd get confused and lose focus; I knew then that a 10-15 minute conference with Kris will bring me back on track. Her work ethic is unquestionable and contagious – I was so privileged to work with an awesome adviser, mentor, and friend.

Christine Cucciare (2008) University of Delaware

"I remember graduate school as difficult. Hard work. A lot of reading. Frequent awful weekends studying and grading papers. Agonizing dissertation setbacks. Disheartening predictions of job prospects. Soul-crushing stories of writing program administration. But thinking about it makes me smile. In fact, it makes me feel really good. The impact of Bowling Green's Rhetoric and Writing Program became clear to me during the 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication. Browsing the listings of sessions and walking the halls of the convention center, I saw graduate after graduate, colleague after colleague, professor after professor. It's so rewarding to see the program from which I came produce so many scholars and so much collegiately. We emerged hooded, prepared, and employable. All that hard work was worth it. Because there is not enough room for the many recollections I have about my experience, I can only highlight my especially fond memories of my classes and experiences with Kris Blair and Rick Gebhardt. I use what they taught me daily and my students are better writers and thinkers because of it. I am a better writer and thinker because of it. And lastly, I have a special gratitude for Rick's Aunt Carrie, whose dressing is still a subject in each of my

"When I was writing my dissertation, Sue and I would always meet at the George House in Findlay to discuss revision strategies, HSRB materials, data analysis, etc. I enjoyed our meetings, because she would always offer additional advice or words of wisdom in regard to my teaching. We would also chat about our children, and she would often share parenting advice such as what to do when your two-year-old throws a temper-tantrum in Wal-Mart or decides to stop sleeping at night. Her stories and suggestions were always greatly appreciated! Needless to say, I miss our meetings at the George House."

Christine Denecker (2007) University of Findlay

"My experiences with BGSU's Rhet/Comp program were, and continue to be the cornerstone of my academic and scholarly growth. My first class on women's rhetors, with Sue Carter Wood, felt immediately like home. Sue, in her generous way, fanned the flame that was my initial inclination to pursue a doctoral degree. Additional classes followed, and I found new, supportive friends, even though I was not part of a traditional graduate student "cohort." Everyone in the department from the faculty to the office staff expressed interest in my growth as a student and contributed to my success. Specifically, my thanks goes out to Rick Gebhardt and his class on scholarly writing, which gave me the needed tools to publish my first article prior to graduation. Sue and her History of Rhetoric course challenged me to do additional, meaningful scholarly research which led to the Shanklin Award as well as the completion of my dissertation. And Kris Blair has served as the model teacher and mentor. During coursework and throughout the writing of my dissertation, she challenged and broadened me academically. Since graduation, she has supported my research efforts, collaborated with me on presentation panels, and has served as a sounding board for scholarly ideas as well as career decisions. I have been blessed by her efforts and those of the entire department. BGSU's Rhet/Comp program is one of a kind—the best kind."

Eric Stalions (2007) Martin Methodist College

"I'm thrilled to report that Organic Writing Assessment: Dynamic Criteria Mapping in Action is now out! I excitedly emailed "Rick" Gebhardt in August 2009. "Thanks so much for helping me craft a dissertation that could be adapted into a book chapter!" I concluded, "I owe my success to your guidance!" My chapter "Putting Placement on the Map: Bowling Green State University" had just appeared in Organic Writing Assessment (2009), the sequel to Bob Broad's What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing (2003). In particular, I wrote a 34-page chapter from my 726-page dissertation Dynamic Criteria Mapping: A Study of the Rhetorical Values of Placement Evaluators (2007). My dissertation, and later my chapter, gave me the opportunity to contribute to the field of composition. Rick, my dissertation chair and mentor in the Rhetoric & Writing Program, guided me in the pursuit of my own unique contribution. Ultimately, I adapted Broad's (2003) Dynamic Criteria Mapping research model to give WPAs methods for strengthening the connections between their placement assessments and curriculums. My contribution grew out of the many discussions I had with Rick through emails, in conferences, and over lunches. Though he was always busy directing the Rhetoric & Writing Program, he always had time to talk. Because of our talks, I wrote enough to wear the letters "O," "L," and "N" off of my laptop's keyboard before my graduation in 2007. Even now, I email Rick for advice, and he always promptly replies. In fact, we had a recent discussion concerning tenure issues. Anyone who has graduated from the Rhetoric & Writing Program owes his or her success to the many caring people within the program and the field. I certainly do, and I hope they all know how thankful I have been for their guidance. However, I am most grateful to Rick. He encouraged me to explore all that was possible, and now I am published."

Russell Sprinkle (2001) Owens Community College, Toledo Campus and University of Phoenix

"It is hard to believe almost a decade has passed since I completed my doctoral program in Rhetoric and Writing at BGSU. While doctoral programs offer many challenges, no challenge is quite like that of completing a dissertation. While writing a dissertation is a difficult task under any circumstances, I must say that working with Rick Gebhardt was one of the most memorable experiences I encountered during my time at BGSU. Rick always encouraged me, but at the same time he also provided me with challenges that were academically and personally meaningful. He showed me how to craft my dissertation in a way that upheld academic standards but also honored my writing style and ideas. He didn't simply tell me what to do, nor did he abandon me. Rather, he provided expertise, coaching, and guidance through the entire process. Now, as an independent academic and professional writing consultant, I work with master's- and doctoral-level students on a daily basis to help them complete their graduate-level writing projects (e.g., proposals, theses, dissertations etc.). It's no surprise, then, that I find myself drawing on my experiences with Rick to help my clients navigate the often rocky terrain of their dissertation journeys. Working with Rick as my dissertation chair was a memorable way to conclude my educational career at BGSU."

Richard Miller (1999) Suffolk University

"I have many memorable moments from my doctoral studies in English at BGSU in the late 1990's. Two that stand out most involve Rick Gebhardt and Bruce Edwards—they were also two major reasons I chose to attend BG due to their work in the field. The first was being in Rick's English 729 class (Research and Publication in English Studies/Rhetoric and Writing). This was by far the best graduate course I have ever taken. The material was challenging, the instructor demanding, and my classmates up to the challenge. I will never forget the things I learned in that class nor the sense of purpose we all shared during that time. The class truly prepared me for the profession. My other important memory involves Bruce Edwards and his ability to guide me during my dissertation. His belief in my project, and my ability to complete it, allowed me the freedom to fulfill a life long dream and understand how meaning is made in and out of the academy. I realize now his guidance and direction were not only for being a better academic, but also for being a better person."

Brad Barry (1998) Dixie State College of Utah

Not only did it affirm to us that we were indeed capable of succeeding, but it also empowered us to effectively navigate the many requests that would inevitably come our way. Dr. Edwards also said, "The classes you are taking are more important than the classes you are teaching. Make your own studies the top priority." This comment affirmed (and reminded us) that our primary purpose in the program was scholarship. It helped us (and freed us) to get our priorities in order before embarking on one of the most challenging endeavors of our lives. During the program, there were many profound experiences and memories. Most memorable, though, was the climate among the graduate students themselves. Having arrived to BGSU from a program wherein students frequently tried to "one up" each other, it was such a pleasant surprise to be in BGSU's R&W program. My fellow grad students were so positive, and consistently encouraged one another. We were a team, helping one another get through and succeed in the program. That environment -- that psychological and professional climate -- was so encouraging and thought provoking. It was also supported by (and reflected among) our professors who worked so well together in their own professional and scholarly endeavors. Not only did this climate help us persist through tough times, it also allowed us to be better scholars by encouraging an open, collaborative exchange of ideas. I also remember (and appreciate) the commitment, kindness, and thoughtfulness of each and every one of my R&W professors. I could tell stories of each one, but then this would become even more long-winded. My sincerest thanks to BGSU's R&W program!

John Fallon (1998) Rhodes State College

A faculty member at BGSU who stands out to me is Dr. Nancy Boudreau, Director of the Statistical Consulting Center. You may be surprised to learn I was a doctoral student in the Rhetoric and Writing program and not Statistics. Nevertheless, a significant component of my dissertation research was quantitatively-based. I consulted with Dr. Boudreau in setting up my research design to collect data on the impact of teacher professional development in west-central Ohio. Fifteen high schools volunteered to participate in this year-long research study. I might also mention my appreciation for my dissertation director, Dr. Bruce Edwards, who was supportive of my cross-department collaboration. More recently, I have conducted research for the Ohio Board of Regents (BOR) program Seniors to Sophomores and Dr. Boudreau also worked with me on this project. While my dissertation research was conducted in 1996-1998., the Board of Regents research was collected in 2008-2009. Dr. Boudreau was still willing to partner with me more than ten years later on this BOR project. Some of her graduate research students also participated in the BOR research, including providing advice on our Focus Groups and advice on the overall research design and data interpretation (we did another statistical sampling as part of this BOR project).

Working across divisions at BGSU during my dissertation showed me how valuable partnerships could be in improving my research. I learned that I work better as part of a cross-functional team in which the members can make unique content-area contributions to the issue under observation. Good job, BGSU, in modeling the value of team work for me!

Steven Krause (1996) Eastern Michigan University

"There's a lot of people associated with the BGSU PhD program in Rhetoric and Writing I could recollect, appreciate, and otherwise praise on the program's 30th anniversary. I had the chance to work with so many fantastic student colleagues-- fellow PhD students John Clark, John Mauk, and Priscilla Riggle immediately come to mind, as do BGSU MA students William Hart-Davidson and Mike "Mick" Doherty. And of course the faculty were great-- Rick Gebhardt, Tom Klein, Donna Nelson-Beene and Bruce Edwards were all folks who gave me tremendous opportunities and (obviously) lots to think about. But I have to of course single out my dissertation adviser, Alice Caldernello. Alice was always so pragmatic and engaged in her advice about both my scholarship and the academic life. I simply wouldn't be here if she hadn't done such a great mentoring job. I try to recall her excellent guidance every time I sit down with one of my graduate students working on their Masters Writing Projects nowadays."

Roxanne Cullen (1984) Ferris State University

"I arrived in BG in 1977 intending simply to do an MA in English while I waited around for my husband to do an MFA. I was a mere twenty years old and had no particular goals at that point. I soon found myself working for Kathy Hart who ran the GSW program, and that changed everything. I knew then that this new degree program, the Rhet/Comp Ph.D, was for me. Kathy was a great friend and mentor. She was knowledgeable, practical, and completely unflappable. I learned many great lessons from her in regard to teaching and administering a writing program, but mostly about interacting with people. She had a wonderful presence and I remember undergraduates calling her "Dean," which amused us to no end. My major professor and dissertation director was Alice Heim- Caldernello. I have fond memories of Alice hosting us at her beautiful little cottage with the great sunroom, both for class and for social gatherings. Bruce Edwards also joined the faculty prior to my exit, and I will always be grateful to him for his help both on the dissertation and in my job search. The combination of coursework, teaching experience, and writing administration experience prepared me well for my career."