

5-2014

# Competing conceptions of literacy : intersections in a dual-credit writing program.

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<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/1573>

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COMPETING CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY: INTERSECTIONS IN A DUAL-  
CREDIT WRITING PROGRAM

By

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2014

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A Dissertation Approved on

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation director, Dr. Bronwyn Williams, for his helpful suggestions, support, and wit during the dissertation process. He was generous with his time, energy, and consideration during the research and writing of this dissertation. Bronwyn also helped me to understand more the kind of mentor I would want to be. His setup of the dissertation writing group was invaluable to my work, and I would like to thank Laura Detmering, Ashly Bender, Shannon Howard, Hollye Wright, Stephanie Weaver, Matthew Wiles, and Brittany Kelley who all informed my dissertation with their encouraging and beneficial comments. This writing group was so formative in the dissertation, and I am very thankful for Bronwyn and to the whole group for reading my work.

My committee shaped this dissertation in many ways. I would like to thank Debra Journet, Bruce Horner, Karen Chandler, and Ann Larson for their invaluable suggestions on what to explain more and what to improve. Their conversations with me were very important in constructing the dissertation.

I would also like to thank my friends who listened to countless talk about the dissertation and my worries and anxieties. Thank you Laura, Hollye, Shannon, Ashly, Barrie, Mike, and Carrie for being so understanding and encouraging throughout the process. Thank you also to Amy, Emmy, Megan, and Jessica, my close friends since high school, who have always supported me. I do not know who I would be without your friendships.

My parents, Jeff and Susan Wilkinson, were extremely understanding and supportive during the dissertation research and writing process. They are the best parents ever, who listened to me talk for hours about the content and offered suggestions when I felt lost. I could not have finished without them, and I am so thankful for the love they give.

I would also like to thank my partner, Matt Dowell, who supported and loved and joked with me during this process. Thank you for all that you do and I love you.

## ABSTRACT

### COMPETING CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY: INTERSECTIONS IN A DUAL-CREDIT WRITING PROGRAM

Caroline Wilkinson

February 14, 2014

This dissertation addresses how as dual-credit offerings rise, university writing programs work to respond to the pedagogical, material, and institutional concerns that inform teaching “college-level writing” in this unique space. Recent composition scholarship, such as Christine Farris and Kristine Hansen’s *College Credit for Writing in High School: The “Taking Care of” Business*, addresses the acceleration of these courses, questioning the extent to which the efficiency of dual credit designates writing as a “commodity easily appropriated, sold, outsourced, and knocked off” (272). My project further studies the implications of accelerated writing courses by interviewing dual-credit students, instructors, and administrators at one sponsoring university and four local high schools in order to examine stakeholders’ conceptions of literacy in a context defined by “college readiness” and financial sponsors of education.

Drawing from scholars who study the relationship between literacy, context and institutional power, such as David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and Deborah Brandt, I consider stakeholders' conceptions of literacy in a site that emphasizes students quickly accumulating college credit, and the assumptions about literacy education which privilege this acceleration. Through data employed from interviews with twenty stakeholders and course and program documents, I argue that dual-credit writing courses highlight the tensions in the role of composition as a field because of the pressure to define a certain kind of "college-level writing" in order to prepare students for careers. Specifically, this project demonstrates how stakeholders' conceptions of "college ready" moved the conversation on literacy education from being about a finite set of skills to perceptions of socioeconomic and educational identity of students and schools. A close look at the level of commitment to "college readiness" at this institutional setting emphasizes that acceleration also connects to financial sponsorship because stakeholders discussed how dual credit serves as a financial deal for both the students because they receive one-third the tuition rate and for the university because mostly secondary educators and part-time lecturers teach the course. Therefore, I argue for more awareness of how these institutional pressures inform literacy not only in dual-credit classrooms, but writing instruction at the university overall.

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION  
CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF DUAL CREDIT

“Well, I guess part of my own kind of self-validation for what I do is I think of you know you hear kids all the time saying, “Why am I in this calculus class I’m never going to use this in real life?” you know I feel like, maybe not the literature so much, but literacy you know is I think is something that we teach to students that I think they can use regardless of what field they go into and I think that’s probably the idea behind everybody taking English 101 is that those are skills that you need.”-Emma, Dual-Credit Instructor

“I think it’s really going to help me when I go to college because I know I can’t miss any classes because it’s going to hurt my grade like I already have that jump on most of the people coming in to my college...I’m already ready.”-Danyelle, Dual-Credit Student

“And you save actually. The main thing is I think you pay like \$300 something or \$400, and you don’t have to take an AP test at the end, so one less test you have to worry about in that like two weeks frame actually.”-Justin, Dual-Credit Student

“We gave free tuition for students who are free and reduced lunch. And other students paid one-third rate, so I don’t think it was a money making proposition. So what I determined for myself is that I thought it was a bit of altruism, that it was a community outreach program.”-John, Dual-Credit Administrator

These four quotations represent the varied conceptions of dual credit and its relationship to institutional stakeholders’ notions of literacy in an increasingly outcomes-based era of education. As high school students look for ways to accelerate their education through programs such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, dual-credit courses have grown to become another option. All fifty states in the United States offer dual-credit programs with different degrees of rigor and oversight. Dual credit, also called dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment, is a program for high school students to take college courses, such as college composition, and use the credit for both high school and college English. The first quote reflects this connection between the two education levels through dual-credit instructor Emma’s explanation of the value of literacy in teaching college composition because she sees it transfer to future student coursework, jobs, and life in general. To Emma, first-year composition provides specific skills that “you need” in college, practical and broad enough to be used outside of the English discipline. Emma views her composition instructor identity as important in part because she teaches these skills at her public high school, Hightree High, and believes that her students will utilize them again at the tertiary level.

The next quotation by Danyelle, a high school senior, relates to Emma’s statement that composition can help students for their future educational and professional work. Danyelle focuses her comments more specifically on dual-credit composition at her public high school, Cary High. To Danyelle, the most beneficial class in high school was dual-credit composition because it prepared her for the logical next step in her life, college. “College readiness” is a term frequently employed at the secondary level through United States government programs such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core Standards, and the tertiary level through the Spellings Commission on Higher Education. Danyelle’s comment demonstrates the current cultural assumption that education should be primarily for professional preparation for a job. However, this quotation also shows the connection between high school and college because stakeholders from both levels implement programs like dual credit. Although discussions about the relationship between secondary and tertiary education frequently concentrate on a unidirectional process, programs such as dual credit reveal the ongoing dialogue between secondary and tertiary education which can benefit students, instructors, and administrators, specifically in conversations on how to conceptualize and assess literacy.

In the third quotation, Justin, a student at Hightree, relates the economic benefits that dual credit offers in comparison to other programs, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, and the cost of courses in college. Created by the College Board, Advanced Placement is a program that offers college-level curriculum and examinations to high school students.<sup>1</sup> It differs from International Baccalaureate

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<sup>1</sup> College Board is a non-profit organization that is “committed to increasing the number of students who earn a college degree and are prepared to succeed in the 21st century” (“College Board”). The organization administers programs such as AP, CLEP, PSAT/NMSQT, and EXCEerator. It also creates and assesses exams utilized for college readiness such as the AP exams, PSAT, SAT, and SAT Subject Tests. The

because IB is not tied to the College Board. IB is a non-profit educational foundation that has four programs which also offer college-level curriculum and examinations to students.<sup>2</sup> Justin's thoughts on dual credit reflect a common discourse on how these Pre-Baccalaureate courses save time and money. It is a practical view of capitalism in relation to higher education, but more specifically his comments echo the economic environment in the United States while this study took place. Many student participants chose dual-credit composition courses because they were considered a "financial deal" by their parents. Several of the participants also made choices about the college they would attend the next year based on how much money they could save. Trying to save money in 2011-12, when many of these students decided on schools, was a significant factor in part because of the implications of the 2008 recession.

As student participants worked through these reasons for taking dual-credit composition courses, they also compared the benefits of a class to a standardized test, which would be a requirement for AP and a part of the requirement along with coursework for IB. Justin explains how the credit comes from the grade in the dual-credit course, which to him is substantially better than the AP and IB option of a standardized test at the end of the year. The grade given at the end of class saves time compared to waiting for a national test score. However, it also addresses what can be both a benefit and limitation to dual-credit programs in that they are practiced and assessed locally.

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College Board works with 7 million students and administered more than 3.2 million AP exams in the 2010 academic year.

<sup>2</sup> The IB program works to "develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world" ("International Baccalaureate"). It works with 3,483 schools in 144 countries with over 1,057,000 students aged 3 to 19 years. Students receive college credit by IB coursework over time and exams. IB differs from AP because it is a two-year program of study that includes 13 courses, an extended essay, and creativity, action, and service requirements. AP is any independent course, out of more than 30, where a student can take a standardized on the course content to receive college-level credit. An AP exam costs \$89 in the United States. Outside of the United States, it costs \$117. The registration for assessment of IB Diploma is \$129. The fee for each exam is \$88.

Currently, dual-credit programs operate under the authority of state legislation, a state agency, or local agreements between school districts and colleges or community colleges. Therefore, while AP and IB standardize their assessment of students for entry into first-year composition through national tests and coursework, dual credit remains a local practice regulated by states and/or school districts. Local educational contexts are inevitable, but also particularly controversial in the standardized assessment culture because local contexts create variability that makes standardization more difficult. Depending on this locality, there is a benefit of the student receiving credit for process work for 16 weeks instead of receiving it for taking a test. The semester-long course connects more with how a student's writing and understanding of literacy would be able to develop in an on-campus college composition course. On the other hand, in many local programs, there is no clear assessment of what counts as a dual-credit class. Students then may take a literature course at the high school that does not align with the sponsoring university's outcomes, and there is no oversight to question it.

This question of oversight is represented in the last quotation with a college administrator's view of how dual credit operates. John notes that the university helps students who would not normally have a chance to take a college course because of free and reduced tuition. Nevertheless, John references that many administrators involved in dual credit are not sure of its identity. John was the Dual-Credit Coordinator for the English Department at Southern Urban University during this study, and had a unique position because he worked in the English Department, but was paid by the Provost's Office. John had to continually work with not only the composition director and instructors' views of what dual credit should be, but also the views of the many

administrators outside the English Department who were in charge of the dual-credit program's funding. He observed that although the program does save money for the university, it is also a way to reach out to students who are underprivileged and not sure if they can afford college so they can try some classes before paying full tuition. This view of "community outreach" is problematized by the fact that of the seven students I interviewed for this project, all were already motivated and had access to go to college before the dual-credit class. It is difficult to know how much this program functions as community outreach, though it does inform the point of contact between the college and local high schools.

This dissertation addresses the competing conceptions of literacy held by stakeholders in a dual-credit program at a metropolitan university and four local high schools.<sup>3</sup> Although this dissertation focuses on a dual-credit program, it is not necessarily about the values and limitations of dual credit, but rather how material, political, and institutional forces, such as the concentration on acceleration in education, the increasingly corporatized university, and the dialogue between secondary and tertiary education, influences notions of literacy in an outcomes-based era where programs like dual credit are becoming more prevalent. In order to study stakeholders' conceptions, this project involved interviews with twenty institutional stakeholders, including students who took the dual-credit composition course, secondary and tertiary instructors who taught it, and secondary and tertiary administrators involved with the creation and oversight of the dual-credit program both at the department level and outside of it. For a dual-credit program, these stakeholders inform the values and assumptions about what literacy

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of this project, there were six dual-credit composition partnerships between this university and local high schools. For this project, I concentrated on four that fit the limitations of this dissertation. These were all schools that after contact from me, agreed to participate in this study.

means, who it involves, and who sets the terms for access to literacy. This dissertation also addresses how administrators and instructors work within institutional conceptions of literacy and how they conceive of the identity of a literacy educator.

This first chapter provides a history of dual-credit composition in the last forty years. It addresses the discussion of dual-credit courses in composition thus far in the discipline by tracing the relationship between secondary and tertiary education in dual-credit writing. This chapter also analyzes literature on how corporate culture and standardized tests influence the current educational system in the United States. It next reflects on theories of context and institutional power in New Literacy Studies, specifically David Barton and Mary Hamilton's work, in order to demonstrate how broader social goals and power differentials shape dual-credit stakeholders' conceptions of literacy. Additionally, this chapter explains the qualitative nature of this work as interviews were conducted and transcribed along with dual-credit course and program documents analyzed for greater understanding of the participants' points of views. Finally, this chapter introduces the following chapters in this dissertation.

### **From Marginalization to Proliferation: The History of Dual-Credit Writing Courses**

Since their inception in the 1970's, dual-credit writing courses have grown extensively throughout the United States. One of the earliest and most prominent dual-credit programs, Syracuse University's Project Advance, began in 1972 to address senioritis in local high schools (Boswell 8). This program started by working with high-achieving students who needed a more challenging high school curriculum because they already completed all their graduation requirements. As described on its "About Us"

page, SUPA requires students “to deeply explore and thoroughly interact with college-level subject matter” while also preparing students for the transition between secondary and tertiary education (“SUPA”). In the 1972-73 academic year, SUPA offered five introductory Syracuse University courses in nine schools to more than 400 students. Now, it offers 38 courses in 184 schools to 9,400 students (“SUPA”). The program currently works with students who are not only high achieving, but also students that outside of dual credit might not have access to college courses because of the financial burden. High school instructors trained by SUPA professors teach the classes as part of their regular teaching load. Therefore, not only are the students challenged by the college coursework, but the sponsoring university and local high school teachers also create a relationship with one another. The courses taught at the high schools have the same instructional goals as their counterparts on a college campus, and they also have identical methods of assessing grades. SUPA has served as a model program for other universities, such as Indiana University, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (“SUPA”).

The first community colleges to develop dual-credit writing programs, such as LaGuardia Community College and Kingsborough Community College, were also influenced by SUPA. LaGuardia’s Middle College High School, which began in 1974, differs from the beginnings of SUPA because it focuses on high school students at risk of dropping out and includes financial scholarships so students do not have to pay. Unlike SUPA’s origins where many of its students were already assumed to go to college, Middle College High School’s dual credit encourages students to graduate from high

school and think about the option of college, an option that might have not seemed feasible by the student before taking the dual-credit course. The targeting of “at-risk students” at LaGuardia’s Middle College High School demonstrated that dual credit could be a program of access for students from low-income backgrounds.

Kingsborough’s College Now program, initiated in 1984, diverges from both SUPA and LaGuardia because it centers on “average achievers.” This term describes students in the range of 65<sup>th</sup> to 80<sup>th</sup> percentile ranks in high school. Findings in education demonstrate initiatives for “average achievers” are effective in increasing rates of college entry, retention, and completion (Crook, 1990; Kleiman, 2001; Burg, 2002). It can be argued then that dual-credit programs help students achieve in college and eventually graduate while doing it more efficiently than without taking any Pre-Baccalaureate courses. However, many of the population of average achievers would go to college anyway because they are achievers. Even if dual-credit courses facilitate college retention, there are many factors in whether a student continues on to college and receives a degree. In 2000, the success of College Now expanded from 56 New York City high schools to 160. From 2001 to 2005, the number of students served in College Now grew 47 percent (Kim et al., 3). The eventual goal for the program is to have every college in the CUNY system provide dual-credit opportunities to every New York City high school.

In the 1980’s, dual-credit courses became much more popular as they spread throughout the United States. In response to student interest in dual-credit programs, several states have implemented policies that provide students with the option of this acceleration. Many states view dual credit as a way for students to start college earlier

and also make sure all students have access to some kind of college education. One such program is Minnesota's Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) that began in 1985. In this program, any 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade student in Minnesota public high schools who meet the requirements of college can take a dual-credit course on campus that would be paid for by the state. In 2011, almost 25,000 students earned credit from the state's 31 colleges and universities. PSEO educators see this dual-credit program as a "valuable and effective way to enhance student learning" as they move from high school to college ("Postsecondary"). The Minnesota PSEO has been copied in other Midwestern states, such as Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, and Ohio. It also inspired another program called Running Start in Washington state in 1990. Similar to PSEO, this program offers 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students a chance to take college courses on the state. Unlike the Minnesota PSEO though, Running Start has been somewhat controversial because of the speed at which students seem to finish their first two years of college, mainly because some Running Start students actually complete an Associate's degree in those two years, and therefore graduate at the same time from both high school and college.

According to work by Hans Andrew, all fifty states have some current dual-enrollment opportunity. In a 2005 study by the National Center for Educational Statistics, 71 percent of public high schools across the nation offered dual-credit courses.<sup>4</sup> From 2001 to 2008, the number of high school students enrolled in college courses tripled from

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<sup>4</sup> There are multiple titles for a dual-credit class. According to a 2004 survey from the U.S. Department of Education, "dual enrollment refers to high school students who earn college credits for courses taken through a postsecondary institution. Different institutions have different names for dual enrollment, including 'dual credit,' 'concurrent enrollment,' 'joint enrollment,' etc." Recent definitions differentiate "concurrent enrollment" from "dual enrollment" by explaining that "concurrent enrollment" options are taught on the high school campus by high school faculty or university adjuncts rather than taught on the college campus ("About Concurrent Enrollment"). This explanation relates to the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships' definition. I refer to the program as dual credit in this dissertation because that is what the program I studied titled it.

5,400 to 17,000 in Kentucky (“SREB Policy Brief” 4). As dual-credit offerings grow, current secondary and tertiary writing programs and pedagogies work to respond to not only these programs, but the pedagogical, material, and institutional concerns that inform dual credit. The most comprehensive work on dual credit nationally is the 2004-05 study by Melinda Karp, Thomas R. Bailey, Katherine Hughes, and Baranda Fermin. The report points to ten features of a program that vary: target population, admission requirements, location, student mix, background characteristics of the instructors, course content, method of credit-earning, program intensity, funding, and state mandates (7). Since dual credit is such a local practice that occurs between the state, sponsoring university and local high schools, there is much variation in how every state approaches it. According to Karp et al., 12 states do not have any legislation or state regulation. This finding demonstrates that the institutions decide how to function on their own. The 38 states that do have policies on dual credit do not address all ten features. Student admissions and finances are most often addressed by state policy (Karp et al., 7). A main argument about state-run dual-credit programs by Karp et al. is how there is no specific model, nor value for a specific model:

States have a vested interest in ensuring that 1) their financial investment in dual enrollment is used widely, and 2) dual-enrollment programs remain college-level and do not dilute the meaning of credit earned through post-secondary institutions. States have less of an interest in promoting a specific model, as it seems possible to achieve program goals through a variety of structures. (10)

Since dual-credit programs are run in a local context, based mostly with the university or community college and high school, it becomes very difficult to implement one specific

way for programs to be run. However, since there is such diversity in how dual-credit programs function, assessment as to whether they are successful becomes problematic because they are all so different. This lack of specifics also becomes an issue of transferability as to whether a university or community college will accept transfer credits from programs that they have no knowledge are college-level or not.

One way to direct programmatic assessment is by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships initiated in 1999. NACEP serves as a national accrediting body for dual-credit partnerships. This organization works to demonstrate some sense of organization in dual-credit programs, particularly because many of them function through state or local mandating bodies. NACEP calls these programs concurrent enrollment, defining it as “offer[ing] college courses to high school students” (“National”). NACEP limits the definition to concurrent enrollment writing occurring “In the high school,” “During the regular school day,” and “Taught by high school teachers” (“National”). NACEP works to make sure that the concurrent enrollment courses are just as rigorous as the on-campus college courses by applying measurable criteria in five categories to programs: curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation. There are 83 concurrent-enrollment programs accredited by NACEP. One issue of the assessment by NACEP is how the organization will only assess the whole concurrent-enrollment program at a university with all the disciplines. Therefore, a concurrent-enrollment writing program cannot be assessed and validated on its own by NACEP. It has to be evaluated with every other program, such as Art History, Calculus, Chemistry, and Music Appreciation. Another issue with this nationwide assessment is the exactness of the definition for concurrent enrollment by NACEP. This definition is

problematic because it excludes the college instructors (most of the time who are graduate teaching assistants or part-time lecturers) who are part of how many programs function. Since every program at a university must be assessed together and because of the narrowed definition and name, oversight of concurrent enrollment cannot occur on a wide scale nationally through NACEP, and many programs do not participate in it. A more thorough assessment would have to consider the multiple and local ways a dual-credit program can function in order to assess it more in depth.

### **Composition's Response to Dual Credit**

Much of the work in composition on dual credit has been definitional. This focus originates because of the nebulosity of dual credit—it can be courses taught by high school instructors at the high school, by college instructors at the high school, by college instructors at the college, courses taught with only high school students, and courses taught with a mixed class. Although college classes can be diverse in population in terms of factors like race, social class, gender, and sexual orientation just to name a few, they do not usually have high school students in them. Students in a college class are finished with high school and identify themselves as “college” students. Conversely, dual-credit students are in an awkward position. They are both high school and college students, doing college work, but for the most part in a high school classroom. This multiplicity of educational identity also occurs with many dual-credit instructors as well because they are simultaneously high school and college instructors, doing the curriculum of college instructors, but still under the standards of their local high school.

Since dual-credit programs are local to the state or school district in which they operate, some are rigorous, like the examples named earlier in the chapter, while others are essentially high school courses that students luckily receive college credit for taking. Since the inception of NACEP, the latter seems to have become less frequent. However, these classes have existed for quite a while, and therefore shape many composition scholars' and instructors' views of dual-credit programs. In 1991, dual-credit writing courses were addressed for the first time in a composition journal. In *Writing Program Administration*, David Schwalm asserts dual-credit programs' growth throughout the United States would become a "potential threat" because they would decrease the amount of college composition courses taught. If many students during high school took the classes, the demand for college classes would significantly decrease, as would "our students' chances of developing college-level literacy" (51). Schwalm highlights the complexity of dual credit because colleges are not sure if dual-credit programs are teaching "college-level" work. He also reinforces the assumptions that "college-level literacy" must be done physically at a college campus instead of a different space that still offers a college curriculum. This anxiety might seem to be elitist in attitude, but it emphasizes the lack of definition of dual-credit programs that makes scholars, teachers, and administrators uncomfortable.

In the same issue of *WPA*, Michael Vivion counters Schwalm by asserting how the nebulosity of dual credit helps students because it does its work locally, which diverges from other options for exemption that operate nationally such as AP and IB discussed earlier in this chapter (59). Administrators and instructors of a dual-credit program at a high school can pinpoint students who they think would do well for these

courses. Some of these students are ones that do not necessarily take AP and IB regularly, whether for financial reasons or because they did not think they were college-ready enough to do so. Administrators and instructors can help challenge these students to take the dual-credit course. This local interest assists with certain underprivileged students recognizing that they would be able to do college work, and therefore could succeed in college. It is important to note that dual-credit programs should have the same standards as the university or college they represent. Therefore, instructors could technically not enroll just anyone in the class, only students who meet the requirements, though ignorance of these standards occurs in less established programs. This ignorance of standards is part of what makes Schwalm uncomfortable about dual credit because he thinks any high school student, even ones who are not qualified, could take the classes. Then, if almost all students did this in high school, there would be a lower demand for college instructors, and therefore college composition.

Schwalm discusses secondary education in a negative manner because he views it as competition for on-campus composition courses. He misses how secondary and tertiary education can learn from one another in the dual-credit space. Not only can dual credit help students, but Vivion also argues that it can unite instructors from both high school and college in a “mutually beneficial professional undertaking” (60). For two disciplines that at times do similar research on dual credit, there is not much reading or citing of education scholars in composition on the subject. Most likely, the lack of citation is because of traditional disciplinary boundaries where scholars prove credibility by quoting the scholars of their own field. However, it makes sense that two fields which are both part of dual credit would collaborate with one another or at least read one

another's work on the topic. There are overlaps in how both disciplines have investigated the complexities of physically and mentally being in high school while taking college classes and critiques both disciplines have made of these programs (McCarthy, 1999; Frick and Blattner, 2002; Thompson, 2002; McComas, 2010). The focuses of the critiques are mostly on the level of maturity and extent of student learning that occurs within the course. For instance, Carol Rohrer McCarthy explains in *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education* that most dual-credit students "likely lack experience with the organizational tools and time management required of college students" (100). Her results show how dual-credit students are not used to the responsibility on them to do the work instead of on their instructors to ask and remind them about it. Because of the subjectivity of teaching and student personality, it depends on the context of the class. Some high school students are already not reminded of their homework and other tasks in their courses while some college students are reminded every class meeting of the homework. Similar to Schwalm's critique earlier, McCarthy asserts that these students are not probably ready for their identity as college students because they are not physically in college yet.

In their 2009 *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* article, Kara Taczak and William Thelin interviewed a college instructor and both college and high school students in a mixed composition class, and found the instructor was not informed beforehand that he would have high school students in his course. Once he did know, the instructor felt pressure to lower standards for the students in the class as a whole since he had not prepared for this mixed population. Additionally, the college students in the course reported on a lack of maturity from the high school students that was a distraction to

learning. Taczak and Thelin argue that “[o]ur study indicates that taking a college-level course did not serve the . . . students in this dual enrollment program” (20). The students in the class that Taczak and Thelin studied were fourteen and fifteen year olds, ages less common than many dual-credit courses that involve juniors and seniors in high school. Nevertheless, similar to McCarthy’s work, these results indicate the distinctiveness of high school and college in terms of not only knowledge, but also maturity that has been found in both secondary education and composition research.

As dual credit has become more prevalent, discussion of the history of the relationship between secondary and tertiary education has gained attention in composition scholarship, where journals such as *CCCC* and *Research in the Teaching of English* have dedicated sections of recent issues to the history of the National Council of Teachers of English and its ever-changing connection to the Conference on College Composition and Communication (Brass and Burns, 2011; Dutro and Collins, 2011; Reid, 2011; L’Eplattenier, 2011; Gilyard, 2011; Lindemann, 2011). Much of this scholarship focuses on the history of marginalization of composition from literature and education from English. As Erica Lindemann explains, NCTE began as an organization in 1911 against elite colleges such as Harvard forcing uniform reading lists in the curriculum of high school English. The secondary teachers were not only reacting to the reading lists, but the assumptions by the college professors that students were not well prepared for college by their high school teachers. This contested relationship has remained between the two disciplines because of the long-held perceptions of each and lack of relationship between secondary and tertiary education. In her discussion of the formation of CCCC, Shelley Reid writes, “As CCCC professionalized, it necessarily

focused on creating a place for composition scholarship that extends beyond general education practices, and the membership largely came to accept and even reinforce the idea that college writing teachers differed substantially from those in primary and secondary education” (688). In order for both NCTE and CCCC to create their own organizational identity, they had to distinguish themselves from the other education levels. In doing so, they both established disciplines and pedagogies that have led to misconceptions about each field and what it expects from the other.

These ideas about the transition from high school to college in dual credit relate to composition’s discussions of transfer. In her recent *CCC* article, “Flowing and Freestyling: Learning from Adult Students about Process Knowledge Transfer,” Michelle Navarre Cleary writes, “Overwhelmingly, research on writing transfer assumes students move from grammar to high school to college to work in one uninterrupted progression” (661). Cleary then explains how writing in other contexts, such as at work, at home, and in communities influences students’ notions of writing. In “Mapping the Questions: The State of Writing-Related Transfer Research,” Jessie Moore explains how research on writing transfer has focused on transfer at college from first-year composition to other courses. For example, Elizabeth Wardle in “Understanding ‘Transfer’ from FYC,” asks, “Do students perceive FYC as helping them with later writing assignments across the university?” (70). Although there has been a focus on transfer from first-year composition to other courses, there has not been study on what students transfer from their high school courses into the dual-credit course, and what they transfer from dual credit into their future courses. This is in part because study of dual-credit coursework is just beginning.

As dual credit becomes a more studied space, there are attempts at collaboration between secondary and tertiary stakeholders at both the scholarly and pedagogical levels. Although the relationship has been contested, some composition scholars have worked to collaborate more with secondary education instructors. Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg's *What is "College-Level" Writing?* includes chapters by both high school and college instructors on what defines writing at the university level. Sullivan and Tinberg write that "this may be the first time such a diverse group of teachers, students, and other interested parties have been garnered together to discuss" the question of college writing, which occurred in 2006 (xiii). In one chapter, high school English teacher Milka Mustenikova Mosley explains,

In order to understand our separate worlds, high school and college, I propose that we establish a line of communication between high school English teachers and first-year college composition instructors. College instructors have to become aware of our reality and take into consideration all the responsibilities we high school teachers have in our daily English classes and provide us with advice and practical workshops so we can help our students become better prepared for college-level classes. (67)

Even though Mosley calls on collaboration, there is still a power differential established here that education is unidirectional to prepare students for the next step instead of seeing how both high school and college instructors can learn from one another. As more dialogue occurs between high school and college writing, there is still a focus on what secondary teachers can learn from compositionists instead of what we as a field can take from secondary educators' knowledge about writing and pedagogy.

Some compositionists have worked to value high school teachers' knowledge more in research particularly about dual credit. In much of her work on dual credit, Christine Farris works to highlight the knowledge that instructors, particularly secondary instructors, have about pedagogy and writing. Her chapter centers on the Advance College Project, a twenty year-old cooperative dual-credit program between Indiana University and ninety high schools in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. In this project, Farris created a program where high school instructors take a course on current methods in college composition funded by the university. They also participate in a composition colloquium for sessions to share pedagogical concerns and materials developed (104-5). At this colloquium, the secondary instructors present their own experiences and insight to other instructors. This is a beneficial experience because it reinforces both high school and college instructors as experts. Farris explains the collaboration with local high schools has had "to work through some longstanding institutional assumptions that elide the important differences between high school and college—including the notion that any outreach by postsecondary institutions to high schools is automatically a smart and necessary thing" (106). There is a point of contact here, but Farris also demonstrates how complicated it is because of the attitudes people already have about each educational institution.

More focus on dual-credit writing programs has led to discussions on how both secondary and tertiary instructors experience the composition courses. Joanna Castner Post, Vicki Beard Simmons, and Stephanie Vanderslice found from survey data on high school partnerships with the University of Central Arkansas that "the experiences of high school teachers in this study were overwhelmingly positive" when teaching dual-credit

courses (174). Ninety percent of the teachers surveyed felt more connected to their discipline after teaching the course and seventy percent of teachers reported being re-energized as teachers from involvement with dual credit (175). These statistics show a great optimism to the experience instructors have teaching dual-credit courses. While this percentage seems to indicate benefits to dual credit in terms of instructor experience, much qualitative work concludes with limitations, such as student immaturity, instructor isolation, and administrative confusion (Bodmer, 2006; Taczak and Thelin, 2009; McCrimmon, 2010). In *Delivering College Composition*, Bodmer focuses on distance dual-credit courses through interactive television (ITV) where studio ITV classrooms were located on both the community college and high school campuses. Students that were in the dual-credit class sat in these rooms during the allotted time so that the instructor could teach to all of them. Many higher administrators at Bodmer's college thought these classrooms would provide access to students in rural areas who otherwise would not have the chance to take a dual-credit course. In the first day of the class, because of computer mishaps with class size, the instructor ended up having 70 students in the class both on-campus and at the three separate high schools. The instructor was in a state of worry for much of the course because of the technology issues that arose, but also because of the level of maturity that students could handle in coursework. In one illuminating scene, Bodmer describes a principal ripping the cord out of a TV because the instructor showed a video that was deemed "filth" for teenagers to see (122). This scene again demonstrates the inevitability of the separateness which occurs between high school and college even when the curriculum is dual credit. As much as dialogue occurs

between secondary and tertiary education, they are still two different institutions with varying political, material, and institutional purposes that form discussions of dual credit.

### **Political, Material, and Institutional Shaping of Dual Credit**

Research on dual-credit has recently highlighted how non-profits and businesses influence stakeholder interest in these courses (Hansen, 2010; Farris, 2009, 2010; McClure, Enerson, Johnson, Lipetzky, and Pope, 2010) In *College Credit for Writing in High School*, Christine Farris explains the prevalence of private groups such as non-profits and businesses in public educational policy at this point in time in the United States. She points out the connection of dual-credit programs to the larger discussion of the increasingly commodified and corporate culture of education because some regard these as “greater, quicker, and easier access to college,” yet with this efficiency composition can become a “commodity easily appropriated, sold, outsourced, and knocked off” (272). The acceleration of students into college courses while they are in high school has its benefits, which have been discussed in this chapter. Yet, there are limitations because of the view of education in this acceleration. For dual credit, education to a certain extent becomes about the “credit,” about obtaining what is needed to “get ahead” in order to receive a degree that has value in society. Since there is this drive to finish the composition course as fast as possible, it becomes less about learning to write, and more about how to move on to one’s major in order to obtain an occupation. The purposes of education shift and rival the purposes of corporate culture more with questions like “How efficient can I be to obtain my degree?” and “What can I get out of this class credit wise?” becoming prevalent. These are indeed important questions,

frequently asked while an individual works towards a college degree. The issue is that these questions are becoming more valued by stakeholders than questions like “What can I learn from this class?” and “How can I get the most out of college coursework for my own learning and learning about myself?”

Hansen and Farris relate how specific organizations, like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has a trust endowment of \$36.2 billion currently, influence primary and secondary education with the assets they provide to local schools and individuals (“Foundation”). Because of their stature and wealth, the Gates have been able to become part of the discussion about education even though neither of them specialize in the discipline. Their mission for equality for all students in the United States to achieve “the attainment of secondary and post-secondary education with genuine economic value” is laudable (“Foundation”). However, the ways that the Gates Foundation works to help education forms a business model sense, attempting to take ownership over the “deficient” schools and firing teachers instead of trying to help them. This could be in part because the Gates do not understand how different public education, a democratic right for all students, is from business where there is necessary competition. In other words, the Gates Foundation takes on quite a capitalist sense in the work they are doing for public education.

This influence of private interest groups has always occurred ever since there has been education, but has become more noticeable since educational institutions began to obtain less public funding from the government. In *Beyond English Inc.*, David Downing, Claude Mark Hurlbert, and Paula Mathieu discuss how beginning in the 1970s, views of education as a commodity changed in the university, and specifically the Humanities,

because of the decrease in tenure-track positions and increase in contingent labor. There has also been a decrease in the last 30 years in public funding for higher education. Therefore, in this time, there is even more dependence on corporations for support by universities (23). Primary and secondary institutions also do not have enough capital on their own to help underprivileged students in their schools. That is where organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are significant because they are able to facilitate students' access to education and therefore their learning. However, they still do it with a particular ideology that is problematic.

There is a tension between neoliberal economic forces and literacy demonstrated in the dual-credit space that represent general questions about the extent to which literacy education is about creating a certain kind of “worker” in the global marketplace. In “Are Markets in Education Democratic? Neoliberal Globalism, Vouchers, and the Politics of Choice,” Michael Apple argues that the neoliberal view represents a “vision of students as human capital. The world is intensely competitive economically, and students—as future workers—must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively” (214). In terms of this viewpoint, choice becomes crucial because students and their parents are consumers in the education system. Apple continues, “For neoliberals, the world in essence is a vast supermarket. ‘Consumer choice’ is the guarantor of (market) democracy. In effect, education is seen as simply one more product like bread, cars, and television” (215). In this manner then, education is about individual choice with not much worry for the consequences on the collective. It is a matter of competition of who can perform the best in the economy. The neoliberal notion that choice of education exists disparate from other factors reinforces the privileged.

Therefore, the relationship between the economy and literacy education can impact one another, especially in the notion of choice that neoliberalism reinforces.

This commodity driven identity of education has come to dominate public discussions of primary and secondary education with catastrophic diction utilized (“Classroom ‘Crisis,’” NBC; “More Schools Likely to Lose Accreditation, Experts Say,” *USA Today*; “Solving the Education Crisis,” CBS; “U.S. Faults State’s Progress on Race to the Top Goals” *The New York Times*). News stories continually relate to the “education crisis” occurring in United States schools right now because of standardized test scores and how they negatively compare to the rest of the world. The focus in the media is about education in terms of competition—comparing the United States to other countries, comparing private and public schools, comparing charter and public. The recent documentary *Waiting for Superman* (2010) follows this pattern in its portrayal of the “achievement gap” and the role of teaching unions in the United States public education system. After the film’s release, *Time* published an education issue and planned a conference built around the school reform ideas of the film. More recently, Exxon Mobile has released advertisements detailing the rankings of American students in subjects such as math and science compared to students of the rest of the world. Exxon’s tagline is “Let’s Solve This.”

These discussions about achievement tend to emerge in times of economic hardship, such as the economic recession that the U.S. seems to be coming out of currently. In 1983, the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* by President Ronald Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education happened as the U.S. was coming out of the recession of the early 1980’s. *A Nation at*

*Risk* contributed to the sense that American schools are “failing” students. It mostly concentrated around the issue of schools failing to prepare students for a competitive national workforce and that there needed to be a study of the “quality” of teaching and learning in all levels of education. The report employs catastrophic language throughout to move the audience about the state of the United States school system:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned only with one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and people. (9)

Words such as “eroded,” “threatens,” and “risk” represent the worry that the United States was not only declining in education, but also as a country in its economic, social, and political power. It is logical that since the economic recession of 2008, this attention to education and the “crisis” occurring has arisen again. Financial investment by corporations and non-profits may be needed currently in education because of lack of funds. However, there has to be discussion of how this financial backing informs curriculum and student learning, specifically when corporate stakeholders advise schools to mold education into more of a business model.

Political forces also affect education and literacy in the increasing focus on standardization of outcomes and assessment in education. Educational scholarship on government initiatives such as NCLB and Race to the Top (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Russo, 2010; Mathis, 2011; Glass and Nygreen, 2011) demonstrates the complexities of this standardization in terms of students' learning and investment in school. Educational research has also indicated that the issues of NCLB in terms of definitions and ways to teach literacy have become focused on economics and competition (Maniates and Mahiri, 2011; Dove, Pearson, and Hooper, 2010; Edmondson and D'Urso, 2009). Obama's Race to the Top initiative calls for students to "out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world" (704-5). Many college instructors see these government initiatives as not affecting their own teaching and scholarship. However, they receive the students in college who have been through this standardization process in elementary and secondary schools, which will inevitably influence how students perceive schooling, learning, and literacy. Dual-credit programs are points of contact for high schools and college that bring the differences in power and perception in terms of policy and assessment into the open, but they also demonstrate the conflicts and tensions in this dialogue.

Dual-credit courses have been one outgrowth of these economic and political changes, specifically because most courses are taught by contingent labor and many occur at the high school campus, which makes them cheaper to operate. It is also because of this concentration on financial plans that dual-credit programs are so ambiguous in how they are defined because they are administered and taught multiple ways to save money locally. This focus contributes to the difficulty of assessing how effective a

program is because it is challenging for a writing program administrator to create certain standards and work with local high schools and other college administrators when they are also in charge of writing on campus. Not investing time and money in assessing dual-credit programs sends a message to stakeholders that this course is more about financial gain than student learning, which contributes to some compositionists' views, like Tinberg and Nadeau's, as to whether dual-credit courses focuses mostly on retention by asking whether these programs "enhance student learning" (706).

### **New Literacy Studies and Conceptions of Literacy in Dual-Credit Programs**

The discussions of literacy in this project are influenced by scholars in the New Literacy Studies (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Besnier and Street, 1994; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1988) that address power differentials in literacy by asking whose literacies are dominant and whose are marginalized, and for what reasons. New Literacy Studies also emphasizes that literacy is dependent on the social and economic context of a particular culture. This emphasis on literacy in terms of context combats earlier notions by social anthropologists, linguists, and sociologists that literacy is "autonomous." Brian Street calls this conception of literacy autonomous if it contains a coherent idea that literacy is "neutral" and "technical" in nature, and has a connection to cognitive ability.

In one chapter of *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Street analyzes social anthropologist Jack Goody's findings about the distinction in literate and non-literate groups. Goody argues that if some societies are more "logical" than others, this "logic" does not come from cognitive ability necessarily, but from the acquisition of literacy that

forms these abilities to occur. Through analysis of Goody's writing, Street explains that autonomous literacy is determinism and does not recognize the multiple contexts in which multiple literacies are based. Street also shows the privileging of certain kinds of literacy that reflect in the autonomous model that reflect conventions of a dominant social class instead of universal logic. In his discussion of Patricia Greenfield's study of the difference between schooled and unschooled children of the Wolof of Senegal, Street explains how "[o]ne does not get the impression, however, that Greenfield recognises this polemical and ideological aspect of her description of unschooled thinking. Instead it is presented as though it really were neutral, detached and scientific, and that the description reliably tells us of Wolof mental states rather than of Wolof cultural conventions" (34).

Reflecting on the power relations embedded in literacy, Street argues for questioning assumptions about literacy that fall under an autonomous model. He proposes an ideological model that considers literacy in terms of social relations and ideology, reflecting on how different literacies depend on different contexts in which they occur:

It is always embedded in some social form, in conventions such as letter writing, charters, catechisms, business styles, academic 'texts,' etc., and it is always learnt in relation to these uses in specific social conditions. These conditions include theories of pedagogy and practices of hegemony that help to determine the meaning of literacy for particular practitioners. (43)

Under the ideological model, different social and economic conditions form literacy and how it is conceptualized by the individuals who use it. Street demonstrates that literacy is much more subjective than scholars think as it depends on the power relations,

institutions, and individuals involved in the context who construct literacy and how stakeholders conceptualize it.

James Paul Gee's *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses* agrees with Street's notion of ideological literacy, and specifies that "cognitive, social, interactional, cultural, political, institutional, economic, moral, and historic contexts" all inform what literacy means to a certain person (xi). Gee also contributes much of his book to arguing how the autonomous view privileges a natural and scientific idea of literacy that "cloaks literacy's connection to power, to social identity, and to ideologies, often in the service of privileging certain types of literacies and certain types of people" (62). Much of Gee's research is about understanding literacy in specific contexts and how different literacies can both reinforce and yet contrast with one another. Through his coining of the term capital D "Discourse," Gee expands work in New Literacy Studies by tying literacy to Discourse, and explaining that individuals are always involved in many Discourses that make up their identities. For instance, one can be a law student, and know the Discourse of law school while also being uncomfortable with the Discourse because it conflicts with the Discourses she is part of outside of law school (160). The significance of Gee's work to this project is how conceptions about literacy marginalize certain people, specifically in school when students who come from lower income backgrounds do not have the secondary Discourse of school already enmeshed with their own primary Discourse. These students are less likely to know the dominant literacies already that are part of school, and must learn them once they begin school in an apprentice-ship fashion. This is also more difficult because of the amount of students compared to instructors.

Therefore, students who do not have the literacies that are already privileged will frequently have a more difficult time in school.

This dissertation is mostly drawing off of the work by David Barton and Mary Hamilton's "Literacy Practices" from *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context*, which is similar to Street and Gee in its acknowledgement that literacy depends on context. Barton and Hamilton establish six propositions about the nature of literacy as social practice: literacy is a social practice, different literacies are associated with different domains of life, literacy practices are patterned by power relationships and social institutions, literacy practices are embedded in broader social goals, literacy is historically situated, and literacy practices change (2). The third proposition, "[l]iteracy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible, and influential than others," relates to Gee's notion of Discourses and how they conflict depending upon power relationships. Yet, Barton and Hamilton do not use the term Discourses, but instead concentrate on "literacy practices." They define "literacy practices" as "cultural ways of utilising literacies" that is more abstract than activities and tasks (2). The literacy practice depends upon the context which it occurs, but also on the power relationships in this specific context of society. When literacy practices are shaped by these institutions and power relationships, they also shape the institutions and power relationships. The literacy practices are both acted upon and the actor. Barton and Hamilton cite how social institutions such as education frequently supports dominant literacy practices because of the power those practices possess in an educational context compared to "vernacular literacies" that are less supported. They do not concentrate on the relationship between literacy and identity as in

depth as Gee does, but more on the specific practices, which include people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy, and discourses of literacy.

The reinforcement of dominant literacies leads to another proposition, the fourth one, that "[l]iteracy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices" (2). Barton and Hamilton provide the example of a woman named Rita cooking a lemon pie, and how the goal of the reading of the recipe is to bake this pie. However, they also recognize that there are other broader goals, such as "providing food and carrying for children, and it reflects broader social relationships and gendered divisions of labor" (6). The practice of this cooking literacy has more consequences than one would assume because it demonstrates economic, political, and social forces that shape the reading of cookbooks in general, particularly by women who have been traditionally marked as the gender who will provide domestically for a family.

Barton and Hamilton also consider how these literacy practices change through "*processes of informal learning and sensemaking as well as formal education and training*" (7). Gee's Discourses explain as how identities change, so do notions of literacies in certain contexts, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. The same is true of Barton and Hamilton's point that literacy practices change as people process learning from different contexts, though again they do not focus on identity to the extent in which Gee does. As one becomes a part of the formal educational system, then the system to which they are a part of will inform or at least make one that he or she contends with the system. The educational system, which is informed and informs political, economic, and social forces, will have an effect on a student's notion of literacy as they go through that system.

Although there have been studies on dual-credit programs in composition, as examined earlier, most of these have focused on the definition of dual credit, dialogue between secondary instructor and tertiary administrator, and experiences of instructors and students in the class. What have yet to be explored are students, instructors, and administrators' conceptions of literacy in the space of dual credit. This dissertation project considers Barton and Hamilton's three propositions in its discussion of how political, economic, and social forces at both the secondary and tertiary level shape institutional stakeholders' conceptions of what literacy means and how it functions in a dual-credit writing program. Many stakeholders possess competing notions of literacy as they discuss the program of dual credit and their expectations of college writing.

In this project, I propose a qualitative study of the institutional stakeholders at a dual-credit program involving an urban public research university (Southern Urban University) and four local public high schools (Cary High School, Dean High School, Hightree High School, and Woods High School) in order to explore how political, material, and institutional forces construct conceptions of literacy for both secondary and tertiary institutions, and how current pedagogies and programs respond to these constructions. Studying the context of this program offers a specific way to complicate theories about literacy and writing pedagogy during an outcomes-based era defined by test standardization and increasing influences of corporations and non-profits on public education.

## **Methodology**

Much research on dual credit has been quantitative in order to research the increases of dual-credit courses offered and how students' success in the class relates to college retention (Frick and Blattner, 2002; Miller, 2006; Post, Simmons, Vanderslice, 2010). This work utilizes surveys or compares high school grade point averages and college grade point averages to standardized test scores. Other research in composition, like the work by Bodmer and Farris discussed earlier in this chapter, is anecdotal. Both Bodmer and Farris concentrate on their own experiences as a college writing program administrator with their dual-credit programs without bringing information from stakeholders such as instructors and students that would offer counterpoints. In his chapter, Bodmer did not conduct interviews with the instructors to determine how they shaped their dual-credit course in their physical classroom and through distance learning. This is specifically important because he calls on a certain episode of a principal not approving of a film that a dual-credit instructor shows to the high school students that became a controversy between the community college and participating high school. Instead, Bodmer calls on only his observations of the program and instructors' pedagogy. In Farris' research, there are no interviews with any secondary instructors even though Farris emphasizes secondary instructors' knowledge of writing pedagogy. Both Bodmer and Farris' methodology of anecdotes is problematic because they only use their observations as the writing program administrator without acknowledging the power relations that come from making observations about their own program and its instructors and students.

Qualitative research on dual credit uses methods such as observation and interviews. One example is Taczak and Thelin's article, also discussed earlier in this chapter, which utilized participant-observation methodology where "[a] team of four participant-observers attended class on a daily basis and took detailed notes, interviewed the students and the instructor outside of class three times during the term, collected all classroom materials, and reviewed student writing for signs of growth" (9). To obtain a richer understanding of a dual-credit program that operated more as Early College High School<sup>5</sup>, Taczak and Thelin interviewed four of the students and the instructor who participated in the dual-credit program about their notions of what college writing means. The researchers also asked how the course functioned as a mixed dual-credit class that included on-campus students. This study influenced my methodology because the students and instructor responses call attention to the level of preparation, or rather lack thereof, these high school students had for an on-campus class and the tensions the instructor felt as he taught two different populations. The multiple viewpoints about dual credit from different stakeholders that Tazak and Thelin show are what I work to explore and understand in my study.

Tazak and Thelin's study reflects the subjectivity in qualitative research because their participants have varied opinions about the effectiveness of dual credit and how the notion of acceleration functions in a writing classroom. The instructor in the study explains the material conditions of working at a college where he did not know that dual-

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<sup>5</sup> Early College High Schools are "small schools designed so that students can earn both a high school diploma and an Associate's degree or up to two years of credit towards a Bachelor's degree" ("Early College"). Once students finish high school, they will be able to have both a high school degree and be half way through a college degree. These programs are designed for students to finish college as fast as possible so that they can move on to a career. As the Early College High School Initiative, the organizing body for ECHS, states, "Early College High School is a bold approach, based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges" ("Early College").

credit students would constitute the course until the first day of class. This issue demonstrates how local context influences dual-credit programs and the material conditions that inform ideas about the differences in secondary and tertiary education. The subjectivity of qualitative research is valuable to my project because I study how institutional stakeholders conceptualize what literacy means through a local setting of a dual-credit program. As recognized from the work of New Literacy Studies, “literacy” is a term that is difficult to define. It has many definitions depending on the environment in which it functions and the actors who use it at a particular time. Therefore, qualitative research provides a way of studying this term in its subjectivity to understand how stakeholders think about literacy in the professional positions they occupy. In my study, the definitions of literacy varied greatly from students to instructors to administrators. By interviewing these individuals with Institutional Review Board approval, understanding their interests and educational backgrounds, like Taczak and Thelin did, I was able to explore more how literacy intersects with institutional power in both secondary and tertiary education. Since Taczak and Thelin worked with one classroom in particular, both of the methods of observation and interview were feasible. In my project, I interviewed twenty institutional stakeholders at one university and four different high schools, using in depth interviews with each stakeholder and collecting textual materials from some of them. This methodology is more effective for me than adding observation to every classroom because observing each class would not be feasible for this study and would not be entirely pertinent since I also focus on administrators.

When I refer to “institutional stakeholders,” I mean individuals who participate in the formation and implementation of dual credit, such as students, high school and

college instructors, and high school and college administrators. By working with students, teachers, and administrators at both the high school and college levels, my goals in this project are: (1) to investigate the conceptions about dual credit and the extent to which these differ at the secondary and tertiary levels; (2) to attend to the ways in which these conceptions shape notions of literacy in as it intersects with institutional power; (3) to more fully understand the complexities of the role of collaboration between teachers and administrators at both the high school and college level; (4) to reflect on my role as a current dual-credit instructor in this research. I taught dual-credit writing in Fall and Spring 2011 at one of the participating high schools, Woods High School.

Seven of the stakeholders interviewed were students from three of the high schools, one from Dean High School, two from Hightree High, and four from Cary High. Student participants were selected from the dual-credit courses according to their interests in the study, their teacher's conception of their investment in the course, and their availability to meet during or after school. Students were asked questions that revolved around their reasons for taking a dual-credit writing course, the ways in which they view conceptions of literacy in this course, and the purposes they see of this course. The four from Cary High were interviewed in a group because this method is what the participating school offered me. All other students were interviewed individually. Students were not interviewed at Woods High School because I was teaching there at the time.

Five of the stakeholders interviewed were college or high school instructors teaching dual credit at three of the local high schools, one college instructor at Dean High School, two high instructors at Hightree High, and one college instructor and one high

school instructor at Cary High. Instructor participants were selected according to their experience teaching dual credit and their availability to meet during or after school. Instructors were interviewed about dual credit's influence on collaboration between secondary and tertiary education, the benefits and struggles of teaching a dual-credit course, and the ways in which this course shapes their constructions of literacy in education and the benefits and limitations of these constructions. The high school instructor at Cary High was interviewed along with an administrator there because this is what the participating school offered me. All other instructors were interviewed individually. No instructors were interviewed at Woods High School because I was teaching there and was the sole dual-credit writing instructor at the school.

Eight of the stakeholders interviewed were high school and college administrators supervising the dual-credit program at some level. Five were administrators at Southern Urban University who had oversight of dual-credit programs in Admissions, the Provost's Office, or in the English Department. Three of the administrators were from the local high schools. One was in charge of the dual-credit program for the public school system as a whole. The other two were high school principals at Cary High and Woods High. Interviews with administrators focused on the ways in which dual credit functions in terms of access to literacy and collaboration between secondary and tertiary stakeholders. Interviews also concentrated on the ways in which dual credit informs competing notions about literacy in both secondary and tertiary contexts. The high school administrator at Cary High was interviewed along with an instructor there because this is what the participating school offered me. All other administrators were interviewed

individually. A list of all of the stakeholders involved in the study and their demographic information is available in the appendix.

In this project, I acknowledge the material conditions occurring at both secondary and tertiary education currently in the city where the schools are located, River City. In *Literacy Practices as Social Acts*, Cynthia Lewis writes that the goal of her research is “[t]o understand the ways that the literacy culture of a classroom is created within the interwoven social contexts of classroom and community” (xi). Although I am not working explicitly with the term “community” like Lewis, I am investigating how context shapes literacy, particularly at different educational levels. In these levels, I explore the relationship between broader educational goals like accelerating through high school and college as fast as possible and working with and yet conflicting with the corporate influence on education that is evident in many dual-credit programs with stakeholders’ conceptions of literacy. In this intersection, there are many conflicts and biases which occur with each stakeholder and their values and beliefs about literacy. These could be examined more in depth by utilizing interviews because I was also able to explore their biases and what kind of political, material, and institutional forces, not only from education, but also specifically in River City, informed these biases.

River City is located in the middle of the United States with a population of about 750,000. According to the 2010 Census, it has continued to grow since 2000. River City is the largest city in a Southern state, but is also situated on a border to a Midwestern state. This geographic location influences the culture of the city as it is referred to as both Southern and Midwestern. 70% of River City is white, 22% is African American, 5% is Hispanic, 2% is Asian, and 1% is American Indian and Pacific Islander. 86% of people in

River City have a high school degree or higher. 26% of people in River City have a Bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income is \$43,680.

The geography of the city influences the population of students who come to River City for a college education. In River City, there is one major research university, Southern Urban University, along with nine other colleges and community colleges. Southern Urban University has a student population of 22,249 undergraduate students and 5,750 graduate students. There are more than 250 degrees in 12 colleges and schools with a prominent business program along with respected fields in social work, engineering, music, dental, and law offered at the university. Southern Urban also has a medical school, law school, pharmacy school, and dental school. The acceptance rate is 75%. Southern Urban University enrolls 78% of students who are state residents and 45% of students from the home county. The average ACT score is a 24.5. The average age of a full-time undergraduate at Southern Urban University is 21.5 years. The percent of undergraduates 25 and older is 20%.

Over 100,000 students attend public schools in the River City Public Schools system. There are 22 public high schools that fall into the system, and for this project, I concentrated on four. Cary High is a well-regarded magnet high school that offers the traditional program. It also offers AP courses and Honors courses along with dual credit. Cary High sends more than 95% of its graduates to college ("Cary"). Students enrolled in any of RCPS traditional middle schools can choose to attend to Cary. Any other interested student can apply. Cary is labeled by the district as "Distinguished." It is ranked as the ninth best high school in the state and ranked 71<sup>st</sup> in terms of Best Magnet Schools nationally by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Dean High is a magnet school for Communication, Media, and the Arts that also offers AP along with dual-credit courses. Students do not apply to Dean High as they do to the other three schools involved in this study. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students that attend is 53. Dean High is labeled by the district as a school that “Needs Improvement.” As of 2012, Dean High had to revise their school improvement plan in the academic year, and if they do not improve, the state education department will put sanctions in place.

Hightree High is a magnet school that offers 27 AP courses (the most of any high school in the state) along with dual-credit courses and concentrations in communication, math/science/technology, and visual arts programs. Hightree is recognized as a “School of Distinction” by the district. It is ranked by *the U.S. News and World Report* as the Best High School in the state and 31<sup>st</sup> Best Magnet Schools nationally. Hightree is also ranked in *Newsweek’s* Top 100 Schools nationally and consistently has National Merit finalists every year since the 2006-07 academic year. Like Cary, students must apply to enter, but Hightree is regarded as the most competitive public high school to apply to in the district.

Woods High is a magnet high school that offers a traditional education program. It provides AP courses, Honor courses, and the most dual-credit courses in the district. Woods is labeled as “Proficient” by the district. It was recognized as the state Education Reform Act Rewards School. Woods High is also application-only unless a student went to a traditional middle school in River City.

In Victoria Purcell Gates’ chapter in Nell K. Duke and Marla H. Mallette’s *Literacy Research Methodologies*, Gates explains how ethnographic research “assumes that knowledge, beliefs, and values are socially constructed through social interaction and

are constantly changing and evolving” (138). Although I am not doing an ethnographic study, I employ interviews, which is a method used in ethnographies that concentrates on the social. The interviews for this dissertation project lasted anywhere from 35 to 90 minutes. All except one was recorded on a digital recorder and then transcribed on to a word processor. The one interview not recorded had written notes taken for it instead. By doing interviews, I understood there would be power differentials between the participants and myself, similar to how Cynthia Lewis discusses the power differentials that occur in peer groups she works with in the middle school classroom. The acknowledgement of power differentials is particularly important because of the interviews I completed with vulnerable populations such as teenagers (who were all 18), secondary education instructors, graduate teaching assistants and part-time faculty. I wanted to interview these people because they are frequently ignored in discussions on dual credit. As stated earlier in the dissertation, some composition directors write about their experiences with dual credit, but it is still their experiences without any challenges to their views. This is problematic because to understand dual credit, a researcher needs to talk to the students and instructors who constitute the dual-credit classrooms.

The lack of interviews with secondary instructors in other studies demonstrates another assumption which played into my methodology. Although most of the time not stated explicitly, many scholars in composition view secondary education as disparate from the work of composition. These scholars forget that first-year writing students come from high school, middle school, and elementary school backgrounds. They have writing experiences, both good and bad, before entering our classrooms. In order to not only understand dual credit more, but writing pedagogy in general, there needs to be more

collaboration with secondary instructors. Some general guidelines for how to do so as an administrator have been found in Farris' work in *Delivering College Composition*. In research though, there should be more inclusion of secondary educators in what they think about writing and pedagogy, which is why I included teachers in this dissertation.

In literacy research, it is also important to have representation in sampling as Cynthia Lewis did in her study of the social dynamics of peer response in a middle school classroom, where she included five children who were representative of population of the classroom (142). I featured four different high schools in terms of student population and school success. I also interviewed administrators in the English Department and Admissions at the university and principals at two of the high schools along with the administrator in charge of dual credit at RCPS. However, to a certain extent, I also interviewed who was available, which is similar to how Barton and Hamilton studied "local literacies" in Lancaster, England because it was "in proximity to the university where they both worked" (Gates 143). I attempted to include another high school that the district defines as "Needs Improvement." However, the teacher at this school was not interested, so the proportion of the population is not as balanced as I would like it in terms of the type of high schools included in this study.

All recorded interviews with participants were transcribed. Analysis was followed using a modified version of the "Listening Guide" developed for use in qualitative psychology. Lynn Mikel Brown explains how this method is "responsive to different voices," and therefore "brings such contradictions to the surface for interpretation" (108). Not only does the Listening Guide study the polyphony of voices, but it also makes the researcher reflect on her own position of power in relationship to the participant during

the interview. This method will allowed for listening multiple times to the recordings with different emphases on what should be listened for each time, therefore allowing for multiple layers in the participants' responses. Analysis focused on the narrative of the conversation including what participants said about education and literacy; what participants note about power; and the ways in which the interviewer response shapes the participants' responses in terms of power. By using a modified version of the Listening Guide, there was consideration of the context in which these participants speak and "the constraints and possibilities they perceive" in that context of transcription (108). A list of standard interview questions is available in the appendix.

Not only did this study involve interviews, but also textual analysis of government, program, and course texts occurred to examine how stakeholders' conceptions about dual credit influences the ways in which they reflect and practice literacy in this context. Analysis of the university handbook for the dual-credit program and course documents by different teachers, such as the course syllabus, schedule, major assignment prompts, informal writing assignment prompts, and comments on student papers occurred to examine how instructors portrayed dual credit and literacy to their students in written texts. These documents were studied to examine the extent to which they reinforce and yet create tension with the values and assumptions discussed in the oral interviews.

By employing The Listening Guide and transcription with the interviews, and textual analysis with the program and course documents, I was able to "discover patterns and themes in the data and to link them with other patterns and themes" (Gates 148). Through doing the transcription and textual analysis, I was able to immerse myself in

stakeholder response. These responses predicted the content of the body chapters because they are the prevalent themes in the interview. These themes included: acceleration of education through “college-readiness” programs, increasingly corporatization of both secondary and tertiary education, and the ways in which collaboration occurs in these material conditions. As with any research, this pattern is recognized through my own cultural frame of interpretation about the intersections of literacy and institutional power, specifically through my attention to New Literacy Studies.

One limitation of qualitative research such as interviews is the nuanced relationship between researcher and participant. This is particularly important because I work with vulnerable populations like teenagers, secondary education teachers, graduate students, and part-time lecturers. In “Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research,” Thomas Newkirk writes, “University researchers who study the classrooms of public school teachers and subordinates (students and teaching assistants, non-tenured faculty) have a special obligation to recognize the vulnerability of those they study” (5). Newkirk argues this point after analysis of Glynda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Losey Fraser, and Marisa Castellano’s argument about the literature graduate student, June, who classifies the ESL student Maria as deficient in “Remediation as Social Construct.” Hull, Rose, Fraser, and Castellano write how June classifies Maria in a problematic way, yet as Newkirk proposes, the researchers do not tell June that she is doing so. The reader also does not have an idea if June saw this article before it was published and then given awarded with a 1992 Braddock.

Newkirk’s response to how the researchers position Jane in their article demonstrates the difficulty in qualitative studies that are not just solved by IRB approval.

It is difficult to recognize as the researcher if or when to tell an instructor if he or she is potentially harming a student's learning and if the participants should be involved in the conceptions of themselves that appear in the final document. I knew some of the dual-credit instructors beforehand since two of them I had taken classes with before and two had been part of a mentoring group I was in charge of for a teaching college composition class. Since I was also a dual-credit instructor at the time of the study, I had worked with three out of the five instructors interviewed on classroom ideas together before.

Therefore, the relationship between researcher and participant became even more complex because I had relationships with these people before I began my study.

Some of my research is also complicated because I interviewed people "above" me in higher education. I interviewed administrators like the Provost, the English Department Dual-Credit Coordinator, and the English Department Writing Program Administrator, all that have a certain power over me since I am a graduate student and graduate teaching assistant. I also interviewed other administrators with much more experience than I had in running dual-credit programs and classroom pedagogy. Therefore, I have to think about not only the way I treat the individuals Newkirk considers vulnerable, but also the individuals who have a certain power over my graduate student status.

Another limitation is the number of participants interviewed for this study. Twenty is only a start to the research on the intersections of literacy and power in dual credit, and having done more would offer even more notions of literacy than I already found. Three of the four high schools are considered well established high schools in River City. I would like to have more diversity in my study of the schools, because this

would also affect the stakeholders' reactions to dual credit. The demographics limit the claims that can be made, and it would have been beneficial to the study to have more schools involved.

### **Chapter Summaries**

In Chapter Two, I concentrate on the reproduction and codification of “college readiness” in educational legislation that both reflects and influences the national conversation. Many of the stakeholders relate their conceptions of “readiness” to this legislation, and in fact, both the national conversation on education and local dual-credit program employ “ready” to mean at different points accelerated, definite, standard, and competitive. The university dual-credit program also shows the internal contradictions of the term, mainly in how its goal is democracy in education and yet privileging of certain identities and schools makes the goal improbable. Having analyzed stakeholders' conceptions of certain identities in dual credit, I then move to analysis of notions of “college-level” writing that shape some of the institutional stakeholders' conceptions of literacy. Many students took dual credit because they wanted to know college-level writing before attending an actual college campus, while instructors struggled with this term and how it influenced their pedagogies. Ultimately, stakeholders both reinforce and question the extent to which the concept of “college readiness” should be involved in the dual-credit program; what is more significant is the fact that “college readiness” connects to stakeholders' conceptions of identity and literacy, and consequently, which identities and literacies are privileged.

In Chapter Three, I begin by explaining the cost of the dual-credit composition course and stakeholder perceptions of this financial cost. These costs, and who paid them, demonstrate the role of sponsorship described by Deborah Brandt, in the relationship that occurred between the university, participating high schools, outside organizations, and students. The financial sponsor is specifically important because of the economic recession of 2008 that affected students' families and relates to the many ways that students discussed their reasons for taking a dual-credit writing course. The chapter then explores the ways in which this sponsorship informed literacy education. Two stakeholders in Southern Urban's dual-credit program, both administrators, discuss the corporatism of the university by focusing on the recognition of students as "customers" in college, and what this term means and the conceptions of the university it implies. University sponsors employing corporate language contribute not only to the conversation about literacy, but how instructors and administrators direct and practice writing instruction with these corporate terms and ideas in higher administration. Finally, there is discussion about the tensions between the neoliberalism direction of higher education and other goals recognized by the university, such as citizenry and awareness of diversity.

In Chapter Four, I address the dialogue between secondary and tertiary stakeholders in the program, specifically dual-credit instructors, the Dual-Credit Coordinator for English, and the Director of Composition. This chapter then discusses the conceptions of what a literacy teacher means by the instructors who are a part of this program, and relates how these perceptions of teacher identity are reflections of labor, economic and institutional issues. It especially investigates the ways in which these

points of contact led to instructors shifting perceptions on themselves as literacy educators. Additionally, the chapter explores the extent to which high school dual-credit teachers are contingent faculty, and the role of contingent faculty in the identity of composition as a field. The chapter ends with arguing for more reflection on this point of contact by secondary and tertiary educators to understand more how conversations about literacy in rhetoric and composition and secondary education overlap.

In the final chapter, I discuss the implications of this dissertation research on composition scholars and educators directly, proposing ways they might pursue the benefits and limitations of these competing conceptions of literacy in future research. This chapter provides two examples of assignments that can be done in a dual-credit writing course to more fully address the implications of acceleration and neoliberalism. I also discuss further how the purposes of dual-credit programs, like the one I studied, inform notions about literacy for high school and undergraduate students, instructors, and administrators, and how future educators can work with these programs for the benefits of the high schools and universities involved. This chapter also further addresses the attempts at collaborations that can occur between secondary and tertiary administrators and instructors. Moreover, it acknowledges the tensions that will always be present in these attempts because of the institutional pressures which inform a dual-credit writing program.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WHEN “COLLEGE READINESS” AND LITERACY CONVERGE IN DUAL CREDIT

#### **Introduction**

In an interview with four students at Cary High School towards the end of their senior year, all of the students expressed their enthusiasm, and yet also anxiety, about attending college in the fall. They conveyed excitement about meeting new people and having control of their own schedules, and concern about their future majors like Engineering and Political Science. Yet, these students were confident about being “ready” to attend college. One student in particular, Danyelle, described how taking a dual-credit composition course affected her sense of preparation for college: “I’m set. I’m ready for college. And I think that like this class really helped. I have to say it was my best class that I’ve taken all four years of high school.” “Ready,” a word Danyelle employed to explain her confidence, is a term that at first seems rather benign because of its pervasiveness in every day conversation such as, “I’m ready to go to lunch” or “Are you ready for that test?” Moreover, it seems neutral because it is a term constantly used in conversations about education in the United States. For Danyelle to use “ready” in her description of going to college would be fairly representative of many high school students’ notions of themselves in May of their senior year.

And yet, for all of its prevalence, “ready” is not a neutral word when used in reference to education. Danyelle’s comment reflects a certainty about the efficacy of “college readiness” prevalent in many political conversations and media portrayals of education in the United States. On March 14, 2011, President Barack Obama explained to a group of middle-school students in Arlington, Virginia: “The best economic policy is one that produces more college graduates... We need to make sure we’re graduating students who are ready for college and ready for careers” (Madison). Obama’s use of “ready” is similar to Danyelle’s because both act as though becoming “ready” for college is a clearly delineated and really rather objective solution in preparing students for higher education and careers. Both also treat “college readiness” as less of an assumption and more of a certain factor of an individual’s identity because Danyelle describes herself as “set” and “ready” while Obama describes students “ready for college.” This assertion by both the student in my study and the President of the United States leads many individuals to think that there is a clear moment when one knows he or she is “college ready.” In response to this assumption, I argue in this chapter that “college readiness” is part of a larger conversation about constructing students as particular kinds of people and schools as particular kinds of schools. Many responses in the interviews conducted for this dissertation demonstrate that “college readiness” is much more about identity, or about the way that students who take particular courses are perceived by dual-credit stakeholders, than being a set of clearly definable skills.

While Danyelle and Obama both suggest the relationships of “college readiness” to identity, the two uses differ in the latter’s explicit relation of “college readiness” with financial gain. This term represents the pressure to not only help students achieve in

higher education, but to keep the economy steady and growing. Much of the conversation about “college readiness” focuses on financial stability for the nation, such as in the following quotation by President George W. Bush from an October 18, 2006 speech: “Whether we like it or not, there is competition for jobs of the future that are going to—that will take place. And, therefore, it’s important that we make sure that our children get a solid foundation early in order—so that our country will be competitive, as well as our children” (“North Carolina”). Both politicians, although from different political parties, make much of their discussion of “college readiness” come back to the extent to which American high school students need to compete with one another and with students of the world to receive financial gain in the global economy. This focus on dominant discourse on “readiness” relates to emerging models for workers better suited for current post-fordist and tentative economic conditions for the worker. This discussion about the effects of the economy on college courses, such as dual credit, will be taken up in Chapter Three.

One result of this rhetoric of competition is that much discussion of “college readiness” focuses on students accelerating as fast as they can through the educational system. The acceleration is specifically evident in programs like dual credit, where students simultaneously obtain high school and college credit. For many of the stakeholders at the Southern Urban dual-credit program, such as students, parents, instructors, and administrators, acceleration is much of the attractiveness of dual credit. However, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the emphasis on acceleration in “college readiness” shapes what kinds of literacies become more privileged by stakeholders in the program. Therefore, not only does “college readiness” affect many stakeholders’ notions

of literacy in the realm of dual credit, but also their practices and pedagogies in the dual-credit classroom. This is especially evident in some students' conceptions that there is a particular kind of "college-level" writing that opposes itself to "high school" writing. This is also evident in how some dual-credit instructors purposefully disrupt the notions of "college-level" and "high school" writing to their dual-credit students.

This chapter begins by highlighting the reproduction and codification of "college readiness" in educational legislation that both reflects and influences the national conversation. Many of the stakeholders relate their conceptions of "readiness" to this legislation, and in fact, both the national conversation on education and local dual-credit program employ "ready" to mean at different points accelerated, definite, standard, and competitive. Southern Urban's program also shows the internal contradictions of the term, mainly in how its goal is democracy in education and yet privileging of certain identities and schools makes the goal improbable. Having analyzed stakeholders' conceptions of certain identities in dual credit, I then move to analysis of notions of "college-level" writing that shape some of the institutional stakeholders' conceptions of literacy. Many students took dual credit because they wanted to know college-level writing before attending an actual college campus, while instructors struggled with this term and how it influenced their pedagogies. Ultimately, stakeholders both reinforce and question the extent to which the concept of "college readiness" should be involved in the dual-credit program; what is more significant is the fact that "college readiness" connects to stakeholders' conceptions of identity and literacy, and consequently, which identities and literacies are privileged.

## **Conceptions of “College Readiness” in the National Dialogue on Education**

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). This law provides resources for Race to the Top, a government program whose purpose is to enact the systemic reform in U.S. education that has dominated much of the conversation about education since Obama has been in office. Race to the Top focuses on pursuing higher standards in primary and secondary schools, improving teacher effectiveness, using data effectively in schools, and implementing new strategies for struggling schools. According to the White House’s Race to the Top website, RTTP has dedicated over \$4 billion to 19 states. The states serve 22 million students and employ 1.5 million teachers in 42,000 schools. These numbers represent 45 percent of all K-12 students and 42 percent of all low-income students nationwide (“Race”).

The Race to the Top description on its website refers to both the terms “college readiness” and “career readiness” in a way that attempts to portray a forward-looking attitude about students’ futures and what kinds of professions they will be doing next. The Department of Education makes these terms central to the Race to the Top purpose of pursuing higher standards in schools: “Race to the Top has ushered in significant change in our education system, particularly in raising standards and aligning policies and structures to the goal of college and career readiness” (“Race”). By using both the terms “college” and “career,” Race to the Top describes a student that, reinforced by the national government, has more than one choice for her or his professional future. This use of two terms is beneficial because RTTP does not imply that a student must go to college, showing there are other ways to prepare students for certain careers. The focus on the

word “readiness” that comes right after both “college” and “career,” though, is problematic in the manner of acceleration in which the government expects readiness to occur.

Although the title Race to the Top seems commonplace because the public has heard it so much, this phrase for education reform affects how the United States’ public views education, and more specifically, notions of literacy and assessment of literacy. This concentration on acceleration is reflected in the title of the government program. Implying that there is a “Race” about how to change the country’s educational system makes learning for an individual more about keeping up with other students than concentrating on one’s own work. Moreover, the “to” after designates there is an actual place where education and learning stop, probably at the “Top” that ends the title. The title implies that the purpose of this legislation becomes more about the speed rather than the quality of education. This rhetoric about competition and acceleration in education also reflects a larger cultural discourse in the United States. Acceleration saves money, which is particularly important to students and parents as the cost of college continues to rise each year (Selingo). In this particular time in the country when many people are still trying to rebound from the 2008 recession, conserving money through the acceleration of education is an attractive option. Moreover, there is value to the “fast is good” approach to life that many individuals privilege in the United States from the abundance of fast food restaurants to the obsession with getting online as fast as possible. This concentration on efficiency is also demonstrated in how people in the United States increasingly obtain their news through social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook instead of through long-form news articles. The multitasker is privileged in this particular

cultural moment, someone who can take on many jobs at one time and do them all efficiently. The Race to the Top legislation reflects and reinforces this culture of acceleration.

This language of acceleration of RTTP is not solely based on the current economy and national culture. The politicians who put RTTP together adopted a discourse about speed and competition that was already dominating the dialogue about education in the United States. In April 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education for the Reagan Administration published *A Nation at Risk*. The makeup of the Commission was comprised of people from business, government, and education, all working to improve the national educational system. In *Nation*, the authors use the term “ready” once, but that singular choice reflects much of the ideology present about “college readiness” currently: “More and more young people emerge from high school ready neither for college nor work. This predicament becomes more acute as the knowledge base continues its rapid expansion, the number of traditional jobs shrinks, and new jobs demand greater sophistication and preparation” (13). Although the authors did not repeat the term to the extent that Race to the Top legislation does, they still make the same connections of “readiness” to the weakened U.S. economy at the time and to the role of competition for professional success. Moreover, they provide a scare tactic use of “college readiness” that has continued throughout discussion of education in the United States: that students will be unprepared for professional success unless serious government reforms occur. This contradictory set of demands relates to the contradictory hope for a vertical career path and the reality of a horizontal career path, which will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Eight years after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, President George H.W. Bush spoke in his “Address to the Nation on the National Education Strategy” about his “America 2000” proposal for education. He declared, “By 2000, we’ve got to, first, ensure that every child starts school ready to learn.” This use of “ready” relates more to students beginning elementary school and places considerable pressure on families to prepare young children for their education. However, Bush’s proposal, which died in the Senate, proposed much of what No Child Left Behind later enacted into law, such as creating national standards and national tests in core subject areas and requiring report cards on the progress of schools and districts. Therefore, ideas about how to assess “readiness” through the federal government were already forming, but were applied to students beginning elementary school instead of college. This focus on young children continued with President Clinton’s 1994 The Improving America’s Schools Act, where there was no use of the term “college readiness” in the document, but many references to getting students from lower socio-economic backgrounds “ready” for elementary school. For instance, the Act wants to “ensure the readiness of all rural children for school” so that students from traditionally lower economic backgrounds have an increased chance at succeeding in school (338). Therefore, although “readiness” during this time was not necessarily directed at college, the ideology was already part of the national dialogue on education.

While used in education legislation before, “readiness” became a term employed much more in George W. Bush’s NCLB and Obama’s Race to the Top time. The No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001,<sup>6</sup> signed into law by President Bush on Jan 8, 2002, expanded the federal role of education. Annual testing forced schools and states to be more accountable to standardized tests and the perception of student progress that those tests constructed. These factors include state academic standards, academic progress where states were required to raise all students to the “proficient” level on state tests, and report cards where states showed the performance of school districts. Additionally, there are factors such as how school districts have to show the performance of individual schools, every teacher in core content areas had to be “highly qualified” in each subject he or she taught, and a competitive-grant program called Reading First, and funding changes to target schools of disadvantaged students (“No Child”). This kind of testing promotes a surveillance culture for students, which is a different kind of “readiness.” The teaching to students that they can be tested at any moment creates a social identity that students have to be constantly prepared to perform for the organizations that create the test. Therefore, the identity of students can come more from their performance on these tests than their work in school.

Similar to Race to the Top, No Child Left Behind has a name that concentrates on efficiency. The title implies that there will be a more communal effort with the words “No Child” because it will work to advance student populations who have been frequently ignored in the educational system. In fact, the main purpose of No Child Left Behind was just that—to help students from lower socio-economic classes who have historically struggled in school to have more success both in academics and future careers. And yet, the title still implies that a child could be “left behind” if these

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<sup>6</sup> NCLB was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act. The ESEA was first enacted in 1965 and previously reauthorized in 1994. It encompasses Title I, the federal government’s aid program for disadvantaged students.

objectives are not taken on by the schools. This terminology continues the rhetoric of education based on competition. This is specifically important because of NCLB's lasting legacy of increased standardized testing of all students that does not consider identity factors such as financial status and social class so that "all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education" (*NCLB*, Sec. 1001). The national testing to assess "readiness" has continued with *Race to the Top*. Therefore, there is a contradiction in what is demanded because everyone is supposed to be "ready," and yet some students will not be "ready" because of the competition that exists through these kinds of assessment. There is a certain anxiety produced for students and schools that one is not up to standards. This anxiety becomes apparent later in this study because of the pressure that dual-credit instructors felt at certain schools were underperforming to prepare their students for college. The same pressure was not felt by instructors at higher performing high schools.

Since *Race to the Top*, a more recent educational initiative that focuses on "college readiness" is the Common Core Standards, which affects both secondary and tertiary education. The Common Core Standards is a U.S. education initiative that works to bring many state curricula into alignment by following the principles of standards-based education reform. Standards for mathematics and English were released in June 2010. The Common Core Standards for Kentucky define "college readiness" in a much more specific manner than other government programs: "College readiness is the level of preparation a student needs to succeed in credit-bearing courses in college. 'Succeed' is defined as completing entry-level courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that prepares the student for subsequent courses" ("Kentucky"). This conception continues

the conversation about “readiness” in terms of moving through particular coursework, but it also becomes clearer about how “college readiness” has been connected to the notion of “success.” This focus on “readiness” changes what education means not only to the public, but to stakeholders in the educational system and how they should move these initiatives into practice. These stakeholders’ values and assumptions about what “college readiness” means are not only informed by the local context, but also by factors such as the national political conversation on “college readiness” and the government response to it. The language and policies filter down from legislation into local contexts, like dual-credit stakeholders’ discussion of the relationship between secondary and tertiary education. Some of the instructors and administrators interviewed in the River City Public Schools system had to enact more standards in their classrooms and schools in order for students to succeed in “college readiness” defined by national legislation. By concentrating on “college readiness” in this manner, students, instructors, and administrators constructed specific perceptions of the identity of “college ready.”

### **The Identity of “College Ready” in a Local Dual-Credit Program**

A College Access Specialist at River City Public Schools, Laura frequently encounters the term “college readiness” with other administrators, instructors, and students. Her job entails working on pathways to graduation for different students depending on their interests. She is in charge of a wide range of students from Kindergarten to twelfth grade, but focuses primarily on secondary schools. Laura has been involved with dual credit at both Southern Urban and another local university for 12 years through her work with RCPS. Through this long duration working with the

program, Laura considers a main purpose of dual credit to be that high school students begin to understand what constitutes “college-level” work. She defines dual-credit composition by its transferring of credit from secondary to tertiary education, but also by the change in the work level:

Well, I think the obvious is that they [the students] get credit that’s usually transferable depending on the subject and the type of thing, and where they end up going. That’s the obvious thing, but I think the other thing is they get exposed to college-level work and they get, they build their efficacy, they build this belief that ‘I can really do this college work and it’s possible for me to go to college.’ So there’s that that side of it.

Laura’s comment is similar to what the dual-credit instructor, Emma, stated in the first chapter about how dual-credit composition can prepare students for other college courses. Both of these educators recognize the classes have value because students are able to learn more what “college-level work” means, and both believe students can transfer those conceptions later on in their professional lives.

Although these stakeholders think students will transfer knowledge from dual credit in their future professional lives, the study of transfer demonstrates the complexity in understanding the extent to which transfer occurs. In “Mapping the Questions: The State of Writing-Related Transfer Research,” Jessie Moore explains how research on writing transfer has focused on transfer at college from first-year composition to other courses. She discusses how David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon write about forward reaching and backward reaching high road transfer, where in forward reaching transfer, the learner applies knowledge to a future situation, while in backward transfer, the learner

applies characteristics of a current situation to the past for relevant experiences (2).

Moore also writes about King Beach, who critiques the idea of transfer and proposes there should be more focus on reflection of consequential transition. Beach's critique of transfer is echoed in studies in rhetoric and composition. Moore notes that "reoccurring themes across many of these studies suggests that transfer is limited and students do not expect their writing in FYC, or even in classes in their majors, to transfer to other coursework or professional contexts." Therefore, there could be more discussion with students that the work they do in composition could help with other courses and their future professional work.

In "Genre Awareness, Academic Argument, and Transferability," Irene L. Clark and Andrea Hernandez define "transfer" as "a term that refers to the extent to which the writing taught in the first year writing class can or should help students write more effectively in other courses and disciplines" (1). Clark and Hernandez discuss a pilot study they conducted where the goal was to develop a curriculum that focused on "genre analysis," "the idea being that a metacognitive understanding of genre can help students make connections between the type of writing assigned in the Composition course—that is, academic argument—and the writing genres they encounter in other disciplines" (1). The authors wanted students to be able to understand genre through purposes and strategies and then apply these notions to writing in new situations. In order to do so, they did not want students to follow explicit teaching of genres, but genre awareness so that students can reflect on purpose when introduced with a new writing project. Clark and Hernandez acknowledged that it is complex to determine whether a particular text exhibits genre awareness, so they focused on students' perceptions of the extent to which

they felt genre awareness occurred. The authors conducted surveys with students in one first-year writing course and found that half the class “predicted the 5-paragraph essay would be useful or very useful for them in their college courses” (6). Although Clark and Hernandez did not study the relationship between high school and college in terms of transfer, this is a finding that would be beneficial for understanding this relationship because of the kind of perceptions that students have about writing which develop not only from college, but from primary and secondary education and outside contexts. Clark and Hernandez’s findings also demonstrate that students’ understanding of genre awareness has been helpful because all of the students found this awareness has facilitated in lowering their anxiety about writing. The authors argue that although a decrease in anxiety is not directly related to transfer of skills, it could help students to approach new writing situations in an effective manner.

In Dana Driscoll’s “Connected, Disconnected, or Uncertain: Student Attitudes about Future Writing Contexts and Perceptions of Transfer from First Year Writing to the Disciplines,” Driscoll defines transfer as “how much knowledge students are able to apply from one context, such as first-year composition, to a new context, such as disciplinary writing.” This definition differs from Clark and Hernandez’s because it is more general, using the term “knowledge” instead of “writing.” Driscoll also relates to what both Emma and Laura stated about students transferring knowledge from dual credit by explaining that there is an assumption that transfer occurs:

Educational institutions build curricula around the assumption that knowledge transfers: from high school to college, from class period to class period, from course to course, and from university to the workplace. However, for over a

century, educational researchers working in a variety of settings have been more successful in demonstrating how transfer of learning fails rather than how it succeeds.

Driscoll discusses how more research on transfer is needed to understand the efficacy of learning in higher education. More than Clarke and Hernandez, Driscoll studies students' perceptions from first-year composition into disciplinary coursework. She used surveys and interviews to understand the extent to which students perceived first-year composition contributing to their writing in other courses and after college. Students had to respond to statements such as "What I will learn/have learned in my FYC course will help with other courses" and "I expect my FYC course content to help me with writing beyond college." Driscoll discusses that students' beliefs about transfer decline over time because students responded at the end of the semester that FYC was not necessarily going to help them in other courses. Driscoll also states, "Rather than simply accepting that students' beliefs about the usefulness and transferability of their course will decline over time, or that close to half of them will fail to understand or see no value in the course in which they leave, faculty across the disciplines should begin to think about how these beliefs can be shifted to better serve the educational environment." Driscoll and Clarke and Hernandez discuss the significance of student perception in terms of transfer.

When describing transfer, Elizabeth Wardle in "Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC," asks, "Do students perceive FYC as helping them with later writing assignments across the university?" (70). Although there has been a focus on transfer from first-year composition to other courses, there has not been study on what students transfer from their high school courses into the dual-credit course, and what they transfer from dual

credit into their future courses. Moore observed this in her own work and writes there should be more dialogue: “Collaborations with other disciplines could result in deeper exploration of how students’ movement among different school activity systems impacts their self-identity and tool appropriation in each.” There is still not enough research on the transfer between secondary and tertiary education because there is not clear dialogue.

However, Laura’s use of the term “college-level work” assumes that there is a kind of writing that can be clearly defined at the tertiary level that differs from the secondary level. This certainty relates to the national conversation on “college readiness” discussed earlier because it assumes there is a clear point when a school or state knows a student is ready for college and assumes a certification of when a student can be assessed as college ready. I argue that “college-level” work cannot be defined clearly because literacy practices are social and contextual, including in high school and college courses. As Janet Alsup and Michael Bernard-Donals’ explain, “One reason the seamless transition from high school to college writing is a fantasy is that there’s no such thing as ‘college writing’” (117). There is not any certainty in what kind of work counts as tertiary compared to secondary because each writing course varies, depending on many factors, such as the students’ investment in the course, the university’s goals for the course, the instructor’s pedagogy, and the way the class approaches assignments. These are all factors that the dominant notion of “college readiness” ignores.

Yet, for Laura to do her job as a College Access Specialist, she has to find something tangible to hold onto as “college-level work.” This is also true for the politicians and educators enacting national legislation on education because they need some kind of definition to hold onto in order to explain who does and who does not get

into college. Most of these people then concentrate on explaining “college-level work” by standardized assessment. They look to standardized tests, such as the most commonly taken one currently, the ACT (American College Testing). As explained on its website, the ACT concentrates on college readiness through the description that it is a “curriculum and standards based educational and career planning tool that assesses students’ academic readiness for college.” The scores received on the ACT are even called “college readiness scores” (*ACT*). Through the replication and codification of “college readiness” in this manner, standardized exams affect the national conversation on who should go to college. Barton and Hamilton’s discussion on how literacy practices are patterned by power relationships and social institutions becomes evident in how the ACT represents what it means to be “college ready” for students. Although the ACT claims to be democratic, stating that it works towards “success for everyone,” it does not because it is a standardized test that will privilege certain identities and certain literacies from the questions it asks (*ACT*). Because the term has been so explicitly tied to standardized testing, other factors that play into “college readiness” that are more contextual become marginalized or at the worst, ignored. An individual may be able to score high on reading comprehension on the ACT, and deemed “college ready” by this particular test. However, a person may only seem “college ready” in that manner because he or she studied this particular genre intensely and for a long time, and might not be “college ready” in other aspects, such as not being able to integrate sources in to writing or to write in new and unfamiliar genres. The ACT then controls to a certain extent who goes to college, what kind of students go to college, by the questions it asks and its assessments of those questions. The discussions about the effectiveness of standardized tests are long and

complex.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it does so by using a particular kind of timed reading and comprehension test that is very different from the kinds of practices students need to do with scholarly texts and writing. This approach does not consider the intellectual work of writing as much as the quantity in which students can respond in a certain amount of time. Students who do not perform well under this model could not be designated “college ready,” but would do well in a first-year composition course because there are different values of writing in the two situations. Therefore, it is important to reflect on this approach of standardized exams to writing for college admissions and writing programs. These tests privilege a certain kind of writer and worker, and exclude other students based on time rather than quality.

In fact, this marginalization of certain students as “college ready” by a standardized structure is what dual credit historically has attempted to remedy. As explained in Chapter One, dual credit developed into a program under the democratic principle of inviting many students to take a college course who would usually not think about a university education in their futures. These are students who do not identify as “college ready” to themselves or to others necessarily. One of the dual-credit instructors in the JCPS system, Amy, relates how she had a student in her class at Cary High who felt this way: “I have one student in my class this semester who didn’t know that he wanted to go to college...[T]he student still has decided that next year college isn’t for him, but he’s more open to the idea after having dual credit.” Another dual-credit

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<sup>7</sup> The assessment of standardized exams is complex. In 2006, Richard Phelps establishes that many critics offer no viable alternatives to standardized exams. In *Rethinking the SAT*, Rebecca Zwick asks, “What is the purpose of college admissions testing?” and “How well do these tests predict academic success?” (8). In the same edited collection, Ida Lawrence, Gretchen Rigol, Tom Van Essen, and Carol Jackson discuss the history of standardized exams “have been reconfigured several times over the years” (60). Therefore, standardized exams have attempted to approach their critiques, but by model, still privilege certain students in their notions of writing skills.

instructor who teaches at Hightree High, Emma, compares the kind of students who take dual credit to AP: “Yeah, I would definitely say that dual credit is as far as student perception, even just as far as difficulty level, falls below AP. I think probably the most high achieving students will take AP.” Even though students might not be learning the content that would connect more with college composition when they take AP Literature, some stakeholders perceive them as more ready because of the status of AP. Therefore, “college readiness” is often more a perception connected to the classes students take than the kinds of writers and readers they are.

This perception continues with another dual-credit instructor at Dean High, Charlotte, who explains, “I had a lot of students in my dual-credit courses that wouldn’t have made it in an AP class, but they were hard workers, and they wanted to be excellent writers, and they were the kind of kids that you see on campus who are freshmen, and who wouldn’t have benefited at all from skipping those classes.” The students’ academic identities by Charlotte are not judged off of their grades in the AP or dual-credit courses or whether they passed benchmarks, such as the AP exam. Their identities are formed by just being in one particular course over another. Judging from institutional stakeholders, dual-credit students are hardworking and likely to go to college, but not necessarily the “smartest” students at the high school. These perceptions construct identities of readiness out of the students’ positions in the institutional framework, such as the courses in which they enroll, rather than the work they actually do. Moreover, these notions construct a hierarchy of “college readiness” identity based on whether a student takes a regular English course (interestingly called Honors at Hightree), dual credit, or AP.

The students also perceive their identities depending on what courses made them feel more “college ready.” All of the students in the Southern Urban dual-credit program I interviewed knew they wanted to go to college for much of their lives and had been preparing for admission. The requirements for admission in the dual-credit program are what would be required for a student to enter Southern Urban as a freshman. Students have to be high school juniors or seniors with a GPA of 3.0 and meet the minimum entrance requirements for the SAT (480) or ACT (20) or earn comparable scores on the PSAT (50). Moreover, according to Southern Urban’s *Dual-Credit English 101 Handbook*, students have to demonstrate writing competency, gain nomination by their high school English teacher, and obtain the approval of their high school instructor (8). Therefore, because of the number of requirements involved to enroll in dual credit, most of these students have thought about and are already on track to attend college. This dual-credit program identifies students already assessed by their schools as “college ready” from their GPA and other factors. The perception is they are just not as “ready” as students who take AP.

Many of the dual-credit students interviewed also took Advanced Placement courses, including AP English courses where they could have gotten credit for the introductory English course at many universities. However, many of the students interviewed took the AP English exam and did not make high enough on it to receive credit for English 101. For most of them, the lesser score on the AP exam is what moved them to take dual credit. A student at Cary High, Sam, explains, “And I got a 2 on the AP English test so they didn’t allow me to take AP English, so I was kind of forced into the college English class.” Another student at Cary, Danyelle, reiterates Sam’s point: “I just

went ahead and went right in because I got a 2 on my composition last year. And they told me it was a better fit to go ahead and do my dual credit so that's the decision I made." Both of these students use "they" to refer to the high school counselors who help them in what classes they should take to get the most credit out of their senior year. These students saw themselves as going to college, but because of the AP exam score of a 2, they moved on to dual credit because their counselors predicted they could actually obtain college credit through that manner. Dual credit was still the second option for college credit to most of them, only after they had taken AP and not passed the national test. Therefore, the standardized tests such as the ACT and AP exam still inform the identities of how and to what extent these students see themselves as "college ready." There are also implications of dual credit being the "fall back" option in terms of how literacy is perceived in the program. By being the second option to many students, the perception of the writing that occurs could be viewed as not as important or as difficult as AP. Therefore, certain notions about writing taught in the dual-credit courses, such as writing as a process, could be downgraded by stakeholders, specifically because timed writing is such a significant aspect of AP. Yet, this perception of difficulty depends on the stakeholder. Some stakeholders thought dual-credit courses were more difficult and more beneficial for preparing students for college. This view is evident with Michael, the Principal of Woods High.

Measurements of "college readiness" do not only affect students' academic identities, but the high schools as well. Some stakeholders in the dual-credit program at Southern Urban grapple with how to compete with courses such as AP to stay viable in the local high schools of River City. Since AP is perceived as the optimum way to obtain

transferable credit for college at many of the high schools, it is more popular than dual credit in River City. However, one principal I interviewed thinks that dual credit aids his students more because they do not have to take an exam to obtain college credit. At Woods High School, there are five dual credit-courses offered, the most in the district. The Principal, Michael, explains that his school suffers in rankings in part because he concentrates more on dual credit than AP:

A lot of these rankings and everything that come out for the schools is based on the number of AP offered and the number of kids that take AP which in my eyes isn't a valid determining factor of the success of the school. You know they rank these schools based on AP, and it's not if the student got a passing score on the AP, it's the fact that they just took it. And so there are some schools that offer multiple sections of AP, but they don't have a standard to put the kid in. Now we've got a standard that we utilize here that they have to meet a certain benchmark, and that's why the numbers are down a little bit... And so I go back and forth with "Yes, we offer all the AP courses, it looks good to the public, but you know is that really meeting the needs of my kids?"

Michael recognizes that the notion of "college readiness" for schools is based on the number of students enrolled in certain courses and the rankings based on AP courses. At Woods High, a student had to have a certain GPA to enroll in AP courses. At some other high schools in the district, there is no benchmark of a GPA to take an AP course. These high schools add in as many students who want to take the course as possible to keep or improve their district ranking because the measurement is on how many students took the exam, not how many passed it. Michael is uncomfortable acting in that manner at Woods,

and he wants to invest in dual credit, as much if not more than AP, because of the classroom context of students obtaining credit for taking a course rather than an exam.

However, because of Michael's interest in dual credit and the standards at Woods, the school has fewer students sitting for the AP exams. This could potentially hurt its ranking in the district. The ranking is especially important because Woods is a traditional school students apply to attend, and competes intensely with another school in this study, Cary High. Cary has two dual-credit courses and its principal invests much more of its resources into having students take AP courses, although many of them do not pass the AP English exams. Nevertheless, AP's status leads Cary to seem more attractive to the public in certain rankings. This affects the identity of Woods High, and leads into the perception of what kind of students attend the school. The competition that exists between the high schools in the RCPS system demonstrates the pervasive nature of competition that is always part of the educational system in the United States. As related earlier in this chapter, competition plays an important role in the national conversation on education, combating with what some would argue the main purpose of U.S. education, democracy. Much of the national conversation is about which student or school is better than another rather than how the student or school progresses. This concentration on competition manifests locally in River City through the ways in which each high school claims to make a student more "college ready."

Although the national dialogue addresses "college readiness" as though it is neutral, this local dual-credit program demonstrates how connected the notion is to identity. The use of the term affects stakeholders' conceptions of student identities and what courses they should take. It also influences students' conceptions of themselves and

others. The assessment of certain literacies by standardized tests such as the ACT and AP exams leads to certain schools and certain students privileged that reinforces the dominant ideology of readiness. Therefore, one of the main purposes of dual credit, to open college courses to students who would not frequently think of themselves as “college ready,” becomes marginal because, at least in the Southern Urban program, there was either an ACT or AP score that led to joining the dual-credit class. The concept of “college readiness” should be addressed in a more complex manner than this assessment.

### **“College Readiness” and Acceleration**

As discussed in the last section, “college readiness” is a marker for both student and school identities. This term also connects to the idea of acceleration in dual-credit courses. Many proponents and opponents of dual credit think the main purpose of the course is for students to accelerate through the educational structure. Some stakeholders in the Southern Urban program echo this view, such as Susan, the Director of Composition: “Well, I mean most obviously it allows them [the students] to get started on their college degree early.” As related in Chapter One, dual-credit courses began so that students who were bored in high school could move on to college courses. The purpose at this point was to challenge students who were considered “ahead” of the high school material. As dual-credit composition courses have become more popular, the purpose seems to have shifted to acceleration, where the value of the course does not seem to be about the content of “college work.” Instead, the value is that students should obtain credits as fast as they can to save time in their education. Southern Urban’s name

for the course, “dual credit,” instead of calling it “dual enrollment,” implicitly represents this concentration on acceleration. This value on acceleration is part of the national conversation on education, where individuals propose a more integrated secondary/postsecondary system, such as in the Common Core Standards discussed earlier in this chapter. Moreover, Nancy Hoffman et al. propose a vertical educational system in *Minding the Gap: Why Integrating High School with College Makes Sense and How to Do It*. They advocate for an educational system where “a post-high school credential is the default end point, and in which the transition between sectors is eliminated to the greatest extent possible” (2). The authors propose this seamlessness to most greatly affect students who are economically disadvantaged and less likely to attend college; these students will have less time to remove themselves from higher education in the seamless model.

To no surprise then, Hoffman et al. are proponents of dual-credit coursework because it provides students “opportunities to accelerate their education” (2). However, it also offers a university something—more students who think of themselves as ready for tertiary education. Juanita, Director of Technology and Community Development in Admissions, who enrolls and directs all the dual-credit programs at Southern Urban, at first questions its recruitment design: “Is it community development or recruitment tool? It’s no real definition. It’s just out there. It is never anything concrete.” Since dual credit occurs off campus, it seems like a nebulous program, even to some of the administrators involved with it. Juanita constructs dual credit as a neutral course by saying that it’s “just out there.” However, she later suggests the recruitment quality of the course: “It is such a good gem. Here is a pool that is easily recruitable.” Therefore, Southern Urban benefits

from dual credit because students who are already taking the class might want to stay at the university who sponsored the course. Moreover, these are not just high school students, but students who are defined by the educational system in this particular program as “college ready.” They have earned the credentials to accelerate to college courses. Therefore, college administrators determine these dual-credit students will more likely succeed at the university, even if they have not physically arrived on campus yet. This acceleration benefits the university because it can easily recruit local students without even having a college day at the high school. The ambassador for the university then becomes the dual-credit instructor, who has to answer questions about how to obtain passwords for the university email address, how to find Southern Urban grades online, and how to utilize the BlackBoard system. Through the instructor, the university is already teaching students how to use the online resources that are part of going to “college.” This instruction benefits the students if they choose to attend Southern Urban because once they arrive at the actual college campus, they are familiar with practices like checking email. Although the students receive benefits like these from taking dual credit, Southern Urban really profits from this acceleration because it has an influence on high school students through the course.

Not everyone at Southern Urban sees dual credit through the lens of recruitment though. Jean, Executive Director of Admissions, explains that dual credit’s purpose is to help the community: “I really do think it functions more as a service. I really do. I think that when you get those students, that’s kind of great, but I think we do dual credit as an institution, as a service to the River City community, yeah, and a service to RCPS.” During this study, Southern Urban’s dual-credit composition courses were in six high

schools in River City. As related in Chapter One, one of the high schools, Hightree, ranks in the top 50 in the nation. However, one in this study, Dean High, and two other high schools not included in this study, are low-performing schools according to RCPS standards. Southern Urban's dual credit could be considered altruistic through its work with a diversity of schools in the city, but even if so, it is also receiving recruitment benefits and finances from the relationship. More in depth discussion of monetary benefits of dual credit for the university will occur in Chapter Three, but it is important to note in this chapter that some stakeholders were not sure of the purposes of the program, such as when John, the Dual-Credit Coordinator for the Composition Program, relates, "And none of the stakeholders knew entirely, is this an outreach program? Is there a financial benefit to the university for this?" John and other administrators were not certain in part because although dual credit was growing, it was also a program practiced off campus, and was therefore difficult to assess in its purposes.

These conflicting definitions have implications for both the program's administration and pedagogy. Administrators such as Juanita have to communicate with instructors clearly on what students need to know about college even though they are not physically at Southern Urban. For instance, students take a dual-credit course that begins their college transcript. Many students at the beginning of the course are not sure exactly what that transcript means and the significance of its permanence. Juanita relates that students lack of understanding what a college transcript means is an issue: "As far as any negative feedback, that is the biggest one." It is a problem because some students do not recognize the dual-credit course grade will affect their college GPA or the credit they receive at certain universities. Therefore, the tension of understanding the college

transcript could result in different approaches to the level of difficulty of the course. As mentioned earlier, dual-credit instructors have to balance teaching and introducing college to students. There could be the pressure to pass students because of the recruitment effort by the university. Many of the stakeholders want the students to have a beneficial experience, but there needs to be more conversation between stakeholders on how the recruitment effort affects the program and pedagogy.

There are also implications for what students think dual-credit functions as because of these conflicting definitions. On Southern Urban's dual-credit program website, it explains that the program "offers qualified, local high school students the opportunity to earn college and high school credit simultaneously before they receive their high school diploma" ("Dual Credit"). By using the term "opportunity," the program appears as a service to the students. This description reinforces Jean's emphasis on the service aspect of dual credit. The website then continues to describe the benefits of the dual-credit program for students, such as to "develop a college transcript while in high school" and "shorten the amount of time required to complete a college degree" ("Dual Credit"). These are benefits for the student in terms of accelerating their education, but again, they are also benefits for the university. Once a student takes a dual-credit course at Southern Urban and passes the course, the student might stay because there are many initiatives to remain such as already knowing how to check the university email and having an idea for how a class functions at this college. In this manner, the program appears more as a recruitment effort than community service. This is especially important because just as there are competing high schools in the RCPS system, there are competing colleges for access to having dual-credit programs in the high schools. Other

state universities and private colleges have dual-credit courses in some RCPS high schools and the private high schools in River City. Therefore, because of this competition, there could be even more emphasis on recruitment.

This debate between whether dual credit functions more as a recruitment tool or service program complicates the discussion of “college readiness” at Southern Urban. If dual credit is viewed as more of a recruitment tool by the university, then there are ethical implications that have an impact on the administration and pedagogy of this program. The recruitment emphasis places instructors in an awkward position of feeling a certain amount of pressure for their students to attend the university after they graduate high school. Out of the seven student participants for this project, four decided to attend Southern Urban. None of them explained that dual credit influenced their decision. For most of them, saving financially was the number one reason for attending Southern Urban, which will be discussed more in depth in Chapter Three.

If dual credit is more of a service to the River City community, then there are also implications in terms of questions about what counts as “college readiness.” As discussed in Chapter One and part of this chapter, dual credit developed into a program at many high schools for students who were from low-income families and would not traditionally have a chance at college. Jean’s response and parts of the Southern Urban dual-credit website construct a purpose of the program as opening access to nontraditional students. However, the student identities discussed earlier in this chapter illustrate students who are already considered traditionally “college ready.” Although some stakeholders think Southern Urban’s purpose is service, this idea is not carried out in the practice of the program. Ultimately, both the recruitment and service purposes are unique to the dual-

credit composition course. On-campus courses do not have this added complication of recruitment and community service to the students, although they do have their own distinct issues. These complications in dual credit come from the acceleration of the course, and more importantly, the option of composition as an accelerated course through dual credit. Not all introductory college courses are offered through dual credit. In their article on early college programs, Taczak and Thelin write,

Yet, dual enrollment programs are rapidly changing the landscape of college campuses. Clearly, there must be a view of education in the minds of administrators and state legislators—an epistemological ideology—that does not value composition as a knowledge-generating discipline. In fact, knowledge under this scenario must be a static collection of information that can be memorized and regurgitated, not something applicable and relevant. (21)

As the authors articulate, prevalence of dual-credit composition courses represents the value, or lack thereof, that many administrators and politicians attribute to writing. There are other disciplines involved in dual-credit courses throughout the United States and Southern Urban, such as Mathematics, which offers three classes, Elementary Statistics, College Algebra, and Precalculus. There are also courses such as United States History, Creative Writing, Humanities, and Accounting offered in the RCPS system through other universities in the area. Taczak and Thelin's consideration could also be applied to the other disciplines listed that offer dual-credit courses. Nevertheless, their point about certain stakeholders represents a still prevalent view of writing courses as skills training.

## **If They Exist, Then What Are They? Conceptions of “High School” and “College-Level” Writing**

Although the notion of acceleration is much of dual credit’s attractiveness, the emphasis on acceleration in the national conversation on education also influences stakeholders’ ideas and practices of literacy in the classroom. One instructor who teaches dual credit at Dean High, Charlotte, discussed how the focus on preparing students for standardized tests such as the ACT at low-performing high schools changes certain secondary educators’ pedagogy. Since some secondary instructors teach the Southern Urban dual-credit course along with their high school English courses, Charlotte thinks the pressure from the instructors about preparing other students for the ACT implicitly still shapes the dual-credit course:

When the pressure is on English teachers to prepare students for ACT, and to get benchmark scores on ACT in reading and English, most of their focus is going to go to reading because that’s a bigger part of the test. And English teachers get a lot of the responsibility for that, that piece of accountability, so yeah I do think that it affects dual credit quite a bit when you have the same teacher whose doing it and I’m the principal and I’m telling you, “I need these kids to benchmark on reading, what are you going to do about that?” You lose the focus that maybe would be placed on that college experience and the writing piece in order to focus on what’s going to keep your job because this is serious high stakes, you know, we’ve had several of our schools and high schools in the district go through audit, and teachers have lost their jobs, and principals have been removed, and so, it’s a big deal.

Charlotte describes the pressure on instructors to teach the kind of writing privileged on the ACT, which she thinks differs from the “college” writing in dual credit. This description demonstrates how institutional power constructs what individuals conceive of as literacy in a certain context. Therefore, because of the pressure of accountability on particular instructors at particular schools from the testing agencies and government, the way instructors teach what “college-level” writing means depends to a certain extent on what can help retain their jobs. As Charlotte indicates, some instructors have to focus on certain aspects such as preparing students to make a high enough score for the ACT. The ACT English Test consists of 53 percent of the test on usage and mechanics while 47 percent is on “rhetorical skills” (“ACT English”). Out of the usage and mechanics section, 24 percent addresses sentence structure, such as “relationships between and among clauses, placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction” (“ACT English”). To prepare students for this test, English instructors must allot a significant amount of time to grammar and certain “rhetorical skills,” such as understanding purpose, audience, and specific kinds of organization and style that the ACT privileges. They also need to prepare students for many questions on literary pieces. The College Readiness Standards for Reading, which represents the assessment of the reading section for the ACT, focuses the most on literary passages. In its description of assessing the main ideas and author’s approach on the exam, the Standards asks test takers to “[r]ecognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in uncomplicated literary narratives” and explain that for cause and relationships, test takers should be able to “[i]dentify clear relationships between characters, ideas, and so on in more challenging literary narratives” (“ACT Reading

Test”). As Charlotte explains, much time and energy would need to be dedicated to reading literary pieces for students to succeed on the ACT.

Consequently, the national dialogue on “college readiness” is recognizable in this local discussion of dual credit and literacy. Charlotte’s representation of the pressure of the ACT on instructors at low-performing schools affects what kinds of literacies become privileged in the course. As stated earlier, Southern Urban had dual credit in some low-performing schools in RCPS, where dual-credit instructors had to negotiate teaching a college class while also teaching students in other classes preparing for the ACT or students in both dual credit and regular English retaking the ACT. If instructors, as Charlotte indicates, have to concentrate on the ACT’s ideas of English, certain kinds of ideas about “college-level” writing could arise in the dual-credit classroom. These kinds of ideas about “college-level” writing indicate a type of writing that is static because it has to reinforce the writing privileged on standardized exams. Charlotte worries that dual-credit instructors at schools like her would teach a kind of writing that does not connect with “college” because it does not let students explore their own thoughts and work on the process as much as concentrate on copying a certain form to do well on a standardized exam. From the syllabi and course assignment prompts I read from each dual-credit course, instructors were aligning their ideas of “college-level” writing close to Southern Urban’s composition outcomes by concentrating on the writing process and purpose. However, since I did not do classroom observations, there might have been a different approach in the classroom that reinforces Charlotte’s anxiety.

Since students need to make a 20 on the ACT to enroll in dual credit at Southern Urban, all of them have experience with what kinds of literacies are emphasized on the

standardized tests. However, most of them seemed to go into dual credit without a clear idea of what kind of literacies would be privileged in the course. Some, such as Devyn, a senior at Hightree, thought the class would be more focused on literature pieces since that is what she had in high school before: “Actually, when I went into it, I thought it was going to be like a whole bunch of nights of reading, like a lot...I don’t know. Most of my English classes we read, like that’s all we did.” Many of the students interviewed expected a certain amount of reading literature in this course, and were surprised that it was concentrated more on writing. These responses about what students expected could be related to what kinds of literacies they privilege, such as ones assessed on the ACT, but more so because literature is the content of most of their high school English courses.

After being in the dual-credit course for most of the year, Devyn and other students began to make distinctions between the differences in “high school” and “college-level” writing. One senior at Hightree, Justin, describes college-level writing as “[m]ore research based and I think how you write your bibliography also. I think that’s the main thing that college professors want to see. I’m just guessing actually. I’m not sure.” It is obvious from this statement that Justin does not feel confident in the distinctions he draws between writing in high school and college. More than most individuals, he readily admits that it is difficult to define the two. This lack of clarity about the differences in high school and college-level writing demonstrates that there are no accurate descriptions of each. There are policy statements, such as Southern Urban’s Composition 101 Outcomes and the RCPS statements on writing that do offer some insights from an institutional point of view. Examples of Southern Urban’s Composition 101 Outcomes include “Focuses on a clear and consistent purpose” and “Demonstrates

awareness of multiple points of view” (“Courses”). In one of the RCPS statements on writing that represents the state portfolio standards, it states that an excellent piece of writing “[i]ndicates a strong awareness of audience’s needs; communicates effectively with audience; sustains distinctive voice and/or appropriate tone” and “[d]emonstrates careful and /or subtle organization that enhances the purpose” (“Writing”). These are attempts to articulate what the writing should be, but this language is vague and is rarely articulated to teachers and students.<sup>8</sup> In his study of secondary English instructors at an achieving high school, Joseph Jones finds that the instructors were not certain what would count as college writing, and many fell back on their experiences in college coursework to prepare students: “The responses reveal how the college imperative, though haphazardly articulated and inconsistently acknowledged, provides purpose for some of their work with students” (5). Although getting students “college ready” was motivational to these instructors, they were not exactly sure what the differences in high school and college writing were, just as Justin did not. These terms both operate in ways depending on the context of the environment and the particular administrator, instructor, and student discussing them. Therefore, in this chapter, there are no clear definitions of what high school and college writing mean; instead, I am interested in the conceptions of these terms by stakeholders to investigate what kinds of literacies are privileged in this dual-credit program.

In his description of college-level writing, Justin acknowledges there is more research or evidence needed in college, along with the significance of the bibliography or Works Cited page. Since Justin’s dual-credit instructor uses the standard syllabus for

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<sup>8</sup> Students in this study did not talk about the policy documents and may not have been aware of them. These policy documents will be discussed more in depth in Chapter Four.

composition at Southern Urban created by the Writing Program Administrator at the time of this study, there were major paper assignments where students had to develop and present a well-researched argument. A subpart of this work was finding sources as evidence for the argument. For instance, one assignment was a movie review where students were asked to research, summarize, and quote from three reviews of a movie they were interested in seeing or had already seen. The purposes for this assignment were described as the following on the assignment prompt: “Improve your ability to thoughtfully refute or concede (without dismissing) arguments and evidence that differ from your point of view, Give you practice writing a thesis-driven, criteria-match argument, Give you practice paraphrasing and quoting from other authors as you insert your voice into ongoing arguments” (“Evaluation”). It was clear the Writing Program Administrator and instructor using this assignment wanted to be able to assess students’ research and inclusion of evidence in this paper. A Works Cited page in MLA style was also called for on the assignment prompt. This assignment was for the Introductory College Writing course at Southern Urban. If students took the Intermediate College Writing course that was offered at schools such as Cary High and Woods High, they would be using even more sources in their papers.

Since there was such a focus on research and evidence in certain assignments, it is understandable why Justin highlights the Works Cited page in his response to what college-level writing means. He could be privileging the page because it seems tangible to him, a kind of writing that distinguishes itself from the text of the rest of the paper. Justin could also be describing college-level writing as this Works Cited page because of a focus on “mastery.” The national conversation on “college readiness” privileges the

notion that students can master certain aspects of writing so they can move in a unidirectional manner to their future courses and career. One can feel as though he or she is “college-ready” by doing a Works Cited page because there is a certain way to do it in MLA format. There seems like a “right” answer when working on a page like that can be assessed clearly by one’s instructor. This could be what Justin hopes English professors want because then he has a certainty of what is expected of him in this writing course. To act as though mastery of writing is possible also relates to what Taczak and Thelin state about the value, or lack thereof, of the field of composition. By privileging college-level writing as a Works Cited page, Justin reflects the national conversation’s value of writing itself.

Interestingly though, none of these students when discussing the differences in high school and college-level writing explain them in terms of grammar. Most of the students explain the differences through using more evidence in writing and concentrating more on argument. Although other students do not concentrate on the Works Cited page, they differentiate the dual-credit course and other English courses they had in the past by research. Drew, a student from Dean High, explains, “Like in high school, you might have to cite like three books or something. You don’t really do a whole lot of research. It’s more like you know your own thoughts and things, but like, when you are doing an argument piece, you really got to back up everything.” Drew privileges the depth of particular arguments and evidence in her conception of college-level writing. Her idea of writing is more subjective than Justin’s because it does not focus on mastery; for that reason, Drew’s privileging disrupts much of the national dialogue on education because her idea cannot be easily assessed. Although argument and evidence are part of

the questions in standardized exams, the kind of writing Drew means cannot necessarily show a student is “college ready” in a clear manner. Demonstrating “college readiness” in this way is less tangible because there is not a certain amount of sources that can be used to make a paper demonstrate evidence. It depends on the argument made and the kinds of evidence a writer uses. Therefore, this conception of college-level writing is less certain than Justin’s description of the importance of the Works Cited page in college.

Drew also includes the term “argument” to explain her conception of college-level writing. This term also relates to the standard syllabus used in the dual-credit English course discussed earlier. This course concentrated on argument, evidence, and research throughout the major assignments in the course. Since the administrator and instructors use “argument” throughout the course materials, it makes sense that many of the students characterize college-level writing the way Drew does. To many of them, to be “college ready” meant understanding how to construct an argument. It appears they perhaps substituted “argument” for “college ready” without having a clear definition of either one. Some of the stakeholders, such as some instructors and the Director of Composition saw college writing as primarily about argument and practiced that in their courses. Susan, the Director of Composition, described literacy as “what is needed to be kind of a functional adult in our society which uh you know includes the ability to read texts, to engage in public arguments, to think critically about public arguments.” Students understood that argument was what the dual-credit course focused on the most and this seemed to transfer to what they thought college-level writing should be.

For some of the students, argument is part of composition more so than literature. Devyn explains that to her, the differences in high school and college-level writing are

based on the differences in literature and composition: “We did a poetry unit that we had to do for Senior English 4 so it was kind of weird just jumping back and forth. And sometimes we were working on doing Senior English 4 stuff. So it was kind of just like weird because I’d be in this whole dual credit college mode, and then she’d just throw this poetry thing at us and say, ‘Do this for high school.’” While students took the Southern Urban dual-credit course, they also took a literature course required for graduation. For many of the students then, the Senior English course would alternate with the dual-credit one every other day of the week. This schedule is beneficial because both courses are able to occur during one time slot, but it also has disadvantages. It became obvious to some students, like Devyn, by the alteration in the schedule that high school writing meant literature and college writing mean composition. Students designated the courses in content and strategies. Therefore, they did not comment on the connection of writing argument about literature pieces in their Senior English courses. In other words, students opposed their conceptions of college-level and high school as they discussed dual credit.

### **Disrupting Notions of “College-Level” Writing: Redefining What Counts as**

#### **Evidence**

As many of the students separate literature from the dual-credit course, Emma, the instructor at Hightree discussed earlier, finds a way to meld both her literature and dual-credit composition courses. In some of the assignments for both Senior English and dual credit, Emma introduces students to different genres and ways of using research based on the purposes of both courses. Emma changes certain assignment prompts in the dual-

credit course by allowing students to use the literature they are reading in the Senior English class as evidence for their composition papers. She stipulates that students can only use one piece of literature as evidence so that they still work towards finding other genres in the research process. This course change did not come from institutional pressure because Emma teaches at the number one high school in the district. In fact, she feels much freedom in what she can do in her classroom: “You know I think at times there’s comfort in the lesson plan for October, and here’s day 1, but there’s also the fun in designing your own lessons. So I think there’s a little bit less pressure here maybe because the students are successful and...I think their success you know allows for more freedom for us.” Consequently, because of the success of the school, Emma feels she can be more creative in her pedagogy and not worry about preparing students for standardized tests like the ACT in the way that instructors like Charlotte discuss. This local example demonstrates how many students of privilege are given more options to be creative and flexible while work for less privileged students can be more rigid and formulaic. The perception of readiness is located externally, in test scores in the school, and students are engaged in more work they find compelling at the high ranking school, while at the less privileged it is more about “the basics.”

It interests Emma to combine aspects of the two courses so that students not only understand the relationship between literature and composition, but the research and use of different genres. For the relationship to be clear, Emma also brought strategies from dual credit into the literature course. One example of this was in a future schedule she created for her Senior English class. Students would be reading *The Canterbury Tales* in

this course. Emma adds the elements of argument learned in the dual-credit class to this assignment in the literature class. The assignment asks students to do the following:

Create a Facebook page for a character from *CT*. The “page” (the final version may actually be several pieces of paper when printed) must include a minimum of 6 elements common to Facebook. It must be accompanied by a one page explanation of how you have used ethos, pathos, and logos in your page to convince me to want to “friend” this character (“Yearlong Outline” 4).

Although Emma asks students to analyze a piece of canonical literature for this assignment, she also asks them to draw on rhetorical terms they have learned in the composition course, such as “ethos, pathos, and logos.” Therefore, students utilize multiple strategies from both English classes so that Emma can assess how they are doing in both through one project.

In Emma’s pedagogy, there is a less clear distinction between conceptions of high school and college-level writing. Her dual-credit classroom asks students to privilege both literature and writing strategies. Through this merging, Emma resists the identity of a dual-credit composition program because she changes what kind of texts can be used. In doing so, Emma purposefully challenges the reification of high school and college-level writing to her dual-credit students. This combination of composition and literature in each course is a facet that has not been studied about dual credit. This could be because to many compositionists, the use of literature in a writing course seems to disvalue composition, a discipline that has worked for its independence. There also is the history of NCTE and CCCC that informs conceptions on the relationship between high school and college instruction (Gilyard, 2011; Lindemann, 2011; Reid, 2011). Emma’s

pedagogy seems possible in this unique space of dual credit because she teaches it at her high school while also teaching these same students about literature. This pedagogy also functions because each course keeps its main purposes; for instance, the use of a literature source as evidence does not discount that there are at least two other kinds of sources also employed.

To a certain extent, this disrupting of high school and college-level writing also works because of the particular school and particular students at Hightree. Emma can work to mesh these notions more because she is not worried about losing her job if she does not prepare students well enough for a certain exam. The national conversation does not affect Emma as much as Charlotte because she is in a certain position of privilege. Consequently, Emma can negotiate much more with what high school and college-level writing means. There is not the pressure of making sure her students benchmark on the ACT that affects how she will teach. The role of acceleration to Emma is not as important because her high school is the most competitive one in the district. Just like Woods High discussed earlier, you have to apply to attend Hightree for high school, and the enrollment is competitive. The socioeconomic status of the students is also higher at Hightree. In the 2010-2011 academic year, Hightree had 16.9% of its students on free or reduced lunch. In that same year, Dean High, where Charlotte teaches, had 54.0% of its students on free or reduced lunch (“High School”). To a certain extent then, Emma can be creative in the dual-credit class because she is at Hightree and has the power and freedom to do so. Her students are already doing what RCPS wants them to do in being “college ready.” If she was at another school in the system, Emma might not be reinforced for her creativity in the dual-credit course because there would be more

pressure on preparing students for standardized exams. Therefore, both Charlotte and Emma conceive of dual-credit pedagogy in a particular way dependent on economic, social and political consequences.

The identity of “college ready” reinforced in the national conversation for both schools and students influences the kinds of pedagogies and practices that occur in the local dual-credit program. In turn, the literacies privileged depend not on Southern Urban’s dual-credit program as a whole, but also on the context of the high schools where the program occur. Although both had a standard syllabus for composition from the university, Charlotte and Emma’s conception of teaching writing became different depending on the context of where they teach and the values significant to those schools at this particular moment. These local examples demonstrate Barton and Hamilton’s notion that literacy practices are patterned by institutions and systems of power. Some literacies are more dominant and influential than others depending on the context of where the dual-credit instructor teaches. Therefore, when individuals want to understand if a dual-credit program reinforces notions of literacy, they have to study different high schools in which this program operates to understand more of the contexts to which shapes literacies and what kind of power differentials are involved.

### **Transferring Credit, Transferring Skills: Conceptions of “College-Level” Writing**

Much of the national conversation on education uses the term “skills” to indicate the assessment of “college readiness.” The ACT reiterates the term when explaining its writing component “that measures your writing skills—specifically those writing skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition

courses” (“ACT Writing Test”). This use is not just limited to testing agencies. Larry Weinstein’s *Writing at the Threshold: Featuring 56 Ways to Prepare High School and College Students to Think and Write at the College Level*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, asserts that “college writing” involves “skills to master,” such as “full, extensive inquiry,” “critical reading,” “organizing complex material coherently,” and “writing with clarity” as examples (6). Many of these definitions oppose how Emma disturbs the notions of high school and college-level writing in her course; instead, they privilege literacies that can be defined by certain, transferable skills.

This use of “skills” by the ACT and Weinstein portrays literacy in a manner that reinforces the acceleration which is so indicative of dual credit. The value of acceleration rests on the assumption of certainty in mastering skills, as discussed earlier in this chapter with Justin and his preference of the Works Cited Page for understanding what college-level writing means. Although this certainty is hopeful for students, it also presumes that reading and writing are unidirectional processes. This view of skills can be recognized not only with students in the Southern Urban dual-credit program, but some instructors and administrators, who place a high level of confidence on the transference of skills from secondary to tertiary education through the dual-credit composition course. One of the stakeholders, Jessica, an instructor at Cary High, suggests a benefit to dual credit over the popularity of AP is that students will be able to transfer skills to almost any other college course they take:

But you know beyond that, it’s teaching them how to write for any class that they encounter. I mean the skills that they learn is not just for English, its social studies, its art, its science, whatever paper they’re writing, they can apply these

research skills, organizational skills, and that's kind of my selling point when I talk to classes about it is you can take what you learn and apply it to anything in college. And so I think that is one huge benefit of the writing instruction, you know, overall.

While Jessica acknowledges students have awareness on what kinds of writing can apply to other courses, her suggestion that the transfer of writing is a “selling point” to students is problematic. When stakeholders conceive of dual credit in this way, the course becomes about finite skills, the way that much of the national conversation characterizes them. Moreover, the course becomes about mastering reading and writing skills because they can be transferable, so the course's purpose is more about preparing students for other courses in college, like Art History and Psychology, than learning about writing in a composition course. This discussion calls to mind Brian Street's challenge of conceiving literacy as “autonomous” or a set of stand-alone skills. Street considers how the autonomous model ignores the power relationships and social identities that are part of individuals understanding literacy. The way Jessica conceives of the dual-credit course relates to Street's autonomous model. It establishes the value of reading and writing through an acontextual view that students who know certain skills can move through any other courses with writing without much alteration. The certainty in the transferability of writing also sets up the composition course to fail because other college courses have different writing conventions that composition does not necessarily teach, and it creates the impression that composition is a service course to other disciplines. This downgrades composition as a field, as Taczak and Thelin relate can happen with the popularity of dual-credit programs. Therefore, Jessica describes college-level writing as something that

is more universal than it actually is. Her conception connects with the extent to which both universities and high schools in River City have to market to their students to a certain extent. Since some of the high schools are application only, to get the best students, high schools have to advertise what their school offers. Jessica does that in her summation of explaining dual credit to students. This marketing discussion will be continued more in Chapter Three which discusses the economic influences in dual credit.

Jessica's opinion is one that John, the Dual Credit Coordinator in the English Department at Southern Urban discussed earlier in this chapter, reinforces about the pedagogy of writing in a dual-credit course: "When you're teaching a writing course and you do a good job of it, you're teaching critical thinking, you're teaching writing skills that are transferable and that that they could use for the rest of their life, and that really stuck with me." There is hope by both of these stakeholders that students will transfer skills from one course or one level to another, which is understandable because both value what they do. Throughout the interviews in this study, many English educators and administrators came back to how learning about writing is valuable to students both academically and personally. It is valuable, but difficult to prove whether transfer of writing occurs in this local program. In their foundational work on transfer, David Perkins and Gavriel Saloman note, "students often fail to apply knowledge and skills learned in one context to other situations" (22). The use of transfer by these stakeholders inflates the skills of reading and writing to credit and grades transferred to a university when a student takes dual credit. However, the kind of literacies privileged and taught are much more subjective than the credit and grade is for a course, as indicated by Emma's

pedagogy. Additionally, the reality of transfer occurring between different courses and contexts has been critiqued by scholars, as evidenced earlier in this chapter.

While some stakeholders align with the national conversation, other Southern Urban stakeholders complicate the use of skills in relation to college readiness. A dual-credit instructor at Cary High during this study, Amy, employs this term when she discusses her assignments for the course. Amy relates skills in a more specific sense to how they can help particular students for particular genres. For example, when Amy explains her use of the term in assignments, she draws upon how skills prepare students for future work in multiple environments:

I think when I'm looking at my assignments, I always want students to have skills whether they're reading or writing skills, that they can take from the assignment and apply to later points, either in their education or their jobs, or even in community work because a lot of our students do participate in community work. And so, being aware, first of all, that not everybody is coming from the same position as far as their attitudes towards reading or writing. That is one thing that I think about and I try to incorporate in my assignments so students are aware.

In a way, Amy's conception of skills correlates with Jessica and John's conceptions. She wants students to employ skills in their future college and career that they have learned in school. This view is forward-looking, similar to the legislation on education that looks for ways to students to succeed and the comments made by both President Obama and former President Bush about preparing students for their future careers. Amy's conception differs, though, in that she sees students doing community work, which is

more a part of life that is not focused solely on social and economic advancement like much of the national conversation does. She sees her assignments as making students “aware” of different purposes, audiences, and genres depending on the situation, whether that be career related or not. This is an example of someone in the conversation thinking in a more flexible manner about writing and giving students meta-rhetorical awareness. Although Jessica hints at this in her response, Amy makes awareness of writing genres and attitudes as valuable as transferability of skills.

When describing her assignments, Amy also suggests that there are exact skills she establishes in her class, which is not as clear when Jessica and John discuss skills in dual credit. Amy views the skills privileged in her course as beneficial for students in composition, but also in other courses where they will be writing:

I know I had one student tell me that we always seemed to come back to thesis statements and topic sentences, and I’m like “Well if you’re writing an essay for sociology, what do you think the teacher’s going to look for?” Right, you can always come back to these so I do purposefully incorporate evaluation criteria for thesis statement, or clear coherent argument is usually the way I state it in my assignment prompt, and to me that’s their thesis statement. And then being able to sustain that argument and use evidence, and I think here’s kind of where the literacy comes back in, especially when you’re teaching research with students is to have them choose evidence that supports their position.

Again, Amy’s claim that there are skills which are transferable to other courses aligns with the national conversation on literacy. She thinks that understanding and writing a thesis statement in her class will be beneficial in a student’s other course. However, Amy

also privileges students' perceptions that there needs to be an argument in what they write, even if it is a composition course not based on argument. Amy does not broadly explain that skills transfer to other courses, as Jessica does, but provides exact skills that could transfer. Her constant connection of college-level writing to thesis statements and topic sentences could make students think these two aspects are synonymous with what argument means. It also might suggest to students that there is one way to write at the university. In her classroom, Amy shifts positions on writing and the kinds of aspects she focuses on for dual credit. "College readiness" is a complicated idea, and Amy's somewhat contradictory statements about teaching dual-credit writing illustrate that complexity.

Similar to students' perceptions of college-level writing, Amy discusses the significance of finding evidence and understanding how to research in her dual-credit classroom. These are skills are not about mastery, but much more complex in their use. Finding evidence for an argument is so much dependent not only on the assignment, but on what kind of argument a student makes. Moreover, evidence to Amy in her pedagogy does not always mean traditional sources such as books, articles, and websites. In her dual-credit class, the first major assignment is called an "Identity Argument." In this assignment, Amy asks students to choose five cultural artifacts that make an argument about their identities. These cultural artifacts can be anything from laptops and phones to teddy bears and coffee mugs. Then, students have to make an argument about how these cultural artifacts shape their identities. Amy makes the goals for this assignment clear on the assignment prompt by stating that one goal is to "[p]ractice writing a thesis driven argument with clear topic sentences." She also states on the assignment prompt that

students need to “fully and explicitly explain the relevance and significance of each cultural artifact.” Although her goals about argument and evidence are emphasized in the prompt, Amy also understands that these skills are flexible, which is apparent in how she conceives of evidence differently depending on the genre. Amy employs a pedagogy in the dual-credit course that uses the term skills, but in a way that shows they are always in process as students go through their professional and personal lives. Some of her students, such as Scott, seem to understand this flexibility when he explains what college-level writing means: “You have more freedom in what you write and like the way you set up and structure wise and stuff.” Scott conceives the kind of writing Amy taught him as very different from the writing he learned in high school which he describes as more structured and rigid. Amy’s focus on skills reinforces the way the Southern Urban dual-credit writing program determines that “[w]riting is a complex task involving several different skills, each of which may be practiced and improved” (*Handbook* 16). Skills for both Amy’s definition of literacy and the handbook’s definition of writing both focus more on context and process than the way skills becomes portrayed in the national dialogue.

In dual-credit programs, to act as though these reading and writing skills are transferrable under the auspices of “college readiness” is to create a fiction about what higher education means. Students cannot be fully prepared for college because they are not there yet, and literacy practices are contextual. As Street indicates, conceptions of literacy and literacy practices vary from one context to the next. Once students begin higher education at the institution they choose, their experiences of a college course will be probably be quite different from the dual-credit one. In “Complicating the Concept of

Skill Requirements: Scenes from a Workplace,” Charles Darrah discusses how public and private reports and scholarly literature demonstrate workers are unqualified for jobs due to changing skills and deficiencies in schools. He explains that the term “skill” is employed frequently, but is not adequately explained. Darrah studies one company, the assembly area of Kramden Computers, and finds that a richer understanding of work besides skills comes from studying this space. He writes, “Understanding how people work is especially timely since educators, business and industry leaders, and public policy makers have conducted an unrelenting debate concerning whether American workers are adequately prepared for a world of work that is being profoundly transformed” (248). On his study of this place, Darrah writes that the treatment of skill is more complex than a list of broad occupational groupings, a certain level of education, and a certain level of income. Therefore, the purpose of education that has become defined by preparing people with discrete skills for work is not necessarily effective. This is because work and skills is defined in social context, as Darrah writes, “The lesson to be drawn from these examples is that skill requirements are not derived in any simple way from asking people about their jobs (or the jobs of others), or observing them at work. Skill requirements are constructed through a social process, and we may legitimately ask how that construction proceeds” (265). Therefore, skills are not neutral because they always function in a social context.

Dana Driscoll’s work on transfer, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, acknowledges the assumption by universities that skills can transfer out of FYC. This assumption leads to difficulties on what kind of writing should be taught in the composition course in order to prepare students for disciplinary writing. Driscoll states,

In fact, universities hold an institutional assumption that knowledge, skills, and techniques gained in FYC are able to transfer to other contexts—disciplinary, civic, personal, and professional. FYC is understood to provide students with functional literacy in academic prose; without successful transfer, disciplinary faculty may be forced to spend time teaching basic writing strategies rather than advanced disciplinary writing skills or other course content.

The purpose of transfer for FYC is one reason at most universities, every student is required to take it. However, as demonstrated from the transfer research discussed earlier, the extent to which students transfer skills is very difficult to understand. As transfer also is a purpose for interest in dual-credit programs, it is significant to recognize how much the notion of “skills” depends on context. Students from dual credit might be surprised at the extent that they are “college ready” because they took upper-level classes that had content more similar to college. However, they will still be getting used to the differences in purpose and institutional power that exist between high school and college. As Barton and Hamilton note, power differentials between shape literacy practices, and the differences in power in secondary and tertiary education shape how stakeholders define and practice literacy in this local context. Therefore, for stakeholders like instructors and administrators to act as though reading and writing skills are transferable to most college courses is to not prepare students for college. It would be not only more truthful, but more effective, to teach the skills in term of context, like Amy does in her pedagogy.

Moreover, the notion of transferability of skills is another attempt to make education seem more democratic. The assumption behind thinking it is conceivable for a student to transfer skills is to think that college admissions, and the education system in

general, is objective. Therefore, some dual-credit courses reach out to students at schools in River City who are not economically nor socially stable, so that students who have “mastered” these skills can have more of a chance at college. And yet, as judged from the dual-credit stakeholders in this local program, much judgment of a students’ understanding of literacy depends on the identity of a student as “college ready.” Therefore, to act as though there are no consequences to stating skills are transferable is to retain the dominant educational system that still excludes the people who do not seem “college ready.” As educators and compositionists use the term “college readiness,” we need to be mindful that the system is not democratic, and that there is not as much certainty in skills that some of these stakeholders let on.

### **Conclusion: The Extent of “College Readiness” in Conceptions of Literacy**

“College readiness” is a term that is part of the national conversation on education, and becoming even more so with programs like dual credit which continue to rise in popularity across the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2010–11 school year, 82 percent of high schools reported that students were enrolled in dual-credit courses. Around three-quarters (76 percent) of all high schools reported that students took dual-credit courses with an academic focus, and around half (49 percent) of all high schools reported that students took dual-credit courses with a career and technical/vocational focus (3). Many students in programs, such as the ones through Southern Urban, take dual credit so that they can already have a start on their college education, so that they, as Danyelle states at the beginning of this chapter, feel “ready.”

“College readiness” is this term that is pervasive, but when analyzed closer, there are internal contradictions represented by local Southern Urban stakeholders’ responses. Individuals use “college readiness” when they discuss issues of access to higher education and one of the goals of the dual-credit program help provide that access and progress for students. This is why the use of skills in dual credit is important to some stakeholders. This term provides stakeholders with a skills-focused concept of what will be needed in order to succeed in college. And yet, as the Southern Urban program demonstrates, students themselves have ideas of who is “college ready” and who is not based on their own identities. Educators also recognize who is “college ready” depending on students’ enrollment in courses such as Advanced Placement and dual credit and what schools the student attend. It is important then that educators are aware that much of what “college readiness” means when utilizing it in dual-credit programs and other likes it.

When “college readiness” and literacy meet, mostly in discussions of college-level writing, institutional pressures affect some stakeholders’ conceptions of what a writing class means and how it functions. It is significant to understand that college-level writing is difficult to define in this cultural moment in the United States, but that national legislation and testing agencies are working to define it. Judging by some of the stakeholders in this chapter, there are institutional pressures for viewing literacy, and college-level writing in particular, in ways that reinforce the national conversation. In *What is “College-Level Writing?”*, Patrick Sullivan writes,

Increasingly, we have let college-level writing be defined for us by state and national legislatures, special task forces, national testing agencies, and even some activist individuals who have strong convictions and large political constituencies.

Few of the people involved in making these decisions and shaping our public policy about education are teachers, and few have more than a passing acquaintance with the college classroom. If we do not conduct this discussion ourselves, and speak with a strong voice about the issues we care about most, someone else will do it for us. If that does happen, it is very likely that the best interests of our students, and the more generally enlightened approach to the enterprise of learning that so many of us support, will be compromised. Our profession should be providing the leadership on this important matter of public policy (18).

Certain literacies are privileged because of the institutional and economic forces that shape them in the Southern Urban dual-credit program. This acceleration that is a purpose in the dual-credit course leads into a skills mastery approach to writing. These ideas about literacy are reinforced in this dual-credit program, through the conceptions of skills and argument, and yet also disturbed by some of the stakeholders. Educators like Emma and Amy complicate the notions of college-level writing and skills in their courses, working for students to understand the flexibility of writing in terms of purpose, audience, and genre. Sullivan indicates that institutions like the national government and testing agencies will continue to conceive of college-level writing with the power that

they have. As educators and compositionists, we also need to be part of this discussion to combat some of the problematic conceptions of literacy, and explore our own motivations for teaching writing at the college-level. Southern Urban's dual-credit program is one place to understand what kind of values fit with the national conversation on education, and in what ways educators disturb these notions.

## CHAPTER THREE

### COMPETING DEFINITIONS: THE ECONOMICS OF DUAL CREDIT

#### **Introduction**

As the Dual-Credit Coordinator in the English Department at Southern Urban University, John struggled to understand the exact purpose of the program when he began his position. Chapter Two discussed how stakeholders perceived Southern Urban's dual-credit program through both community service and recruitment models in varying degrees through college and career readiness standards. Additionally, academic benefits are a position for dual-credit programs. Rather than distinguishing whether dual credit concentrated more on service or recruitment, John was interested in understanding the financial benefits for both the high school students taking the course and the university offering it. He did not see the financial advantage of dual credit for Southern Urban: "I don't think there is. We gave free tuition for students who are on free and reduced lunch. And other students paid one-third rate so I don't think it was a money-making proposition." This dual-credit program reached out to students and their families who would not necessarily have the resources to pay for the course by offering free and reduced tuition rates. It also worked with families who made more than the free and reduced lunch limit, but needed to work on an incremental pay system in order to afford dual credit for the academic year. Therefore, Southern Urban's dual-credit program was a

sponsor for some of its students to make it economically possible to take a dual-credit composition course. This conversation on the cost of dual credit reflects the critical financial pressure on many students and their families to pay for college, especially since the 2008 recession. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, “undergraduate tuition, room, and board at public institutions rose 42 percent” after adjustment for inflation between 2000-2001 to 2010-2011 academic year (“Tuition Costs”). State and local financing of universities and colleges declined seven percent in 2012 and per student support dropped nine percent from the previous year, the lowest level in 25 years (Lewin). From the period of 2002 to 2011, the state appropriation per full time equivalent (FTE) student for Southern Urban decreased by one-third, 33.3% (“Budget”). According to the Southern Urban FY12-13 budget report, more than \$59 million has been cut from Southern Urban’s state funding during the last 12 years. Tuition and fees for Southern Urban make up most of the university’s revenue. In fiscal year 2012-13, the state provides 39% of Southern Urban’s budget while tuition and fees cover the remaining 61% percent (Drees). There are also indirect costs gained from grants and endowment funds. Many of the students interviewed for this project continually referred to saving money as the primary factor for their choices of taking dual credit and attending certain colleges. Some of them explained their fear of incurring college debt while others indicated that taking college courses in high school was a way to move through their degree faster so they could make a stable income sooner. Many students mentioned their parents’ support of dual credit because it felt like a short and long-term financial “deal” that would lead to college, and potentially, financial stability.

In “The Composition Marketplace: Shopping for Credit versus Learning to Write,” Kristine Hansen writes, “The alternatives to first-year college composition (FYC) are often marketed to students and their parents as a way to ‘take care of’ the college writing requirement or ‘get it out of the way’ while the students are still in high school and thus save time and tuition once they matriculate at college” (2). These alternatives, such as dual credit, address the struggles for many people to make college work even though it may not be affordable to them. In this chapter, I argue that stakeholders’ notions about the current economy and the financial advantages of dual credit informed the conceptions of students, instructors, and administrators of the purposes of literacy education at Southern Urban. The values and assumptions about literacy held by the stakeholders in this program not only relate to the corporatization of education, but also to the socioeconomic class of each participant. Therefore, I will draw again on Barton and Hamilton’s work on the influence of social institutions and power relationships in shaping individuals’ ideas of literacy.

I will also utilize Deborah Brandt’s notion of sponsorship, demonstrating the way that the dual-credit program financially sponsors certain students, and through this manner, regulated certain notions of literacy. In *Literacy in American Lives*, Brandt explains how sponsors are “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (166). Both Southern Urban and River City Public Schools regulated the approach to literacy to an extent by the dual-credit course materials, instructors, and stakeholders who funded the money for the program. I argue the tension between neoliberal economic forces and academic literacy demonstrated in

the dual-credit space represent general questions related to college writing instruction about the extent to which literacy education is about creating a certain kind of “worker” in the global marketplace. These questions demonstrate the struggle in identity for composition as a course and discipline at the university.

This chapter begins by explaining the cost of the dual-credit composition course and stakeholder perceptions of this financial cost. These costs, and who paid them, demonstrate the role of sponsorship in the relationship between the university, participating high schools, outside organizations, and students. The financial sponsor is specifically important because of the economic recession of 2008 that affected students’ families and relates to the many ways that students discussed their reasons for taking a dual-credit writing course. The chapter then explores how this sponsorship informed literacy education. Two stakeholders in Southern Urban’s dual-credit program, both administrators, discuss the corporatism of the university by focusing on the recognition of students as “customers” in college, and what this term means and the identity of the ever changing university it implies. University sponsors employing corporate language contribute not only to the conversation about literacy, but also to how instructors and administrators direct and practice writing instruction with these corporate terms and ideas in higher administration. Finally, there is discussion about the tensions between the neoliberalism direction of higher education and other goals recognized by the university, such as citizenry and awareness of diversity.

## **The Cost of Credit**

According to Southern Urban University’s website, the dual-credit composition course costs one-third of regular university tuition. The website does not provide an exact amount of the price, so after communicating with the Bursar’s Office, I found that it costs \$126.75 for tuition and also an \$8.25 for the Student Recreation Fee for a total of \$135.00 per credit hour. An English Composition 101 course at Southern Urban is three credit hours; therefore, it is \$405 for a dual-credit student to take 101 through the university. To many of the students and their parents, this cost seemed reasonable in order to begin college coursework early. One student at Cary High, Scott, explained why his parents were enthusiastic about dual credit: “My parents really liked the fact that I was taking a dual-credit course. I mean, just the fact that I get to take a college course and get credit taken for it, they were all for it. And tuition being a third of the price of what it would be in regular college, they definitely go for that.” To Scott’s parents, dual credit was an attractive option because it felt like a financial “deal” that would also be a long-term investment since Scott would be accumulating credit for college.

Other students and parents also viewed dual credit as a long-term investment. Danyelle, another student at Cary High, related her mother’s position on the course: “Yeah, my mother had to put two of us through the class. And then, though it’s kind of a lot, she was like, ‘You know what I’m not even tripping because I know you guys can pass this class and that’s two less classes that I have pay for when you go to college so you know what? Just go ahead.’ She was really supportive.” Danyelle’s mother recognized the expense, the upfront, lump sum cost of the course, even if it was a third of tuition. However, the appeal of dual credit was a financially prudent one for her—she

would pay more now and consequently less in the future. Both Danyelle and Scott's conceptions of their parents' reactions to dual credit were focused most on saving money as opposed to what kind of content would be in the course. When other students discussed their parents' reactions to their taking dual credit, most of them explained that parents were primarily interested in their children obtaining college credit for academic reasons, but they were also enthusiastic about saving financially. As discussed in Chapter Two, the students taking this course were already designated by the high school and college as "college ready." Therefore, many of their parents were trying to figure out a way to pay for college. The dual-credit program appealed to the dual goals of obtaining credit for college and saving money.

This notion of saving is specifically important because of the current cost of higher education in the United States. In 2011 to 2012, the cost of in-state tuition and fees for Southern Urban University were \$8,930. The out-of-state tuition and fees for the university were \$21,650 ("National University Rankings"). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, current dollar prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board on average in the United States were \$13,600 at public universities, \$36,300 at private not-for-profit institutions, and \$23,500 at private for-profit institutions for the 2010-2011 year.<sup>9</sup> Public universities have suffered since the 2008 recession because of the lack of support by many state governments. Therefore, tuitions rose at many public colleges more sharply since the recession than they did before and during it (Pérez-Peña). In 2008, Southern Urban's tuition was \$3,782 for a resident per semester. This price is almost a thousand dollars less than the \$4,733 tuition at Southern Urban for 2012 ("Tuition"). Many of the students interviewed for this project related that they had to

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<sup>9</sup> These are national numbers so that room and board cannot be subtracted from these figures.

balance the cost of the college they would attend with their aspirations for higher education. Devyn, a senior at Hightree High, explained her experience on deciding which college to attend:

But I mean my whole college decision was just based on money. I applied to nine other schools. I got in, it was just they gave me \$8,000, and tuition was \$37,000 a year, so it was just like...I applied to Hampton University. And they were expensive, and they only gave me \$8,000 so it was just "Eh." So after a while, they all just kind of fell off, and I was like, "Hey, let's go to Southern Urban." And I mean it's not a bad decision. I've been here all my life. Like with my mom, I've been helping her in the summers, and just coming over here to her office after school just running around and doing them favors and it seemed like the right fit. And I just figured I could go away for graduate school.

Devyn had an ideal university she wanted to attend, but the price was out of her and her parents' range even with financial aid. Her comments about Southern Urban demonstrate that although she knew she could take out loans at other schools, and therefore potentially attend her dream school Hampton University, she was more interested in saving financially through tuition remission at Southern Urban as compared to going to her dream college. Not only would Devyn still be geographically comfortable in the same city in which she grew up and also near her family, she would not have to pay tuition because of her mother's employment at the university.

Devyn's college decision was also influenced by a current event at the time. President Obama had recently given a speech on April 24, 2012 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he stated, "I'm the president of the United States.

We only finished paying off our student loans off about eight years ago. That wasn't that long ago. And that wasn't easy—especially because when we had Malia and Sasha, we're supposed to be saving up for their college educations, and we're still paying off our college educations.” Devyn had just recently heard about the Obamas' student debt in the news and seemed anxious by recognizing the amount of time it would take such powerful people to pay off their debt: “That scared me.” This anxiety makes sense, because according to The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, college affordability is growing more difficult: “Student financial aid did not keep pace with tuition costs, exacerbating the college affordability program.” Moreover, student loans have more than doubled in the last decade (Lewin). Therefore, students thinking about going to college have to consider what they can afford and what kind of debt they are willing to accumulate. Devyn suggested that her college decision was based on not having a financial burden like the Obamas did: “I don't have to worry about tuition. And then go to another school and try to just rack up on student debt that I don't really have to have. So it just didn't make sense to anybody, and I was like that doesn't make sense, let's just stay here.” Devyn's decision to save money by attending a more affordable university demonstrates the kinds of negotiations she and many other students make in their choices of higher education.

The three students just discussed were students whose parents were not only involved in their education, but who also had the resources or access to pay for dual credit. To some other students, dual credit was not a feasible option unless they received some kind of aid. Although the Southern Urban program made an effort to address socioeconomic status by waiving tuition for students in the free and reduced lunch

program, there were some students who were left out because they did not qualify as needing aid, but whose parents lacked enough money to pay for the course. For many families, it is not possible to pay the cost of dual credit, specifically because it is a one-time price of hundreds of dollars. A student who went to Dean High, Drew, brought up this exact experience when she was asked about the drawbacks of dual credit. Drew was not considered a “free or reduced lunch” student, but her family also did not have resources to pay for the course easily:

I guess the only bad thing I could think about it is like having to pay for it. I know it's a really good deal compared to like what the college cost is going to cost, but it was still kind of hard...My family's like middle class and we're comfortable, but it's like you know \$600, I can't just like pull it up out of the air. So my mom paid it...It was good that I got those classes out of the way, but I think that was the only bad thing about it.

Drew said her family made payments for the course in installments. Therefore, even though her mother paid for the course, it was over a period of time to make the cost more manageable. The incremental pay system seemed to be an unofficial way that Southern Urban worked with students who were not necessarily classified as “free or reduced lunch” students. It was not advertised on the website or in the dual-credit handbook. Instead, what was made clear in dual-credit materials was that there would be consequences for not paying tuition to the school. This regulation is evident on the website when it states, “*Failure to fully settle financial obligations may result in financial penalties*” (“Dual Credit”). The program set the economic terms for access to literacy by controlling when and how families should pay. However, from the interviews, the dual-

credit program did not seem as restrictive as the written material indicated because they let families pay in increments.

Laura, the College Access Specialist for River City Public Schools, repeated Drew's view about how much money short term it would be for parents to pay for the dual-credit course. She explained that some students take AP courses because it is cheaper to pay for an exam than take a college course:

Now it's usually more expensive to do the dual credit versus just paying for your AP exam. So, which for some kids, the difference between I don't even know what dual credit goes for anymore, but \$200 to \$300 versus \$80 might not be a big deal, but for a middle-income or a lower-income family who might not qualify for free or reduced lunch, that's a lot of money. That's a lot of money, even though both are huge discounts from what you would pay at a college campus.

Both Drew and Laura recognize that dual credit would be a significant amount of money to pay in the short term. Unlike Scott and Danyelle's family, who could focus on long-term investments because of their socioeconomic status and/or interests in higher education, Drew's family had to focus on whether it was possible in this moment for her to take the course. She was, fortunately, able to enroll, but this predicament demonstrates how the free and reduced lunch population were not the only ones who struggled to pay for college. Drew described her family as "middle class," but there is a variance in what is considered "middle class." A Pew Research Study in 2012 found that 85% of self-described middle-class adults think it is more difficult currently than a decade ago for middle-class people to maintain their standard of living ("Lost Decade"). Therefore,

socioeconomic class was instrumental in which students took dual credit although Southern Urban worked with families in order to pay.

Moreover, Drew attended Dean High, which was considered the lowest performing school in this study. The relationship between socioeconomic class and perception of school success was evident in the different economic profiles of the schools in the dual-credit program, as evidenced in the chart below, which represents the academic year 2011-2012 at RCPS.

School	Hightree High	Cary High	Woods High	Dean High
Students attending college after graduation percentage	98.0%	92.9%	61%	77.4%
Dropout rate	0.4%	0.2%	0.7%	1.8%
Free and reduced lunch percentage	17%	24%	43%	56%

As mentioned in Chapter One, Hightree is known as one of the highest academic public high schools in the state and also ranks high nationally according to *Newsweek*. The student who worried about how to responsibly finance her education, Devyn, attended Hightree. Cary High sends more than 90% of its students to college. Both Scott and Danyelle, the students whose parents could afford the dual-credit course, attended Cary. Woods High, another traditional high school in River City is classified as “Proficient.” Higher than any other school in this study, 31.7% of students go into vocational or technical training after attending Woods High. Dean High is a school labeled as “Needs Improvement” by the state. Drew, the student who was not in poverty, but whose family

struggled to pay for the course, attended Cary. As the percentage of need for free and reduced lunch increased, the status of the school in the district decreased. These needs affect the socioeconomic profiles of the schools. The statistics demonstrate the relationship between wealth, or lack thereof, such as through the percentage of free and reduced lunch, and interest in attending college and therefore taking dual credit.

Drew's experience demonstrates that the economic stakes for dual-credit students are similar to traditional students in college who have to figure out ways to pay for college without many financial resources. Paying for dual credit emphasizes the economic benefits and problems of going to college: short term, the money to pay can be a burden, while long term, the class is supposed to project one into a certain socioeconomic status. In a Treasury Department report from 2012, research indicated that an individual born into the bottom income quintile has more social mobility if he or she attended college. Since one dual-credit class costs less than a semester of traditional college, dual credit can be less economic stakes for students if they fail the course. Devyn described the dual-credit composition course as "Just to get like a practice run. So maybe if I wasn't so good at it the first time, I could like do something to fix it and be better at it the second time." Dual credit offered a way for students to try a college course and see what they thought of it before the high stakes really occurred of attending full-time with the economic consequences associated with that decision.

Although many of the stakeholders recognized the cost of dual credit, they arrived at very different numbers for what the course actually costs. Drew indicated that it was \$600 while the College Access Specialist Laura considered it to be much cheaper, in the \$200 to \$300 range. Interestingly, both of these figures were about \$200 off from the

exact cost of the course. These differences in numbers by stakeholders show how many were uncertain about the actual cost of dual credit. What seemed clear to many of the stakeholders, though, was that dual credit was one-third the cost of regular tuition. It was just not clear what this one-third actually meant cost-wise. The cost of dual credit as one-third rate of tuition was a selling point for the Southern Urban dual-credit program located on the website and mentioned in some of the interviews, as previously indicated in John's and Scott's statements. The rhetoric of the webpage plays into a cultural construction of the material value of the course, and reminds the students and their parents that they are being viewed as consumers because of the concentration on the "deal" of the course. From what the students indicated, many parents seemed to be willing to pay because of this discount in the cost of college. Therefore, it would be more opportune for the university to represent the deal instead of the actual price, specifically because of the anxiety about the cost of higher education represented by many of the stakeholders. If there is a way for students and parents to get access to a college course more inexpensively, then it must be a "good deal." The discount is highlighted, but not the actual cost of the course. This publication of the deal factor plays into the conception of the dual-credit course, and higher education in general, as a commodity. It demonstrates the emphasis on the economic value of college that can eclipse other values, such as academic rigor and connection between high school and college literacies.

This notion of a "deal" demonstrates how important stakeholders' economic choices are in the dual-credit program. Barton and Hamilton explain that "literacy practices are patterned by power relationships and social institutions" (2). Students and their parents who have the option to pay for the course have a choice in education.

Therefore, the literacies that some students are able to access depend not only on the social institution of school, but the economic system in which the student operates. Some students have more power because they have the choice of taking dual credit without worry about how to pay for it while other students see it less as a choice because they do not have the resources. However, it is also more complicated because those students who come from families with a lot of income would not be worried about looking for “deals” in education. This suggests the dual-credit program marketing is directed towards students more at risk than those families who can easily afford it. In “Are Markets in Education Democratic? Neoliberal Globalism, Vouchers, and the Politics of Choice,” Michael W. Apple writes about some of the major tensions surrounding education in the United States in relation to marketization and voucher plans. The concept of choice in education, through vouchers and charter schools, is part of a neoliberal view that choice can be distinct from the economy and society. However, Apple indicates how problematic the neoliberal position is because it continues to defund public schools in the United States where students with the least access to resources attend. To promote “choice” through vouchers and charters still makes students from the lowest socio-economic class suffer the most. There would need to be more egalitarianism to improve all public schools, and yet, the neoliberal viewpoint does not promote egalitarianism.

Apple also argues that the neoliberal view represents a “vision of students as human capital. The world is intensely competitive economically, and students—as future workers—must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively” (214). In terms of this viewpoint, choice becomes crucial because students and their parents are consumers in the education system. Apple continues, “For

neoliberals, the world in essence is a vast supermarket. ‘Consumer choice’ is the guarantor of (market) democracy. In effect, education is seen as simply one more product like bread, cars, and television” (215). In this manner then, education is about individual choice rather than consequences on the collective. It is a matter of competition: who can perform the best in the economy.

This focus on competition is the subject of Patricia Harkin’s “Excellence Is the Name of the (Ideological) Game.” Harkin writes about the competition between academics for funds at the university “to do the work that has historically been entrusted to us, work that used to be sustained by university and operating budgets, work that, when grant applications are unsuccessful, no longer gets done” (30). Since there has been a decline in the public funding of higher education, academics have to depend more on granting agencies and on private development funds. In order to compete with the number of applications, Harkins recognizes how “excellence” has become a main term in the lexicon of university funding. “Excellence” is the way in which the university measures work, “not in Aristotle’s sense of finding a golden mean—but in corporate capitalism’s sense of competing in terms of size” (34). This term has extended to how universities now describe themselves in order to be marketable to students and function on the college rankings system. The overuse of the term “excellent” concentrates on the security of the academic job in higher education as the competition maintains or increases.

Bill Readings critiques the techno-bureaucratic institutionalization of “excellence” in higher education in *The University in Ruins*. He describes the history of the understanding of the function of the university by demonstrating the modern

university has had three ideas: “the Kantian concept of reason, the Humboldtian idea of culture, and now the techno-bureaucratic notion of excellence” (14). Readings explains that this change in the pursuit of excellence represents a change in the University’s function, where it is not clear where it fits into society and what exactly academics have to offer:

The University thus shifts from being an ideological apparatus of the nation-state to being a relatively independent bureaucratic system...The University is thus analogous to a number of other institutions—such as national airline carriers—that face massive reductions in foreseeable funding from increasingly weakened states, which are no longer the privileged sites of investment of popular will. (14)

Readings indicates how the university in contemporary times is driven by market forces and corporate sensibilities. He explains how the university used to be the institution of national culture in the modern nation-state, but now that is unclear in a more global economy. To a certain extent then, Readings writes about what the function of the university used to be compared to what it has become. He asks, “At the twilight of modernity, which is also the twilight of the University as we have known it, can another way be found to think the University? This is to ask whether the University, once stripped of its cultural mission, can be something other than a bureaucratic arm of the unipolar capitalist system” (46). What comes with this function of the university are that students are referred to as consumers again.

Similar to Harkin, Bruce Horner, Kelly Latchaw, Joseph Lenz, Jody Swilky, and David Wolf discuss what it is like to work in an English Department when “their academic work was subject to material crisis and change” (77). Through a series of

accounts of their experiences, the authors discuss an involuntary program review their department went under. Horner writes,

In what might seem a textbook case for Bill Readings' critique of the corporatization of the university, faculty, staff, and administrators learned that all academic programs would be assessed for their currency and innovation—whether they were “learner centered,” “values-based,” “holistic,” “responsive to external demands and needs,” responsive and structurally connected to meet the university's internal needs (global/international in perspective); and above all, achieving “excellence.” (76)

The term excellence surfaces again in how universities measure themselves and their faculty. This kind of assessment of academics demonstrates that the English Department future is largely in doubt at Drake University, where all of these authors were employed at the time. According to Jody Swilky, the Department needed to do a more effective job of showing what exactly it did for the university. One important critique of the Department was that it did not serve the demand of composition as much anymore. Other programs across the university were able to teach what counted as a writing course in their classes. Therefore, the English Department became less needed because it did not have as much of the presence as an introductory class as it had in the past. Swilky writes, “In the end, the department's experience with the academic program review suggests we must work differently if we are to have a chance to illuminate the value of curricular reform in English. We need to consider the nature and direction of curricular reform in light of what we have lost or given up—that is, our function as the primary designers and teachers of the university writing requirements” (90). This experience demonstrates how

with a certain viewpoint of excellence, there was more pressure for the English Department to prove why it is significant to the university. It also shows that the neoliberal approach to the economy focuses on the individual, such as through job security and choice, than it does on the community. Consequently, a lack of extending benefits to all teachers shows lack of support or a sense of community by the university which leads to a lack of commitment by the teachers to university.

Scott, Danyelle, and Drew's choice of dual credit and Devyn's choice of college was influenced by the cost of the university as a social institution that would provide them a certain amount of status and power. Therefore, financial choices about dual credit and the cost of college are not isolated, but instead intersect with conceptions of literacy education because the choices occur during this particular time where college costs continue to rise, and many students have to go in debt to receive the benefits of a degree. These economic options inevitably inform the values and assumptions about what literacy means and who it involves. The discussion of a choice already establishes that certain students have more access to the literacy taught in dual credit than others. It was relatively easy for Scott and Danyelle's parents to pay for dual credit because they viewed it as a long-term investment. The ability to think long term and invest in education is a luxury in many ways dependent on the socioeconomic status of a student's family. When there is not the stress of financial struggle, students not only have the money to pay for the course, but they also have the time and energy. There is not the worry that accompanies other students whose families have to make more short-term decisions about their finances because they do not have economic security. Consequently, when individuals do not have this kind of stress, they can also devote themselves to

literacies that are part of the dual-credit course. These experiences of paying for the dual-credit program represent how the extent to which one has a choice is most often limited in education by the context of the student. The neoliberal notion that choice of education exists disparate from other factors reinforces the privileged. The way students like Drew struggled to pay for the course represents how this neoliberalism affects the dual-credit program because although Southern Urban paid for some students who were at the lowest socioeconomic level, it did not offer resources for ones in a certain bracket above that. These students were still limited by the socioeconomic position. Some decisions about whether to take the course were made on whether their parents could afford it, which also created more stress on the student.

Additionally, the concentration on “excellence” discussed in the scholarship on the corporatization of education draws attention to the link of school and financial resources. The link demonstrates the assumption that the more a student has access to the literacy in the dual-credit class, the more likely they are able to compete in the economy once they get in the workforce because they are already familiar with competition. These students already compete to get in the course by taking standardized tests and attaining certain GPA-'s to even enter the course. Moreover, they are familiar with the competition that is part of education from their experiences already in secondary education, specifically because at three of the four schools, Hightree, Cary, and Woods, a student had to apply to even attend. Therefore, there is a clear connection between financial sponsorship and competition in education by analyzing the economics of the dual-credit course.

## **Sponsors of Literacy**

As Southern Urban provided a “deal” in requiring less tuition, the dual-credit program, the university, and River City Public Schools become sponsors of students’ literacies in the composition classroom. Through its tuition reduction, Southern Urban’s dual-credit program operated as a sponsor to its students’ literacy education. The program provided many resources for students at participating high schools to be able to take the courses offered through the university, but in turn regulated what kind of literacy was learned. Therefore, the dual-credit program functioned as Brandt’s notion of a sponsor, as she indicated in *Literacy in American Lives*, “Just as the ages of radio and television accustomed us to having programs brought to us by various commercial sponsors, it is useful to think about who or what underwrites occasions of literacy learning and use” (19). In doing so, we must not only think of the dual-credit program itself as sponsor, but also educational institutions like Southern Urban University and the River City Public Schools as sponsors, too. Southern Urban offers the dual-credit program for students to take the course. RCPS offers the location and resources such as books for the students.

There are varieties of sponsorship, economic, cultural, and personal that Brandt discusses: “For purposes of this study, literacy skill is treated primarily as a resource—economic, political, intellectual, spiritual—which, like wealth or education, or trade skill or social connections, is pursued for the opportunities and protections that it potentially grants its seekers” (5). Literacy sponsorship is a complex relationship that comprises many different factors, from the economic to the personal, between the sponsor and sponsored. For instance, Brandt describes the impact of the industrial revolution on how literacy becomes sponsored in the Midwest for two women raised on dairy farms, one at

the beginning of the twentieth century and one near the end. One of these women, Martha Day, graduated from high school in 1920 and was one of the best-educated members of her community. Meanwhile, Barbara Hunt graduated in the 1980's to a very different economy that did not privilege high school as much as college. Day was able to become a journalist by writing for agricultural newspapers and "was able to trade more seamlessly on the status of her farm-girl background to make the transition from physical to mental labor" (31). Brandt concentrates on the economic conditions for both of these women, but also focuses on how their gender impacted the kinds of jobs they could both attain. Day was not able to go to college because she was female while her brother was able to attend (32). The cultural constraints of that time period for Day impacted the sponsorship she had. Culturally, her literacy was also shaped by her Christianity because it put Day in contact with an important sponsor, a Sunday school teacher who was the managing editor of a local newspaper. The teacher knew she was interested in writing and offered her the option to put together a monthly newsletter for the Sunday school group. This man then bought a small regional magazine and asked Day to write for it, which led to her future in journalism (33). From Day's story, there are many varieties to sponsorship.

Although Brandt writes about the varieties of sponsorship, for this project, I am concentrating on her analysis of economic sponsorship. Brandt writes extensively about the relationship between economics and the conceptions and experiences of literacy in the United States. For instance, many of the eighty people she interviewed explained how financial situations, such as the movement to more industrial jobs from an agrarian lifestyle, changed what kind of literacies they practiced. I concentrate on Brandt's concept of sponsorship in material terms because of the economic sponsorship I saw at

work in the dual-credit program at Southern Urban. In this program, stakeholders harbored anxieties about paying for college because of their worries of ever reaching financial stability in the current global economy. At the time of this study in Spring 2012, one in two new college graduates in the United States was jobless or underemployed. The term “new graduate” refers to bachelor degree holders under the age of 25 (Altavena). Although dual-credit students had not even begun on-campus college courses, they were already focused on some kind of financial stability for when they took dual credit. Southern Urban, in its role as sponsor, waived tuition for students who qualified for free and reduced lunch. Moreover, the program seemed to work with students’ families who did not qualify for free and reduced lunch, such as Drew’s, by unofficially arranging for payment in installments. Another sponsor, River City Public Schools, also bought a class copy of textbooks for each dual-credit course. Therefore, students did not have to pay for books, which is beneficial financially because the textbook, Andrea A. Lunsford, John J. Ruskiewicz, and Keith Walters’ *Everything’s An Argument with Readings*, costs about \$45. These sponsors worked to enable literacy for dual-credit students sooner by making materials for the course cheaper.

Southern Urban’s dual-credit website also states a more official channel for financing the course by university scholarships and other waivers that “will be provided for students who do not qualify for free and reduced lunch on a case-by-case basis” (“Dual Credit”). This is another way for students from a certain socioeconomic status to have a chance to take the course even if their parents cannot afford it. Students could not only be admitted to the university for dual credit, but also receive a scholarship that would help them in their goals for college. Moreover, there is also a scholarship from the

state Higher Education Assistance Authority (SHEAA), which is the source for grants, scholarships, and loans for the entire state. This scholarship requires that students be enrolled in a dual-credit course in the state, be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, be a legal resident of the state, be a high school junior or senior during the academic year, and either have an ACT score of 18 or higher or achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher for the academic year.

The SHEAA is a governmental agency to improve students' access to higher education. It administers several financial aid programs and provides information about higher education opportunities. The scholarship is up to \$420 for one course and \$840 for two courses. The scholarship will also pay for textbooks of up to \$125 for one course and \$250 for two courses. The agency gives this scholarship to 1,000 students in the state each year. Through these scholarships by Southern Urban and the SHEAA, along with the class copies of books by RCPS, the university, high schools, and the government organization become material sponsors for certain students' literacies in the dual-credit program. They all provide a way for the sponsored students to attain more access to literacy and education by the discounts, free materials, and scholarships used.

Sponsors such as Southern Urban and River City Public Schools are influenced by another sponsor, the national government.. This sponsorship is more cultural than material because of its focus on the values about education which are reinforced by the national government. On August 9, 2012, Arne Duncan, United States Secretary of Education, explained in a speech to the State Higher Education Executive Officers' Higher Education Policy Conference: "The common theme or takeaway messages here are really two-fold. Boosting college access and completion is vital to the future

economic prosperity and civic vibrancy of your home states. That is why accelerating college attainment is not just a policy and institutional concern for academia; it is really an urgent national mission.” Similarly, in a February 19, 2011 speech President Obama delivered at Intel, he stated, “If we want to win the global competition for new jobs and industries, we’ve got to win the global competition to educate our people. We’ve got to have the best trained, best skilled workforce in the world. That’s how we’ll ensure that the next Intel, the next Google, or the next Microsoft is created in America and hires American workers” (“Weekly Address”). Both of these quotations highlight that achievement in education needs to occur for success of the current and future economy of the U.S. Moreover, noticing the impact of President Obama’s debt had on Devyn for attending college, his stance on becoming more educated indicates that great economic cost is worth it in order to be a worker in the job market. Recently, Obama announced a proposal to rate colleges and link those ratings to federal financial aid. The ratings would compare universities based on tuition, graduation rates, the percentage of low-income students who attend, and interestingly, the debt and earnings of graduates (Lewin). Southern Urban, River City Public Schools, and government organizations invested financially in dual-credit students because these institutions wanted students to attend college for a variety of reasons. Their sponsor of the national government makes it clear from the above quotations that the main reason is to compete in the global marketplace. However, it is also important for universities to have high graduation rates. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the 2011 graduation rate was 59% for full-time first-time undergraduate students who began their college degree in 2005 (“Graduation”). College graduates are much more likely to be employed than high school

graduates, even through the recession. The unemployment rate for college graduates in April 2013 was 3.9% compared with 7.5% for the work force as a whole (Rampell).

As suggested from the economic, political, and institutional forces which surround and constitute dual credit, one of purposes of the program is to create workers for the global economy. In doing so, this influences the value of literacy and purposes of literacy education.

Unending cycles of competition and change keep raising the stakes for literacy achievement. In fact, as literacy has gotten implicated in almost all of the ways that money is now made in America, the reading and writing skills of the population have become grounds for unprecedented encroachment and concern by those who profit from what those skills produce. In short, literacy is valuable—and volatile—property. And like other commodities with private and public value, it is grounds for potential exploitation, injustice, and struggle as well as potential hope, satisfaction, and reward. Wherever literacy is learned and practiced, these competing interests will always be present. (Brandt 2-3)

These competing values of literacy were evident in the space of a dual-credit program that operated through notions of acceleration and competition in the teaching and learning of writing. The financial situation of the students in the program along with the concentration on education as a commodity impacted the purposes of literacy education at the university. The lives of those in “the gap” who did not receive funding also had to live with ways to achieve higher education without the financial resources.

### **“Customers” at the University**

Although it is a financial deal for some students to take dual credit in high school, it is not as much of a “huge discount” as Laura suggested earlier, even with Southern Urban acting as a sponsor. For instance, if a student takes the course and then fails it, the money spent on the course was not beneficial in the way that student and parents predicted. This failure could be considered a loss financially because the student did not earn the credit even if she or he gained knowledge about writing. Another situation of financial loss for a family is when a student decides to not attend the college where she or he received the credit for English Composition. If the student attends another school that does not accept any dual-credit courses from the Southern Urban program, then the student and her or his parents lost money and credit by taking the dual-credit course, even if there was improvement in writing and advancement in knowledge about college.

The dual-credit price is also not as much of a discount when students take into account that the tuition and Student Recreation Fee are not the only costs. Students also have to apply to the dual-credit program and pay a one-time application fee. This is the same fee for students who will attend Southern Urban as freshmen: “All students will pay a non-refundable, one-time \$50 application fee...Once a student pays this application fee, he/she does not have to pay it again in order to take additional courses or to apply to the university as an incoming college student” (“Dual Credit”). The dual-credit students must pay the same amount of an application fee in order to take the one or two dual-credit courses that a freshman would pay to apply to and attend Southern Urban all of her or his undergraduate career. Therefore, not only do students have to pay tuition and fees, but also the whole admission fee for Southern Urban University for only one to two courses.

Moreover, increasingly universities have been charging “fees” to students as a way to raise revenue in addition to tuition increases as state funding is cut. Municipalities and states have also done this to avoid the issues of raising taxes. For municipalities, these “fees” are hidden taxes and for universities, they are hidden student costs. The dual-credit students do not have to pay the other fees applied to undergraduate students at Southern Urban, such as the Student Building Fee, Student Health Fee, and Student Athletics Fee, among others, since they do not use these options in the same way an undergraduate on campus would. The students also do not have to pay for a parking pass or for any housing since most of them still live with their parents while attending high school. The dual-credit students have access to services such as the library and the university writing center because they have student identification cards.

The application fee is an advantage to the university because it serves as a recruitment tool so that a student who has already applied to Southern Urban for dual credit will not have to pay the application fee if they decide to attend permanently for college. However, if a student chooses to attend another university, then she or he still has to pay the application fee for Southern Urban along with the application fees for other universities to which they apply. The application fee might be a hindrance to some students applying to other institutions because they might be able to afford only one or two application fees, and will have already spent one at Southern Urban. Therefore, students have a financial incentive to stay at Southern Urban for their undergraduate career after taking a dual-credit course. The university gains in finances and recruitment by having students pay to take the course even if they decide to go to another university

for their freshman year. The students still have a discount because if they decide to attend Southern Urban, they do not have to pay the application fee again.

This noticeable marketability of dual credit reflects the position of many universities as they depend on higher tuition and more corporate sponsors. In *Beyond English Inc.*, David Downing, Claude Mark Hurlbert, and Paula Mathieu acknowledge that colleges have always been tied to benefactors, such as churches, the government, and corporations. Scientific management practices constructed the way labor was characterized in the early twentieth century at American universities, and these notions maintain today in academia where publications have more value than teaching. As related in Chapter One, beginning in the 1970s, there was a decrease in tenure-track positions and increase in contingent labor. There has also been a decrease in the last 30 years in public funding for higher education. Therefore, there is even more dependence on corporations for support by universities (23). This financial support leads to certain terminology and notions about education that relate to a certain corporate mindset. In their discussion of Pre-Baccalaureate courses, Hansen and Farris write, “[I]t is clear that public educational policy is being subjected to concerted influence from private groups supported by the private foundations of private businesses” (xix). Therefore, the sponsorship by Southern Urban’s dual-credit program is not only from the universities and schools involved, but also the increasingly corporate atmosphere of higher education.

This corporate atmosphere was discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to how universities approached the notion of “excellence.” In composition specifically, there is discussion of how to address the corporatism of the university and the material conditions of students. In Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner’s “Composing in Global-Local Context:

Careers, Mobility, Skills,” the authors write about the instrumentalist and critical pedagogies in composition, and how proponents of each are usually at odds about the other. The authors explain how terms “such as *financial and career security* might mean for us and for our students is increasingly urgent in light of the recent global economic downturn” (114). Lu and Horner recognize the material conditions that occur for both composition students and instructors during this particular time. Moreover, they acknowledge that because of the flexible nature of the economy, it is difficult for instructors to be certain of the career possibilities for students. Students’ “investment in higher education is materially, intellectually, emotionally, and viscerally costly and risky: it’s not clear how, when, or whether that investment will ‘pay off,’ and what economic, emotional, or intellectual form the ‘return’ will take” (115). This description of the variety of factors that accompany students’ investment in college relates to students like Devyn who worried over what kind of academic, economic and emotional experience she would have as she chose a university to attend.

As Lu and Horner discuss the conditions in which students attend college and take courses, they propose that composition instructors should combine both the instrumentalist and critical in their pedagogies. Lu and Horner ask specific questions that would be beneficial to ask students, such as

How might individual students best go about composing a sustainable work life, given the specific, multiple, and often conflicting affiliations, commitments, and alignments they have had, are interested in sustaining, and hope to establish, and in light of the specific historical and social conditions of their life, their education, and their literacy practices? (116).

The composition classroom can function as a place to explore questions about work and material conditions. Lu and Horner address that pedagogy depends on the context of the course and the contexts of the students and instructor, and it also depends on the instructor listening and responding to students. Many students are looking for terms like “*career, marketable skills or job security*” (117, emphasis theirs). However, these students are also living in a different kind of economy where careers are much more flexible than stable, and local and global forces intersect with one another. Therefore, Lu and Horner state that it is important to not treat the meanings of these words as singular. They have vastly different meanings depending on the material conditions for the student, instructor, and university.

There is an urgency to take on this kind of work on the corporatism of the university because of the downturn of the current economy. In *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*, Tony Scott explores the relationships between postsecondary writing and education and service work in fast capitalism, focusing particularly on social class. Scott establishes that there are many characteristics of higher education that reflect a service economy: “in terms of their rhetoric (as students are increasingly referenced as ‘education consumers’ and curriculum is approached as a portable commodity); in their marketing techniques; in the articulation of their goals; and in their positioning and management of teachers” (4). This last characteristic directly applies to composition administration and pedagogy. He describes the compartmentalization between teaching and scholarship and administrative work and how this compartmentalization impacts postsecondary writing education. Scott writes how “it is important to explore more thoroughly the field as an ongoing, strained

relationship between a *scholarly profession* that seeks full status as a ‘legitimate’ academic discipline and a *bureaucratic practice* that has a legacy grounded in labor exploitation and oppressive conceptions of literacy and the political function of higher education” (43). The field of rhetoric and composition has built labor conditions that are problematic for many of the instructors who teach in them.

Moreover, Scott writes about students who are simultaneously attending college and working at low-level service jobs. These jobs represent the service sector of the economy that many students attend college in order to not have to take these jobs. Scott addresses that there should be more explanation of the political economic terms of labor that not only influence students’ service jobs, but also the universities that they attend.

Scott explains:

To borrow Deborah Brandt’s term, the institutional ‘sponsors’ of post-secondary writing—along with the terms of labor and economic structures that are created and sustained by those sponsors—remain largely invisible. Conceptions of what exactly is happening when our students write therefore often don’t make space for a counter-hegemonic consciousness or politics because they don’t account for how the political economic shapes labor and writing education at the level of institutional architectures. (9)

Many sponsors for students’ writing that occur within and outside the university have not been addressed in depth, particularly economic sponsors’ relationships to students’ writing. In order to understand the variety of factors that impact student writing, Scott thinks that composition pedagogies should be more concentrated on the material conditions. Since there has been a focus on the corporatism in composition, Scott

recognizes that many problems have unfolded, namely that there is an emphasis on individual rather than collective action which reinforce a certain class of people to succeed professionally while others continue to struggle.

Some of the Southern Urban stakeholders reflected this tension between public policy and private businesses in the role of education. As Executive Director of Admissions at Southern Urban University, Jean oversees programs that allow for transfer credit to college like dual credit and Advanced Placement. When she discussed programs like these, Jean reflected on her own competing conceptions of literacy in considering the role of students at the university. To Jean, dual credit was not necessarily a stable program because it was outside of what is considered the university: “No, I mean I think right now during budget cuts, I think we have to, we will continue to evaluate the value of services that do not directly impact our primary customers, our undergraduates, our graduates, and our professional students, and our research mission.” Jean’s response addressed what was valued by institutional stakeholders, and the ways in which businesses inform higher education. Calling undergraduate, graduate, and professional students “customers” demonstrated a specific view of not only students and their experiences at the university, but also of the purposes of literacy education in general. Calling students “customers” places more of the emphasis on the financial aspects of college and implies that colleges function much like businesses in how they treat their own customers.

The term “customer” often refers to an individual who consumes or pays for some kind of product or service, and makes the item paid for a commodity.<sup>10</sup> Customers are part of what makes capitalism function because they create competition for businesses with what they are willing to pay. Businesses, for the most part, want to “please the customer” so they can function in the economy. Therefore, customers have a certain amount of power because they can choose the products and services they buy in a capitalist economy. The use of “customer” by Jean represents how universities also function in a consumer market. In Michael Singh, Jane Kenway, and Michael W. Apple’s “Globalizing Education: Perspectives from Above and Below,” they write,

Likewise, the retreat by the state from investing in the ‘education of the national/global public’ is evident in the creation of an international market in educational products and services that seeks to reconstitute parents and students as individual consumers choosing within the constraints of their socioeconomic status to maximize their private interests in profit-making. (20)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the students at Southern Urban stated that a primary reason for taking dual credit and attending Southern Urban was related to price. When they felt as though they were getting a deal, the students and parents thought it was beneficial to take the course. These notions affected the dual-credit stakeholders like Jean. Jean acknowledged that the term “customers” made some people uncomfortable, but she explains that referring to students as “customers” is a practicality to keep a university running: “I mean students are customers. Some people don’t like that word, but they are customers and you know, as tuition goes up and up and up, students become

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<sup>10</sup> The commodity-driven discussion relates to one reason why universities are anxious of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) because the universities are no longer limiting access to sources of education so that devalues the commodity the university has.

more and more customers. I tell students all the time, if they're getting ready to make a college decision, this is the biggest, this is the first really big financial decision that you make in your life." Jean recognized that students like Devyn and their parents shop around at different universities to see what the best option would be for higher education. Even that the college choice is called "shopping around" is telling in what it entails about the relationship of capitalism to higher education. However, she also acknowledged that many of these students will be coming from backgrounds where they will have to take out debt for their undergraduate education, and will need to think through what kind of cost there will be for themselves.

This kind of view of students as potential customers also came from another administrator. Similar to Jean, Juanita, the Director of Technology and Community Development in Admissions, discussed how the ambivalent status of dual credit makes it not a primary concern for the university because they have to focus on the undergraduates and graduate students who attend full time. Juanita stated, "I look at dual credit as one of those external plans. It is on the chopping block." There are a variety of reasons why dual credit would be on the "chopping block," especially because it does not occur physically at the university. Southern Urban relates it as a program that will help students get a head start on college, especially students from unprivileged backgrounds. However, since the dual-credit students have less financially invested in the school than undergraduates who go full time, live on campus, and participate in campus activities, then it will be a program in a tenuous space. Since dual credit does not have permanence at Southern Urban, it represents much of the conversation about the current economy that works in

flexibility. As dual credit works in this market, it has to appeal to its customers, the students.

The comments by both of these administrators in Admissions represent how Southern Urban as an institution plays into this corporate culture. It outsources services, like dual credit, to the high schools and has university adjuncts, graduate teaching assistants, or high school instructors teaching the course. Therefore, there is no worry created about classroom space for the dual-credit courses because the high schools offer the space. There are many financial resources spent on fancy logos, banners, and slogans to appeal to high school students and their parents in order to attend Southern Urban. There is also emphasis on economies of scale driving purchases such as BlackBoard©. The university has to compete with other ones who have amenities like campus climbing walls and high tech classrooms (“College-Cost”). Dual credit is not unique here, but it is also not immune. The university creates economies of scale because it is cheaper to outsource to dual credit to high schools so that classrooms do not have to be used on the university campus. Additionally, it is cheaper to have high school instructors teach the course so that universities do not have to pay an instructor to do so. When Southern Urban does have instructors teach the course, they are the ones who get paid the least, such as part-time lecturers or graduate teaching assistants.

Unlike the two administrators in Admissions, other administrators in Admissions, the English Department, and at the secondary schools did not refer to students as customers or to the economic state of dual credit. Nor did the instructors use the term, although both administrators and instructors acknowledged and recognized the material conditions for students and themselves in the current economy. One a dual-credit

instructor, Amy, understood the financial pressure on students for how they decide on colleges and why they take dual credit. Amy recognized the financial savings that Southern Urban could bring and explained that many of her students wanted to take dual credit because it will be more comfortable to try a college course in high school, but other students were interested in saving money:

I also have students that come in and say, “My dad said I have to take this because it’s going to save him money next year.” And fine, education’s expensive, I think we have to realize that, and especially at an institution like Southern Urban where they’re paying a third of the cost, and if they’re free and reduced lunch, they’re not paying at all. I think we have to consider that that’s a reason why some of our students are interested in dual credit in the first place.

Amy demonstrated the negotiation here between the financial aspects of higher education through dual credit and the learning in the course. As a teacher, she had to recognize that economics was part of the dual-credit class in a manner that was more apparent than a regular college course because she was more aware of the economic realities for students of what Southern Urban was. Other dual-credit instructors explained how students would ask about how to pay their tuition to the instructors. This is a question that most on-campus college instructors do not receive because students recognize that is not the instructor’s job. However, for the dual-credit students, Amy and other teachers were their only connections to the university. They were not sure yet of what it meant to be at a university with its different departments. In this manner, money was highlighted in the dual-credit course in a way that would shape the students’ and instructors’ notions of the class.

## **The Economics of Writing and Conceptions of Literacy Education**

If stakeholders such as Jean, who act as important sponsors of literacy for dual-credit students, think about students as “customers,” then their ideas about economics could influence, and at the least, create some epistemological conflicts on conceptions of literacy and literacy education at Southern Urban. This connection is similar to the one Brandt describes between the economic system and the ways in which individuals learned literacy. Since Jean is a sponsor of literacy, even if she is not in the classroom or designing the composition program, her description of Southern Urban’s goals for students represented notions about education that could impact literacy education. When she described the goals of higher education, Jean included factors such as the significance of writing, degree completion and effective critical thinking:

I think our goal is to enroll students who are college ready, and then our goal for undergraduates is to have them complete their undergraduate degrees, and have them become strong critical thinkers and strong writers and strong in the discipline of their choice and to be good citizens and to have a liberal arts background through our General Education and to graduate with a commitment to diversity.

Jean’s discussion displayed the extent to which conceptions about the economy reinforce and also create tension with the multiple purposes of a dual-credit program. In stating these purposes, Jean employed the notion of “college readiness” that was part of the discussion of dual credit in Chapter Two and related to degree completion. These two factors are part of the efficiency model that dual-credit programs emphasize. They also

connect with the term “customer” Jean used earlier because they focus on competition and creating skilled workers.

As Jean made these statements that relate to the commodification of higher education, she also suggested some purposes, such as creating critical thinkers and strong writers and facilitating good citizens and an awareness of diversity that would create tension with the terminology of students as customers and the corporatization of college. There are tensions and contradictions in what Jean expects college to offer to students. Some of them, such as being “college ready” and completion represent neoliberalism because they focus on that notion of “excellence” that both Readings and Harkin discuss. These characteristics are part of competition not only for the student in the job market, but also for the college for which that student attended. Every student who graduates from Southern Urban is another one that improves the percentage of retention. The number of graduates counts into the rankings for universities, and so universities would be interested in the goal of the completion. Southern Urban and other universities would also be interested in the goal of having students who are “college ready” because it also relates to “excellence.” Here is another chance to improve the rankings because with every student who scores well on the ACT, the average of the admissions for what the college takes improves. This is a huge incentive, another way of competing for high quality students by universities. This is significant because then colleges can attract a certain population of students who are “college ready,” and also therefore more likely to graduate. Moreover, as the college raises the ACT score or GPA of who can attend, it becomes a more highly valued commodity. The more difficult to gain admission to the

university, the more it is in demand. This demand leads to more resources because of the amount of students and parents interested.

However, Jean also states that the goal for a university is also to create “good citizenry” and build awareness of “diversity.” “Good citizenry” cannot necessarily be quantified for a rankings system. Diversity can be measured to a certain extent by the number of different populations that attend the college. However, awareness of that diversity is not quantifiable either. This part of the university is what Readings refers to as a place to impart the values of the nation-state on to the students who attend. It teaches what is appropriate for students to be and do while they are at the university. Southern Urban then does not only want students who could pass the ACT easily, but also students who would be defined as “good people,” whatever that exactly means. This connects with fast capitalism because it values “teamwork” and differentiation to create new markets.

In James Paul Gee, Glynda Hull, and Colin Lankshear’s *The New Work Order*, the authors consider the ways in which “fast capitalism” blurs the boundaries between public and private because a corporation is now supposed to concentrate on “*knowledge as its primary value*” and on empowering workers as people (p. 5, emphasis theirs). They quote James Champy, a co-inventor of reengineering, who writes, “Today, *it’s not only what you know that counts, it’s what kind of person you are*” (p. 157, emphasis theirs). This provides a way for capitalism to seep into every part of an individual’s life. Yet, even with this call for empowering individuals, fast capitalism still functions in the same way as the traditional notion of capitalism because the conditions still lead to a ready market for reified skills. This is especially evident in Gee et al.’s description of the company’s Teamco’s training class and its materials. The corporation teaches a

curriculum in the training class that helps individuals to acquire skills in becoming more collaborative in teams. It seems as though this class would have to acknowledge sociopolitical and power relations because of its focus on moving individuals into teams, and the differences in gender, ethnicity, and economic status in the course. This focus on “teamwork” connects with fast capitalism and the influences of corporations onto universities.

Jean mentioned she also thought one of the goals for the university was for students to become “strong writers.” Composition represents a definite space where the goals for the university come into conversation with one another through students’ and instructors’ writing. For instance, because SACS require each university to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) plan. Southern Urban University focused on critical thinking of undergraduate students which has influenced the composition program. What we choose for students to write on and what we dismiss represent the goals we align to at the university. The composition classroom is a space to address the sponsors that seem invisible, as Scott described them, more in depth. Stakeholders in the dual-credit program like Jean and Amy struggled with these tensions in higher education and how to negotiate between economics and the citizenry in this space, and Amy seemed to especially in the space of the composition classroom.

This tension in the purposes of higher education was also reflected by students in the dual-credit program. Sam, a student at Cary High attending Southern Urban the next academic year, explained in his interview that there was more to going to college than beginning a career:

I think one big misconception of college is like it's preparing you for the career, like your career field. It does do that, but I think also in college you become smarter and you become an intellectual thinker. And you have a different approach to things so I think that's another like thing that college gives you and you become smarter in college so it's not just about your career field and stuff.

Sam has participated in the Southern Urban program where the main purposes marketed to students were about focusing on acceleration of their career and saving money. Yet, while he has been taking the course, Sam saw college through many of the ways that Jean described it, as a place to critically think and grow in awareness of other ideas and other people. Also like Jean, Sam described the complexity of the purposes of a college education that can be represented in a course like dual credit. In dual credit, there was a concentration on preparing students for a career to be workers in the global marketplace. Not only does it focus on quantification, but this preparation is neoliberal glorification of competition and on the emphasis of the individual.

In this concentration on the individual, it also represents that choice is part of opportunity, individual agency, and consequences. By addressing individual choice in this manner, the matter of material conditions of the student becomes ignored. There are cultural and power issues that play into why Sam viewed college in this manner, but he was also genuinely excited and felt prepared to begin this next stage of his education and career. His view of college was informed by the education at Cary High that reinforces emphasis on education. And yet, Sam also discusses a general awareness to other ideas and diversity.

Southern Urban's dual-credit serves as a sponsor for students because it supports literacy by inviting students to learn more about "college-level writing" earlier and emphasizing higher education. Yet, this sponsor also regulates what "college-level writing" means in terms of what becomes taught to the students in the course by the particular materials utilized. There it becomes important to recognize the extent that "college-level writing" should relate to career choice. Southern Urban's dual-credit program becomes a sponsor through how it regulates literacy. There is "college-level writing" needed for a financial incentive. To get this certain kind of college literacy out of this class will allow students to hopefully obtain employment that they would not necessarily get without it. It might put them in a certain status. And yet, it also changes the ideas of what composition and the university should be doing for students. It puts pressure on education to perform for businesses to supply workers. In her book, Brandt writes, "That is, how might we begin to talk about the responsibility that this economy has to teachers and students instead of only the responsibility that teachers and students have to this economy?" (206). When we recognize stakeholders' reasons for taking dual credit, we have to realize that these reasons can also affect literacy and stakeholders' notions of what literacy education should be.

### **Conclusion: The Connections of Economics and Literacy**

When asked about their reasons for taking dual-credit courses, many of the students at Southern Urban answered that it allowed them to save money in some kind of manner. Dual credit was, in part, a financial "deal" to them and their parents, which is difficult to attain in higher education as tuition across the United States continues to

increase and the job market is still difficult for recent college graduates. Many of these students and their parents expressed that they were thinking ahead for the future by enrolling in dual-credit composition courses. And yet, in some ways, dual credit serves the university that sponsors it just as much as it serves students.

Brandt's notion of sponsorship demonstrates how these stakeholders' values and assumptions about what literacy means are not only informed by the local context of the dual-credit program, but also by larger forces, such as the United States economy, neoliberalism, and competition between universities. It also depends on a student's own socioeconomic status, since some students' parents paid for the course with no worry at all about a lump sum amount while other families struggled to make the payments with the student putting in money from her own part-time job. Therefore, the relationship between the economy and literacy education can impact one another, especially in the notion of choice that neoliberalism reinforces. The choice of dual credit was possible for some students and not for others. The choice of taking dual credit or going to college is one that is not possible for all high school students. It is important, then, to acknowledge that choice occurs in the context of a student's and school's socioeconomic environment.

Corporatism affects the university, as is demonstrated from individual stakeholders such as Jean employed corporate language that does not necessarily fit her own view of the purposes of higher education and dual credit. It is within this tension that stakeholders have to discuss more about the tension between what is valued by the market, such as skills for a career, and what is devalued, such as a commitment to citizenry. These two factors are not always in opposition to one another and can overlap, such as the view of fast capitalism that concentrates on "teamwork." It is important to

recognize though that the multiple purposes of higher education become highlighted in the dual-credit classroom. I argue that these issues highlighted in the dual-credit space represent general questions related to college writing instruction about the extent to which writing should be focused on students' career aspirations, and the extent to which this relation should be critiqued. The increasingly corporatizing atmosphere of both tertiary and secondary institutions affect how stakeholders, such as high school and college instructors and administrators, shape notions of literacy in their curricular expectations and classroom transactions.

One manner in which to deal with this tension is in the dual-credit classroom. Many instructors already begin with literacy narratives about students' experiences with reading and writing. The dual-credit instructors could add in questions about why students enrolled in the dual-credit course and what they are hoping to get out of it. Hopefully, this assignment would lead to conversations about the focus on efficiency and financial sponsorship in the dual-credit course, and provide students with a broader view of what literacy means and how it functions. There needs to be discussion with students of how financial backing informs curriculum and student learning, specifically when corporate stakeholders advise educational legislation and public rhetoric, and the complications that arise from that.

The dual-credit classroom emphasizes competing definitions of literacy because they are enacted by the economics of this particular space. Since most of the students are new to the economics of college, they ask instructors financial questions that would probably not occur in an on-campus composition course. The notion of saving money is also mentioned more, along with a purpose for finishing both high school and college as

soon as possible in order to begin one's career and have some sense of financial stability. However, stakeholders are also interested in literacy education as helping students in other manners besides only preparing for a career, which connects to the multiple purposes of higher education mentioned by the stakeholders. Although these issues are more highlighted in dual credit, ideas for discussion of the global marketplace and capitalism in composition would be beneficial for any composition class as long as the instructor is comfortable with it and interested in exploring the varying possibilities for the relationship between financial sponsorship and literacy education, and the extent to which it needs to be critiqued.

The corporatization of education is evident in the purposes of a dual-credit program because of the focus on the global marketplace through efficiency and saving money. Although the program highlights these purposes, the actual classroom practices by the instructors did not explicitly discuss them. It would be beneficial to work with these issues in the classroom so that students can reflect on how assumptions from the label of dual credit shapes the way they and other individuals think about literacy and literacy education. In order to do so, it would be helpful to address student goals, such as the ones Devyn, Sam, and Drew explain, about saving money through taking dual credit and also attending Southern Urban. In "Working Bodies: Class Matters in College Composition," Min-Zhan Lu explains that student goals like financial success and security are part of the composition classroom. She addresses the contradiction that many stakeholders in this study indicated between wanting economic security in the marketplace and also desiring to have certain ideals and interests not valued by capitalism (188). Lu writes that in the composition classroom, "the teaching and learning of a

specific set of writing processes and products can never be separate from interrogation into its relation to the formation of the individual bodies (self, subjectivity, identity) under capitalism, especially when the students' primary, fully articulated purpose for taking a composition course is to amass the set of skills that is most likely to secure "financial security" and "career success" in a given labor market" (189). As discussed earlier, in the Southern Urban dual-credit program, many of the students wanted to take the course for short and long term financial goals. It is important that as composition administrators and instructors, we reflect on these goals in the classroom. To do so makes composition also more real to the students because their writing is not isolated, but part of the multiple purposes of higher education that Jean described earlier.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DUAL CREDIT AS A POINT OF CONTACT FOR SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATORS

#### **Introduction**

When asked about the limitations of dual credit, Charlotte, a dual-credit instructor at Dean High, commented, “One of the things that I think is a drawback to the current state of the dual-credit program is the fact that you have high school teachers who are teaching the class, and it’s really not set up to be something that is college-like.”

Charlotte is a high school teacher, but she taught at Southern Urban University for four years as an adjunct instructor in composition and also had been a graduate teaching assistant while she earned her Master’s in English. As someone who has experience teaching at both levels of education, Charlotte feels uncomfortable with high school instructors who have not taught at the college-level before teaching dual credit because most of their experiences have been teaching literature, creative writing, and speech or journalism courses. Therefore, Charlotte worries that high school teachers who have not taught on a college campus before will be unprepared for teaching the dual credit class as anything different from the other courses they teach and will misconstrue to students what “college-level” writing means.

This conception of high school teachers demonstrates much of the lack of understanding that exists between tertiary and secondary levels on literacy education.

When dual-credit courses began to rise in popularity during the early nineties, rhetoric and composition scholar David Schwalm argued that writing program administrators “should be aware of a potential threat to our students’ chances of developing college-level literacy” in reference to dual credit (51). Schwalm continues, “College writing courses, are, by definition, taught in the general context of college—a context impossible to replicate in a high school senior English class” (53). In these quotations, Schwalm made assumptions about the quality of teaching and learning of writing that occurs in a high school setting. Moreover, his arguments also acknowledge a fear by Schwalm that the labor he and other composition instructors do, the teaching of writing, could decrease in demand if high school instructors are able to teach first-year composition courses.

This concentration on labor is not a new discussion to composition studies. There have been many arguments in the field to make the workload for part-time lecturers more just by increasing pay and benefits. In “Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty,” the NCTE College Section Working Group on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty write how organizations like NCTE, CCCC, and MLA have struggled to mandate universities to treat part-time faculty fairly. There have been responses, such as the Wyoming Resolution in 1987, which calls on reasonable wages and working conditions for contingent faculty, and statements made by CCCC in 1989 and 2003 to create more tenure lines in writing programs and English Departments. However, the economics of the university system have fought against these responses, and therefore the financial struggle for many part-time lecturers has not changed. The field’s fraught relationship with contingent faculty is highlighted by the identities of the

dual-credit instructors in the Southern Urban composition program. Many of them are contingent to the university as graduate teaching assistants and part-time lecturers. Moreover, more high school instructors are teaching dual credit and have difficulty teaching in the transition between high school and college.

This chapter explores the larger labor issues that exist in the working conditions for dual-credit instructors by analyzing the perceptions of what a literacy educator means. Some of the dual-credit instructors, such as Charlotte, made a great effort to establish themselves as a college instructor when they taught composition. In this study, first-time dual-credit high school instructors who shared a graduate Teaching College Composition course with on-campus composition instructors, viewed themselves as dealing with different than issues than the on-campus instructors, who were all graduate teaching assistants. These dual-credit instructors saw themselves as high school teachers, not only because they were paid by the school system, but because they felt alienated in the graduate course. These perceptions inevitably influenced the points of contact between secondary and tertiary stakeholders and their notions and practices of writing pedagogy.

At the same time David Schwalm wrote about the “threat” of dual credit, Michael Vivion argued that dual-credit could unite instructors from both secondary and tertiary education in a “mutually beneficial professional undertaking” (60). Recent composition scholarship addresses the attempts at collaboration between secondary and tertiary education through dual-credit programs (Farris; McCrimmon; Taczak and Thelin; Tinberg and Nadeau), demonstrating the complexities of merging the different spaces, curriculums, and pedagogies. Much of this collaboration has concentrated on high school educators needing to align to the standards of the university without taking into account

these educators' expertise. In this chapter, I highlight how college and high school educators, while not necessarily collaborating, are in dialogue with one another through the Southern Urban composition program, especially in the mandatory Teaching College Composition course. Therefore, dual credit serves as a point of contact where secondary and tertiary educators are in conversation with one another on literacy, and the ways in which it should be taught in the classroom.

This chapter begins by addressing the point of contact of dual credit for secondary and tertiary stakeholders in the program, specifically dual-credit instructors, the Dual-Credit Coordinator for English, and the Director of Composition. It then discusses the conceptions of what a literacy teacher means by the instructors who are a part of this program, and relates how these perceptions of teacher identity are reflections of labor, economic and institutional issues. It especially investigates the ways in which these points of contact led to instructors' shifting perceptions on themselves as literacy educators. Additionally, the chapter explores the extent to which high school dual-credit teachers are contingent faculty, and the role of contingent faculty in the identity of composition as a field. The chapter ends with arguing for more reflection on this point of contact by secondary and tertiary educators to understand more how conversations about literacy in rhetoric and composition and secondary education overlap.

### **The Space of Dual Credit as a Point of Contact**

In "Seeking New Worlds: The Study of Writing beyond Our Classrooms," Bronwyn Williams criticizes the separation that exists between rhetoric and composition and disciplines such as K-12 literacy education. Williams explains that even when

scholars from different fields research and write on the same topics, they still frequently cite only other publications in their discipline:

In other words, while more people in rhetoric and composition research and write about how writing and rhetoric are taking place in communities and beyond traditional college-age students, those works and the conversations they inspire seem to take place largely within our own field. Meanwhile, in what I would argue are complementary fields of the study of literacy, rhetoric, and writing, research is taking place that is astonishingly similar. Yet, by and large, people aren't citing this work, and people in fields such as K-12 literacy education, ethnographic and literacy studies, and media studies aren't citing rhetoric and composition. (129)

This lack of citation represents the divided nature of the relationship between rhetoric and composition and secondary education in scholarship, even if both fields at times study similar spaces and notions of literacy. For instance, in work on dual credit by rhetoric and composition scholars, there are not citations for scholars who also write on dual credit from education, such as C.R. McCarthy's article in *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education* and E. Jones and T. Southern's book, *The Academic Acceleration of Gifted Children*, both resources that came out at least ten years before rhetoric and composition began to analyze dual credit in its scholarship, such as in Christine Farris and Kristine Hansen's *College Credit for Writing in High School*. Even though both fields write about the same space and many times in similar manner, there is not a crossover of knowledge. There is a gap in the relationship in terms of the larger fields because the disciplines not only have different citation standards, but also because there are conceptions about

creating credibility in a field by quoting and citing other scholars known in the same field. In doing so, scholarly citations become exclusionary to other disciplines, even if they are promoting the same kind of knowledge. This is specifically an issue in relationship to dual credit because, as these programs have grown, many Writing Program Administrators want to understand how to incorporate dual credit in an effective and ethical way at their universities. Since 2009, there has been more discussion of how to do so in rhetoric and composition, but there was already conversation happening in education journals before this time. Moreover, tertiary stakeholders have to work with secondary stakeholders in dual credit, and it would be beneficial to have some knowledge of the perspectives of the high school teachers and administrators.

In contrast to the scholarship on dual credit, the actual site of it produces conversations on literacy education between secondary and tertiary stakeholders in the practice of teaching composition. This has been demonstrated most notably in work such as “Minding the Gap and Learning the Game: Differences That Matter between High School and College Writing,” where Christine Farris explains how she conducts 35-hour seminars in the summer that introduce the high school teachers to current methods in college composition and “the strategies for teaching the Indiana University English Department’s first year courses emphasizing analytical reading and writing” (278). The high school teachers are also funded for the summer seminar, fall and spring colloquia, and classroom visit sites. These are explicit incentives for the high school instructors, where they are able to interact with both the program director and on-campus composition instructors. However, it is important to recognize that this dialogue is on the university’s campus, where many of the high school instructors are not familiar.

Similar to Farris' program, Southern Urban's dual-credit instructors have contact with the program director and other instructors in their first semester teaching first-year composition. Dual-credit instructors take the Teaching College Composition course taught by the Director of Composition. In this course, they are exposed to first-time on-campus instructors who are usually graduate teaching assistants. The dual-credit instructors also attend program orientation with graduate teaching assistants, professors, full-time lecturers, and part-time lecturers in the summer. However, because the orientation usually coincides with the beginning of the River City Public Schools' year, the high school instructors are not usually able to stay the whole time at orientation. During the semester, the instructors are observed once by the Director of Composition and once by the Dual-Credit Coordinator for the English Department. Additionally, they follow an identical standard syllabus their first year teaching with the same kind of major writing assignments and requirements that first-time on-campus instructors use. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, some of the writing assignments' requirements are changed by the high school teachers to fit more with their literature curriculum of Senior English.

An even more direct point of contact in dual credit is when the dual-credit instructors who are part-time lecturers or graduate teaching assistants actually work together in the physical classroom with a high school instructor. When a college instructor teaches dual credit at a local high school in the RCPS system, she teaches in a high school instructor's classroom. In case of issues such as discipline and classroom conduct, along with if any emergencies that occur, the high school teacher stays in her classroom while the college instructor teaches the dual-credit composition course.

Frequently, this time counts as the high school teacher's planning period. When both of the instructors are in this space, observation inevitably occurs. The college instructor coming to teach the course observes the high school instructor's classroom setup and the way she interacts with her students before and after the dual-credit class. Alternatively, the high school teacher observes the college instructor's lessons and discipline techniques while working on her planning.

At the time, in this shared space, a professional relationship between the high school teacher and dual-credit college instructor frequently occurs. For instance, if the college instructor wants to use the computer, but the projector is not working, she can ask the high school instructor to help her. In this sense, unlike in most on-campus situations, she is not alone in the classroom with her students. She is able to receive support from another instructor in the room. This also applies to discipline in dual credit in a specific manner. If discipline becomes an issue with certain students, not only can the college instructor who can deal with issues, but the high school instructor, who knows the students better, can as well. They can work together in order to enforce certain rules and follow them throughout. For a relatively new college instructor, such as a graduate teaching assistant, this interaction can be a beneficial experience, almost like an internship that she does not have the chance to have at the college level.

Moreover, both the high school and college instructors in this particular space are in direct dialogue about pedagogical strategies. Amy was a graduate teaching assistant who taught dual credit two days a week in Jessica's high school classroom. The other three days a week Jessica taught the same group of students Senior English. Some of the students interviewed for this project discussed how Jessica would sometimes change

deadlines for her Senior English work if Amy's deadlines for dual credit were too close. For example, Megan said, "Jessica tried to work around it, and we would have certain days where we could like focus on Amy's work or her work, and it helped a lot." The students also recognized that similar pedagogical strategies were used by both the instructors in the classroom. Danyelle described how both teachers started using the same kind of discussion strategies:

I think the classes, like they don't overlap, but what we do kind of can relate to each other because we have Socratic circles, do you know what that is? It's like we just finished reading *1984*, and you sit in a circle...and you talk about the book, like have a discussion on the book. And when we were doing our peer review and our workshops, it kind of made you think about the book or it made you think about the paper, and the more we did workshops or the more we did Socratic circles, you could see that the workshops or Socratic circles were getting a little deeper and deeper every time, so I think they kind of did overlap in that sense, a little bit.

Danyelle explained that in the Senior English course, class discussion occurred in a circle about the literature text, which was very similar to the composition, where peer review occurred in a circle about the student text. This comfort in participating in class discussion in both courses in a similar manner seemed to lead to stronger analysis of the notions of purpose, audience, and genre. It also demonstrated how both courses could overlap with one another through one pedagogical activity. Danyelle described herself thinking about both courses, one that focused more on reading and one on writing, in those circles.

Jessica and Amy worked so well together in the classroom that when Amy found out she would not be teaching dual credit the next year because her graduate teaching assistantship needed to be used more on campus, Jessica decided that she felt confident enough to teach the course. Although she felt comfortable because of her relationship with Amy and the graduate courses she had taken in English, Jessica was also nervous about how her dual-credit students would see her. She would not just teach them Senior English anymore and have another teacher come in for dual credit. Jessica would now be balancing teaching both courses, one high school and one college, one literature centered and other writing centered, in the same classroom to the same students. Not only would Jessica be teaching different content courses to the same students, but she also would be dealing with her students' perceptions about what a college instructor means in a different manner. In our interview, Jessica stated that some of the dual-credit students were more nervous around Amy:

High school and college are two totally different realms. I know my students, not that they complained about Amy, they learned a lot, but it was like, "She's not very warm." And I was like, "It's kind of not her job. I mean she's pleasant and that's enough. You're overly sheltered and babied here." I was like you know, "Out in the real world, no one's going to remind you to check that grade sweetheart. Your parents aren't going to be on your tail because your parents don't matter when you enter to college." But that is in my opinion, a maturity issue, and not just a high school issue. It's something that they have to learn, and for them, that's hard because they're still in a high school setting.

Jessica knew how her students in the past had thought of Amy as more distant, which made sense considering she was not an on-campus high school teacher and she saw them two days a week. Conversely, Jessica saw these same students every day of the week, and also saw them in the halls, at pep rallies, and at extracurricular activities. She was much more involved institutionally in her high school than she was in Southern Urban, which many of her students appreciated. Yet, she recognized that in high school, students were treated differently than in college, where they were less dependent on adults such as their parents and teachers.

Considering Jessica observed Amy teach the course, she had awareness about this difference in institutions that she wanted to bring to her teaching of dual credit. Jessica wanted to impart some of her perceptions of this college culture to students so they would be more ready for college. She stated, “I’m very interested to see how to teach college writing even though I think at Cary, we kind of do anyway, but I’m interested to see how to do that and how I can take those skills and just apply it to my underclassmen as well. So as a teacher, I find that to be very beneficial.” By teaching the dual-credit course, Jessica wanted to take notions of “college-level” writing in that class and utilize them in other English courses she taught. This introduction and interest in college culture could potentially be beneficial for her students, and it also demonstrates the shifting perception Jessica saw of herself as a teacher once she knew she would teach dual credit. She recognized that the dual-credit course would be occurring in her classroom, and she wanted to make it similar to Amy’s course because Jessica saw the benefit of students being introduced more to college culture.

This example of a point of contact in dual credit between Amy and Jessica is an optimal experience, in part because of the strong teachers on both sides participating. If there are instructors who are not interested or open to another instructor in their room, this kind of dialogue could hurt both English courses that students take and the students' learning. Additionally, the instructors in this situation knew of both the material conditions and power differentials for high school instructors in the dual-credit classroom. Because Amy had previously taught high school courses, she understood the pressure Jessica was under in a different manner than a dual-credit instructor who had not had experience teaching high school before. She knew Jessica was already working a full-time job and then had another instructor, who was not at first familiar with her high school nor its students, come in and teach a course in her classroom. Amy also recognized the power differentials in being a college instructor as a graduate teaching assistant because she did not have the power to decide if she could teach dual credit again, whether it would be at the same high school the next year or not, and whether it would be in the same classroom. It depended on Southern Urban's English Department, much like many of the high school instructors' job decisions depended on RCPS. Given that these material conditions and power differentials were recognized by both of the instructors, they could work together and learn strategies from one another.

### **The Teaching College Composition Course and Perceptions of Teacher Identity**

The Teaching College Composition course (referred to in some participant comments by its course number, English 602) was a rich point of contact between secondary and tertiary educators because both dual-credit and on-campus instructors had

to take the course if they were teaching composition for the first time. The Teaching College Composition class serves as a way for first-time composition instructors at Southern Urban to learn more about what kind of writing and pedagogy is expected in the composition courses at this particular university. To a certain extent, it is a course about figuring out one's teacher identity while teaching composition for the first time through Southern Urban's program. Not only do instructors discuss different kinds of pedagogies as a class, but they also work in mentoring groups to articulate their challenges in the classroom and receive input from others. During this study, two of the instructors in the Teaching College Composition class were dual-credit teachers who worked at the same local high school. The other instructors were graduate teaching assistants who taught on campus. The Director of Composition placed the two dual-credit instructors in a mentoring group by themselves with an Assistant Director of Composition who was also teaching dual credit. The graduate teaching assistants were divided into groups of three with an Assistant Director for every group.

As there was such a difference in the number of dual-credit instructors compared to on-campus teachers, the two high school instructors discussed feeling alienated. Emma, an instructor at Hightree High, was interested in taking the 602 course so that she could learn more about how the composition program operated at Southern Urban. She thought that dual credit could potentially lead to more understanding about writing pedagogy between secondary and tertiary educators:

Well I think it's good in that it's working towards fostering a kind of mutual respect for what we each do even though it's different. I feel like particularly with having taking that class that kind of worked in a way. Even though during the

class I felt like we were kind of separate from the rest of the class, I think it was useful, a useful course, in helping to work on some of that kind of community-ness...I still feel like we're a separate entity, even within the 602 class like the way things applied or the way that we were. It was different.

Emma explained how the Teaching College Composition course began to develop into a community for the high school teachers and graduate teaching assistants because both were first-time composition instructors. However, Emma also recognized the limitations that occurred in this community of instructors because she still felt separated from the on-campus instructors in certain ways. Institutionally, the high school instructors were distinct from the other instructors because they worked off campus. Therefore, practices of the composition program that were supplemental to taking the Teaching College Composition course, such as pedagogy workshops and stopping by the Director of Composition's office hours, were not part of the dual-credit instructors' experiences because they were only on campus for the graduate course and worked full-time at the high school. They were not able to receive the content at these workshops and meetings, but more importantly, they were also not able to develop connections with other instructors and the Director of Composition outside of class. This lack of access was a limitation for the high school instructors teaching dual credit.

Additionally, even while being in the class, it was difficult for Emma to participate because of the material conditions for how she taught the course at the high school compared to the on-campus instructors. Emma and the other dual-credit instructor in the course, Daphne, taught English 101 the whole year along with the Senior English class for high school. Their particular high school, Hightree High, did not offer English

102 for dual credit. The graduate teaching assistants in the Teaching College Composition course taught English 101 for the fall semester while they were in the graduate-level teaching course, and taught English 102 in the spring semester. Therefore, the rest of the graduate-level teaching class was ahead of Emma and Daphne on the standard syllabus by one to two major assignments. This made it difficult for Emma and Daphne to remember what exactly had been discussed when they were on a major assignment that the rest of the graduate course had done a month or two before. Therefore, the many resources from the course were not as immediately useful to the dual-credit instructors as they were to the on-campus instructors.

Even though the resources were not as timely in terms of their courses, both Emma and Daphne commented on the helpfulness of resources, such as major assignment prompts, class exercises, PowerPoint presentations, and rubrics. Daphne thought the best part of the course was the access to all these resources: “Well, I mean I liked the fact that we got the assignment sheets and examples, rubrics, things like that, all that was very helpful. And the textbook, I’ve always like the textbook. And there were some good lessons and some good PowerPoints so yeah we got a lot of good materials.” Even if she could not use them right away, Daphne knew all of these resources were on file, which facilitated her work as a dual-credit instructor and her work as a high school instructor teaching other courses. She could spend time on dual credit, but it was not the only class that she taught, so Daphne was able to employ these materials while also creating materials for her other classes. Emma also found the materials helpful, but she also enjoyed the point of contact that existed between all of the instructors teaching the same course in one classroom: “And that’s one thing that I liked about the 602 class, that

opportunity for idea exchange. I wish that we had been at the same pace with the units to really do more of that. But I like that idea for saying, ‘Ok, I tried this and it didn’t work’ and somebody else to say, ‘Well, I tried this other thing and maybe you want to do that.’” In this Teaching College Composition space, Emma was able to hear about different strategies for teaching college composition that she had not necessarily thought about before. Even if she was not on the same pace as the rest of the class, it was beneficial to hear what kind of activities worked for different instructors and how to fix activities and assignments that students seemed to struggle to understand.

Daphne also mentioned that the overlap of the Senior English course with the dual-credit course made for a different schedule than what was discussed in the Teaching College Composition course. Therefore, she purposefully noted at times what made “college-level” writing different than in her Senior English course:

Honestly, I don’t feel like a different, a different person if that’s what you’re asking because we try to blend their Senior English credit with this as much as possible. So because you know there’s a certain list of writings for English, Senior English and certain for the dual credit, I’m trying to overlap some so that it’s not so overwhelming... Well I do notice that I’m often saying, “This is something you would do in college” or whatever. I feel like I’m trying to prepare them, and even with the grading, I try to point out things that a professor might point out.

Although the projects they did in class aligned with the standard syllabus supplied by the composition program, Daphne related the two courses of Senior English and dual credit to one another in discussion and coursework. In “Muted Voices: High School Teachers,

Composition, and the College Imperative,” Joseph Jones studies the tension already in what college writing means for high school English instructors. In his survey of secondary English instructors at an achieving high school, Jones found that they were not certain what would count as college writing, and many fell back on their own experiences in college coursework to prepare students. Considering that “within the discipline of English, always tentatively, provisionally—and often contentiously—defined by those who teach it, the relationship between college English and high school English has been marked by disputation and dismay,” Jones also found that many high school instructors had little to no association with college English instructors (1).

In contrast to what Jones states, in her teaching of dual credit, Daphne knew from the Southern Urban composition program what was expected of “college-level” writing. She also had contact with college instructors through the graduate Teaching College Composition course. What was different though were the material conditions for Daphne and Emma teaching the course at their high school compared to the on-campus instructors. Not only do the high school instructors have to take a course on composition pedagogy, but they also have to maintain their full-time jobs while taking the course, which is very different than the work load for most English graduate students. Additionally, they frequently have more than one course preparation and teach different grade levels. Daphne explained that commenting on her dual-credit students’ papers took precedent over her freshmen student papers because of the kind of classes they were:

And I do tell them, “Please read the comments, take ten minutes right now, read the comments, and come ask me some questions if you want because I didn’t write those on there for the fun of it, you know?” Yeah, it takes a lot of time to do

that and since I have to be honest, I'm better at it with my seniors, my dual credit, because for one, theirs fifteen of them, and two, they really care to become better writers and the whole idea behind this class is to make them better writers so I do give them more comments than my freshmen. But, of course, my freshmen still have four, three more years. Well, yeah we do the whole entire writing process even though they're freshmen. You see that big stack of papers right there? One day I have to get into those.

When Daphne explained in an earlier quote she had never taught a college course, she elaborated that being a dual-credit instructor at the high school did not make her feel any different from teaching any of her other courses. She did not necessarily see her perception of her teaching identity shift in the same way that Jessica did. However, she seemed to be focused intently on the practices that she thought would be helpful for students in college. She treated her dual-credit class differently than other classes, more like a "professor" she said, by commenting extensively on student papers. Daphne knew, because of her material conditions, that she could not do that for every course she taught, but she recognized that was an important aspect of the dual-credit course. Although she stated she tried to overlap dual-credit courses with other courses as much as possible, which was not always the case. Therefore, there were shifting perceptions and practices for Daphne as a literacy educator while she taught dual credit and other English courses.

The material conditions in which the dual-credit instructors worked influenced the extent to which the instructors viewed the work they needed to do for their students, but did not necessarily make them feel like college teachers, even though they were.

Emma stated that she did not consider herself a university teacher for a variety of factors:

I honestly I feel like kids are college students more than I feel like I'm the college teacher. If that makes any sense, you know. I guess I think more about the opportunities for them using university resources than I think about me. And particularly as a dual-credit teacher because we're not specifically an employee of the university, we're not getting paid by the university. And I don't feel integrated into that community either so I guess I don't ever really think of myself as being a university teacher.

Given that the dual-credit instructors were paid by RCPS, they aligned themselves as high school teachers even if they taught a college course. The instructors were not paid by Southern Urban for teaching dual credit. Additionally, they did not receive any financial benefits from their high schools, such as a raise or a bonus, for teaching the dual-credit course. However, they did receive cultural capital by teaching the "college course" at the high school because it makes them not only able to teach a variety of courses, but also a course the high school administration deeply supports. One financial incentive offered was that the high school instructors did not have to pay the tuition to take the Teaching College Composition course. By having high school instructors teach the college course without having to pay them, and receiving tuition from the students taking the dual-credit course, Southern Urban is able to outsource a certain amount of labor.

Emma also mentioned that she did not view herself as a college instructor because she did not feel a part of the university community. Because both she and Daphne were in their own mentoring group, working with each other and an Assistant Director of Composition, who also taught dual credit, there was not as much exposure to on-campus

instructors as much as there could have been in the course. The on-campus instructors in the course were also taking other graduate courses together, working in the same GTA offices together, and serving on English Graduate Organization committees. Therefore, it was difficult for Emma and Daphne to be part of the Teaching College Composition community because they were contingent to the university.

### **Dual-Credit Instructors as Contingent Faculty**

The outsourcing of having high school instructors teach dual credit was financially cheap for Southern Urban and for the local high schools because they did not have to pay their teachers any more money. Therefore, many of the dual-credit instructors were teaching a college class for the first time and taking a graduate-level course that did not offer them many financial advantages. Because of this, some of the dual-credit instructors had not been interested in teaching the class, but since there was no one else at their high school who could do it, they inevitably ended up teaching it. Daphne, described the situation of her teaching the course as the following: “Because when we were approached about doing this class, no one was volunteering...And I thought ‘Well I probably have the equivalent with all the different English classes.’ So by then I said ‘Ok fine I’ll do it.’” There was not much excitement to taking on a graduate-level course and new curriculum without any financial benefits. However, this quotation suggests that the instructors gained status as volunteers, doing something other teachers were not willing to do, which they can later trade in as favors now owed to them.

One reason that many of the high school instructors were not interested in teaching dual credit was because they were already teaching the higher-level English

courses, such as Advanced Placement, that do not require graduate coursework. The dual-credit handbook explained the Teacher Eligibility Requirements for dual credit: “High school faculty will submit transcripts and curriculum vita to Southern Urban University’s English Department for approval of qualifications to teach College Writing. These qualifications will be the same as those required for teaching the campus-based sections of the same course” (8). Therefore, a dual-credit instructor had to have a Master’s degree in English or a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in English. This requirement is not designated by Southern Urban, but by SACS, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the regional accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Many of the high school dual-credit instructors found the requirement of the 18 graduate credit hours in English limiting because most high school teachers have a Master’s or graduate-level coursework in Education. Therefore, there is a hierarchy by discipline operating here as well where English perceives itself as more stringent than Education. Given that some of the local schools did not have any English teachers that met that requirement, college instructors from Southern Urban came in to teach dual credit. These college instructors were either graduate teaching assistants or part-time faculty. It is important to highlight that high school teachers, part-time lecturers, and graduate teaching assistants taught dual-credit composition. There were no professors or full-time instructors teaching the course, which reflects the position of dual credit at the university. In an interview with Juanita, the Director of Technology and Community Development in Admissions, she acknowledged the separation of dual credit from the on-campus community: “I look at dual credit as one of those external plans. It is on the

chopping block.” Although dual-credit courses have been at Southern Urban for a number of years, it is a program that does not have stability because the university views it as outreach to a certain extent. This view of the program results in the use of a contingent faculty to teach dual credit, a group of teachers that changes often as graduate teaching assistants graduate or part-time lecturers obtain better jobs. It seems that one way to make the faculty more stable is by having high school instructors teach it.

In many ways, these high school teachers are contingent faculty to Southern Urban. They do not work for Southern Urban full time or receive a pay check from the university. It is cheaper for the university to have the high school instructors teach dual-credit courses than to pay to send a college instructor to the high schools. To a certain extent, this outsourcing reflects the state of labor in composition at the university. As discussed in Chapter Three, higher education operates under a corporate model which affects who teaches certain courses at the university. In “Toward a New Labor Movement in Higher Education: Contingent Labor and Organizing for Change,” Eileen Schell writes, “Those of us who teach in writing programs or administer them will say that despite widespread acknowledgement of the problem, the part-time and non-tenure track situation has worsened” (92). She cites the Coalition on the Academic Workforce/Modern Language Association survey, which indicates that “nearly one-third (32 percent) of those who teach introductory writing courses situated in English departments are part-time faculty. An additional one-tenth (9.5 percent) are full-time, non-tenure track faculty, and 22.2 percent are graduate teaching assistants (93). Schell establishes the extent to which first-year composition courses depend on part-time

faculty. The overwhelming majority of composition instructors at the university level are contingent faculty.

Although there are many contingent faculty involved in teaching composition, there are multiple limitations to their job quality and security. In “The Wyoming Conference Resolution Opposing Unfair Salaries and Working Conditions for Post-Secondary Teachers of Writing,” Linda Robertson, Sharon Crowley, and Frank Lentricchia write, “At many of our colleges and universities—even those enjoying great prestige—teachers of writing hold the same degrees as their tenured counterparts; yet they are excluded from participating in academic life, prohibited from teaching courses in their fields of academic preparation, denied the traditional support for research, and denied even basic benefits” (276). Although the Wyoming Resolution in 1987 was a strong stand for contingent faculty, there are still serious inequities in part-time composition instructors’ pay and working conditions.

There is a long history of the CCCC transforming the Wyoming Resolution into a quite different resolution, “The Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing.” In Jeanne Gunner’s “The Fate of the Wyoming Resolution: A History of Professional Seduction,” the author writes about the textual events that led from the Wyoming Resolution to the CCCC’s “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing.” Gunner writes, “If we examine the changes in the substance of the Wyoming Resolution made over time in light of the steps in the professionalization process, what we see is a progressive silencing of the group that inspired the original document and their document itself transformed into a statement on academic privilege” (108). The Wyoming Resolution began as a more

spontaneous action against the oppressive conditions of writing teachers. Gunner writes about how the quest for power and privilege obfuscated the elite in rhetoric and composition from the problems of real people detailed in the Wyoming Resolution. As the documents changed from the Wyoming Resolution to the “Statement of Principles,” there was a shift from establishing a fair working environment to a reinforcement of the traditional hierarchy at the university (110). “The Statement of Principles” proposed that colleges narrow the number of part-time positions occupied and change these positions into tenure-track ones. Gunner writes, “An implicit assumption in this process of conversion to tenure track is that the new position will be occupied by someone other than the person who has been marginalized and exploited by poor working conditions” (115). Therefore, there is an assumption that tenure ensures educational quality. Gunner concludes that this conversion process demonstrates how “[o]ur primary professional organization has been less—much less—than a strong ally in writing teachers’ effort to improve salaries, working conditions, and grievance procedures” (119).

James Sledd also critiques the transformation of the Wyoming Resolution in “Why the Wyoming Resolution Had to Be Emasculated: A History and A Quixotism,” where he attempts to answer two questions: “First, in the five years after the once-so-promising Wyoming Resolution, why has so much talk produced so little action to check the exploitation of composition teachers? Second, what can be done, if anything, to right this wrong?” (269). Sledd describes the hierarchy in English departments where tenured faculty in literature attempt to avoid teaching composition, but they maintain their budgets by the enrollment in composition courses. Graduate teaching assistants and part-time lecturers become the main instructors of composition courses, and are also exploited

by the pay and working conditions. Therefore, this labor situates composition in a certain manner as a service course that does not need expertise. Sledd writes, “The Slevin committee not only rejected implementation of the resolution which it had been called upon to implement; it also neatly subverted the argument that the *teaching* of composition, not just *research* in composition, should be honored and rewarded” (278). The change from the Wyoming Resolution to the Postsecondary Standards emphasized that teaching, and therefore individuals who specialize in teaching such as part-time lecturers, should not have as prominent a role at the university and there should be a move to make all faculty full time. However, Sledd explains that “[i]n the mid 1980s, the number of full-timers in two-year and four-year colleges actually declined, while the number of part-timers continued to rise” (273). As part-time faculty continue to become a main population of the university, they do not receive the respect and benefits in which the Wyoming Resolution addressed.

In Joseph Harris’ “Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss: Class Consciousness in Composition,” the author argues there needs to be more awareness of material interests of all the kinds of faculty—graduate teaching assistants, part-time faculty, and professors. Moreover, there needs to be work done in order to make positive changes that impact the unfair wages and material conditions of certain instructors. Harris writes, “While we have seen in the last two decades a flurry of proposals to recenter study in English around new or different sets of texts and issues...there have been few serious attempts (the 1986 Wyoming Resolution being a striking exception) to reconfigure who does what sorts of actual work in English departments, under whose supervision, under what conditions, and for what pay” (44). He writes about the

complexity of class at the university, specifically when educational attainment already addresses a certain kind of class. Harris also writes that tenure-track faculty in composition need to learn more how to “push for changes in teaching and the working conditions of writing teachers” (45).

Many dual-credit instructors are part-time faculty, which demonstrates not only the position of dual credit at the university, but also the identity of composition. Composition programs are frequently one of the largest programs on a university campus because the courses usually have a lower class size limit than other general education courses, such as World History or Introduction to Biology. The lower class size is so students can focus on their writing in the course and instructors are able to make comments and provide feedback in a manageable manner. However, because of the number of courses that this lower class size creates not all of the courses can be taught by tenure-track faculty or full-time instructors, specifically at large public universities. Also, the many graduate teaching assistants and part-time lecturers can be attributed to the low status associated with the teaching of composition as a “remedial” course. Therefore, graduate teaching assistants, starting from the Master’s level up to the Doctoral, frequently teach a couple of first-year composition courses a semester. When there are still more courses, part-time lecturers are employed to teach anywhere from one to more than four courses a semester. Frequently, these lecturers are not just teaching at one university, but multiple ones in the area in order to try to construct a sustainable income. Therefore, they are not as institutionally tied to the university as professors, full-time instructors, and graduate students.

When so much of the labor is working in this manner, then the identity of composition can be viewed as less of a discipline of expertise than other disciplines at the university. The perception is that composition is a service course to other disciplines at the university. When composition becomes viewed this way, then conceptions of writing also become limited to concepts such as basic skills and grammar. In “Composition and the Future of Contingency: Labor and Identity in Composition,” Walter Jacobsohn writes how “composition reflects both the structural imperatives of the corporate system and the traditional university hierarchy” (184). In the use of the labor in composition, it functions to fit into the increasingly corporate university that was discussed in Chapter Three. If students are treated as “customers,” then the university must find ways to be marketable and also keeps its own costs down. One way to do so is to use contingent faculty like part-time lecturers and high school instructors. However, when the university operates in this manner, it makes a statement that what is taught and learned in composition is not as valued because there is not financial value given to the instructors who teach the course. This is problematic because it affects perceptions of composition as a field and the extent to which it is central at the university. There is a large tradition of complaint detailing composition as equivalent to motherhood, where it is fundamental, and yet not something to be paid for. In this hierarchy, dual-credit courses run the risk of being at the bottom in terms of both economic and institutional support.

Many rhetoric and composition scholars and instructors have challenged the quality of the job for contingent faculty and worked for more full-time instructor positions, such as Elizabeth Wardle at the University of Central Florida, who has worked with university administrators to reduce the number of adjuncts from 33 in 2008 to 7 in 2012.

In “Intractable Writing Program Problems, *Kairos*, and Writing about Writing: A Profile of the University of Central Florida’s First-Year Composition Program,” Wardle writes, “Macro-level knowledge and resolutions from the larger field of Writing Studies are frequently unable to inform the micro-level of individual composition classes, largely because of our field’s infamous labor problems” (1). As Wardle indicates, most universities still run on this part-time faculty model because it saves money for the university overall. At UCF, using the Writing about Writing curriculum, Wardle has hired 15 full-time, benefited, and unionized instructors. Although this work by Wardle is hopeful for contingent faculty, it is not the norm.<sup>11</sup> Most universities are still in the situation that UCF started in with many part-time instructors making up the identity of who teaches their composition courses.

Dual credit has become another space that adds more contingent faculty to composition, but it is a different kind of contingent faculty. As Emma stated, there is a community that formed in the Teaching College Composition course, but there is still a separation. Emma explained how in the context of the Teaching College Composition course, she was really prepared for teaching because she had been teaching high school for 12 years already. Before teaching dual credit, Emma had taught creative writing, oral communication, study skills, freshman through senior English, and AP English. Many of the graduate teaching assistants Emma was in the class with had never taught before: “Within the 602 class, most of the rest of the class were brand new teachers so some of the instruction they needed, we didn’t necessarily need, but they were also a more integrated part of the university, so some of the instruction we needed about that kind of

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<sup>11</sup> Similar approaches have been implemented at other universities, such as the University of Denver, under the direction of Doug Hesse.

stuff, they didn't need." Emma explained how the course fit the needs for graduate teaching assistants who were familiar with campus resources, but new to teaching. Daphne, who had been teaching high school for 14 years, also explained the concentration on how to teach students was too repetitive for her: "But the thing is, a lot of it too, especially in the beginning, was about teaching and Emma and I had been doing it for many, many years, and we had those classes a long time ago so that wasn't as useful for us either." Emma and Daphne, were familiar with teaching, but not necessarily with campus resources, such as how to use BlackBoard effectively and what online resources students could use for the library. These were issues which they struggled with throughout the academic school year.

Additionally, there is a power imbalance with the dual-credit instructors and the composition program based on their material conditions and their positions at university. As discussed earlier, scholars like Christine Farris have designed effective dual-credit programs that involve the high school instructors more at the university. Yet, Farris is a tenured professor at Indiana University who publishes on dual credit from a certain position of authority within the university and the field of rhetoric and composition. She does not cite any of the high school instructors' perceptions of themselves as teachers in the dual-credit program. This lack of citation could be because of the power differential that already exists between Farris as a professor and the dual-credit instructors who follow her design that she would not want to add the power differential of being the researcher because they might feel compelled to be participants. Nevertheless, in this field, we have not yet heard from the high school dual-credit instructors on their perceptions of the university dual-credit program and their positions in it. At Southern

Urban, Susan, the Writing Program Administrator, was attuned to the unique needs of the dual-credit instructors. She explained that she created the mentoring group so that the instructors would be able to voice their concerns to a group all going through the same experience:

Well, I mean I think it's beneficial because a lot of what we end up talking about in 602 is not applicable to the high school situation. Things like classroom management don't really transfer, aren't necessarily applicable for them so I think it's useful for them to have their own mentor group for that reason. They can talk more about sort of integrating it within their high school day, the challenges of doing the curriculum over which usually is an extended period of time and balancing it with other things that they're doing in the class. I thought last year was helpful for Emma to use the course to think through the ways that the dual credit could be combined with her literature course, and look at intersections between those so it felt like a more integrated curriculum.

Both Daphne and Emma commented on the support that Susan gave them to change the curriculum to best reflect their situations. They recognized that Susan understood they were coming from a different situation that would sometimes make the class boring or repetitive for them. Yet, because they were still in a graduate course, there was certain worry by both Emma and Daphne about receiving certain grades on their work. Although they were far removed from the other on-campus instructors in many ways, there was the same sense of student worry about what the instructor will think of their projects. For this reason, there was still a power differential between Susan and Emma and Daphne that had to be recognized.

Also, the institutional differences of high school and college inevitably influenced Daphne's view of Susan because she had not taught high school before. When asked what would be more helpful about the Teaching College Composition course in the future, Daphne asked,

Well, has she done a dual credit in a high school? I think that would be helpful if she knew exactly where I was coming from because some of these issues that I've mentioned, I've kind of mentioned them to her too and she was definitely understanding and she worked with me on eliminating an assignment or two. But I think you know she would have already seen those things had she had the experience.

This experience for Daphne with Susan was unlike that of Amy and Jessica, who had both taught high school and who both were contingent faculty in some ways. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the dialogue between secondary and tertiary stakeholders in dual credit, but it is also important to recognize how difficult this dialogue is to enact because of the differences in institutions along with material conditions and power differentials. These political and economic issues that are part of dual credit and first-year composition in general filter down to the instructors' perceptions of themselves and others as literacy educators.

### **Conclusion: Dual Credit as a Point of Contact, Not Yet Collaboration**

In their article, "Contesting the Space between High School and College in the Era of Dual Enrollment," Howard Tinberg and Jean Paul Nadeau ask, "When a college course—a college writing course—is transplanted to a high school setting, taught, as

often happens, by high school teachers, what happens in that course? Does the course not change in fundamental ways, despite best efforts to render it as a college-level experience?” (711). Additionally, the Southern Urban University handbook explains that many stakeholders who are not comfortable with dual credit think that “[w]hat we call college credit, inevitably, becomes changed, if not in fact diluted by courses taught within the high school context” (21). There are assumptions on both a national and local level on what occurs when a dual-credit course is taught by a high school instructor.

However, dual credit offers a space for possibilities for more dialogue to occur between both rhetoric and composition and secondary education on what being a literacy educator means. The struggles for instructors like Emma and Daphne in the dual-credit writing program inform the shifting perceptions of educator identity and classroom practice that occur when a high school teaches this course. There are shifts in perceptions of the identity of a literacy educator because of these points of contact. These shifts demonstrate a benefit of dual credit because it does create a point of contact between secondary and tertiary literacy education. Dual-credit programs are points of contact for high schools and college that bring the differences in power and perception in terms of policy and assessment into the open, but they also demonstrate the conflicts and tensions in this dialogue.

These tensions especially come into play because of the identity of these high school instructors as contingent faculty to the university. Although they are not in the same position as part-time lecturers or graduate teaching assistants, the high school instructors of dual credit are part of a program that is always on “the chopping block,” so there is not as much security about the state of first-year composition in a dual-credit

course than there would be on an on-campus course. Additionally, the instructors teach for the university, but they do not get paid for the course by the university. They have to negotiate the pressures of teaching Senior English courses concentrated on literature with teaching a “college-level” writing course and understand the institutional differences in high school and college. These perceptions of labor issues filter down into the perceptions of literacy teachers and literacy education. They also inevitably influence the identity of composition because of its history as a service course, and having high school instructors teach composition reflects that service and may lead to some composition scholars’ discomfort with dual credit. Because of their varied experiences, the dual-credit instructors are not only composition instructors, but they are literacy educators. Therefore, the notion of a literacy educator, through dual credit, is evolving.

The dialogue demonstrates what kind of opportunities there are for both secondary and tertiary stakeholders to learn from one another. However, much of the design of dual credit has based itself off of a unidirectional relationship between high school teachers and college administrators, where the high school teachers are supposed to take a course and learn from the rhetoric and composition scholars. When dual credit functions in this manner, it causes tensions by not acknowledging that high school teachers are experts in their own right, and should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of literacy education and pedagogy. Therefore, dual credit in rhetoric and composition currently is a point of contact and contestation. The issue of dual credit between secondary and tertiary education has no easy resolution given the differences in the two educational spheres that are combined in this dual space. At Southern Urban University, the dual-credit program is a best-case scenario. There is much conversation, and at other

universities and colleges, there is no conversation at all. It is significant to remember that in any dual-credit program, there is a bridge between two distinct curriculums and teachers who have been trained in a variety of manners. In their work, Tinberg and Nadeau stress that “the design and implementation of a dual-enrollment program have a significant influence on whether true collaboration and clear communication occur” (717). I would argue that there is not yet collaboration between secondary and tertiary educators in dual credit because there is not enough acknowledgement of the differences in the two educational institutions. However, collaboration can be worked on for the future as both levels have more conversations about literacy with one another.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### REFLECTING ON DUAL-CREDIT WRITING PROGRAMS

“My attitude has always been that since alternative accreditation, dual enrollment, testing, portfolio submission, options are available and will continue to be available that a well-run dual-credit program is probably the best alternative to actually taking the courses on a college campus.”-John, Dual-Credit Administrator

“Dual credit moved fast, like it was fast-paced, but it wasn’t crazy...It helped that I was able to take somewhat of a college class without having to smush everything in to a few months and taking most of March and April and a little bit of May to study for a test.”-Devyn, Dual-Credit Student

“I very much see it as you’re earning credit in two places so they’re earning high school credit by being able to accelerate their regular high school class, and to kind of complete that in fewer classroom hours than a regular student would complete that course.”- Charlotte, Dual-Credit Instructor

These three quotations represent the increasing emphasis on acceleration in literacy education through programs such as dual credit. As a university administrator, John recognized that programs which speed up education, such as dual credit, Advanced Placement, and Early College High School, are becoming more prevalent. Therefore, composition programs have to learn how to be involved with dual credit in both effective and ethical manners. Much of this dissertation discusses how Southern Urban worked to try to involve high school students and teachers effectively in a university composition program. The stakeholders struggled with how accelerated programs influence not only notions about what “college-level” writing means, but what kinds of students and teachers should be involved in “college-level” work. Through this struggle, they attempted to define what literacy education meant to them in the context of dual credit and in a writing program at the university. Since there is an increasing demand for programs like dual credit, organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication have established statements for what is expected of dual-credit writing programs. In the CCCC position statement on dual credit/concurrent enrollment composition, the authors explain, “In short, a rapidly growing number of high school students are fulfilling requirements through a variety of programs and starting college with credit for first-year composition already completed...On-campus composition programs are facing the pedagogical and economic implications and consequences of these changes” (1). This dissertation addresses these implications through the study of not only pedagogy and economy, but also political, institutional, and programmatic implications.

As structures for awarding credit become more fluid, I argue that there needs to be more awareness of how these accelerated programs shape educational stakeholders' notions of literacy, especially at the point of contact between high school and college. In "Literacy Practices," David Barton and Mary Hamilton explain that "[l]iteracy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible, and influential than others" (2). This study is increasingly important in the context in which it occurred because the local students, administrators, and teachers involved were responding to this national conversation on "college readiness" and the economic consequences of the 2008 recession. Therefore, financial and institutional sponsors, such as the scholarships and one-third tuitions rates that applied to the dual-credit writing course, shape stakeholders' conceptions of literacy. The discussion of sponsorship draws from Deborah Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives*. In this book, Brandt explains the multiple values of literacy: "Literacy is a valued commodity in the U.S. economy, a key resource in gaining profit and edge. This value helps to explain, of course, the length people will go to secure literacy for themselves or their children. But it also explains why the powerful work so persistently to conscript and ration the resource of literacy" (21). This connection of literacy to the economy demonstrates the extent to which dual-credit programs operate in the context of socioeconomic status so that if students can pay for the course or if they receive a scholarship for the course, they also obtain experiences with "college-level writing" that will potentially help them both professionally and personally.

Furthermore, this dissertation addresses the extent to which educators perceive the uses of literacy for making students "ready" for college and careers. Much of the

legislation on “college readiness” focuses on students becoming ready for work in the capitalist system. However, this purpose is not necessarily what educators, both high school and college instructors, are thinking of when they teach composition to students. There are other aspects of a university education, such as citizenry and diversity, which are privileged by both administrators and instructors, as discussed in Chapter Three. In that chapter, the Southern Urban Admissions administrator Jean established that she thought one of the purposes of college was career readiness. This focus is in part because of the current economy that occurred during this study, where students referred to the dual-credit writing class as a way to save money for college and described their parents’ reactions to the course as a “deal.” However, Jean also made clear that she thought there were purposes outside of careerism that should be taught to students as well while they are in college. It was difficult for her, and for many education stakeholders, to negotiate the current corporatism of education with the human aspects when discussing how literacy education should function for students.

Because of the changes that occur in what “college” means demonstrated through programs like dual credit, there needs to be more conversation about the future of literacy education between both secondary and tertiary stakeholders. In Howard Tinberg and Jean-Paul Nadeau’s “Contesting the Space between the High School and College in the Era of Dual-Enrollment,” the authors explain the history of tension between secondary and tertiary education on what was expected of students’ writing. Tinberg and Nadeau then describe that currently “the terrain between high school and college has again become contested. Once again, high schools are under fire for not adequately preparing students to succeed. This time, however, the forces of conformity emanate not from the

colleges alone so much as from government and private entities” (704). This dissertation explores the dialogue between high school and college stakeholders because much discussion on “college readiness” is tied to non-educational structures. Both secondary and tertiary stakeholders work with one another in the dual-credit space, and have to negotiate the synergies and tensions that exist between these two educational structures. Therefore, to further the dialogue about literacy, secondary and tertiary stakeholders can be included more in the conversation on readiness so that their viewpoints are represented.

It is also important to recognize the relationship of literacy and identity that was a part of this conversation. Through attempting to understand how “college-level” writing notions would change, stakeholders inevitably related what they saw as certain kinds of students who take dual-credit courses compared to Advanced Placement and regular English courses. Stakeholders also viewed how the perception of what a college educator means changes when they are also high school teachers. Therefore, as notions of “college-level” writing changed because of the space of dual credit, so did notions of the identities of the students and instructors who were part of this program. The space of dual credit leads to further discussion about literacy education, and specifically where our composition students are coming from when they enter the classroom in the fall of each academic year. Therefore, it would be beneficial to focus more attention on literacy education instead of segmenting writing through high school and college. This focus could lead to more effective dialogue between stakeholders at the university and high schools.

Discussions of the relationship between tertiary and secondary education in composition frequently relate back to collaboration (Farris, Thompson, Tinberg and Nadeau). In this study, I challenge the extent to which collaboration occurs presently between secondary and tertiary education. The challenge of collaboration is in part because of the different cultures of high school and college. In Southern Urban's dual-credit handbook, there is description of the "gap" that exists between the two education levels:

Insofar as the critique may be valid, it offers a challenge to all involved in College-High partnerships. How do we bridge the gap? If the differences between high school and college are not merely a matter of grade level, then we need to define those differences and to develop strategies for accommodating them in our dual credit instruction in order to ensure that college credit remains a meaningful standard, distinct from advanced high school work. ("Dual Credit Handbook" 21)

Although this discussion is an effective beginning to the conversation on the relationship between high school and college in dual credit, I wonder about the use of this phrase "bridging the gap" because it implies that there is a static gap between the two education levels, and that it actually needs to be merged together in some way streamlined way. To me, a more effective way to reflect on dual credit is that it demonstrates that high school and college are not stable binaries in teaching composition, but that the sites and cultures merge together and yet also create tension with one another. They are distinct from one another, but yet they are part of one another because the students in dual credit are simultaneously high school and college students, the instructors simultaneously high school and college. There are consequences of dual credit being in both sites, as

discussed in Chapter Four in terms of dual-credit instructors' reactions to the program. This simultaneous existence makes the nature of the idea of first-year composition in this context of dual credit less stable and more fluid, which can serve to create problems for stringent rules on how the course should be run and what content should be taught. In this fluidity, there is a place for experimentation for the instructors on how to effectively teach first-year composition. However, there is also space for course standards expected on campus to become adrift in the high schools because of the distance created between the administration on campus and the teachers and students off campus.

The limitations of this project included that it was a study of one dual-credit program so context is crucial. The political, institutional, and economic forces of this particular program and the school it operates in informed stakeholders' conceptions of literacy. These pressures on dual-credit programs may be similar, but enacted in different manners in other contexts. Furthermore, the dual-credit writing program at Southern Urban is a strong program, which does not represent the majority of dual-credit programs who do not have much oversight at the university or high schools. Another limitation to this project was that interviews were conducted, but there were not observations of the classrooms because of time constraints on the project. If there had been observations, there would have been more discussion of how literacy functions in the actual classroom through more discussion of classroom activities and class projects. Additionally, this project interviewed 20 stakeholders, but it would have been beneficial to interview more kinds of stakeholders, such as parents, to understand their viewpoint of dual credit.

## **Recommendations for Changes in Dual-Credit Teacher Training and Policies**

One of the dual-credit instructors, Emma, stated that although there could be more dialogue between Southern Urban University and the local high schools in the dual-credit program, she was not sure how to enact it: “And I would like for there to be more, but at the same I don’t know how to do that you know? How to improve that.” Emma recognized that as much as she wanted more collaboration with university stakeholders, the different expectations and perceived identities of high school and college teachers affected what she thought was possible. In “The Space Between: Dual Credit Programs as Brokering, Community Building, and Professionalization,” Christine Farris describes the relationship between high school and college instructors for dual credit as they construct a university colloquium. At the colloquium, the educators, both secondary and tertiary, present their findings on research and pedagogy. This discussion leads to a conversation on dual credit by both the disciplines of composition and secondary education (104). However, the high school teachers attend Farris’ class and the colloquia on a university campus and are observed by a university administrator. There is dialogue, but it seems to mostly focus on high school teachers learning what college composition expects. There could be more opportunities for secondary education instructors to demonstrate their own knowledge from their own discipline and pedagogy besides the colloquia.

In the Southern Urban dual-credit program, Hightree High’s instructor Daphne found the Director of Composition, Susan, to be incredibly understanding through the dual-credit experience. Daphne found Susan as helpful as possible for the context of taking dual credit because Susan helped eliminate some of the work of the graduate course for Daphne when it was too overwhelming along with her full-time teaching at the

high school. To improve the relationship between secondary and tertiary education further, Daphne explained another way to do so would be more observations by the Director of the dual-credit instructors:

Well, has she done a dual credit in a high school? I think that would be helpful if she knew exactly where I was coming from because some of these issues that I've mentioned, I've kind of mentioned them to her too and she was definitely understanding and she worked with me on eliminating an assignment or two. But I think you know she would have already seen those things had she had the experience. I don't know. But I know she's done some observations. Maybe more observations. I don't know. I really don't know. Because I mean she was always accessible, didn't have any issues really.

In an ideal situation, Susan would have been able to teach dual credit so she had an idea of what experiences and challenges the dual-credit instructors should expect. However, a Writing Program Administrator is already extremely busy with on-campus commitments, such as directing new first-year composition instructors in a graduate course, mentoring composition instructors on all different levels, mediating grievances, and representing the composition program to the university. Therefore, it would be difficult for the Writing Program Administrator to even go off campus, much less teach an off campus course. Additionally, dual credit is a small percentage of the composition courses taught through Southern Urban. There are structural reasons to why dual credit is not a main focus of composition programs and why a Dual Credit Coordinator was hired for Southern Urban. However, dual credit is still new to not only composition programs, but composition scholars and administrators. There has not been enough scholarship yet for Susan to

know what to expect for high school instructors to struggle with in dual credit. Moreover, Susan's research and teaching interests do not lie in dual credit. Therefore, Susan did what she could in the context of the composition program at the time by being as accessible to the dual-credit instructors as possible.

Daphne wanted the Teaching College Composition course in the future to function as a course where dual-credit instructors were separated from the on-campus instructors. Considering there are only about two dual-credit instructors who take the class a year, this kind of class will mostly likely not occur. Therefore, there should be new strategies to make the dual-credit instructors be part of the community more. Since both Emma and Daphne brought up that some of the work on pedagogy was too repetitive for them, it seemed that partly it was repetitive because they could not add their voices to the class discussion in an official manner. This is the same argument many incoming Ph.D. students make about not wanting to take the Teaching College Composition course. They view it as repetitive, but just as the students want their experiences to be taken into account, they need to learn the context of the Southern Urban composition program. To a certain extent, then, there were resistant attitudes to the Teaching College Composition course that did not consider what it added to the instructors' pedagogy. One way to incorporate their voices more in the graduate course would be to have the high school instructors teach certain lessons about pedagogy and literacy education to the on-campus instructors. This way, they would be more a part of the class and also recognized as the experts they are. Consequently, some of the on-campus instructors could teach certain lessons about how to utilize Southern Urban resources, such as BlackBoard, and where to find information on the University Writing

Center. Therefore, both populations can learn from the other about aspects of writing pedagogy. Additionally, there could also be a change in the dual-credit program where there could be a chance for high school instructors to observe college composition courses and college instructors to observe high school English courses. This could create a place for instructors in Teaching College Composition or in the mentoring group attached to it to discuss the differences and similarities in literacy education that occurs at the secondary and tertiary education levels.

### **Recommendations for Changes in Dual-Credit Curriculum**

If we decide to address the brand of dual credit in composition pedagogy, one beneficial way to go about it would be for students to reflect on their identities as dual-credit students in the classroom. This happened in informal ways, as stated already with the questions dual-credit instructors were asked, such as where and how to pay bills, as compared to what an instructor would be asked on campus. One dual-credit instructor, Charlotte, explained that she gives an annual talk about what credit hours mean for student: “Every year that I’ve taught dual credit, we’ve had a day where we sit down and we talk about what credit hours mean. How many credit hours a class is usually worth, if you have a three-hour course, you can expect six extra hours on top of that a week on your own time. So we’ve had long discussions about that.” However, there were not any major assignments that instructors did that asked students their reasons for taking dual credit and what they expected out of a “college-level writing” class. One idea to change this would be to have a one to two page introductory paper at the beginning of the semester that asks students what it means to be dual-credit students and why they chose

to take this course. Then, instructors and students would begin the class with more of an understanding of its overlapping purposes. Later in the semester of the dual-credit course, students could write a response on the reasons they think dual-credit courses exist and the assumptions behind them that could influence students' conceptions of "college-level writing," such as notions of efficiency and correctness.

Some of the instructors already do a literacy narrative at the beginning of the semester, as Charlotte indicated, "I'm down to one personal piece. And it's just, I do that at the very beginning of 101 so that I get to know them. And it's a safe piece of writing for them. I feel like they need a safe piece when they walk into the course." Another instructor, Emma, also explained her use of a literacy narrative for students: "They did a reflection, and they were supposed to be reflecting on their experiences with literacy. And students were like, 'Uh reading and writing, I got to write about reading and writing again.' And what I tried to convey to them at least my idea of literacy is more like, is broader than that, like how we communicate with the world." Both of these instructors already ask students to reflect on their ideas about writing and the experiences with literacy education. Therefore, instructors could add more in that assignment about literacy in the particular dual-credit space to understand students' reactions to the course.

If there was at least this introductory paper, there could be more openness designated in the classroom for how literacy functions in an economic system as Brandt describes. At least having more discussions would hopefully lead to less isolation about what literacy means, as when Jean's explanation of the university demonstrated both the factors privileged in the marketplace and devalued. Doing some kind of assignment related to the branding of dual credit would also help students to understand their notions

of identity in relation to capitalism. Since it is explicitly political, this assignment could potentially make administrators and instructors uncomfortable. In a conservative climate, it would be beneficial to have a conversation in class on dual credit and its relationship to capitalism instead of a writing assignment. This conversation would be lower stakes than a writing assignment on the issue. In Chapter Two, there was discussion of what dual-credit students meant in comparison to AP students or “regular” students. It would be beneficial for students to reflect on what they are “getting out” of dual credit financially and how these perceptions impact their notions of literacy and literacy education. This pedagogy would also be helpful so that students can recognize the ways in which dual credit empowers them to take college courses, but also shapes their identities in relationship to capitalism in terms of competition and acceleration.

If instructors were interested in doing so, it would also be helpful in the assignments to have students reflect on what kinds of people and institutions have acted as literacy sponsors for them. These discussions or written assignments could lead to students thinking more about their reasons for going to certain colleges and what kind of sponsors they encounter in higher education. This notion of sponsorship would also help students to recognize more of the economic situation of dual credit for them. Students may think about whether they are going to apply to college or not, how they are going to pay for college, and how this payment shapes what kind of higher education experience they will have. The class could discuss what it means to have a financial sponsor such as Southern Urban for their literacy education and what that represents about the values and assumptions from the sponsors that are part of their lives. This could also lead to analysis of the high school they attend and what kind of materials and resources help with their

taking the class at the high school. Then, students could think about other sponsors that were also discussed in Chapter Three, such as parents, instructors, and administrators. This would not only be helpful for understanding the broadness of how both one's professional and personal life impacts literacy, but it would also facilitate students understanding of exactly what a dual-credit course is. Even though the dual-credit course at Southern Urban was the same standard syllabus that some instructors used on campus, I am not sure that this standardization necessarily helped. In terms of context, there are certain aspects of dual credit, such as how it highlights the financial motivations of stakeholders in higher education, that should be taken into consideration in the actual coursework. Then, as discussed in Chapter Two, some of the confusion that students have about the identity of the course would be cleared up by these assignments and discussions about the purposes and motivations of the class they are taking.

These assignments and discussions would also be useful so that stakeholders could further explore the tensions in higher education between learning skills to prepare for a career and cultivating ideals about who they want to be. Students would understand more about the context in which they live and work, and also understand more about access and identity through these conversations on how capitalism informs higher education, composition, and the courses they take. By having these conversations, hopefully students would go into their coursework and their careers with a more critical view of how institutions relate economics and literate practices. When I use "critical" here, I do not just mean "critique," but in terms of students being reflexive about their own places in higher education and their future jobs. In doing so, they would be able to reflect on institutions' values and assumptions about certain kinds of literacies, such as

“college-level writing.” They would be able to utilize these literacies and yet also reflect on and critique them.

However, if there are going to be explicit discussions about dual credit in relation to the economic system in the classroom, it would be important to reflect on the identity of the instructors as well. Most instructors teaching dual credit are high school teachers, part-time lecturers, or graduate teaching assistants. There are few tenure-track professors teaching the course, although many administer dual-credit programs. The power differentials that this status of the instructor creates is important when reflecting on this discussion. To get students to talk about the ways that the economy connects with literacy would be powerful. However, it would also be something that would not necessarily work unless the instructors had the institutional power to do so. The instructors would have to be comfortable with addressing the tension that is part of the Southern Urban program. This is not me saying that the assignments about dual credit, capitalism, and literacy sponsors cannot be done by people with less institutional power, but that it should be reflected on. Moreover, this lack of institutional power connects with perceptions of literacy and “college-level writing” that both secondary and tertiary stakeholders have varying ideas on in the dual-credit program. For instance, in Chapter Two, a dual-credit instructor, Charlotte, discussed her worry that high school teachers at low-performing schools would teach dual credit similar to test preparation because of the pressure on performance. This was a different perception than Emma, who taught at the highest performing public high school in River City. Emma did not worry about instructors teaching “college-level writing” in a formulaic way because that worry of test

performance was absent. This institutional power between high school and college in the dual-credit space was discussed more in depth in Chapter Four.

### **Final Conclusion and Implications**

If future dialogue about secondary and tertiary education in dual credit can involve high school teachers more in what they can bring to literacy education, the following questions could be helpful for future research about this dialogue: What can composition instructors and administrators learn from secondary education instructors about writing and pedagogy from the dual-credit space? What ideas can we use from secondary education instructors and their experiences? What can we learn about assessment to better understand our students when they come to college? These questions lead to more discussion about the extent to which composition and secondary education instructors and administrators can work together.

Further research that could potentially develop from this dissertation project also includes more research on the meaning of “college-level” writing in the national conversation on college readiness and how this definition affects stakeholders at both secondary and tertiary education in terms of how they administer and how they teach. Moreover, there could be more research on the transfer of writing that occurs from high school to college. Transfer was a subject that was not discussed much in this dissertation, and could be explored further to understand more of the relationship between secondary and tertiary levels in literacy education. This dissertation also began to address writing program administration work through the lens of the dual-credit program. It would be

beneficial to establish more discussion of writing program administration in the space of dual credit.

Dual-credit programs have grown since their inception in 1970's at universities and community colleges. As they become more prevalent, composition programs have to not only acknowledge, but work with these programs in order to keep teaching writing effectively. There are dual-credit programs named in Chapter One, such as Syracuse University's Project Advance and Kingsborough College's College Now programs, which have been successful in directing students towards writing at and for college. Even though dual-credit programs can reinforce problematic conceptions of education, such as the acceleration of learning and literacy discussed in this dissertation, they also offer a unique dialogue between the disciplines of rhetoric and composition and K-12 literacy education. This conversation is beneficial because it creates more investment in literacy by educators in a time in which the standardization of "college-level writing," by the government and national testing agencies has grown. These institutions frequently define "college readiness" and are not frequently experienced in the current classroom and the benefits and tensions which arise from this space. Therefore, literacy educators should continue to discuss their conceptions of literacy education with one another and the public so that educators expand this important conversation on literacy.

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## APPENDICES

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE

All names are pseudonyms chosen by the stakeholders or assigned to them by the researcher when they did not have an interest in naming themselves. The names of the university, public school system, and local high schools are all pseudonyms chosen by the researcher.

APPENDIX A  
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Amy: A dual-credit instructor who taught at Cary High School during the time of this study. Amy is a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Doctoral program of Rhetoric and Composition at Southern Urban University. Amy had also taught dual credit at Woods High and taught composition courses at Southern Urban for the past two years.

Charlotte: A dual-credit instructor who taught at Dean High School. Charlotte had a Master's in English and Education. She had taught as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Southern Urban University while receiving her Master's in English. Charlotte was a high school instructor who had been teaching for ten years.

Danyelle: A high school senior at Cary High School during the time of this study. Danyelle was in the dual-credit composition course, but had also taken AP courses at her high school.

Daphne: A dual-credit instructor who taught at Hightree High School. Daphne was a high school instructor who had been teaching for 14 years. Daphne has a Master's in Reading Education. She had also taught English to many other levels of students at the high school.

Devyn: A high school senior at Hightree High School during the time of this study. Devyn was in the dual-credit composition course, but had also taken AP courses at her high school.

Drew: A college sophomore at a state university at the time of this study. Drew had taken dual-credit composition two years before as a high school senior at Dean High School, and described the benefits and limitations the course had on her college education.

Emma: A dual-credit instructor who taught at Hightree High School. Emma was a high school instructor who had been teaching for 12 years, 6 of them at Hightree. She had both a Master's in English and Education. Emma had also taught AP and Honors courses in English.

Jean: An administrator in Admissions at Southern Urban University. Jean was the Executive Director of Admissions and worked with students interested in attending Southern Urban.

Jessica: A dual-credit instructor who taught at Cary High School. Jessica was a high school instructor who had been teaching English for seven years at the school. She had also taught AP and a variety of high school English courses.

John: The Dual-Credit Coordinator for the English Department at Southern Urban University during the time of this study. John was an Instructor who taught composition and literature courses while directing the dual-credit program.

Juanita: An administrator in Admissions at Southern Urban University. Juanita directed all dual-credit programs at the university with local high schools.

Justin: A high school senior at Hightree High School during the time of this study. Justin was in the dual-credit composition course, but had also taken AP courses at his high school.

Laura: The College Access Specialist for the River City Public Schools system. Laura worked to get RCPS students into a variety of colleges.

Longfellow: An administrator in Undergraduate Affairs and Professor of English. Longfellow works primarily with undergraduate degree programs, academic support services, and general university support services.

Megan: A high school senior at Cary High School during the time of this study. Megan was in the dual-credit composition course, but had also taken AP courses at her high school.

Michael: The high school principal at Woods High School. Michael had been the principal at Woods High for three years.

Ned: The high school principal at Cary High School. Ned had been the principal at Cary High for 16 years.

Sam: A high school senior at Cary High School during the time of this study. Sam was in the dual-credit composition course, but had also taken AP courses at his high school.

Scott: A high school senior at Cary High School during the time of this study. Scott was in the dual-credit composition course, but had also taken AP courses at his high school.

Susan: The Director of Composition at Southern Urban University during the time of this study. Susan was a Professor in Rhetoric and Composition at Southern Urban and taught the Teaching College Writing (602) course.

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

## Subject Informed Consent Document

### Competing Definitions of Literacy: Institutional Stakeholders' Conceptions and Practices of Dual-Enrollment

Investigator(s) name and address:

Dr. Bronwyn Williams (principal investigator)  
Bingham Humanities Building  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292  
btwill02@louisville.edu

Caroline G. Wilkinson (co-investigator)  
Bingham Humanities Building  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292  
cgwilk02@louisville.edu

Possible Research Site:

University of Louisville  
Belknap Campus and Classrooms  
Louisville, KY 40292

Butler Traditional High School  
2222 Crums Lane  
Louisville, KY 40216

DuPont Manual High School  
120 West Lee Street  
Louisville, Kentucky 40208

Louisville Male High School  
4409 Preston Highway  
Louisville, KY 40213

Phone Numbers for Subjects to Call for Questions:

Bronwyn Williams – 502.852.4741  
Caroline Wilkinson – 334.740.5264

### Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Dr. Bronwyn Williams and Caroline Wilkinson, a graduate student in Rhetoric and Composition. The study is

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sponsored by the University of Louisville, Department of English. The study will take place at the University of Louisville. Approximately 15-20 subjects will be invited to participate.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to expand the studies on dual enrollment by attending to the political, material, and institutional forces that construct conceptions of and attitudes toward literacy for both secondary and tertiary institutions, and how current pedagogies and programs respond to these constructions. The research subjects will be three dual enrollment instructors, six dual enrollment students, and at least six administrators part of the dual enrollment program. The concepts being researched include the purposes of dual enrollment in an outcomes-based era, how stakeholders' notions about dual enrollment inform attitudes about literacy, the ways instructors and administrators respond to these attitudes in program and course documents, and how students reflect on literacy. While my focus is on the ways in which stakeholders' attitudes about dual enrollment inform literacy, my purpose is to come to a better understanding of expanding the study of college writing and pedagogy beyond the "traditional" first-year composition classroom.

### **Procedures**

In this study, the student, instructor, and administrator participants will be interviewed at least once by the co-investigator. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interviews will be informal in nature which will allow for a more discussion-based conversation regarding conceptions of both dual-enrollment and literacy. Participants will make program and course documents such as program handbooks, syllabi, schedules, and major assignment prompts available to the researcher. These documents will be discussed in the interviews. You are encouraged to have informal conversations with the researcher outside the official meeting. Such meetings will be facilitated by the participant. The research project and your involvement will run throughout the Spring 2012 semester.

### **Risks**

There are no known risks associated with this study.

### **Benefits**

The information collected may benefit your understanding of the course in which you are taking, teaching, or coordinating.

### **Confidentiality**

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may look at the study records:

The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board and Human Subjects  
Protection Program Office  
Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP),  
Office of Civil Rights

Information collected from these research activities will be used to complete the co-investigator's dissertation. If any results from the study are published as presentations or in print, pseudonyms will be used. Participants will decide on the pseudonym they wish to be used. Also, the following steps will be used to protect your confidentiality:

- The removal of any identifying information from materials generated from this study including interview transcripts and documents provided to the researcher.
- The use of a pseudonym rather than your given name when referring to information you have provided. A pseudonym will also be used for any persons to whom you refer in any research procedures.

Confidentiality will not be maintained between teacher and student. Participation will not influence assessment of the student on the part of the instructor. The instructor will have no knowledge of what is discussed between student subject and investigator.

Participants will have the right and will be encouraged to review any writing that is generated from this study. Disagreement in presentation of the subjects will be resolved by both views being included in the published material.

All confidential research materials will be kept in a secure filing cabinet in the office of the co-investigator or on the co-investigator's password protected computer.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate, you may decline to participate in any specific portion of the research or decline to answer any specific questions in the interviews. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Withdrawing from the study will not have any adverse effects on assessment of your performance in English 101 or 102. Participation in the study will in no way positively influence your assessment in English 101 or 102.

Revision Date: 2/20/12

**Research Subject's Right, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at (502) 852-4741

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You can discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the study doctor, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this research study.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

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This paper tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered, and that you will take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject/Legal Representation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Explaining the Consent Form

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

Bronwyn Williams – 502.852.4741  
Caroline Wilkinson – 334.740.5264

Revision Date: 2/20/12

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Date Approved <u>03/12/2012</u> Valid Thru <u>03/11/2013</u> #
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Dear [name],

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting for my dissertation. The study is sponsored by the Department of English and is being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Bronwyn Williams. The study takes the following form, as described in my IRB proposal:

“The purpose of this research is to expand the studies on dual enrollment by attending to the political, material, and institutional forces that construct conceptions of and attitudes toward literacy for both secondary and tertiary institutions, and how current pedagogies and programs respond to these constructions. I will consider how collaborations between secondary and tertiary institutions have shaped notions of literacy and its purposes in education in the current culture focused on learning outcomes from standardization and national testing. In this way, my project seeks to expand the study of college writing and pedagogy beyond the “traditional” first-year composition classroom to consider how programs like dual enrollment inform notions of access to academic literacy.

Drawing upon one dual enrollment program between a public metropolitan university and three local high schools, this research will involve analyses of program and course documents, and interviews with students, instructors, and administrators concerning the ways in which they reflect on literacy in this type of program. I hope to contribute to a better understanding of dual enrollment by exploring different stakeholders’ conceptions of it in order to complicate theories about literacy and writing pedagogy during an outcomes-based era.”

I would be interested in your participation in this study in the form of the inclusion of students from your class as participants in my study, and your engagement in one interview and a follow-up interview if needed. The study would run the length of the 2012 spring semester, and I would plan to interview you at your own convenience. Your time commitment would take the form of the one meeting listed above, any informal conversations you would care to have in regards to my observations of your class, and your submission of classroom documents (syllabi, prompts).

You can reach me via email or phone to further discuss this study. Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this study, so we can arrange to meet to discuss your rights and expectations as participants. Your participation is completely voluntary. I look forward to answering any questions you may have and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Caroline Wilkinson  
852-5919  
Humanities 319F  
cgwilk02@louisville.edu

Expedited Category (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey,

interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.



APPENDIX C  
LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Students, Instructors, and Administrators

Students

- Please state your name for the recording device.
- What high school do you attend?
- What grade are you in high school?
- How many dual-enrollment courses have you taken? What courses are they?
- What dual-enrollment writing courses have you taken?
- Do you plan to attend college next year? If so, where at?
- What do you define as a dual-enrollment course?
- Why did you decide to take dual-enrollment courses?
- What do you think are the purposes of dual-enrollment courses?
- In what ways do you think these dual-enrollment courses can lead to academic success?
- How do you think it differs from a “regular” high school course?
- In what ways do you think this course is equivalent to a “regular” college composition course?
- How might this course help prepare you for college?
- What do you think literacy means? If you had to describe it to someone, what would you say?

- Please describe your literacy history, including experiences in formal and informal educational contexts.
- In what ways has this course shaped what literacy means to you?
- What was the hardest part about writing in this course? The easiest part?
- What was your favorite assignment in this course? What about your least favorite assignment? Why?
- How do you think standardized tests like the SAT and ACT shape what you think literacy means?
- To you, what are the benefits of taking a dual-enrollment writing course? What about the weaknesses of it?
- Is there anything else I have not asked that you think would be useful for me to know?

#### Instructors

- Please state your name for the recording device.
- Where do you teach high school?
- What courses do you teach?
- How long have you been teaching?
- What is your educational background for teaching high school?
- What is your educational background for teaching composition?
- How did you get involved with teaching dual-enrollment writing? What were the requirements for you to teach dual enrollment? What were the benefits and drawbacks to these requirements?
- What do you define as a dual-enrollment course?
- What are the benefits and limitations of teaching a dual-enrollment writing course?
- What experiences have you had with other dual-enrollment instructors? Were these instructors secondary or tertiary and how did you work with them?

- What experiences have you had with dual-enrollment administrators? Were these administrators secondary or tertiary and how did you work with them?
- To what extent has dual enrollment contributed to collaboration between secondary and tertiary education? What would make this collaboration more beneficial?
- What do you think are the tensions and power differences in this collaboration? Can you provide any examples
- What do you think are the benefits of teaching a dual enrollment course? What do you think are the drawbacks?
- What do you think are the benefits for a student taking a dual enrollment course? What do you think are the drawbacks?
- If you had to define literacy to someone, what would you say it is?
- How do you think your assignments approach your definition of literacy?
- How do national and local literacy standards inform how you write course documents such as the syllabi, schedule, and major writing assignments?
- What are some of the drawbacks of these national and local literacy standards for how you conceptualize literacy and practice it in your classroom?
- In what ways do you see dual enrollment informing attitudes about literacy by instructors? By students?
- Is there anything else I have not asked that you think would be useful for me to know?

#### Administrators

- Please state your name for the recording device.
- Please provide some background of your educational and work experience.
- What courses do you teach?
- How long have you been an administrator?
- How did you get involved with managing dual-enrollment writing?
- What do you define as a dual-enrollment course?

- What do you think are the benefits of dual-enrollment writing?
- What do you think are the drawbacks of dual-enrollment writing?
- How does the phenomenon of dual enrollment relate to the outcomes-based era in the United States educational system?
- If you had to define literacy to someone, what would you say?
- In what ways do you see dual enrollment programs informing attitudes about literacy by administrators? By students?
- What do you think are the benefits of implementing a dual enrollment course at the local high school? What are the drawbacks?
- What do you think are the benefits of teaching a dual enrollment course? What do you think are the drawbacks?
- What do you think are the benefits for a student taking a dual enrollment course? What do you think are the drawbacks?
- How do national and local literacy standards inform how you write program documents such as the program handbook? How do you think they inform the requirements for teaching a dual enrollment course?
- What are some of the drawbacks of these national and local literacy standards for how you conceptualize literacy and practice it in your classroom?
- To what extent has there been collaboration on the dual enrollment program with the high school and college instructors? What would make this collaboration more beneficial?

## APPENDIX D

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Southern Urban University: Southern Urban is an urban public research university. It has a student population of 22,249 undergraduate students and 5,750 graduate students. There are more than 250 degrees in 12 colleges and schools with a prominent business program along with respected fields in social work, engineering, music, dental, and law offered at the university. Southern Urban also has a medical school, law school, pharmacy school, and dental school. The acceptance rate is 75%. Southern Urban University enrolls 78% of students who are state residents and 45% of students from the home county. The average ACT score is a 24.5. The average age of a full-time undergraduate at Southern Urban University is 21.5 years. The percent of undergraduates 25 and older is 20%.

River City Public Schools: River City Public Schools is a public school system located in River City, Kentucky. Over 100,000 students attend public schools in the River City Public Schools system. There are 22 public high schools that fall into the school system. RCPS is the 28<sup>th</sup> largest school system in the United States.

Cary High School: Cary High is a well-regarded magnet high school that offers the traditional program. It also offers AP courses and Honors courses along with dual credit. Cary High sends more than 95% of its graduates to college (“Cary”). Students enrolled in any of RCPS traditional middle schools can choose to attend to Cary. Any

other interested student can apply. Cary is labeled by the district as “Distinguished.” It is ranked as the ninth best high school in the state and ranked 71<sup>st</sup> in terms of Best Magnet Schools nationally by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Dean High School: Dean High is a magnet school for Communication, Media, and the Arts that also offers AP along with dual-credit courses. Students do not apply to Dean High as they do to the other three schools involved in this study. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students that attend is 53. Dean High is labeled by the district as a school that “Needs Improvement.” As of 2012, Dean High had to revise their school improvement plan in the academic year, and if they do not improve, the state education department will put sanctions in place.

Hightree High School: Hightree High is a magnet school that offers 27 AP courses (the most of any high school in the state) along with dual-credit courses and concentrations in communication, math/science/technology, and visual arts programs. Hightree is recognized as a “School of Distinction” by the district. It is ranked by *the U.S. News and World Report* as the Best High School in the state and 31<sup>st</sup> Best Magnet Schools nationally. Hightree is also ranked in *Newsweek*’s Top 100 Schools nationally and consistently has National Merit finalists every year since the 2006-07 academic year.

Woods High School: Woods High is a magnet high school that offers a traditional education program. It provides AP courses, Honor courses, and the most dual-credit courses in the district. Woods is labeled as “Proficient” by the district. It was recognized as the state Education Reform Act Rewards School. Woods High is also application-only unless a student went to a traditional middle school in River City.

## CURRICULUM VITA

### Caroline G. Wilkinson

cgwilk02@louisville.edu

(334) 740-2534  
704 Allen Street  
Syracuse, NY 13210

University of Louisville  
Department of English  
Bingham Humanities Rm. 315  
Louisville, KY 40292  
(502) 852-0987

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#### Education

**Ph.D. Rhetoric and Composition**, University of Louisville, May 2014.

Dissertation: "Competing Conceptions of Literacy: Intersections in a Dual-Credit Writing Program"

Committee: Bronwyn Williams (Director), Debra Journet, Bruce Horner, Karen Chandler, Ann Larson

**M.A. English**, Rhetoric and Composition Specialization, Auburn University, May 2009.

Thesis: "'Getting Things 'Alt' Enough": A Rhetorical Analysis of Composition Scholars' Use of Hybrid Academic Discourse"

Director: Kevin Roozen

**B.A. English**, Auburn University, May 2007. Summa Cum Laude.

Minor: Psychology

#### Publications

"Representing Revision: Alternative Uses for Course Texts." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. 41.3. March 2014, 294-299.

#### Conference Presentations

"Extending Conceptions of 'College Readiness' in the Dual-Credit Classroom."  
Conference on College Composition and Communication. Las Vegas, NV. 14  
March 2013.

- “Competing Definitions of Literacy: Responses of Dual-Enrollment Institutional Stakeholders.” Thomas R. Watson Conference. Louisville, KY. 18 October 2012.
- “Revising ‘Reciprocity’: Dual-Credit as a Point of Contact for Institutional Stakeholders.” Conference on College Composition and Communication. St. Louis, MO. 23 March 2012.
- “Dual-Credit as a Point of Contact for Institutional Stakeholders.” Writing Program Administrators Conference. Baton Rouge, LA. 16 July 2011.
- “How We Position Our Stories: Reflecting on the Sequencing of Creative Nonfiction in FYC.” Conference on College Composition and Communication. Atlanta, GA. 7 April 2011.
- “Working English in Editing: The Notion of Performativity in Responses to Publication Processes of Multilingual Scholars.” Thomas R. Watson Conference. Louisville, KY. 14 October 2010.
- “Getting Things ‘Alt’ Enough”: Remixing the Practice of Hybrid Academic Discourse in Scholarly Work.” Conference on College Composition and Communication. Louisville, KY. 18 March 2010.
- “Writing across Curricular and Extracurricular Activities: Promoting Literate Development in the Twenty-first Century.” North Carolina Symposium on Teaching Writing. North Carolina State University. Raleigh, NC. 17 October 2009.
- “Revealing Waves in Standard English and Academic Identity: The Practice of Hybrid Academic Discourse as Self-Reflection in Scholarly Work.” Conference on College Composition and Communication. San Francisco, CA. 13 March 2009.
- “Standard English and Academic Identity: The Practice of Hybrid Academic Discourse as Self-Reflection in Scholarly Work.” English Graduate Association Colloquium. Auburn University, Auburn, AL. 7 March 2009.
- “‘In Your Dreams’: The Realistic Supernatural in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*.” English Graduate Association Colloquium. Auburn University. Auburn, AL. 8 March 2008.

### **Honors and Awards**

Watson Dissertation Scholarship. Fall 2013. University of Louisville.

Barbara Plattus Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching. May 2012. University of Louisville.

Writing Program Administration Graduate Organization Graduate Student Travel Grant, (\$250). March 2012. Council of Writing Program Administrators.

Faculty Mentor for the Seventeenth Annual Red and Black Honors Banquet and Awards Ceremony for Scholar Athletes and their Faculty Mentors. March 2013 and February 2010. University of Louisville.

Faculty Favorite Nomination. September 2013. University of Louisville.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Teacher of the Year: Honorable Mention. April 2009. Auburn University.

### **Administration**

Assistant Director of Composition. University of Louisville. Department of English. May 2010-May 2012.

### **Teaching**

Le Moyne College. English Department. Adjunct Instructor. 2014-present.

- WRT 101: Critical Writing

University of Louisville. Composition Program. English Department. Graduate Teaching Assistant. 2009-2013.

- ENGL 101: Introduction to College Writing (4 sections).
- ENGL 102: Intermediate College Writing (4 sections).
- ENGL 101: Dual-Credit Introduction to College Writing (1 section).
- ENGL 102: Dual-Credit Intermediate College Writing (1 section).
- ENGL 306: Business Writing (1 section).
- ENGL 373: Women in Literature (1 section).

Auburn University. Composition Program. English Department. Graduate Teaching Assistant. 2007-2009.

- ENGL 1100: English Composition I. (2 sections).
- ENGL 1120: English Composition II. (2 sections).

Auburn University. Intensive English Program. Office of International Programs. Instructor. 2008.

- English for Everyday Use. (1 section).

Auburn University Summer English School. Education Department. Instructor. 2009.

- Advanced Reading and Writing for 9-12. (1 section).

### **Related Teaching Experience**

Tutor, Sylvan Learning Center. Auburn, AL. April 2009-August 2009.  
Worked with individuals from five years old to eighteen years old in beginning reading, advanced reading, and advanced math.  
English Writing Center Consultant. Auburn University. August 2007-May 2009.  
Assisted undergraduate students in writing and critical thinking. Served as a mentor for first-year English Center consultants who communicated on any issues and successes they experienced.

Tutor, Auburn High School. Auburn, AL. May 2008-August 2008.  
Worked with high school students in language and reading comprehension for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam.

Tutor, Lee County Literacy Coalition. Auburn, AL. January 2008-August 2009.  
Assisted learners with different skills from learning how to read to studying for the GED.

## **Service and Professional Development**

### University of Louisville

Member, Barbara Plattus Award for Excellence in Graduate School Teaching Committee, 2013.

Presenter, Conference on College Composition Proposal Writing Workshop. 2013.

Coordinator, Symposium on Student Writing. 2012.

Presenter, How Instructors Can Be Involved with the Symposium on Student Writing Workshop. 2012.

Executive Board Member, English Graduate Organization, 2010- 2011.

Graduate Student Peer Mentor Coordinator, English Graduate Organization, 2011.

Graduate Student Mentor, English Graduate Organization, 2010-present.

Member, English Department Technology Committee, 2010-2011.

### Auburn University

Secretary, English Graduate Association. 2008-2009.

Research Assistant, Dr. Thomas Nunnally. 2008.

Member, Practicum Committee for the English Graduate Association. 2007- 2008.

Member, English Graduate Association, 2007-2009.

### **Professional Affiliations**

Conference on College Composition and Communication

National Council of Teachers of English

### **Selected Graduate Coursework**

#### Ph.D., University of Louisville

Teaching College Composition (Joanna Wolfe)

Politics of Language in the Teaching and Study of Composition (Bruce Horner)

Scenes of Reading: 1800-1900 (Susan Griffin)

Composition Theory and Practice (Min-Zhan Lu)

Creative Nonfiction: Practices and Pedagogy (Bronwyn Williams)

Biology, Technology, and Writing (Marilyn Cooper)

Research Methods in Composition (Debra Journet)

History of Rhetoric (Carol Mattingly)

Outside Composition (Bruce Horner)

New Media and Composition Pedagogy (Bronwyn Williams)

Contemporary Theories of Interpretation (Karen Kopelson)

#### M.A., Auburn University

English Composition: Approaches and Issues (Kevin Roozen)

Victorian Literature (Christopher Keirstead)

Survey of Literary Theory (Joanne Tong)

Creative Writing (Judy Troy)

Native American Literature (Hilary Wyss)

Rhetorical Theory (Kevin Roozen)

African American Women in Literature (Susana Morris)

Old English Language and Literature (Thomas Nunnally)

Composition Studies: Reconfiguring Writing as “Literate Activity” (Kevin Roozen)

### **References**

#### **Bronwyn Williams, Professor and Director of University Writing Center**

Department of English, University of Louisville

Bingham Humanities Room 315

Louisville, KY 40292

bronwyn.williams@louisville.edu

(502) 852-0217

#### **Joanna Wolfe, Director of the Global Communication Center**

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