The Creation of an OER to Restore and Maintain a Writers' Community at a Regional Public College

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Abstract

This article explores the creation of *Processes*, an open educational resource (OER) created by the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) committee at Farmingdale State College (FSC). After COVID-19 shut down in-person activities on campus for one year and made in-person activities more difficult thereafter, the WID committee faced a challenge: how do we re-establish the connections made before 2020?

Processes was originally conceived as a way to promote writing on campus. But as the project took shape, stakeholders from across the university emerged and participated, including faculty, students, and the college president. This article posits that open educational resources can serve as community-building/re-building projects that bring those from disparate disciplines, ranks, and institutional locations together. Drawing upon Etienne Wenger's (1999) research on "modes of belonging," it considers the ways that cross-disciplinary OER contribute to the maintenance of community connections within institutions. *Processes* is a home-grown effort, but as an open educational resource it is accessible to many; students, faculty, and administrators at Farmingdale State College and beyond can use it for their own purposes. Sharing their experiences editing this collection, the authors encourage the development of similar projects.

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Introduction

Much of our work went virtual in 2020. At Farmingdale State College, a regional public college that is part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, this lack of face-to-face community placed unfamiliar strains on all stakeholders, from first-year students to faculty, to administrators, to the college president. Where we once would have come together to hold writing workshops and talks while sharing the traditional academic lunch of wraps, pasta salad, and cookies on paper plates, we found ourselves fiddling with our cameras and asking if we could be heard, sometimes to no response. Sometimes, only little black rectangles seemed to be listening.

We know we are not unique. Beth McMurtrie (2022) from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* collects faculty, student, and administrator perspectives about the effects of COVID-19 on student (and even faculty) engagement with coursework, and the reports are bleak. Students are tired. Faculty are tired.

In an institution where our roles differ as much as our areas of expertise, the pandemic that has kept us apart has also been our most obvious commonality. Students who have no choice but to attend college remotely lose interest when they cannot relate to their peers. Faculty invested in those students' educations lose hope when that investment does not appear reciprocal. Administrators attempting to keep institutions running despite ubiquitous threats to public health lose direction when they do not understand the struggles happening in our strained and virtual educational arenas. In short, COVID-19 has made community building and maintenance difficult in academia.

However, the pandemic is not our only commonality. We all write. Whether we call writing an act, a technology, a chore, a skill, or an art, we all do it. Writing is the medium in which students, faculty, and administrators traffic, and it serves as the proof of study, the arena for the ideas that come from that study, and the primary mode of communication for those facilitating that study. Faculty and administrators write to communicate their work and keep track of it. For students, writing is the work. We all need writing differently, and we all approach writing in ways that help us do what we need with it.

Due to our interest in the material, social, and personal idiosyncrasies that shape writing processes, an interest necessary for writing instructors and scholars in a diverse institution, we wanted to create an open educational resource (OER) that would explore the complexities of writing. To some extent, we hoped that this collection might help to demystify writing processes across various disciplines and locations. The Farmingdale State College Writing in the Disciplines (WID) committee circulated a call for reflections about writing experiences on our campus. Titled *Processes,* the collection would compile contributions from faculty across departments, as well as administrators, students, and even the college president. Each contribution would contain two parts: (1) an excerpt from a published or unpublished article written by the contributor, and (2) a personal reflection about the contributor's experience writing that original text. By sharing both their "product" and their "process," each contributor would offer readers a peek behind the curtain of the notoriously obscure world of academic discourse. Faculty could gain insight into real-world writing processes, including writing processes in disciplines other than their own, and they could enjoy a reminder of what it is like to write as a student,

possibly unsure of how to write in a discipline. Students could learn that even seasoned writers second guess their writing ability, struggle to meet deadlines, and write multiple drafts before their work is ready to be read. Administrators could have the opportunity to share the kinds of writing that others in the academy seldom see, such as proposals or other communications to public officials (as with the contribution from our college president), and they might learn or be reminded of the kinds of writing they facilitate as higher education administrators by reading the contributions of students and faculty. For all audiences, the collection would offer insight into trial-and-error strategies, frustrations, and triumphs that might expand our understanding of writing in the disciplines.

The OER, published in March 2023, presents a diverse collection of experiences. It opens with a reflection from the Farmingdale State College president, Dr. John Nader, about his relationship with writing throughout his career, spanning his time as a college student, a faculty member, and a high-level administrator. Next is a section of the book dedicated to undergraduate and graduate writing in the field of nursing, one of Farmingdale's premier areas of study. This section begins with a reflection from Dr. Nancy Maggio on how she has used writing to teach students about their responsibilities as new nurses as well as how their work is perceived. The remainder of the book collects excerpts from faculty and students from across disciplines to highlight not only the differences between their processes but also the shared struggles, ones many of us think we either go through alone or create for ourselves. Because a strict focus on published pieces would in turn create a strict focus on the *products* of writing, we found ourselves more concerned with the *processes* writers in different disciplines and at different points in their careers employ. Therefore, we encouraged submissions that included published and unpublished writing. We also wanted to draw attention to different genres of academic and professional writing. Ultimately, an engineering student contributed a critical reflection on a novel while some in the sciences submitted excerpts from articles in biology or health sciences. A professor of landscape architecture and urban design contributed a reflection on gendered language, and a professor of English contributed an annotated conference proposal to provide a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes writing that many academics do regularly.

As the editors of *Processes* and members of the Farmingdale WID Committee, we wrote this article to reflect about our experiences developing this OER. In the remainder of this article, we focus on both the pedagogical goals that guided the project at its inception and the community-building benefits that we observed as the project took shape. First, we draw upon the work of composition studies scholars such as Anne Beaufort (2008), David Bartholomae (1988), Patricia Bizzell (1986), Lynn Z. Bloom (2003), and James Berlin (1988) to discuss theoretical frameworks that informed the project's pedagogical goals. Then, we then draw upon Etienne Wenger's (1999) research on "modes of belonging" to consider our community building goals. In particular, we consider the ways that cross-disciplinary OER contribute to the cultivation and maintenance of community connections within institutions. Next, we turn to scholars such as Chae and Jenkins (2015), Levy and Tila (2022), McBride and Abramovich (2022), and Petrides et al. (2010), among others, to situate this project within the broader context of OER publishing. Namely, we argue that OER can serve important community-building functions for those involved in their publication and dissemination. Lastly, we discuss the results of the project. We demonstrate that the project has fostered early signs of imagination, alignment, and engagement, the three "modes of belonging" highlighted in Wenger's work.

Literature Review

In writing classes, we often encourage students to test the waters of academia's "discourse communities." Anne Beaufort (2008) defines a discourse community as "a social group that communicates at least in part via written texts and shares common goals, values, and writing standards, a specialized vocabulary, and specialized genres" (p. 179). Using metaphors related to acting and performance, David Bartholomae (1988) elaborates upon this concept, considering the ways that a student writer "dramatizes" their experience within discourse (p. 625). As he explains, students entering college are outsiders who engage in a "necessary and enabling fiction" (p. 625) of imagining insider status, using language that enables them to "write and sound, finally, also like someone else" (p. 630). Patricia Bizzell (1986) considers this issue from a different angle. Using a spatial metaphor of "distance," she describes her students as outsiders to the academic community who must "master its language-using practices" (p. 297). In her work, there is no artifice of "dramatizing" a discourse. Instead, the act of playing the game is itself a process of socialization. Student writers affirm the power of academic discourse communities—including their ways of writing, thinking, and knowing—by becoming invested in these communities and engaging in very real psychological and social negotiations of self and reality.

Too often, however, students and faculty think about writing as a monolithic skill that one can either learn or not. Writing classrooms, despite advances in composition theory, often reinforce the idea of a singular writing process, a series of stages or sequence of assignments that leads to a polished piece of writing. With this project, we wanted to create a pedagogical resource that would help students explore the complexity of writers' processes. As Lynn Z. Bloom (2003) argues, writing is not one specific process; it is socially constructed, mediated, and shaped (p. 35).

Bloom's 2003 observation is not without theoretical backing. In 1988, James Berlin explicated the then-established approach to writing and rhetoric that he called "social-epistemic rhetoric." This approach stood in opposition to current-traditional rhetoric, which relied on teaching standard forms and *correcting* student writing (p. 480) and "expressionist" approaches to rhetoric, which assumed that opportunities for self-expression would result in the cultivation of a student's individual voice (p. 484). Social-epistemic rhetoric, as Berlin defined it, represented the "notion of rhetoric as a political act involving a dialectical interaction engaging the material, the social, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation" (p. 488). In other words, social-epistemic rhetoric acknowledges the rules, tools, disciplines, and individual idiosyncrasies that shape the ways we approach writing; these processes are not shaped by some objective standard alone, nor are they formed individually. Rather, they arise in response to personal *and* social conditions.

The challenge of classroom pedagogy, of course, is that we cannot mimic the dynamics of authentic discourse communities. It is impossible to prepare students to participate in the varied discourse communities that they might encounter throughout their lives. While some instructors prioritize the explicit teaching of "meta-knowledge" (Gee, 2001, p. 542) about these communities, others argue that this kind of learning produces "stilted, unconvincing performances" (Schryer, 2001, p. 36) rather than truly authentic socialization. Real socialization happens, they argue, when learners acquire skills in "natural, meaningful, and functional settings" (Gee, 2001, p. 542).

We believed that an OER focused on writing in various disciplines and institutional locations might offer students a powerful combination of "meta-knowledge" about discourse communities and an experiential "feel for the game." The vast array of professions awaiting Farmingdale State College graduates presents a challenge in teaching technical and professional writing, as a focus on genre would inevitably leave some genres, and therefore disciplines, out. On the one hand, we felt that this collection could offer students and their instructors knowledge about the habits of these discourse communities, some of which—especially in our section on writing in the field of nursing—would be provided by the students who have completed these programs themselves. Students would benefit from not only the perspectives of their instructors but also their peers, who are burgeoning writers in their respective fields. Since students contributed to the collection, their experiences would be incorporated into the curriculum. Because first-year writing courses often require (or should require) reflective writing, we also felt that *Processes* might prove useful for modeling reflection. Finally, *Processes* exposes students to varied examples of form, exposition, persuasion, and rhetorical appeals, all of which are key elements of expository writing courses. In short, we believed that personal accounts of writers' experiences in various disciplines and institutional settings might offer students something like a vicarious experience of disciplinary socialization. By representing the experiences of writers from a range of disciplines and at various stages in their careers, the collection would provide a backstage look at these communities and their practices, potentially opening space for reflection about the inherently idiosyncratic nature of writing processes, even those that, to some extent, hew to the expectations of their fields. Ultimately, we felt that *Processes* could serve as a reader for a writing course, or parts of it could supplement course-specific materials precisely because it is free to use and distribute. It is a potential teaching tool for technical and professional writing courses, first-year writing courses, and advanced expository writing courses.

For instructors and administrators, some of whom have spent decades immersing themselves in disciplines, the opportunity to reflect about the writing processes of other members of the campus community might expand their field of vision in productive ways. We felt that the collection could offer instructors an opportunity to learn more about how their students use writing, even if that knowledge might complicate their understanding of their students' idiosyncratic writing processes. Looking into the writing of their students (for a purpose other than a grade) might allow faculty an opportunity to consider the strengths students bring to their classes, or the ones they learn over time, even after the end of a single semester. In addition, *Processes* packages student writing alongside that of faculty and administrators, presenting student writing *as writing to be studied* rather than as an exemplary or cautionary sample. We also felt that instructors could gain insight into the writing processes of their own peers—other faculty—who write and teach in disciplines and discourse communities other than their own. Lastly, we felt that administrators could benefit from the collection. For them, the collection would be an opportunity to explain their writing while learning about the writing that takes place in the programs over which they preside.

In addition to these goals for students, instructors, and administrators, we felt that *Processes* could help to re-invigorate some of the campus connections that had been weakened during the COVID-19 pandemic. As members of the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) committee, we have always been aware that Farmingdale is a community of writers. Across disciplines, offices, and ranks, we write

for varied purposes. We develop habits of citation and intertextuality that make our work meaningful within discourse communities. We attend to matters of audience, style, stance, and identity. We struggle through stages of drafting and revision. This community, however, is often an invisible community. Despite being engaged in parallel undertakings, we often remain unaware of the ways that our own practices connect us to others across campus. This was doubly true during the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote work made cross-disciplinary dialogue even less common than usual.

To develop a project that would bring members of this invisible community into alignment with one another, we grounded our work in a theoretical framework developed by Etienne Wenger. In Wenger's *Communities of Practice* (1999), he discusses three distinct but interrelated modes of belonging within institutions and workplaces: *engagement, imagination,* and *alignment.* The first mode, *engagement*, is familiar to anyone who participates in an academic field. Contributing to a "common enterprise" through practices of "sustained intensity and relations of mutuality" (p. 184), we form communities of practice rooted in shared histories, trajectories, and artifacts. From the beginning, we knew that we wanted *Processes* to be a cross-disciplinary collection. By collecting reflections about the writing practices of faculty, students, and administrators, we hoped to offer readers an overarching view of communities defined by intense engagement and disciplinary insularity.

Wenger's second mode of belonging, *imagination*, offers us the possibility of extending our identities beyond the narrow confines of our communities of practice. As Wenger writes, imagination helps us articulate "a trajectory that connects what we are doing to an extended identity, seeing ourselves in new ways" (p. 185). It requires us to embrace "incongruity and serendipity" (p. 186) and to demonstrate "the willingness, freedom, and energy to expose ourselves to the exotic, move around, try new identities, and explore new relations" (p. 185). We designed *Processes* to engage our campus community in this kind of imaginative endeavor. Firstly, the project asks contributors to denaturalize the habits that characterize their own communities of practice. As Wenger writes, imagination helps individuals and communities "move back and look at [their] engagement through the eyes of an outsider" (p. 185). In doing so, they make space to "conceive of new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures" (p. 178). In addition, the project asks contributors to imagine themselves as members of a community of writers. In contrast to interdisciplinary projects that strive to mingle distinct disciplinary approaches, cross-disciplinary projects such as *Processes* have the potential to call into being a community that cuts across disciplines and hierarchies in novel ways, creating alignment between people invested in the advancement of a "common enterprise." Recognizing the common enterprise of writing—a commonality that seems obvious but is rarely acknowledged on our campus—shifts focus away from disciplinary specialization and institutional hierarchy, the two organizing principles of the academy.

The third mode of belonging, *alignment*, necessitates that we "coordinat[e] our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises" (p. 174). As Wenger writes, this process can "rally the energies of unlikely bedfellows" (p. 182). To illustrate the point, he considers the environmental movement, which over the years has articulated "motivations, beliefs, and passions" that have brought seemingly unaligned people—"a positivist biologist" and a "new-age worshiper of the planet" (p. 182)—into alignment with one another. When we conceived of

Processes, our hope was that strange bedfellows from across campus would begin to align themselves with one another.

In sum, we saw the development of *Processes* as an opportunity to foster the modes of belonging outlined by Wenger—engagement, imagination, and alignment. We hoped that the project would engage our campus community in habits that might persist beyond the end of the project, paving the way for a thriving community of writers.

Discussion

Why An OER?

We are not the first to put together a collection such as this, and we hope not to be the last. In 2005, Mary Segall and Robert Smart published *Direct from the Disciplines: Writing Across the Curriculum*, a collection of writing from faculty across the curriculum at Quinnipiac University. *Direct from the Disciplines* compiles these texts to show that the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative at Quinnipiac worked thanks to the efforts of diverse faculty. But the aim goes further than that. Segall and Smart explain that the book not only gives credit where it is due, but it does so by giving voice to diverse disciplines in the same place (p. 3). Too often, disciplinary boundaries keep people and their ideas apart. Unexamined disciplinary assumptions often complicate conversations between colleagues. But the development of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) at Quinnipiac University, Kathleen McCourt (2005) writes, brought with it a sense of community in part because it focused on writing among faculty in an institution historically focused on preparing students for careers in health sciences, business, and communications (p. 153). In short, the WAC program at Quinnipiac brought diverse faculty together to focus on a subject not traditionally associated with the majors that the university offers.

Similarly, Belinda Kremer and Richard McNabb's *Collide: Styles, Structures, and Ideas in Disciplinary Writing*, published in 2007, collects discipline-specific reflections from C.W. Post faculty (now Long Island University Post) from disciplines such as English, Spanish and Foreign Languages, Political Science, Film Studies, and Chemistry (among others). Kremer and McNabb (2007) open their introduction with an anecdote about a student who brings their anthropology paper to the Post Writing Center out of frustration that the techniques learned in first-year writing did not transfer well to anthropology (p. XI). This represents a collision between disciplines–composition studies and anthropology–and the book focuses on the concept of collision (literal or figurative) from the perspectives of the many disciplines housed at Post. For example, Nicholas Ramer (2007), professor of chemistry, writes about the collision of ß-Poly (vinylidene fluoride) and infrared light (p. 47), and Lori McNiel (2007) writes of the vastly differing representations of motherhood and childcare in three popular magazines marketed towards women and three feminist academic journals, which creates a collision of expectations imposed on women (p. 109). Each chapter is accompanied by a critical reflection on the exigencies, methodologies, and conclusions of their work, a feature that we emulate in *Processes*.

Collide was the initial inspiration for *Processes*, and *Direct from the Disciplines* showed us that we could contribute to a tradition of university faculty coming together under the common inquiry of writing. Of course, we took up the task in the 2020s, and we wanted to do so in a way that was appropriate for our time, when more students than ever seek out higher education, many amidst financial hardships that could prohibit them from buying a traditionally published collection of academic essays, for a class or otherwise (McDermott, 2020, p. 2). We wanted to make this resource free to all.

To our knowledge, a collection such as ours has not been compiled in over ten years, and there have been changes to writing processes in that time, such as the nature and tone of online discourse, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the social justice perspectives that became mainstream in the early 21st century. Similarly, as the academy strives for interdisciplinarity, academic writers could do well by "checking in" with one another.

Though *Collide* and *Direct from the Disciplines* are over 10 years old, they still serve their purposes today, inspiring scholars to reach across disciplinary lines to learn from each other about writing, an activity that serves disciplines differently but serves them nonetheless. WAC and WID have a history of doing this; for example, the WAC Clearinghouse has provided a central location for open-access texts specifically discussing WAC/WID/Writing Studies for academics across majors since 1997, proving that the topic of writing has the potential to bring readers together; or at least to get academics on the same web page. We write this article in hopes that other institutions might support the creation of OER, in part because projects such as these strengthen campus communities.

But why not just hold a party or celebration of scholarship? This would allow us all to get together and perhaps appreciate each other's work. Or why not a writing award for undergraduates, which would allow us to honor the work of our students? The question of medium is always there, and we took time especially to decide how we wanted to circulate this work. Ultimately, we decided to publish an OER, which would require us to collaborate rather than simply get together. And we would have a physical reminder of the work we did, which would circulate more widely than an award announcement or pictures of an event. We were inspired by *Direct from the Disciplines* and *Collide*, and we hoped to inspire others as well.

Our hope to inspire broadly helped inform our answer to the question of medium. OER are alternatives to costly textbooks. But there are benefits to the use of OER that extend beyond the financial benefits for students and institutions. Boyoung Chae and Mark Jenkins (2015) conducted a study within the Washington Community and Technical College system (WA CTC) and discovered several non-financial benefits of OER for faculty. Namely, faculty find they have more freedom to design curricula when they are not tethered to a commercial textbook (p. 5). This could result from faculty using parts of multiple OER to compile the materials for their classes without asking their students to pay out of pocket for multiple textbooks to weave into a syllabus. Or it could result from the sheer volume of OER available, on several topics, which can be used at the instructor's discretion. Chae and Jenkins also note that faculty feel a greater sense of collaboration with their colleagues when they have the freedom to choose from multiple sources to supplement class activities (p. 5). When faculty can get creative, they tend to seek out opportunities to collaborate.

Furthermore, in a 2013 study, Chae and Jenkins surveyed 780 faculty from the WA CTC system. They found that 82% of their respondents had heard of OER before the study, and 90% of those faculty knew key words associated with OER and their usage. Also, they found that the majority (67%) of those who had heard about OER had searched for one in their discipline. However, only 60% of those faculty had been successful in finding one, at least one that they felt comfortable using in the classroom. These numbers, in turn, support Chae and Jenkins's 2015 report, which names discomfort or distrust of the quality of OER, lack of institutional support, and difficulty finding and reviewing materials as barriers to the adoption of OER more universally (p. 5).

The positives, we think, cancel out many of the risks or negatives Chae and Jenkins consider, at least in our experience. Because it was published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, *Processes* can be used as free course material, and this can apply rather broadly, since the book includes contributions from across the disciplines represented among the Farmingdale State College community. Given the freedom to excerpt course materials from OER (without the financial commitment to use the entire book), we are confident that faculty from across the disciplines can use *Processes* alongside other course texts. As noted above, Chae and Jenkins (2015) specifically point to an important affordance of OER: they can be used piecemeal and for free (p. 5). This allows faculty from outside strictly writing-focused courses to use parts of the book to supplement and inform their own course-specific writing instruction. And faculty can do this easily; they can take as much as they need without having to secure permissions or put the onus of purchasing costly materials for one or two lessons onto students (McDermott, 2020, p. 2).

In addition to their financial benefits, OER initiatives can help build communities and collaborative partnerships. Lisa Petrides, Cynthia Jimes, Clare Middleton-Detzner, and Holly Howell (2010) demonstrate that participation in an OER training network can support "enhanced teacher collaboration and curriculum development activities as well as information sharing about resources, practices, and teaching challenges" (p. 5). Rory McGreal (2019) echoes this conclusion. Surveying stakeholders at 13 institutions about their experiences implementing OER, he found that the primary benefit for faculty was "the sharing of resources (both internal and external) and collaborations" (p. 142). In some cases, this led to collaboration between faculty and librarians for the first time. Similarly, Mark McBride and Sam Abramovich (2022) have studied the ways that OER can contribute to "boundary crossing," an experience defined by identification of difference, cooperative interaction, reflection that changes perspectives, and collaboration and co-development that transform a community (p. 2). According to their research, OER can serve as "boundary objects" that make these practices possible. Citing the work of Nick Fox, they write, "The objects enable these communities or individuals, which are at times separated by their own perspectives, to establish continuity or working relationships around an idea or an innovative practice" (p. 7). An example of this can be found in the research of Bryan McGeary, Christopher Guder and Ashwini Ganeshan (2021), who write about the ways that partnerships between librarians, faculty, and students can increase student engagement and redistribute the labor of OER authorship.

In this brief discussion, we have considered a few of the community-building benefits of OER. These are benefits that Martin Weller, Rebecca Pitt, Robert Farrow, and Patrick McAndrew (2015)

would refer to as "indirect impacts" (p. 360). While the direct benefits of OER are those related to cost and access, Weller et al. argue for the value of indirect impacts that can be felt "at one or two degrees removed" (p. 360). The implementation of OER can foster beneficial connections between faculty and students, faculty and colleagues across campus communities, and between faculty around the world. In addition, collaboration via the web can lead to innovation in the creation of OER beyond local contexts. Research into the community-building benefits of OER, however, has not yet considered the indirect benefit that we consider in this article—namely, the fact that creating an OER is a "common enterprise" that can bring diverse members of a campus community into greater alignment with one another, paving the way for the emergence of a formerly unrecognized campus community.

The editors of *Processes* consider the book a gift to the FSC community. Because of its Creative Commons license, faculty can use the book piecemeal and for free in their classes. This can also be said for an e-book or home-grown course pack. But e-books often fall under copyright, and while they are free to use piecemeal, permissions must be sought in order to use larger portions of the text, let alone to alter the text to fit the needs of a particular course. Home-grown course packs avoid these pitfalls, but they do not often carry with them the legitimacy of a book published by a publishing house. For *Processes*, we worked with Milne Open Textbooks, a publishing house affiliated with SUNY Geneseo. This partnership allowed us access to copyeditors, designers for the cover and internal layout, and another set of eyes to make sure the project had the legitimacy of a traditional edited collection while remaining free to use, alter, and distribute. This partnership adds to the perceived legitimacy of the text, as printed copies are available from the publisher for a nominal fee, either through SUNY Geneseo or Amazon.

So, while *Processes* is a gift for faculty looking for writing and reflection from different disciplines, it is also a gift for students. It provides students with a platform to discuss their writing for an audience of their peers and professors through publication. *Processes* can also send the message to students that faculty care. Levy and Tila (2022) argue that "[a]dvances in technology and cultural shifts towards a more open sharing of information afford college instructors additional methods to establish a powerful teacher-student connection" (p. 199). In our case, post-COVID-19 and in a school whose population skews working-class, such a connection is vital. When the authors of a free text come from the very school where students study, the potential for connection is heightened. Students can see the names of other Farmingdale students as well as professors they know or have heard of, and those familiar names can tell them something about writing in their own disciplines. Seeing *Processes* as a course text or supplement to a course text shows students that their school cares for their education and their finances, but it also communicates that staff, administrators, faculty, and peers at FSC care enough to create something.

Indeed, the institutional support that we have received contributed to the success of this project. *Processes* is a homegrown effort to expose ourselves to our colleagues' and students' writing. To further this goal, the college president has lent support to the project in the form of a contribution about writing across his long and varied academic career. While we hope folks from other campuses will take up *Processes* for the purposes of teaching and/or research, we take pride and comfort in knowing that our

institution has supported the creation of a document that promises to help build community among faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

Creating Community

While experiential learning and community-engaged scholarship promise to bridge gaps between the university and the surrounding community, Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID) programs already have a rich tradition of building communities on campus. Over thirty years before COVID-19, Susan McLeod (1987) noted that the point of WAC programs is to create a community of learners in the classroom, much like the disciplinary communities academics form in their departments (p. 20). At the turn of the century, she expanded this community-building potential to include faculty across the curricula by pointing out that WAC/WID programs can "braid" their concerns with those of the university at large (1997, p. 72). In other words, WAC/WID stands a better chance of gaining institutional staying power when we work collaboratively with other departments and offices, inviting scholars and academic professionals to build a community of higher education stakeholders with overlapping concerns.

Processes reflects this "braiding" process. The project began when the chair of the English and Humanities Department passed a copy of *Collide* along to the WID Committee, which inspired us to develop a similar project. Members of the WID committee contributed their work and solicited manuscripts from their colleagues and students, while the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and the President of the College enthusiastically contributed their own writing. As contributors shared their work, we began to see hints of the modes of belonging described by Wenger. Reflecting about their private experiences of pre-writing, drafting, and revision, contributors joined one another to publicly explore their identities as writers.

We see hints of Wenger's mode of alignment in the way that *Processes* aligned instructors, students, and administrators with a community of writers beyond the classroom. The collection proudly includes insightful and compelling contributions from undergraduate students across majors who take writing seriously and discuss it critically. This was an opportunity for them to experience submission deadlines, double-blind peer review, and writing for a purpose rather than for a grade. All contributors had the same interactions with the editors of *Processes*, regardless of their status on campus. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students alike were kept abreast of the publication process, including when and how to submit, how to address reviewers' concerns, and the licensing of the book that the editors chose and why. Some students had questions about the process as we went along, as they had not published before. We took time to respond to all contributors, including students, so they would feel comfortable and included at every stage of publishing this book.

By engaging people from varied departments, offices, and ranks, the project encouraged strangers to realign themselves in relation to one another. Faculty had relied on the WID committee for years before *Processes* to review writing-intensive syllabi and present on topics such as plagiarism, best practices for presenting writing assignments, and the value of writing after graduation. But that was a one-way relationship; faculty came to WID for approval or to learn something. Students were invited to participate in workshops, but the themes were not always obviously useful to them, and faculty tended to

make up the majority of the audience for these workshops. In short, the relationship was always based on what WID had to offer. When the CFP for *Processes* was distributed across FSC's campus, it came from a trusted presence on campus. At the same time, it represented an opportunity for WID to listen and learn something. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students all contributed. And while the introduction to the book came from the WID committee, the chapters came from the entire campus; all were included.

Pre-publication, the WID committee hosted a luncheon to promote *Processes* on campus and give contributors the chance to present their work. Five contributors, including the college President, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, one professor, and two undergraduate students spoke about their fields and the processes they have developed over the courses of their writing careers. The accounts were as varied as their fields, as varied as the stages of the speakers' careers, and each speaker shared some of their experiences writing professionally and personally. The audience, traditionally made up of faculty at WID events, included undergraduate students and faculty not affiliated with WID. Students wanted to see their peers speak, and faculty wanted to hear from the students they encouraged to contribute. Those not slated to speak were simply excited to get together with their peers, a luxury during the previous two years.

At this luncheon, we saw instructors, students, and administrators begin to articulate their identities as members of a community of writers, a phenomenon that reflected Wenger's concept of imagination. In contrast to an academic system rife with hierarchy, we listened as faculty and students spoke with passion about the topic of writing. Students, both as presenters on the stage and as invested members of the audience, spoke with authority about writing. By experiencing the publication process themselves–seeing how reviewers responded to their drafts (as opposed to professors) and working towards an unmovable deadline for publication–students *earned* their authority and shared what they learned with their peers and professors. Students in the audience were emboldened by their peers. They had the attention of their professors, deans, and the college president. As a faculty member, and as the host of the event, Chris was heartened by the enthusiasm in the room, and he was more than happy to sit back and let the audience carry a lively discussion during the Q and A after the talks were over. In short, the conference ended with many faculty members' wildest dreams coming true: a democratic dialogue broke out, animated by genuine interest.

Though we did not collect data about this event, we believe that it contributed to changing the ways that faculty, students, administrators, and staff imagine their relationships with one another. As Wenger (1999) writes, practices of imagination can help people connect their practices to an "extended identity" (p. 185). By raising the visibility of writing on campus and drawing parallels between the writing practices that we all engage in, we believe that we encouraged participants to imagine themselves as a community of writers and align themselves with one another in pursuit of a "common enterprise." Post-publication, we held an event to mark the release of *Processes*, and we witnessed a similar scene as the pre-publication event; students, faculty, and administrators gathered to hear the president and associate dean speak, and Chris delivered a history of WID at FSC, a story of a home-grown effort that formed and took shape in response to the needs of the FSC community, much like *Processes* itself.

Despite the hierarchies that often keep us apart, we believe that we have seen the first signs of these modes of belonging. In time, we believe that this nascent community of writers may come to demonstrate habits of sustained engagement, as defined by Wenger. We hope that future research substantiates this belief.

Conclusion

At a moment when we found ourselves facing a lack of community connection, we decided to make an OER that would help us foster *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment* within our campus community. Ultimately, our hope is that this project contributes to the development of a meaningful community of writers on our campus. By hosting workshops and talks for all faculty and helping instructors use writing wisely in their courses, WID at Farmingdale has shown that writing spans disciplines and that our peers in Health Sciences, Business, and Automotive Technology (the list goes on) have common interests that align them with one another. *Processes* works to further this alignment. By encouraging faculty, students, administrators, and staff to recognize—in an admittedly modest way—their connections with one another across disciplines, ranks, and institutional locations, we have taken a first step toward creating a "common enterprise" on our campus. While this project did not catalyze the establishment of a fully-formed community of writers, the modest but promising results that it has yielded serve to demonstrate the power of Wenger's insights about modes of belonging. Rather than establishing a community of writers through institutional mandate, we worked to foster engagement, imagination, and alignment through the completion of a shared project. In doing so, we prioritized relationships over institutional structures, an approach that we believe affirms Wenger's emphasis on joint attention and aligned practices. As Wenger (1999) writes, "the process of alignment bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants can become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions, and practices" (p. 179). As we take steps to foster a community of writers on our campus, Wenger's modes of belonging will continue to serve as a theoretical framework for community-building.

This is the part where we could point to holes in our own research or suggest ways others can take it further. However, we have a different aim with *Processes*. We hope that our colleagues at other institutions will read our work, use it in classes or faculty training, or simply read it to learn more about writing. But we also hope to inspire others in academia to do similar work on their own campuses. In *Processes*, we present a snapshot of writing on our campus, limited only by self-selection and the disciplines represented in the Farmingdale community. Any community enterprise that attempts to make overarching claims will do so myopically. But when more and more members of the larger WAC/WID community speak or write, we all benefit from a less and less myopic viewpoint. A similar text from an institution focused on, say, the arts will bring with it different but equally valuable perspectives, all of which contribute to the larger snapshot of writing in American colleges and universities.

For those considering doing similar work on their campuses, we cannot recommend it enough. Offering Farmingdale's writers opportunities to imagine themselves as a community, and fostering spaces in which we can bring this nascent community into alignment through "common enterprise," suggests possibilities for genuine cross-disciplinarity. The colleagues that we see daily in the hallway on

the way to class, the students that we see when we get there, and the administrators who fit students into those classes all rely on written genres and tools that differ greatly, and our minute concerns differ just as much. Still, we all work to get that lesson plan written, that essay drafted, and those students on the roster. We all write to make Farmingdale State College work.

In March 2023, we published *Processes* through SUNY Geneseo's Milne Open Textbooks publishing house. We all wrote to make it work. We hope that making this project public and readily available will inspire others to do the same. We are interested to learn.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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